

# Social Media Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Social media sites are a part of most people's everyday communication and allow for the exchange of ideas, opinions and information about both personal and work related issues. This policy covers the publication of commentary by employees (including internal staff, Associate Lecturers, consultants and others working for or on behalf of the University) relating to the University on personal and University online social media sites.

Social media is defined as any facility for on-line publication and commentary (including videos) that allows for communication in the open.

Employees who contribute to social media sites must do so responsibly and treat electronic behaviour as they would treat non-electronic behaviour. They should be mindful of how they represent themselves on both personal and business social media sites as the lines between public and private, personal and professional expression are easily blurred and the content on social media sites may be public for many years. Employees will be accountable for anything they say on any social media site which directly or by inference is relevant to the University.

## 2. Use of the University's name

Employees should not use the University's name in such a way as to bring it into question or disrepute. Employees are free to express their political, religious, social and academic views in private or public provided this is explicitly done in their own name and not the name of the University.

An employee's personal social media profile and comments are unlikely to be of interest to the University where no direct or indirect reference is made to it, any individual or groups of employees, partners and suppliers. However, the University may be concerned where the nature of a communication is regarded as being defamatory or misleading, where it undermines professional credibility or integrity of employees, partners and suppliers or potentially damages the reputation of the University.

## 3. Use of Social Networking Sites

The University respects an employee's right to a private life. The University must however also ensure that confidentiality and its reputation are protected. Employees are reminded of their obligations under University employment policies and standards when using social media sites generally, in particular the responsibility not to bring the University into disrepute or allow personal interaction on websites to damage professional or work relationships with colleagues, students or other University partners.

Employees are advised that social media sites are public forums and should not assume that their entries will remain private. Social media sites are relatively easy to access. Any comments and images posted may be permanent and widely available so careful consideration should be given before publication.

Confidential University information must not be published or discussed on personal social media sites. No information is to be made available that could provide a person with unauthorised access to the University, confidential or sensitive information or intellectual property. Any non-disclosure agreements that are in place must not be violated.

Privacy and the feelings of others should be respected at all times. Students, employees, partners or suppliers should not be cited or referenced without prior approval. Permission must be sought from individuals before posting their contact details, photos, etc. Care should be taken to avoid using language which could be deemed as offensive.

The use of social networking sites at work for personal reasons within working hours is permitted but limited to reasonable use. i.e. it does not impinge on an individual's job performance.

#### **4. Sanctions for misuse**

Employees will be requested to remove any comments or materials that are deemed to be in breach of this policy.

Violations of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment contract.

#### **5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff, regardless of: race, sex, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression or gender reassignment

#### **6. Useful References**

Behaviours and Standards at Work  
Computer Acceptable Use Policy  
Communications Privacy  
Information Security Policy  
Data Protection Code of Practice  
Bullying & Harassment Policy  
Terms and Conditions  
Public Interest Disclosure Policy