



Social Media Policy for Staff

Overview and Scope

"Social media" is a category of online media that support people talking, participating, sharing, networking and bookmarking online. Common social media platforms include, but are not limited to, online social networks such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, blogs, podcasts, discussion forums, RSS feeds, and content sharing sites such as Instagram and YouTube.

The purpose of this policy is to help staff develop an online presence that is ethical and legal, while maximizing the benefits of utilising emerging social media technologies when communicating with students, colleagues and the public.

The scope of this policy extends to all employees who engage in online conversations or share content using social media sites.

It is the responsibility of each user to adhere to this policy. Where inappropriate use of social media may constitute an offence under criminal law, **referral will be made to the appropriate authorities**. In addition, users in breach of the policy **will be liable to disciplinary action** under relevant University procedures.

There are two sections to this policy: **Section A** extends to staff members' use of social media including personal use, where this use impacts on the University, other staff members, students and the wider community. **Section B** outlines the additional responsibilities of staff who use University social media sites, or who are asked by their manager to use or participate in social media sites, as part of their job responsibilities.

Section A: General Social Media Use

Acceptable Use

Staff are personally accountable for any breach of the University's Social Media Policy, whether posting as a private individual or in the performance of their duties as an employee of the University.

Staff should familiarise themselves with the University's Social Media Guide for Staff (<http://go.qub.ac.uk/socialmedia>) which gives advice on a number of important issues including effective use of social media and protecting yourself online.

Staff members' use of social media is subject to all current University Policies, including the Code of Conduct for staff (<http://go.qub.ac.uk/pcander>), the University's Computer Resources - Acceptable Use Policy and other Security Policies (<http://go.qub.ac.uk/itpolicies>) and the JANET Acceptable Use Policy (<https://community.ja.net/library/acceptable-use-policy>).

Staff wishing to make a complaint about a potential breach of the University's Social Media Policies may do so through the University's staff grievance procedures (<http://go.qub.ac.uk/grievance>).

For specific advice on the use of social media, staff should contact socialmedia@qub.ac.uk

Posting Content to Social Media Sites

Staff should presume that everything they post online will be public and permanent, regardless of the privacy settings they assume are applied.

Staff should be aware that social media content may easily become available to the public, including the University, students and the media, and that inappropriate use could damage their reputation and career prospects. The University reserves the right to act on any information obtained from online sources if it indicates that a member of staff is in breach of the Code of Conduct for staff or other University policies.

Staff should familiarise themselves with the terms and conditions of any social media site that they use and note that many companies that operate social media platforms specify that, by posting on their sites, the company is granted irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive license to use and distribute content for any purpose, commercial, advertising, or otherwise.

When using a personal social media account, staff should consider including, where appropriate, a disclaimer stating that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the University.

Posting Guidelines

The following guidelines must be considered when posting content to any social media account for any purpose, whether the content be text, images, video, audio or links to other sources.

1. Staff should respect the dignity and privacy of others and should always consider how their online behaviour may affect other users and reflect on themselves and the University.
2. Special care must always be taken when dealing with any content related to children and vulnerable adults. No content relating to children or vulnerable adults should be posted online without the express approval of the relevant University authority.
3. Staff should adhere to copyright law and secure permission prior to posting, sharing or distributing copyrighted materials.
4. In particular, staff must not use social media for any of the following under any circumstances:
 - To post inappropriate, discriminatory or defamatory comments, including comments about colleagues, students or support staff
 - To bully, harass or intimidate students or colleagues
 - To post threatening, obscene or profane comments
 - To express or support sexist, racist, sectarian or homophobic views
 - To express support for illegal activities or organisations
 - To disseminate misleading information
 - To share confidential or sensitive information
 - To view or distribute sexually explicit or offensive content
 - To infringe or violate someone else's rights
 - To post personally identifiable information that could be used to locate any individual without that person's written permission
 - To post content that could create a security risk for the University, its staff or students
 - In any way which may be unlawful

Training and Support

The IT Training and Assessment Unit provide various training courses in social media which can be booked via iTrent (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/qol/>). It is strongly recommended that staff attend any relevant courses. Further information about social media training is available at <http://go.qub.ac.uk/socialmedia> or by emailing socialmedia@qub.ac.uk. In addition, staff can receive regular advice and updates on the use of social media at Queen's University from the following sources:

- Social Media blog at <http://blogs.ac.uk/socialmedia>
- Facebook at www.facebook.com/SocialMediaQUB
- Twitter at www.twitter.com/SocialMediaQUB

Section B: Use of University Affiliated Social Media Sites

Social Media Site Creation

A University affiliated social media site is defined as any site that could reasonably be perceived to be associated with or representative of Queen's. This includes support sites such as the @LibraryatQUB Twitter account and School-based sites such as School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work Facebook site, along with any social media sites that, by their content or look, could be perceived as being associated with Queen's.

Anyone wishing to create a University affiliated social media site must obtain approval from their Head of School or Director. Any queries relating to the establishment of a University social media site should be emailed to socialmedia@qub.ac.uk

Queen's reserves the right to monitor any social media sites that affiliate themselves with the University and, where necessary, to request the removal of sites that reflect negatively on the University or the removal of content that infringes on the University's copyright or implies an unauthorised association, e.g. references to Queen's University Belfast or QUB, the Queen's logo and related imagery.

Responsibilities of Site Administrators

If you set up a University affiliated social media site, you effectively become the administrator for that site on behalf of the University and are responsible for maintaining the site and moderating content. It is important that at least one other member of staff shares administrator responsibilities for the site and has access to the login details in order to ensure continuity and to assist with moderation.

University affiliated sites must be registered via an online form available at <http://go.qub.ac.uk/socialmedia>. Note that the form requires confirmation that the Head of School or Director has approved the creation of the site and must include contact details of two site administrators.

Approved sites will be included in the University Social Media Directory (<http://go.qub.ac.uk/socialmedia>) where appropriate.

The site administrators must maintain the security of account passwords and are fully responsible for any actions that take place using the account. If a site is no longer required, administrators should deactivate or permanently delete the account as appropriate.

Care should be taken when naming accounts to maintain consistency and to ensure accounts can be easily identified as University affiliated accounts.

Site administrators must have an understanding of the basic principles and etiquette associated with the management of an effective social media site. It is

recommended that site administrators attend the **Managing a University Social Media Site** course provided by the IT Training and Assessment Unit (bookable via iTrent (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/qol/>)).

Content Guidelines

In addition to the general policy statements relating to the use of social media outlined in **Section A**, administrators of University social media sites must adhere to the following:

- Ensure that the site complies with the terms and conditions of the social media platform used
- Ensure that the site does not compromise University branding guidelines
- Secure permission prior to posting, sharing or distributing copyrighted materials
- Only link to legal content and view any content before linking to it
- Ensure that content and commentary do not damage the University's reputation
- Ensure that content does not include confidential or proprietary information about Queen's or its students, employees or alumni
- Avoid using social media in teaching or research in a way that may be detrimental now or in the future to participants
- Manage the site in an effective manner to ensure timely feedback and support, where required

Where social media sites are used to explore controversial content as part of a course of academic study, administrators must ensure that appropriate context and disclaimers are provided and, if possible, take any reasonable measures to restrict access to the content.

Comments made by users are their property and should not be reused without their permission.

Social media platforms should not be used to collect personal information about users.

Moderating Content

University social media sites should encourage users to share their views by commenting on content within the following guidelines:

- Comments must be relevant to the topic being discussed
- Comments should be constructive and absent of expletives, obscenity and vulgarity
- Posts that are off-topic, abusive, contain profanity, are threatening in tone or devolve into personal attacks should be deleted immediately and reported, if necessary

- Posts with links that are determined to be spam or sales and advertising, or infringe copyright, should be removed immediately

Where possible, guidelines for posting content should be prominently displayed on the social media site, along with a statement that site administrators reserve the right to review all comments and posted materials and remove such materials for any reason.

Where possible, complaints should be dealt with via direct message or email, not on a public forum.

University affiliated social media sites should be monitored and updated on a regular basis.

Where a user's post raises a duty of care issue, site administrators should seek advice from the appropriate unit, e.g. Student Guidance.