

Swansea University Social Media Guidelines

Introduction

These guidelines have been developed to support the University's Social Media Policy and to help staff make appropriate decisions about the use of social media. The guidelines outline the standards that staff are required to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the University may monitor use of social media and the action that could be taken in respect of breaches of these guidelines.

The scope of the guidelines

To protect the integrity, reputation and interests of the University, all staff are expected to comply with these guidelines at all times to protect the confidentiality, and interests of the University, our services, employees, partners, and customers. Breaches of these guidelines may be dealt with under the University Conduct and other Substantial Reasons for Dismissal Ordinance and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to dismissal.

The Chief Operating Officer has overall responsibility for the effective operation of these guidelines. The Director of HR is responsible for monitoring and reviewing their operation and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to the University operations.

All staff are responsible for their own compliance and for ensuring that the guidelines are consistently applied. All staff should ensure that they take the time to read and understand them. Members of staff who believe they may have witnessed a breach of these guidelines should report it to their line manager in the first instance. Any serious breach should be reported to the Director of Information Services and Systems or the Director of HR.

Using social media sites in the name of Swansea University

Swansea University has a number of official accounts on sites such as Facebook, Twitter and You Tube where opinions expressed and information shared reflects the views of Swansea University as an institution. If a member of staff posts material on a social media website in the name of Swansea University or on behalf of Swansea University, without going through the appropriate procedures, and subsequently brings the name of the University into disrepute, this could amount to gross misconduct.

Responsibilities of staff in Official University online / social media presence.

Employees may contribute to the University's social media activities, for example by writing blogs or managing a social media account.

The University understands that members of staff may choose to use their own equipment, and devices for using social media. Such use should also be in accordance with these guidelines.

Employees must be aware that at all times, while contributing to the University's social media activities, they are representing the University. It is best practice to consider having two separate accounts, one for professional use and the other for personal use.

Staff who use social media as part of their role must ensure that the communication:

- has a purpose
- has a benefit for the University
- is proof read before it is published
- does not break the confidentiality of the University, its staff, students, partner organisations or clients.
- does not bring the University into disrepute for example by arguing, criticising individuals or groups, posting inappropriate images or breaching copyright.
- could not be considered as discriminatory, bullying or harassment of any individual or group. An example of this could be, but is not limited to, making derogatory comments relating to age, disability, ethnicity, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, sex, and sexual orientation.
- is suitable for posting publically worldwide; NB: once something has been posted it is too late to retract it.

Staff are required to consult the University Press Office if there is media interest resulting from online activity.

Use of Social Media in a personal capacity

The use of social media for personal purposes during normal work hours (other than break times) is not permitted.

The University recognises that staff make use of social media in a personal capacity. While staff are not acting on behalf of the University, staff must be aware that they may be recognised as being one of our employees. Online behaviour that is a breach of University regulations or UK legislation, and/or that damages the reputation of the University, will be dealt with through the University's Conduct and other Substantial Reasons for Dismissal Ordinance.

Communications made in a personal capacity through social media must not be unlawful – i.e. breach any UK criminal and / or civil legislation. If staff make comments on any aspects of University business, then staff must identify themselves as an employee. Any social media profile that indicates that staff are employees of the institution should include a disclaimer (see Appendix 1). Staff should neither claim nor imply that they are speaking on behalf of the University. Social media posts should not include University logos, unless permission has been granted.

Staff are reminded that content posted via social media in a personal capacity may be viewed by students or fellow colleagues. Respect should be had at all times for other people's privacy and feelings. Care should be taken to avoid language which may be deemed as offensive to others. Any derogatory remarks made about students, colleagues or the University, will be considered under the University's Conduct and other Substantial Reasons for Dismissal Ordinance.

The University reserves the right to request the removal of content from an official social media account and from a personal account, if it is deemed that the account or its submissions pose a risk to the reputation of the University or to one of its members of staff or students.

Staff also need to be aware of a number of other relevant policies and guidelines:

- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Dignity at Work and Study \(Combating Harassment\) Policy](#)
- [Computer Regulations](#)
- [Strategic Equality Plan 2012-2016](#)
- [Conduct and any other substantial reason for dismissal](#)

Monitoring use of social media websites

Staff should be aware that the public use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for work purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken under the University's Conduct and other Substantial Reasons for Dismissal Ordinance.

Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against the member of staff and the University. It may also cause embarrassment to the University and to stakeholders.

In particular uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

- (a) Creation or transmission, or causing the transmission of any pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- (b) Creation or transmission of a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
- (c) Creation or transmission of material which is offensive, obscene, criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the University, its clients or its staff;
- (d) Creation or transmission of confidential information about the University or any of its staff or clients (which you do not have express authority to disseminate);

- (e) Creation or transmission of any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for the member of staff or the University);
- (f) Creation or transmission of material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.
- (g) Creation or transmission of unsolicited bulk or marketing material to users of networked facilities or services, save where that material is embedded within, or is otherwise part of, a service to which the user or their User Organisation has chosen to subscribe.

Any such action will be addressed under the University's Conduct and other Substantial Reasons for Dismissal Ordinance and may result in summary dismissal.

Where there is a concern that these guidelines may have been breached the University will undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with its Conduct and other Substantial Reasons for Dismissal Ordinance. If it appears that a criminal act may have been committed, information may be provided to the Police in connection with the criminal investigations.

Relevant external legislation

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000
- Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Copyright, Design and Patterns Act 1988
- Copyright (Computer Programs) Regulations 1992
- The Terrorism Act 2000
- The Anti- Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001
- Obscene Publications Act 1994

Guidance for Staff on the use of social media

- Consider the use of disclaimers; some examples are available in Appendix 1.
- It is strongly advised that staff create separate personal and professional accounts.
- Do not upload, forward or post a link to anything that could be considered abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- Any member of staff who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform their line manager or their relevant HR Officer.
- Never disclose commercially sensitive, anti-competitive, private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with your line manager.
- Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the University. If you make a mistake in a contribution, be prompt in admitting and correcting it.
- You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools – be aware that what you publish will be public for many years.
- Do not escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations. Never contribute to a discussion if you are angry or upset, return to it later when you can contribute in a calm and rational manner.
- If you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, then don't publish. If in doubt, always discuss it with your line manager first.
- Do not discuss colleagues, competitors, customers or suppliers without their prior approval.
- Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.
- Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.
- Before your first contribution on any social media site, observe the activity on the site for a while before launching in yourself to get a feel for the style of contributions, the nature of the content and any 'unwritten' rules that other contributors might follow.
- Activity on social media websites during office hours should complement and/or support your role and should be used in moderation.
- If you notice any content posted on social media about the University (whether complimentary or critical) please report it to your line manager.
- It is acceptable to quote a small excerpt from an article, particularly for the purposes of commenting on it or criticising it. However, if you think an excerpt is too big, it probably is! Quote accurately, include references and when in doubt, link, don't copy.

Appendix 1:

Example disclaimers for social media sites:

- The views expressed here are my own and do not represent the official position of Swansea University
- Views expressed here are not those of Swansea University.
- Tweets my own
- Posts my own
- Posting in a personal capacity
- Views expressed are my own, except re-tweets