Title: Social Media Guidance
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This guidance sits alongside the University's Social Media Policy and has been produced to give University members a best practice guide in order to avoid common pitfalls and be aware of the potential implications of engaging in online conversations. The same standards of behaviour and conduct should be adhered to when airing views or interacting with other people on social media as would be applied in offline scenarios.

Professional responsibilities apply regardless of the medium being used and all social media communications that represent the University must comply with relevant University policies that address staff and student conduct, as below:

Acceptable Behaviour Policy (staff)

Rules of Conduct for Members of Staff

Student Agreement

Student Disciplinary Regulations

Information Security Policy

The line between professional and personal use of social media is not always clear and personal use can have an impact in the workplace and on the studies of others. It is therefore important that University members bear the following advice in mind when using social media:

- **Be clear**: Social media is a relatively informal method of communication, so the tone can be informal as long as it doesn't undermine the clarity of the post;

- **Be courteous**: As a University of Bristol member of staff or student, the University's commitment to acceptable behaviour by staff and students is understood. Some online communities can be volatile, tempting users to behave in ways they otherwise wouldn't. Don't forget that anything posted online can be seen by anybody, and it might not be possible to remove it;

- **Be secure**: Never share confidential or sensitive information - the University's Data Classification Scheme (PDF) will help in understanding the level of confidentiality of different types of information;

- **Be thoughtful**: If unsure whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material in your role as a University member, please refer to the University's Social Media Policy;

- **Be responsive**: Encourage comments and respond to those who have questions. Share relevant posts from others - followers like to see interaction with the online community. Social media works best when there is two-way communication, rather than just broadcasting information with no attempt to engage with feedback;

- **Be focused**: Ensure that items posted have relevance to the target audience; don't be tempted to post general news that isn't connected to your role;

- **Be honest**: If a mistake is made, don't try and delete it: followers may receive the message anyway. Instead, apologise and move on;

- **Be transparent**: If participating in or maintaining a social media account on behalf of the University, clearly state your role and goals. Discuss with your manager when you are empowered to respond directly to users and when approval may be required. Including a disclaimer ("*all views are my own*") can help clarify the status of a personally managed account, but does not give licence to use social media irresponsibly.

Roles and Responsibilities

There are clear lines of responsibility for social media use within the University.

The Web Editor Team and other members of the Public Relations Office are responsible for -

- Keeping up to date with digital developments through appropriate continuing professional development

- Producing guidance on social media

- Maintaining a directory of official University social media accounts

- Working with the Social Media Steering Group to act as a consultative group and raise standards of social media usage across the University

Staff are responsible for -

- Knowing the contents of the Social Media Policy and this guidance

- Ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this guidance and other relevant policies

- Informing the Web Editor Team where an institutional account is to be used

- Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content he/she has posted via the University account

Students are responsible for -

- Knowing the contents of the Social Media Policy and this guidance

- Ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this guidance and other relevant policies

Conduct when using social media

The University's Acceptable Behaviour Policy states:

"Unacceptable behaviour may involve actions, words or physical gestures that could reasonably be perceived to be the cause of another person's distress or discomfort. Unacceptable behaviour does not necessarily have to be face-to-face, and may take many forms such as written, telephone or e-mail communications or social media."

and the Rules of Conduct for Members of Staff (Ordinance 28) sets out the types of actions that could constitute misconduct – these are also applicable to the use of social media. Forms of student misconduct are detailed in the University's Student Disciplinary Regulations and are equally applicable to social media.

As stated in the Social Media Policy, the University has a [Policy and Procedure for Students on Reporting Allegations of Bullying and Harassment](#) and this also applies to any such behaviour that occurs when using social media.

Use of Third Party Materials

Sharing content such as images, photographs and video is very popular and easy to do via social media sites. While this may have value in an educational context, there is a risk of breaching the rights of individuals who own the different media e.g. images rights, patents, copyright in a blog, or rights associated with collaborative outputs. All members should ensure they have permission or other justification to share content in this way. There is an increased risk where content is commercially valuable, confidential and/or sensitive.

Further information and guidance regarding [copyright](#) is available from the Secretary's Office.

Personal data and privacy

Personal data (as defined in the Data Protection Act) is information about a particular living person and must not be shared via social media sites without consent. University members posting content or setting up accounts are responsible for ensuring appropriate informed consents are in place.

Further advice in relation to the [Data Protection Act](#) is available from the Secretary's Office.

Freedom of Information requests

University staff should be aware that a request for information made to an institutional social media account can be a valid, legal request under the Freedom of Information Act. Such requests must be responded to within 20 working days. If such a request is received, please forward to the Information Rights Officer in the Secretary's Office.

Further University guidance:

- University's social media homepage: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/connect
- Information on maintaining social media channels: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/style-guides/web/how/social
- University's Twitter guidelines: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/style-guides/web/how/social/twitter
- Mobile app guidelines: TBC
- Relevant IT Services courses: http://www.cbs-bris.org.uk/Portal/SubCats?cat=2

Externally produced guidance:

- EDINA Social Media Guidelines: http://edina.ac.uk/about/social_media/social_media_guidelines.pdf
- LSE Guidance on Twitter for academics and research: http://www.bris.ac.uk/web/guide/social-media/twitter-guide-lse.pdf
- Vitae Innovative Handbook of Social Media for Researchers and Supervisors (Open University): https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/reports/innovate-open-university-social-media-handbook-vitae-2012.pdf/view