Social Media Policy for Students

Executive Summary

The following policy aims to offer guidance and direction on student use of social media while studying at the University of Nottingham. While social media can offer many social, academic and professional benefits, there is an inherent risk attached to its use, and this policy can make individual students aware of the impact that misuse of social media can have on themselves, their fellow students, members of staff and the University's reputation. It advocates the use of social media, but encourages a cautious and considered approach, while outlining the standards of conduct expected from students.

The policy covers:

1. Freedom of speech/academic freedom
2. Social media use in teaching and learning
3. Social media use and personal life
4. Expected standards of behaviour when using social media
5. Cyber bullying via social media
6. Intellectual property concerns on social media
7. Use of the University's brand
8. Responsibilities in regards to social media
9. Monitoring
10. Data protection
11. Guidance on breaches to the policy and potential consequences

This policy is also cross referenced with various other University policies and procedures including:

- The Data Protection Policy
- The Code of Practice for users of the University Computing Facilities
- The Electronic Mail Usage Policy
- The Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics
- The Information Security Policy
- The Dignity at Nottingham Policy
- The Code of Discipline for Students
- The Student Complaint Procedure

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1. **Policy statement**

1.1 The University of Nottingham ("University") recognises and embraces the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring as a tool. It can be used to share news, information and successes, keep the University community up to date with important developments and promote healthy academic debate about controversial subjects and areas of research. There is, however, an inherent risk involved in using social media, in that, it is an instantaneous and far reaching form of communication and inappropriate use can impact upon staff, students and the reputation of the University.

1.2 This policy provides information for students as to the appropriate use of social media when connected to their status as a student of the University, or when directly or indirectly referencing the University.

2. **Scope of the policy**

2.1 For the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as any online interactive tool which encourages participation, interaction and exchanges. New forms of social media appear on a fairly regular basis and currently include Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat and Twitter, as well as blogs, discussion forums, instant messaging and any website which allows public commenting or posting.

2.2 This policy applies to all students and to any personal communications within a social media platform which directly or indirectly reference the University.

2.3 This policy applies to social media communications made at any time, whether privately or publicly, and from anywhere, including away from campus and on personal devices, whether to an individual, to a limited group or to the world.

2.4 The University acknowledges that students may use social media in their private lives and for personal communications. Personal communications are those made on, or from, a private social media account, such as a personal page on Facebook or a personal blog. In all cases where a private social media account is used which identifies the University, it must be made clear that the account holder is a student at the University to avoid the impression that views expressed on or through that social media account are made on behalf of the University.

3. **Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom**

3.1 Nothing in this policy is intended to have the effect of limiting either freedom of speech or academic freedom, subject to that freedom being exercised within the law.

4. **Using social media as a teaching and learning tool**

4.1 Where social media is used as a teaching and learning tool through official University websites and accounts, all students must read, understand and agree to the terms of use of the social media website and the University's terms and conditions relating to the use of social media in this context before accessing and posting content on social media in a teaching and learning context.

5. **Social media in your personal life**

5.1 As a student you should be aware of your association with and responsibilities to the University, and ensure that your profiles and related content are consistent with:

- the University's policies, including but not limited to, data protection, dignity, electronic mail usage and information security
- your Registration Agreement with the University
- how you would wish to present yourself – including to future employers

5.2 You must also be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything which you post online. Therefore, you should avoid posting anything online that:

- you would not wish to be in the public domain
- you would not be willing to say personally to the face of another individual

5.3   You should also be aware that any digital material that you post online could reach a wider audience than you would have expected or intended. Once digital content has been created and shared, you will have limited control over its permanence and audience.

6.   **Expected standards of behaviour**

6.1   Students are personally responsible for what they communicate on or through social media and they must adhere to the standards of behaviour set out in this policy and any related policies (see section 6.4).

6.2   Communications on social media must be respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Use of social media must not infringe on the rights, or privacy of other students, or staff and students must not make ill-considered comments or judgments about other students, staff or third parties.

6.3   Students must take particular care when communications through social media can identify them as a student of the University of Nottingham to members of staff, other students, or other individuals.

6.4   All use of social media must comply with the University's policies, including:

- The Code of Practice for users of the University Computing Facilities
- The Electronic Mail Usage Policy
- The Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics
- The Information Security Policy
- The Dignity at Nottingham Policy
- The Code of Discipline for Students
- The Student Regulations

6.5   The following non-exhaustive list may, according to the circumstances (and subject to 3.1), be considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be posted:

- confidential information (which may include research not yet in the public domain, information about fellow students or staff or personnel matters, non-public or not yet approved documents or information);
- details of complaints and/or legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving the University;
- personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission;
- comments posted using fake accounts or using another person's name without their consent;
- material, including images, that is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile towards any individual or entity;
- any other posting that constitutes a criminal offence;
- anything which may bring the University into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of colleagues, former colleagues, students, staff and those connected with the University

6.6   The University has well-established ways for students to raise any dissatisfaction or concerns that they may have such as the Student Complaint Procedure or the Dignity at Nottingham Policy. Concerns must be raised through such procedures, not on social media.

7.   **Cyber Bullying via social media sites**

7.1   The University will not accept any form of bullying or harassment by or of members of University staff or students.

7.2   The following examples illustrate the types of behaviour, displayed through social media communications, which the University considers to be forms of cyber bullying:

- maliciously spreading rumours, lies or gossip
- intimidating or aggressive behaviour
- offensive or threatening comments or content
- posting comments/photos etc. deliberately mocking an individual with the intent to harass or humiliate them

7.3   Cyber bullying may also take place via other means of electronic communication such as email, text or instant messaging.

7.4   Any student who is experiencing cyber bullying by another student or a member of University staff, will have the full support of the University. The Dignity at Nottingham Policy outlines the procedure to be followed, if a student feels they are being bullied, harassed or victimised.

8.   Intellectual Property

8.1   All students must ensure that they have permission to share any third party materials, including all images, photographs, text and videos, before uploading them to or linking to them via social media and, where sharing is permitted, should ensure that such materials or shared links are credited appropriately.

8.2   In addition, all students must check the terms and conditions of a social media account and/or website before uploading material to it; by posting material to social media accounts and/or websites, you may be releasing ownership rights and control of the content. For this reason, you must exercise caution in sharing all information.

8.3   The University is not responsible for, nor does it hold any ownership, of any content posted by its students, other than content posted by students using University accounts, or in the course of their duties, as a form of professional communication.

9.   Brand

9.1   The University's name, identity and logo may only be used in accordance with the University's brand guidelines.

10.   Roles and responsibilities

10.1   All students are responsible for:

- •   ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies;
- •   informing the relevant staff member(s) when an institutional account is to be used;
- •   seeking relevant authorisation for official posts prior to publication;
- •   regularly monitoring, updating and managing content he/she has posted;
- •   adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when the institution is named (see section 2.4 above); and
- •   reporting any incidents or concerns in line with section 13 below

11.   Monitoring

11.1   The University reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review within the law, without further notice, student activities using its IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings, to ensure that its rules are being complied with and such activities are for legitimate purposes.

11.2   The use of social media may be monitored by the University in accordance with its Information Security Policy and the Code of Practice for Users of the University Computing Facilities.

12.   Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000

12.1   The Data Protection Act 1998 ("DPA") applies to social media as it does in other contexts. You must ensure that all posts comply with the DPA. See the attached link for the University's Guidance on Data Protection and Data Protection Act Policy.

12.2   No personal information, including photographs and videos, should be shared on social media without the consent of the individual to whom it relates. Students should, therefore, never post other students' and/or staff and/or a third party's personal information without their consent.

12.3   The Freedom of Information Act 2000 may apply to posts and content that you have uploaded to official University websites, or any other website belonging to a public authority. As such, if a request for such information is received by the University (or other public authority), the content that you have posted may be disclosed.

13. **Incidents and response**

13.1   Where a breach of this policy is reported, the University will review the circumstances and decide on the most appropriate and proportionate course of action, which may include referring the matter to be dealt with under a different procedure.

13.2   Where students are in receipt of any content considered to be in breach of this policy, this should be reported to the University via their school, or hall of residence or to the Security Office.

14. **Consequences of a breach of this policy**

14.1   Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including exclusion/termination of registration.

14.2   Any disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Code of Discipline for Students.

14.3   Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of when the breach is committed and regardless of whether any University equipment or facilities are used in committing the breach.

14.5   Where conduct may be illegal criminal offence, the University may report the matter to the police. Beyond that, any member of staff, student or third party may pursue legal action against you, if they choose to do so.

15. **Reporting**

15.1   Any complaints received under this policy will be reported, on an anonymised basis where appropriate, to the relevant body within the University.

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