

Social Media Policy – FAQs

Q. Why have a Staff Social Media Policy?

Social media is very much part of our lives today, whilst there are huge benefits associated with it there are challenges and risks to. These could be risks to the University or staff, students or those connected to the University.

The Social Media Policy aims to educate staff on using social media so that they can make informed choices when posting on social media platforms. The policy in no way restricts staff members freedom of speech, this is covered with in the [Free Speech and Academic Freedom policy](#) and the staff social media policy makes reference to this policy.

Q. Why is personal social media usage included within the scope of the policy?

There is a risk that personal social media communications could bring the University into disrepute or compromise the safety of colleagues, former colleagues, students and those connected with the University. Therefore, the policy encompasses all social media communications which directly or indirectly reference or associate with the University, a staff member, student or officer of the University, regardless of whether social media communications are sent on personal devices, private accounts or outside of office hours.

Please note the aim of the policy is in no way intended to intrude on private lives or monitor personal social media presence.

Q. What is acceptable and what isn't when posting on personal accounts?

The key is if the post references (directly or indirectly) the University or associates with the University then the Policy will apply and you will need to ensure that the post is in line with the guidance. This includes any posts which could impact the safety of staff, students or officers of the University.

You should also consider if the post could damage the University's reputation. If the post is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile, regardless of if the University or a colleague is referenced within the post then the policy will apply.

For more information please see the examples at the end of this document or the full [Social Media Policy](#).

Q. Will the University be monitoring staff personal social media accounts?

The University does not routinely or systematically monitor personal social media accounts. However, we do have a duty to investigate any reports of breaches of the [Social Media Policy](#). This may include reviewing a staff members social media usage, personal or work accounts.

The nature of social media is that it is easy for your posts to reach others, any media posted online may reach a wider audience than intended or expected. Even if you later remove the post it may not be totally erased. As staff you need to be aware that when you post onto social media you lose effective control of that information.

Q. What happens if I make a mistake or post something breaching the policy?

Any reports of breaches to the Staff Social Media Policy will be determined on its own merits. Ultimately if the University has concerns about your post they may ask you to take it down, remind you of your responsibilities within the Social Media Policy, request you refresh yourself on the additional guidance such as the [social media podcast](#) or it could be investigated further under the disciplinary or dignity policy, depending on the circumstances.

Examples

Here are some fictional examples to help staff understand whether the social media post is covered under the policy and if it is appropriate under the policy. Where in doubt, staff should consider [the policy](#) when posting on personal on Social Media accounts.

There is also a useful [Social Media Podcast](#) made by Legal which gives you some real life examples.

Personal posts not covered under the policy:

The vast majority of the personal social media posts will not reference or associate with the University or a colleague and therefore won't bring the University into disrepute. The University are unconcerned with personal posts such as holiday or family photo's etc so won't be subject to the policy.

Personal posts where extra consideration of the policy is needed prior to posting:

Post	Explanation
A photo where you are wearing your Nottingham University staff jacket	Extra care should be taken when posting to social media where the post can be associated to the University, in this case the wearing of your staff uniform. Other images which could link you to the University could be your pass on display, using the University logo or a photo taken inside a University building.
A post from 10 years ago when you were a student at a different University	The University does not routinely check social media posts or historic posts, however, you should be aware that anything placed on social media will always be in the public domain and cannot be totally erased. A report of a breach of the policy relating to a historic post may be made and the University would need to investigate. Although you were not a member of staff at the time of posting the post would be covered if it damaged the university's reputation or compromises the safety of colleague.
A post containing details of malpractice within the workplace ("whistlebolowing")	The University has guidance and a procedure for whistleblowing, and we would encourage all staff to use the whistleblowing process rather than social media so that any disclosures of malpractice can be dealt with correctly and promptly.

Following or being friends with a member of a radical political party with views which may shock, offend or disturb.	The policy does not aim to restrict your right to free speech or police who your friends are on social media. However, you may want to review the Free Speech policy when publicly conversing with them online especially when views may harm individuals or bring the University into disrepute.
A post is made, with positive intent, which is misinterpreted due to cultural differences, language barriers or out of date information.	Always make sure you consider your audience or potential audience as posts can easily be shared. People can read posts and deliberately or unintentionally mis-interpret. Make sure any facts you are using are accurate and you have followed the Free Speech policy.
Posting or liking a post which disagrees with a work practise / policy or process	Regardless of if you mention the University or which media platform you use it is likely that your friends/family or followers will know that you work for the University. Make sure the post will not bring the University into disrepute. If your communication is contentious, there is a greater onus on you to exercise caution as it could damage a workplace relationship. For further guidance, please refer to the University's statement on free speech , our values and dignity policy . You may also want to speak to your line manager as there may be other routes available to you to voice any concerns.

Posts which breach the staff Social Media Policy:

Post	Explanation
A post threatening an individual or entity	Regardless of if this is on a personal account, a personal device or done outside of work hours this is not acceptable to post as it could bring the University into disrepute or compromise the safety of colleagues, former colleagues, students and officers of the University.
A post endorsing a particular product/service and referencing you use the product at work	This could be indirectly associated with the University and could be seen as the University endorsing the product/service which is in breach of the policy. To make this acceptable you could remove the reference to work and also add a disclaimer to make it clear that the account is private and are your own views to avoid the impression that the views expressed are made on behalf of the University.
Making or Re-sharing a malicious rumour about another staff member which could harass or humiliate them on Facebook.	Although you may not be the author of the original post, liking or re-sharing may be considered as cyber bullying and a breach of the University's Dignity Policy. This also applies to posts about people connected with the University or students. Regardless of if you mention the University or which media platform you use it is likely that your friends/family or followers will know that you work for the University.

