

Social Media Policy (Code of Practice)

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1. Scope and Purpose

1.1. Social media networks and platforms have become a significant and integral part of our day-to-day lives. These tools provide users with the opportunity to collaborate and share ideas with others holding similar interests or work-related focus. They also provide a very positive way in which to share or promote events and activities through participation in interactive discussions and by engaging with the wider community.

1.2. The College recognises and embraces the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring. The College encourages employees to engage, collaborate, promote and innovate through appropriate use of social media. In doing so, employees must be aware of the potential impact on both themselves and the College and the inherent risk involved in using social media. Social media is an instantaneous and widely accessible form of communication where personal and professional identities often merge. Inappropriate use can impact upon staff, students and the reputation of the College.

1.3. For this policy, social media is defined as a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes online social forums, anonymous apps, blogs, video-and image-sharing websites and similar facilities, including comments on published content.

1.4. The College expects employees to adhere to the key principles laid out in this policy. It provides clear guidance and advice on the use of social media sites for all employees by outlining staff responsibilities when accessing and using social media for both college and personal purposes whether during working hours or otherwise.

1.5. Breach of this policy may occur regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether our equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach. Any employee or Third Party suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with any investigation. Employees or Third Parties may be required to amend or remove material which is deemed to constitute a breach of this policy.

1.6. Any breach or failure to comply with a request to remove material by employees may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Any breach or failure to comply by a Third Party may result in the termination of any contract under or in connection with services they provide to us.

1.7. If your duties require you to speak on behalf of the College in a social media environment, you must liaise with the Marketing & Communications Manager.

2. Accountability

2.1. All staff are to be made aware of the policy. Where staff are working at premises other than College locations, they will be subject to the policy. The policy covers behaviour on all social media. Breaches of this policy will be taken seriously and may lead to disciplinary proceedings.

2.2. The Marketing & Communications Manager is responsible for ensuring the policy is regularly updated and reflects ongoing developments in social media.

2.3. There are clear lines of responsibility for safeguarding and digital safety within the College. Anyone working with students has a responsibility to record and report their concerns. Staff need to raise a new concern on the college safeguarding database, MyConcern where it will be dealt with by the Safeguarding Team. If their concerns relate to the conduct of a member of staff then this should be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Director of Human Resources or the Principal.

2.4. Students should be encouraged to share any incidents of inappropriate use and be assured that they will be taken seriously.

2.5. Staff have the responsibility for ensuring that they have up to date awareness of online safety matters and of the online safety policy.

2.6. The College is responsible for making sure students are aware of the dangers of social media. Guidance and information will be provided through the College induction and Personal and Social Development sessions. Online safety issues are embedded into all aspects of the curriculum and other College activities.

3. Process / Procedure

3.1. Acceptable use of College social media platforms

3.1.1. Staff are encouraged to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media where this is part of the normal duties of their work. Staff responsible for contributing to the College's social media activities should always be aware that they are representing the College.

3.1.2. The College authorises the use of some social media accounts for official purposes. The Marketing & Communications Manager must authorise the creation of a College social media presence for marketing or educational purposes in advance of any page or account being set up. The College Acceptable Use Policy will apply to all aspects of social media and website use. Details of the social media presence should be recorded and each curriculum / professional services area are required to have a record of the account along with passwords so that it is accessible if an employee leaves. Access should be revoked when an employee leaves. If a social media presence is inactive for a period of three months, the College reserves the right to remove it.

3.1.3. Where a social media account has been approved by the Marketing & Communications Manager, the creator/curator of the account remains responsible for all content posted and must monitor contributions to ensure that they are appropriate, will not cause offence and do not infringe any third party legal or moral rights. The College does not allow the following activity on its social media presences: circulating chain letters or spam, circulation of personal religious, equality & diversity or political content, or promotion of outside organisations unrelated to Wiltshire College & University Centre's business.

3.1.4. Posting any images or information about students is not acceptable unless it forms part of an educational activity and the students' consent has been given. In the case of students under the age of 18 the consent of the parent or guardian should be given. Should an individual ask for their image/video to be removed, their request should be actioned

immediately. All use of social media should have regard to the College's Data Protection policy.

3.1.5. Staff should not communicate with students' parents or guardians about the College business other than through official College communication channels.

3.2. Acceptable use of social media for personal use:

3.2.1. The college recognises that staff may wish to use social media channels as a way of communicating personally with the public and / or friends. The use of social media at work should be restricted to the terms of this policy. Staff are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites from the College's IT network. Staff should limit their use of social media in accordance with the Acceptable Use Policy.

3.2.2. Staff may wish to use their own personal devices to access social media while at work. Personal use of social media should not interfere with staff work duties and responsibilities. Excessive personal use of social media websites may be considered a disciplinary offence.

3.2.3. The College recognises that staff may use social media platforms for both personal and professional purposes. Where employees use personal social media for professional purposes they must:

- make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf
- write in the first person, and
- use a personal email address when communicating via social media.

The use of a Wiltshire College & University Centre email address is permissible only if establishing a professional profile, for example on a platform such as LinkedIn.

3.2.4. Employees who disclose their affiliation with the College on personal social media accounts must make it clear that their views are personal and do not represent those of the College. This can be done on Twitter, for example, by including a line in an individual's profile to the effect that 'all views are personal/my own'. Employees using personal social media for professional purposes should ensure that their profile and any content are consistent with the professional image they present to colleagues and that of the College.

3.2.5. Employees must avoid posting comments about sensitive College-related topics, such as our performance. Even if it is made clear that the views on such topics are your own and not those of the College; the comments could still damage our reputation.

3.2.6. Employees should respect confidential information shared at College (such as Ofsted results) before it reaches the public domain and not post related content on their social media sites.

3.2.7. Staff are asked to refrain from answering queries on social media from their personal accounts on, for example, the College Facebook page. Should they wish to respond to a comment/query, they should contact the Marketing team who will respond via the page admin account.

3.2.8. Staff must refer to the Communications and Social Media section of the Staff Code of Conduct for expectations around professional and personal boundaries with students and other staff members.

3.3. Use of specific platforms

3.3.1. LinkedIn and ‘business’ social media platforms: The College encourages staff to have a LinkedIn profile and declare that they work at the College. This platform – and any similar platform where it talks to businesses or individuals in a professional capacity – should be used to promote and encourage engagements regarding College news and activities. Posts should be in line with this policy and the College’s values. Concerns about posts or comments from another staff member, should be reported to the Director of Human Resources and the Marketing & Communications Manager. Where appropriate, disciplinary action may be taken.

3.3.2. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, SnapChat, WhatsApp and Twitter: Staff are allowed to have their own personal accounts in which they post personal views on professional related matters, subject to the guidance set out in this policy. Personal accounts must not have a ‘business style’ profile connecting them to the College. It is an employee’s responsibility to ensure that general users can tell that an account is personal and not an official College account. For example, account names or ‘handles’ should be personal and not mirror the College name e.g. @MeWiltsColl would not be acceptable. The College does not routinely monitor personal accounts but may investigate relevant concerns or complaints raised about the presentation or content of a personal account. The College may request changes to the presentation or content of an employee’s personal account and, if appropriate, disciplinary action may be taken.

3.3.3. Departmental promotional presence: As set out above, these are allowed with written permission from the Marketing & Communications Manager. Official social media and web content will be monitored by the Marketing department and any content deemed unsuitable should be removed. Should content not be populated on a regular basis, Marketing will request that they are closed, in line with our overall management of the College’s brand.

4. Communication with students

This section should be read in conjunction with the ‘Staff Code of Conduct’:

4.1. Staff must ensure that they establish safe and respectful online behaviours. Communication between students and staff, by whatever method, should take place with clear and explicit boundaries. This includes the use of technology such as mobile phones and text messages, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, webcams, websites, and blogs

4.2. Staff should not share any personal information with a student. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the student other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Staff should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. Staff should also be circumspect in their communications with students so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming.

4.3. Staff should not give personal contact details to students including e-mail, home, or

personal mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with the relevant Vice Principal and parent/carers.

4.4. Staff should only make contact with students for professional reasons and in accordance with College policy. All College platforms should only be used in accordance with the College policy. Staff should not use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to students.

4.5. Staff should ensure their personal and social networking sites are private and students are never listed as approved contacts. Staff should never use or access the social networking sites of students or accept 'friend' requests from students.

4.6. Once a student has completed their studies with the college and are therefore no longer a student, staff should not have any further contact with them, as their professional relationship has ceased.

5. Implementation

The College Senior Leadership Team and the Marketing & Communications Manager carry the ultimate responsibility in ensuring staff and students make appropriate use of official social media. However, all staff have the responsibility to uphold the policy and support the College in fulfilling its duties and commitments.

6. Associated Documents

- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff Disciplinary Policy
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure
- College Complaints Procedure
- Data Protection Policy

7. Equality Impact Assessment

Wiltshire College & University Centre strives to ensure equality of opportunity for all students, local people and the workforce. As an employer and a provider of education, the College aims to ensure that none are placed at a disadvantage as a result of its policies and procedures. It is intended that this policy and procedure is fair to all. Where any part could potentially lead to unequal outcomes, the policy then justifies why this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

8. Data Retention Statement

Wiltshire College & University Centre is committed to ensure the data it collects, and holds is in line with the ICO's guidance and meets data protection law. Where appropriate a Data

Protection Impact Assessment will be undertaken as and when policies are updated to ensure risks to the individual and college are considered and managed.

For further information please refer to Wiltshire College & University Centre's Data Protection Policy.

9. Policy Review and Ownership

This policy and procedure is owned by the Marketing & Communications Manager. It will be reviewed periodically in light of developments in employment legislation, good employment practice or audit; and to ensure it continues to be relevant and supports operational effectiveness. The document is managed by the Curriculum and Customer Support Team Leader