

Guidance on the Use of Social Media for Students

Introduction

The University recognises that social media is a part of everyday life for most students and that it can be an important and valuable means of communication. The University also recognises the entitlement of students to freedom of speech within the law

The University is mindful, however, that the use of social media can carry risks.

This guidance is intended to support and protect students in their use of social media including making students aware of the possible risks which may arise from the inappropriate, irresponsible or careless use of social media. It is intended to provide guidance to students to assist them in making the best use of social media in order to enhance their personal and academic lives and their student experience as a whole. It is also intended to make students aware of the potential consequences of the misuse of social media, both as a Brunel student and in their personal lives.

Social media refers to any form of media that encourages online social interaction between users and content creators and includes a variety of websites and other interactive or communal internet sites or technology platforms. These include socially-orientated (eg Facebook) and professionally-orientated (eg LinkedIn) networking sites, blogs and discussions forums, Twitter, instant messaging and other chat media and content sharing sites (eg Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Yik Yak), and any media site that allows public commenting or posting.

The Union of Brunel Students activity on social media is managed by UBS and is not covered by the University's policies.

It is the responsibility of all students to ensure that their use of social media is appropriate and responsible, and to make themselves familiar with this guidance. Please see point 11 below for related Guidelines, Policies and Senate Regulations.

The Union of Brunel Students has been consulted in the development of this policy.

Scope

This applies to students' use of social media and does not apply to staff use of social media. Staff are directed to the [University's Social Media Policy and Guidelines](#) which are designed for staff who use, or wish to use, social media within their role at the University.

Please note that, if you are using, whether as a student or a member of staff, social media on behalf of the University or any of its departments via an official University-approved channel, the [University's Social Media Policy and Guidelines](#) will apply to you.

Guidance

Personal Safety

1. Don't reveal information about you that could be used to steal your identity (eg date and place of birth), or that might reveal your actual whereabouts. Never share your passwords or log-on information with anyone, ever. Thoroughly check privacy settings and consider how much information you are sharing.

Consider the implications before posting

2. Social media is not anonymous, and the internet remembers everything. Postings of all types can typically be traced back to their authors, and information posted through social media is backed up, stored, replicated, linked and reposted continuously.
3. Think carefully about posting anything which you would not want a third party such as a future employer, institution or professional body to read or which you would not feel comfortable seeing on the front page of a newspaper or the BBC website, or which you would not wish to be heard saying in public.
4. If you are on a course that leads to professional accreditation, make sure you also familiarise yourself also with the relevant professional standards regarding the use of social media.
5. You should be respectful of and protect the privacy of others. Don't post or share photographs, content or other information if you do not have permission to do so. You need to consider intellectual property rights, copyright and ownership of data when using social media.
6. Inappropriate or inaccurate comments which are damaging to a person's reputation should be avoided as they could result in a claim for defamation, for which you could be personally responsible.
7. Bullying remains bullying even if it is not conducted in a public sphere. The same is true for cyber-bullying.

Be Respectful

8. As a student of the University, you are bound by the University's rules of Student Misconduct defined in [Senate Regulation 6.12](#). The scope of this conduct in Senate Regulation 6.12 may extend to comments and postings on social media made or facilitated by you.
9. Comments and other postings made or facilitated by you on social media may also reflect on the University and you should therefore when using social media remain mindful of avoiding communications that would or could defame the University or its staff or students or otherwise damage the reputation of the University. Students are referred to the guidance above at paragraph 3 about things to consider before posting statements on social media sites. It is also important to consider the possible effect that you may have on the recipient(s) of your postings on social media, as well as thinking about the wider audience who may also see your posting.

10. In particular, you should avoid making, posting, or facilitating statements, photos or videos that :
- a. Discriminate against a person based on his or her race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or beliefs or national origin;
 - b. threaten, harass, intimidate, abuse, bully or victimise;
 - c. make sexual innuendos;
 - d. are offensive, false, inaccurate or unjustified;
 - e. may cause undue distress or provoke anti-social or violent behaviour;
 - f. contravene any codes of conduct or standards relevant to your course or any placement forming part of your programme of study;
 - g. constitute a criminal offence;
 - h. may breach the University's policies referred to at paragraph 14 below).

This is not an exhaustive list, but merely examples of what may constitute a breach of the rules of Student Misconduct in certain circumstances.

11. Students whose use of social media is suspected by the University of constituting misconduct as defined by SR6.12 may be subject to investigation or other action (including disciplinary action) by the University under relevant procedures such as Senate Regulation 6. In appropriate cases, this may result in the student's temporary or permanent exclusion from the University under its published procedures. In determining whether a student has breached the rules of Student Misconduct, the University will take into account all of the circumstances, balanced against the entitlement of all students to freedom of speech within the law. For example, if the content of the posting is true and accurate, but expressed in an offensive, intimidating or threatening fashion, this is more likely to be considered a breach of the Rules of Student Misconduct than if the same posting was politely and respectfully expressed. In considering such matters, the impact of the posting on the recipient(s) will usually be taken into account.

12. Students are reminded that:
- a. (where on professional programmes of study) misuse of social media may breach professional codes of conduct;
 - b. commission of a criminal offence in connection with the use of social media may result in a criminal record;
 - c. breach of professional codes of conduct and commission of a criminal offence may directly affect students' career prospects.

13. The Brunel logo and crest may only be used with the express permission of the University. Contact the [University's Branding Team](#) for more details.

Links to other Policies, Rules and Regulations

14. All existing Brunel University Policies, Rules and Regulations concerning students extend to students' use of social media. These include codes of conduct, professional course policies, corporate branding policies, Data Protection, acceptable use of IT and disciplinary procedures. The following are of particular importance, but this list is not exhaustive:

- [Rules of Student Misconduct \(Senate Regulation 6\)](#)
- [Dignity at Study Policy and Guideline](#)
- [Equality and Diversity Policies](#)
- [Acceptable Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Electronic Mail Policy](#)
- [Network Account Policy](#)
- [Electronic Mail Archive Compliance Account Policy](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Film and Photography Guidelines](#)
- [Fitness to Study \(Senate Regulation 11\)](#)
- [Academic Appeals \(Senate Regulation 12\)](#)
- [Expect Respect Guidance](#)

Contacts

15. If you encounter misuse of social media, such as posting of inappropriate content, please report it to diversebrunel@Brunel.ac.uk. You can also get further information about cyber bullying and reporting misuse of social media to external agencies at <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Bullying/Pages/Cyberbullying.aspx>. In addition, you may wish to see the help pages of the social media channel in question or use the built in 'Report' tools.
16. If you have any queries about this guidance please contact HOSS@Brunel.ac.uk