

STUDENT SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

**Purpose and Context**

This policy has been compiled to help students understand the reputational, legal and

ethical implications of social media usage and what happens when it is misused,

intentionally or otherwise. It seeks to protect students, the University and its staff from

the misuse of social media and clarify where and how existing University policies and

guidelines apply to social media.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all students of the University of Chichester who engage in

online conversations or share content in the context of a social network. It extends to the use of social media in a personal capacity, where this impact the University, its students, staff, or the wider community. Furthermore, it outlines the responsibilities of students who use social media associated with the University or Students’ Union (including but limited to sports clubs and societies).

The policy does not cover social media usage by university staff, which is covered in a

separate policy, nor does it apply to the use of social media in research.

**1. Introduction**

##### Effective use of social media can bring significant benefits to individuals and the University. These include opportunities to stay connected and communicate with others, promote success stories, develop national and international reach and learnings.

##### Social media channels can spread messages across the globe quickly and to a range of audiences at little or no cost and, unlike other traditional media channels, they can provide instant feedback from audiences.

##### Along with these benefits come the risks inherent in managing channels that are dynamic and unlimited in scale. These include the risk of reputational damage arising from misuse by staff, students or third parties, threats to the security of sensitive or confidential information, exposure to malware and the potential to jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations.

##### **1.4** **The purpose of this policy is:**

###### **1.4.1** to minimise the risks to the University associated with the use of social media;

###### **1.4.2** to provide students and applicants with a clear articulation of the University’s expectations regarding the use of social media;

###### **1.4.3** to make students aware of the potential impact social media could have on themselves, the University, and others;

###### 1.4.6 to provide guidance on etiquette and best practice when using social media platforms.

**2. Definitions**

**2.1** This policy deals with all forms of social media, and for the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as any online interactive tool that encourages participation, interaction and exchanges. New forms of social media are created on a regular basis; examples of current platforms include Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Discord, Campus Connect and Reddit, as well as blogs, discussion forums, instant messaging and any website that allows public commenting or posting. These examples are purely for reference and the university is not affiliated with any social media brand or company. Examples of platforms will be updated frequently but this policy applies to all social media use whether expressly listed in this paragraph or not.

**2.2** It also extends to the use of the chat function in all conferencing software, whether these are used in a scheduled teaching and learning session or for communication between students when collaborating at other times. The recording function in MS Teams means that the contents of a ‘chat’ remain available after the session has closed for all participants to view. (The University’s retention policy in place for Teams is to delete messages after 12 months. This applies to one-to-one and group conversations (Chats), Teams Channels and Teams Meetings).

**2.3** This policy is intended to cover the use of all, and any social media platforms used by students of the University. For the purpose of the policy we split student social media accounts into four distinct types of social media account:

###### **2.3.1 University of Chichester Account** – used by representatives of the University to communicate messages from a departmental or corporate perspective;

###### **2.3.2** **Professional Personal Account** – used by an individual for professional purposes, who is identifiable as a student of the University of Chichester through the content of their posts or their profile’s biographical information; and

###### **2.3.3** **Private Personal Account** – used by an individual primarily for non-university / personal activity.

**2.3.4** **Student Led Account** – these are accounts used for the purposes of a club, society or group of students normally formed through the Students Union.

**2.4** For the avoidance of doubt, this policy does not cover the University of Chichester Students’ Union activity on their corporate social media, but does however cover accounts that fall within the categories outlined above.

#### 3. Professional Use of Social Media (A University of Chichester Account or Professional Personal Account)

**3.1** If you use social media in a professional capacity, either through a University of Chichester Account or through a Professional Personal Account (as influencer or ambassador of the University), you must make sure that your communications do not:

###### **3.1.1** bring the University into disrepute, for example, by making defamatory or disparaging comments about individuals, other organisations or groups, or the University, or by posting inappropriate content or using inappropriate language;

###### **3.1.2** breach confidentiality or data protection requirements, for example, revealing confidential information owned by the University, or the personal data of any individual who has not given appropriate consent for their data to be published;

###### **3.1.3** Breach copyright or other intellectual property rights, for example, using someone else’s content without their permission or by breaking the terms of any permission granted;

###### **3.1.4** do anything that may be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual or group, for example, making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or age; using social media to bully another individual; or posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or linking to such content; or

###### **3.1.5** breach the University’s policies or the terms of service of the social network.

**4. Social media in an emergency and escalating concerns**

##### **4.1** Social media provides essential information channels during an emergency and it is vital that the information provided is timely, consistent, and accurate. All communications on social media from the University in an emergency will be issued via the central university social media accounts (@chiuni/universityofchichester). To minimise the risk of issuing conflicting and/or incorrect information, it is vital that all other corporate social media accounts do not post information or updates during a live incident and await further direction from the University’s Serious Incident Management Team.

If you are unsure, please contact [marketing@chi.ac.uk](mailto:marketing@chi.ac.uk)

**4.2** If a social media account appears to have been a victim of unauthorised access, or a post from a corporate or professional personal account attracts a number of negative comments, staff should flag this with the marketing team in a timely manner, who can record the incident and comments and advise on how best to respond. Contact [marketing@chi.ac.uk](mailto:marketing@chi.ac.uk). Where this could potentially result in a personal data breach this must also be reported to IT and the DPO Office in accordance with our breach management processes.

#### 5. Private Use of Social Media

#### 5.1 The University recognises that students will make use of social media in a private capacity, through Private Personal Accounts. The University does not, as a matter of policy, interfere with the private lives of its students, however, as with any private behaviour, if you use social media in a manner that negatively affects the University, for example as set out in section 3.0 above, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

**5.2** If you disclose an affiliation with the University on your profile or in any social media postings, you must state that your views do not necessarily represent those of the University. However, be mindful that you will still be perceived as a representative of the University, and such a disclaimer would not prevent appropriate disciplinary action. The University may request the removal of content if it is deemed to pose a risk to the reputation of the University or to that of one of its staff/students.

**5.3** Respect should always be shown for other people’s privacy and feelings. Care should be taken to avoid language which may be deemed as offensive to others. For example, you should not:

* say defamatory things about people or organisations;
* say anything that is or could be construed as discriminatory;
* engage in any criminal activity;
* tell lies or mislead people; or
* post inappropriate pictures or videos.

**5.4** The University does not actively monitor personal social media accounts but it is likely that any posts that mention or are relevant to the University will appear on the marketing team’s media monitoring software, which is used to effectively run the corporate social and press channels.

#### 5.5 Personal social media accounts do not need to follow university brand guidelines. To avoid confusion, the University prohibits the use of its logos; which includes the university crest and the university’s copyrighted name, on social media when used for non-business reasons.

#### 5.6 If you make use of social media, you are encouraged to familiarise yourself with privacy settings for each social media platform and share only at a level that you consider to be appropriate.

#### 5.7 Official complaints made by students regarding social media usage should be made using the official complaints channels of either the University or the Students’ Union, depending on the context of the complaint. [Marketing@chi.ac.uk](mailto:Marketing@chi.ac.uk) or [studentsunion@chi.ac.uk](mailto:studentsunion@chi.ac.uk)

#### 6. Breach of this policy

##### **6.1** A breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

**6.2** Students may be required to remove posts which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action (For more information please visit the website and see [the disciplinary code and procedures document](https://www.chi.ac.uk/app/uploads/2022/04/Disciplinary-code-and-proceedures.pdf).

##### If you become aware of a breach of this policy, please contact your academic advisor or email: marketing@chi.ac.uk.

#### 7. Responsibility

##### **7.1** Specific responsibilities for social media across the University are as follows:

###### Reputational risk created by social media – Chief Marketing and Communications Officer.

###### Press enquiries – Press and Public Engagement Manager

###### Social media development – Digital Content Producer

###### Internet usage monitoring infrastructure – Director of Information Learning and Technology.

###### Disciplinary proceedings relating to social media – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)

**8. Relevant policies**

#### 8.1 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. All of our policies can be found online at [www.chi.ac.uk/about-us/policies-and-statements](http://www.chi.ac.uk/about-us/policies-and-statements). Relevant policies include:

###### **8.1.1** the Electronic Information Security Policy;

###### **8.1.2** the University Privacy Standard and Privacy Notices;

###### **8.1.3** the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Statement;

###### **8.1.4** the Freedom of Speech Code of Conduct;

###### **8.1.5** the Safeguarding and Prevent Duty Policy; and

**8.1.6** the Equality and Diversity Policy.

**Annex A: Best practice for managing Professional Use of Social Media (A University of Chichester Account or Professional Personal Account)**

A.8. Be respectful: Anything you post on your site/group/channel reflects directly on you, your area of work, and the University as a whole. Be professional and respectful at all times and do not engage in arguments or extensive debates. While it can be appropriate to put right any incorrect assertions, or provide extra detail to counteract any criticism, try to do so in a way that will be construed as friendly, rather than combative or over-sensitive.

A.9. Be friendly: Developing a tone of voice that is friendly and relatively informal is essential – you are engaging in a social forum, so behaving in a social manner is going to be far more effective than talking in a dry, verbose or overly formal way, though using slang, ‘text speak’, or sentence fragments is generally not appropriate. You should also adopt a consistent voice across sites, if you are using more than one channel to represent your area.

A.10. Timeliness is everything: Social media allows us to share information almost instantly, which means audiences often expect information to appear straight away. While that’s not always feasible, be prepared to provide relevant information promptly in response to new developments, announcements or emergencies. A short amount of accurate information delivered at the time can be more valuable than a lengthy report the following day.

A.11. Be accurate: As a Higher Education institution spelling, punctuation and grammar are critical, so take time to write and check your posts for clarity of message and errors before publishing them. Drafting your message in a Word document and using the spell check facility is often a good idea.

A.12. Your content will live forever: Think before you post and remember that anything you share on social media is not private. It can and will be shared, stored and spread globally, even when deleted many online tools will still save the post and people could screenshot anything online. Don’t post anything online that could reflect negatively on the University or that you wouldn’t feel comfortable seeing on the front page of a newspaper or the BBC website for example. Ensure you have the informed consent of any individuals who appear in photographs you wish to publish (for more on consent see section 2.1.2 of this policy).

A.13. Think about frequency: If you post too often you risk annoying your followers. As a broad rule of thumb, you should make fewer posts on Facebook (approx. three per week) than on Twitter (which can handle tens of posts a day if the content is interesting). Also, ensure that all content you post or share is likely to be relevant to a large section of your audience.

A.14. Share, share, share: Follow other relevant University social media accounts and repost/share/retweet any messages that are relevant to your own audiences. This is a great way of joining up our social media channels and strengthening the sense of community.

A.15. Focus on engagement, not numbers: Rather than aiming to get as many followers as possible it is better to prioritise increased engagement with the followers you do have. Fifty students who regularly interact with your channel are more valuable than 500 who click the like/follow button and never come back.

**Annex B: Current primary University social media accounts (Updated April 2023)**

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/UniversityofChichester](http://www.facebook.com/UniversityofChichester)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/chiuni](http://www.twitter.com/chiuni)

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/universityofchichester/>

Tik Tok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@universityofchichester>

YouTube [www.youtube.com/universityofchichester](http://www.youtube.com/universityofchichester)

##### LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/university-of-chichester](http://www.linkedin.com/company/university-of-chichester)

**Annex B: Best practice for managing Private Personal social media accounts**

**B.1** Individuals are personally responsible for their communications through social

media.

**B.2.** Communicate thoughtfully**:** Consider carefully whom you add as friends or followers

**B.3.** Think before posting: Privacy does not exist on social media. Think carefully about posting when you are commenting on global movements or controversial topics if you have stated you represent the University on your profile. Remember that what you post on your personal page could impact you professionally.

**B.4.** Ensure that your profile settings are set to private if you do not want anyone seeing everything that you post. There are different privacy settings on each platform and most channels are public by default, so ensure that you have manually adjusted these settings.

**B.5** Social media should not be used to verbally abuse or intimidate staff, students

**B.6** Before posting pictures, videos or details of another person you should obtain

their consent.

**B.7** Students should not post communications which might be misconstrued in a

way that could damage the University’s goodwill and academic reputation,

even indirectly.

**B.8** The University prohibits using its logo(s) in on social network profile pictures, back ground images or cover photos, without the permission of the Head of Marketing. It also prohibits the use of its name or derivatives thereof within the account name or remit statement of a social network account, by individuals or organisations without the permission of the Head of Marketing.

**B.9** Remember that what you publish may be readily available to the public (including the University, prospective future employers, the media and social acquaintances) for a long time. Keep this in mind when posting content. Inappropriate posting of content can damage your career potential, since potential (and current) employers often screen social media sites when considering applications.

**B.10** If you are approached by a media contact about content on a site relating to

the University of Chichester you should contact the Head of Marketing or the Press and Public Engagement Manager.

Any queries please speak to the marketing team in the first instance [marketing@chi.ac.uk](mailto:marketing@chi.ac.uk)

**Annex C: Best practice for managing Student Led social media accounts**

Individuals are personally responsible for their communications through social

media.

**C.1.** Communicate thoughtfully**:** Consider carefully whom you add as friends or followers

**C.2.**  Think before posting: Privacy does not exist on social media. Think carefully about posting when you are commenting on global movements or controversial topics if you have stated

your group/ channel represents a part of the university or the Students’ Union. Remember that what you post on your account could impact you both academically and professionally.

**C.3.** Ensure that your profile settings are set to private if you do not want anyone seeing what you are posting. There are different privacy settings on each platform and most channels are public by default, so ensure that you have manually adjusted these settings.

**C.4.** Social media should not be used to verbally abuse or intimidate staff, students or other student led channels

**C.5.** Before posting pictures, videos or details of another person you should obtain

their consent.

**C.6.** Students should not post communications which might be misconstrued in a

way that could damage the University’s goodwill and academic reputation,

even indirectly.

**C.7.** Remember that what you publish may be readily available to the public (including the University, prospective future employers, the media and social acquaintances) for a long time. Keep this in mind when posting content. Inappropriate posting of content can damage your career potential, since potential (and current) employers often screen social media sites when considering applications.

**C.8.** If you are approached by a media contact about content on a site relating to

the University of Chichester you should contact the Head of Marketing or the Press and Public Engagement Manager.

Any queries please speak to the marketing team in the first instance [marketing@chi.ac.uk](mailto:marketing@chi.ac.uk)