Student Social Media Policy

Policy Owner and Department
Policy Author and Department – Public Relations & Internal Communications

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Queries relating to this document should be directed to the Department of Public Relations & Internal Communications on 028 9036 66178.

Please find a full list of associated policies, definitions and clarifications at the bottom of this document.

This policy can also be made available on request, in alternative formats including Braille, audio format and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.

Introduction And Background

Ulster University recognises that social media channels provide unique opportunities to participate in discussions and share information on topics of interest to students. Through social media activity and engagement on services such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube and Instagram, students can enrich learning and study, as well as personal lives and career opportunities.

This policy is specifically for Ulster University students who are using (or considering using) social media in any capacity. It has been compiled to help students understand the reputational, legal and ethical implications of engaging in online communication of this nature – and what can happen if social media is misused, whether intentionally or otherwise.

The policy offers advice and guidance to students on appropriate use of social media – and the potential consequences of misuse. It applies to all students of Ulster University.

We love hearing stories from and learning about our Ulster University community. Please be aware that we, Ulster University, reserves the right to copy, use, distribute and disclose without compensation to you any content, comments or quotes that you either post on our social media pages or tag us in (@ulsteruni). This includes any ideas or information relating to Ulster University which we might find via hashtags including but not limited to, #ulsteruni, #ulsteruniversity, #UUB, #UUBC, #UUJ, #UUM, #WeAreUU, #WeBelieveInBrave, #WeMindYourMood, #WeBuildCareers and #WeMakeItHappen.

Policy Statement

This policy encourages Ulster University students to use social media in a responsible way, taking advantage of the opportunities for discussion, information sharing and enhanced learning without risking personal security, and protecting current or future career prospects as well as the reputation of the University.

The policy aims to:

- encourage the responsible use of social media by Ulster University students;
- raise awareness of relevant UK legislation and regulations, and relevant Ulster University policies;
- outline the responsibilities for individuals using social media for Ulster University purposes;
- highlight the potential risks of using social media for personal use;
- promote effective and innovative use of social media as an integral part of Ulster University's activities;
- provide clear guidelines on how breaches of this policy will be addressed;
- to protect the reputation of Ulster University, its students, staff and partner organisations.

General Policy Principles

It is the responsibility of students to read and act in accordance with the principles of this policy. It is also the responsibility of students to read and act in accordance with the rules and guidelines set out by individual social media, social networking and website hosting companies and providers.

Social media must only be used in ways that do not breach University policies, statutes, regulations or ordinances. For example, students should not use social media in ways that breach the University's Dignity at Work and Study (Bullying and Harassment) Policy, the University's Charter, Statutes and Ordinances relating to student discipline, the University's Acceptable Use of IT Code of Practice, the Equal Opportunities Policy or the General Data Protection Regulation Policy.

Students should be aware that breaches of these University regulations may affect progression to the next level of study, and may affect suitability to gain professional accreditation. Professional bodies and employers make no distinction between using social media in a personal capacity and as an Ulster University student. Students have been known to have had placement offers rescinded in light of information posted on personal social media sites.

Ultimately, inappropriate postings / use of social media may affect ability to find work once graduated.

Responsibilities Of Students In Personal Online/Social Media Presence

Students are personally responsible for content they post or share via social media. It is essential that students respect the privacy and the feelings of others at all times, and understand that the content posted via social media is a permanent record which is shared instantaneously with a potential global audience.

Students must also be aware that many of our prospective students are minors (younger than 18 years of age) and that interactions with these persons should always be approached with caution, ensuring that the content of conversations / responses is suitable for under 18s.

Students must not use Ulster University's logo on personal social media sites or other websites.

A student's personal online or social media profile may reference Ulster University as their place of study, but it must be made be clear that comments / posts / shares made by the account holder are made in a personal capacity only. Students should include a simple and visible disclaimer for clarity such as: "The views I express are mine alone and do not reflect the views of my place of study".

Any communication by an Ulster University student made in a personal capacity through social media must not:

- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassing of, any individual e.g., making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;

- contain images or other content that is sexually explicit or illegal;

- bring discredit to the University in any way e.g., by insulting fellow students or other individuals; making/sharing defamatory or offensive comments about individuals or groups; liking/posting/sharing/linking to images or other content that is inappropriate, sexually explicit or illegal;

- breach copyright: e.g., by using someone else's images or content without permission, or by failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce. This means, for example, not posting articles or pictures scanned from newspapers or magazines. posting such content may result in legal action by the copyright owner;

- breach confidentiality: for example, by revealing confidential information owned by the University; posting confidential information about an individual, business or other organisation; posting contact details, pictures or personal details of other students or members of staff or members of the public without their prior permission. Students must seek prior advice from their course director or the Students' Union if unclear about what information might be deemed confidential.

Further information on the responsibilities of students in relation to data protection is contained under point 7 of the University's General Data Protection Regulations Policy, available at:

https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/286008/GDPR-Policy-clean-final-version-14-Jan-20-.pdf

If there is any doubt about the accuracy of information to be shared on a social media network or site, then students should refrain from posting, commenting, liking or sharing this information.

Additional Responsibilities Of Students Using An Official Uusu And Ulster University Online/Social Media Presence

The Students' Union logo should be used on official Students' Union online channels which are aligned and associated with Ulster University Students' Union. This includes Sports Union clubs, UUSU societies, volunteer groups or social media networks established by course student representatives.

The University logo can only be used on official University social media and other online channels that are identified as official corporate Ulster University accounts.

Students should be aware that they are representing UUSU and the University when posting comments, liking, sharing or responding to comments made by others on social media.

Should students need to establish an official UUSU or University social media presence, they should contact the University's Public Relations & Internal Communications office on 028 9036 6178 in the first instance for guidance and training. This will ensure the channel is recorded appropriately, and that it adheres to naming, brand and visual identity guidelines/protocols.

Any student who already maintains an official University social media channel and wishes to close it down should contact the Public Relations & Internal Communications office on 028

9036 66178 for guidance in how to manage this process.

Monitoring Of Social Media

Ulster University will monitor official University social media channels and we reserve the right to request the removal of any content deemed to be in breach of this policy.

Ulster University monitors references to the University online and we will act where necessary to protect our reputation.

Ulster University will refer to social media sites when investigating breaches or complaints under this policy.

Ulster University will refer to social media sites when investigating a student who we feel may be vulnerable under this policy. Vulnerabilities include but are not limited to, drug use and mental illness.

Breaches Of The Policy

Ulster University has the right to request the removal of content from an official social media account and/or from a personal account if it is deemed that the account or its content breaches this policy.

If a student acts in a manner which breaches this policy, they will be liable to disciplinary action under the University's Student Discipline Procedure, as detailed within the University's Charter, Statutes and Ordinances (Ordinance XLI) available at: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/about/governance/compliance/student-discipline. Depending on the content posted / shared / liked or favourited, students may also be subject to the University's Dignity at Work and Study (Bullying and Harassment) Policy and Procedures available at:

https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/121162/DWSP-2017.pdf

Where a student is alleged to have breached this policy and the student disciplinary procedure has been engaged, Ulster University Students' Union may offer support and representation to any student facing disciplinary action.

Complaints

Complaints concerning the misuse of social media by Ulster University students will be dealt with using the procedures set out in the Student Disciplinary procedure.

Complaints about cyberbullying will be dealt with using the procedures set out in the University's Dignity at Work and Study (Bullying & Harassment) Policy & Procedures.

Complaints about social media misuse or cyberbullying by an Ulster University student should be directed to the Public Relations & Internal Communication's team on 028 9036 6178 in the first instance. Complaints will be logged and referred to the appropriate University authorities for action.

Where a complaint involves threatening or potentially criminal online social media behaviour, the matter will also be reported to the PSNI for investigation.

This will include, but is not limited to, complaints in which a student is alleged to have:

- posted online photos or videos of people in a place where he or she would expect privacy;
- posted online photos or videos of people taking illegal drugs;
- threatened violence;
- accessed or shared child pornography;
- sent sexually explicit images or photos;
- engaged in stalking;
- committed a hate crime.

Implementation

Ulster University will ensure that this policy and the appropriate procedures are implemented, disseminated and kept under regular evaluation and review, in line with the University's procedures for developing policies. The policy will be reviewed two years from the date of its implementation.

Related Policies

The policy does not sit in isolation and students need to be aware that a number of other relevant policies and guidelines exist which are relevant to conduct while using social media.

Students need to be aware of and abide by all relevant policies and guidelines during their time at Ulster University.

This policy seeks compliance with the following legislation:

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).

Data Protection Act (2018).

Protection from Harassment (NI) Order (1997).

Health & Safety at Work (NI) Order (1997) Human Rights Act 1998.

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000.

Communications Act 2003.

Computer Misuse Act 1990.

Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988.

Copyright (Computer Programs) Regulations 1992.

The Terrorism Act 2000.

The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001.

Official Secrets Acts 1911-1989.

Obscene Publications Act 1994.

Malicious Communications (NI) Order 1988.

Electronic Communications Act 2000

The following University policies are relevant to this policy:

If you cannot access these links due to technical difficulties, simply visit the University Secretary's Policy page on our website www.ulster.ac.uk where all relevant policies are available.

Acceptable Use of Information Technology Code of Practice -

https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/335806/User-Account-and-Access-Policy.pdf

Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations -
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/about/governance/ordinance-and-regulations

Copyright Policy -
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/357504/Copyright-Policy-2019_20_1Ulster.pdf

Dignity at Work and Study (Bullying & Harassment) Policy and Procedures
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/121162/DWSP-2017.pdf

Equal Opportunities Policy -
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/122902/EO-Policy-2016.pdf

GDPR Policy - https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/286008/GDPR-Policy-clean-final-version-14-Jan-20-.pdf

IT Monitoring Policy - https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/335799/IT-Monitoring-Policy.pdf

Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults -
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/291737/Protection-of-Children-and-Vulnerable-Adults-2018.pdf

Student Charter - http://www.ulster.ac.uk/studentcharter/

Student Discipline Ordinance & Procedure -
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/382587/Student-Discipline.pdf

User Account & Access Policy -
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/335806/User-Account-and-Access-Policy.pdf

Definitions And Clarification

Bullying is defined, as unfair treatment, excessive criticism, or persistent nit-picking, intimidating, aggressive or undermining behaviour, which makes the recipient(s), feel upset, humiliated, threatened or vulnerable and undermines their self-confidence and integrity.

Cyberbullying is the use of the Internet and related technologies to harm or harass other people, in a deliberate, repeated, and hostile manner.

Harassment is unwanted conduct based on the grounds of religious belief, political opinion, sex (including gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status), race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or age which has the purpose or effect of violating that person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating

or offensive environment for that person. Differences of attitude, background or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another; nevertheless, this does not make it acceptable. It is the purpose or effect of the behaviour rather than the motive that must be considered.

Social Media refers to online channels of communication that allow users to interact in the public domain by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interest. It includes, but is not limited to, social networking services such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, WhatsApp, wikis and blogs.

Useful Links

Section on social media in Ulster University's Student Guide
http://www.ulster.ac.uk/guide/useful-info/policies/social-media-guidelines/

Ulster University's Rules for dealing with cyberbullying
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/peopleandculture/employee-benefits/equality-diversity/dignity-at-work/cyber-bullying

Ulster University's site containing information about dignity at work and study
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/peopleandculture/employee-benefits/equality-diversity/dignity-at-work

Google's guide to online safety and security
http://www.google.co.uk/goodtoknow/online-safety/

Student site containing a wealth of information about online safety
http://www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/student-safety/

Examples of social media use that have resulted in legal action
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20782257

For any additional questions or support, reach out to socialmedia@ulster.ac.uk

Ulster University may change the Social Media Policy (in whole or part) at any time and without prior notification.

Please send us a private message through any of our social media channels if you have any suggestions, we love to hear and share great ideas.

This document is also available on the University's website at:

https://www.ulster.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/marketing-and-communications

http://www.ulster.ac.uk/secretary/policyimplementation/policies/secretary.html

https://www.ulster.ac.uk/student/policies