



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

Social Media Policy

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1. Purpose

This guidance aims to provide managers and individual employees with information concerning the use of, or the development of, any social media application, and to help them get the best out of the tools available whilst maintaining a safe professional environment and protecting themselves, as well as the University.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with other associated policies i.e. the University's Acceptable Use Policy, Data Protection Policy, Code of Ethics and other relevant Employment Policies and Procedures.

Failure to follow these guidelines is likely to result in a breach of the University Acceptable Use Policy, Data Protection Policy, or Code of Ethics, which may lead to disciplinary action.

2. Definition of Social Media

For the purposes of this guidance, social media is a type of interactive digitally based online medium that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data and information in a public forum. This includes e-mail, online social forums, blogs, video and image sharing websites, private instant messaging platforms and similar applications.

Staff should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Staff should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use whether that is for personal use or related to any form of University work.

3. Introduction

3.1 The University of Lincoln is committed to making the best use of all available technology and innovation to improve the way we do business. This includes using all reasonable and cost-effective means to improve the way we communicate, reach out and interact with the different communities we serve.

3.2 Social media encourages the sharing of ideas, discussion, participation and interactions between anyone in the world through online forums. This opens up new and exciting opportunities for the University of Lincoln and its employees however, equally there are potential issues and risks to consider when using such platforms. Employees of the University should be constantly conscious of the risks of social media when using it in either a professional or personal manner. Social media is generally public and staff should be aware that whatever they write or post on social media is not private but is accessible to everyone in the world and will be published and accessible for perpetuity - it cannot be removed once it has been shared by other users and may reach mass audiences of many thousands or even millions of people. Potential employers can review applicant's social media sites.

3.3 Social media platforms also allow for the exchange of information through private messaging apps and functionalities. These platforms are not exempt from any law

and therefore are still subject to the same guidelines as any other communications media, such as Competition & Markets Authority legislation and Freedom of Information requests.

3.4 New forms of social media are frequently being introduced into the online world however major social media platforms include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Messenger, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Flickr, The Student Room, Weibo, and blogs and discussion forums.

3.5 The University of Lincoln expects all staff to follow this guidance to help avoid major mistakes which could result in a breach of ethics and / or reputational and legal damage. In terms of legal damage, staff need to be mindful that this is not restricted or indeed always applicable solely to a corporate body i.e. University. Staff as individuals are subject and accountable to the law. This is why compliance with this Guidance should also help avoid misuse / abuse of well-functioning social media relationships. It is important that we manage any potential risks through a common-sense approach and framework, as well as proactively monitoring the development of such applications.

3.6 This Guidance should be read in conjunction with the information and support that can be provided by the Communications, Marketing and Development Web Team, webteam@lincoln.ac.uk, on the use of social media. Staff can also access additional information and training through either the HR Portal page and or via the University Organisational Development page.

3.7 This Guidance is in no way intended to contradict the principles of the University's Statement on Academic Freedom, but aims to provide helpful guidance to enable staff to protect themselves online.

4. Use of Social Media

4.1 Staff may contribute to the University's social media activities, for example by writing for blogs, managing a social media account, however when creating new University social media accounts staff should advise the central Communications, Marketing & Development Web Team on webteam@lincoln.ac.uk.

4.2 Employees must be aware at all times that, while contributing to the University's social media activities or communicating on social media and making any reference to the University, as an employer or in any other context that they are representing and representatives of the University of Lincoln.

4.3 Employees should use the same safeguards, sound judgment and discernment as they would with any other form of communication about the University of Lincoln in the public sphere. It remains a formal communications tool with the potential to reach millions of people. Staff who use social media as part of their job must adhere to the following safeguards.

- Making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the University

- Obtaining permission from a Manager before embarking on a public campaign using social media
- Obtaining consent when using images of others
- Maintain the authenticity of the corporate logo i.e. crest and brand
- Getting a colleague to check the content before it is published

Advice and assistance on these matters can be given by the University's social media team by contacting webteam@lincoln.ac.uk.

4.4 The University recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the University, employees must be aware that they can damage the University if they are recognised as being one of our employees.

4.5 The University recognises that it is natural for its staff sometimes to want to discuss their work on social media. The employee's online profile (for example, the name of a blog or a Twitter name) may contain the University's name, but staff should ensure that they keep discussions focused to the area in which the employee works.

4.6 If employees do discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which the University operates), it must include on their profile or elsewhere a statement that "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."

4.7 In all cases, employees should consider content on their individual accounts, which may be considered to be inappropriate, such as derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age or; using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee or student of the University); posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content. Staff are expected to be sensible and demonstrate reasonable discernment in not being offensive or bringing the University into disrepute.

4.8 Should a member of staff be advised by the University that their posts are offensive or inappropriate, they will be expected to remove inappropriate content at once.

4.9 Any communications that employees make in a professional or personal capacity through social media must not:

4.9.1 Breach confidentiality, for example by:

- Revealing confidential information related to intellectual property in breach of the Intellectual Property Policy, or information owned by the University
- Giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a student, colleague or partner contract) or organisation (such as a partner institution)

- Discussing the University's internal workings (such as agreements that it is reaching with partner institutions / customers or its future business plans that have not been communicated to the public)

Information about competition and markets authority guidance, data protection and GDPR is available on the portal.

4.9.2 Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:

- Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age
- Using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee or student of the University)
- Posting images that are discriminatory or offensive, or links to such content

4.9.3 Bring the University into disrepute, for example by:

- Criticising or arguing with students, customers, colleagues, partners or competitors
- Making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups
- Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content

4.9.4 Breaching copyright, for example by:

- Using someone else's images or written content without permission
- Failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something

5. Use of Social Media in Recruitment Process

5.1 The HR department and recruiting managers should conduct searches, either themselves or through a third party, on social media when these are directly relevant to the applicant's skills or claims that they have made in the recruitment process. For instance:

- A prospective employee might claim that they have used social media in their previous job (for example, as a publicity tool)
- A prospective employee's social media use may be directly relevant to a claim made in their application (for example, if they run a blog based around a hobby mentioned in their CV or a skill in which they claim to be proficient)

5.2 Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the Recruitment and Selection Policy and associated procedures and guidelines.

6. Appendix

Document	Available at
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Acceptable Use Policy	https://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/abouttheuniversity/governance/universitypolicies/informationandcommunicationtechnologyictpol/
Data Protection Policy	https://ps.lincoln.ac.uk/services/registry/Secretariat/IC/Data_Protection/SitePages/Home.aspx
Code of Ethics	https://secretariat.sites.lincoln.ac.uk/academic-policies-2/
Employment Policies and Procedures	https://ps.lincoln.ac.uk/services/hr/Employment/SitePages/Home.aspx
Statement on Academic Freedom	https://secretariat.sites.lincoln.ac.uk/academic-policies-2/
Intellectual Property Policy	https://secretariat.sites.lincoln.ac.uk/academic-policies-2/
Recruitment and Selection Policy	https://ps.lincoln.ac.uk/services/hr/Employment/Recruitment%20and%20Selection/SitePages/Home.aspx

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