

GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Introduction

Social media sites include all internet presence including blogs, Facebook, websites, Twitter and any other application which allows opinions to be presented for public consumption.

Teesside University recognises that social media tools such as blogs, micro-blogs, online forums, content-sharing websites and other digital channels established for online interaction and connection are increasingly used to:

- Promote Teesside University to colleagues, students, customers, the media and other stakeholders; and/or
- Share opinions and participate in online dialogue.
- Support learning and teaching.

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish standards and expectations regarding any Teesside University related use of social media.

From the perspective of Teesside University the use of social media by can be split into two categories:

- a. As a corporate communication channel of the University (aspects of University website, University Facebook, Wordpress and Twitter accounts etc). These outlets are authorised to carry the University logo and access is controlled and regulated.
- b. Personal social media accounts which are not authorised to carry the University logo and as such are not official communication channels of the University. These are mostly commonly in use by individuals in their personal life.

The guidelines that follow are helpful to usage in either of the above categories.

2. General guidance

2.1. Ethical conduct. Always respect the dignity and privacy of colleagues, students, customers, other stakeholders, and other organisations. Harassing, intimidating, offensive, abusive, threatening, menacing or hostile content communicated through blogs and other online communications is prohibited. Data related to others, including, but not limited to, personal details and pictures, should only be posted with that party's consent.

2.2. Accurate information. Never knowingly communicate information that is untrue or deceptive. Communications shall be based on current, accurate, complete and relevant data. Teesside University will take all reasonable steps to assure the validity of information communicated via any channel but it is your responsibility to

assure accuracy in the first instance. Anecdotes and opinions should be identified as such.

2.3. Protection of confidential information. It is never appropriate to share, post, publish, or otherwise disclose confidential information unless you are explicitly authorised to do so.

2.4. Accountability. Be careful what you share, publish, post, or otherwise disclose. You are personally responsible for what you share and should remember that anything you post may be in the public domain for an indefinite period of time (even if you attempt to modify or delete it). Try to ensure your online communications reflect Teesside University's ethos of openness, responsiveness, integrity and optimism.

3. Guidance: Corporate Social Media

3.1. The use of corporate social media outlets is controlled and requires authorisation. If you have such access you MUST ensure that the access details (passwords etc) are very carefully controlled. Most social media is cloud based and not directly under the control of the University. Should you lose or allow the login details to fall into the hands of a 3rd party immense damage could be done. Passwords should always conform to the University's security requirements for internal staff accounts.

3.2. Be careful not to present your personal views on a medium designed to speak for the whole University.

3.3. Care should be taken to ensure that text is typo free and grammar and syntax are acceptable.

3.4. There are instances where a third party may disagree with a statement made on Social Media. If there is doubt as to the correctness of a statement it is generally safer to remove it. In considering that you may wish to think of a means to ensure that 'copy' could be updated or if necessary removed in the absence of the author. Be that yourself or someone you manage who has been authorised to use a corporate social media outlet.

4. Guidance: Personal Social Media

4.1. Blogging and other online dialogue are far-reaching forms of communication; distribution is meant for a public audience. Information purported to be published by members of the University community, contained within blogs and other websites, could have a negative impact on the University and our stakeholders, with potential legal implications. Unless you have been given permission by your Dean or Director to speak on behalf of the University via social media, you should never claim to be speaking on behalf of the University or expressing an official position in such communications.

4.2. If on your personal internet presence, you refer to your employment at Teesside University you should inform your manager. You should also include a simple and visible disclaimer such as: 'These are my personal views and not those of Teesside

University'. Be mindful of how the information you post may be perceived by others inside or outside the University community. The smart option for sites like Facebook, which ask for employment details as a means of matching friends, is to avoid indicating your place of employment at all. It is a sad fact that anyone can take offence at something you post and if there is a link back to your employer it merely provides another avenue to pursue the grievance.

- 4.3. Do not use social media to post comments or other content (photos, sound clips or video) relating to staff or students at the University without their consent.
- 4.4. Do not reveal confidential information relating to the University via social media.
- 4.5. If you are contacted by a third party (press etc) about a social media posting you have made that relates to the University or your role at the University, please contact your line manager before responding.
- 4.6. Check before you 'Like': 'Liking' or sharing a post or a message on social media is a very visible action. Here are four things to think about before you 'like' or share something:
 - Who posted it in the first place? Do you know and trust the person who created the post? If it was posted by organisation or a group, what do you know about them? Can you do a google search on them?
 - What is the main message contained in the post? Does it blame, scapegoat or ridicule anyone? Does it label anyone, or call anyone names? Would you say it out loud in front of your friends or your colleagues?
 - Do you want to be associated with that message? If you 'like' or share something on social media, hundreds or even thousands of people will be able to see that you did that. Do you want people to associate you with this particular post or message?
 - What will you gain by liking or sharing the post? The way that you use social media can affect the way that other people see you.

Please 'like' and share with care. Many undesirable organisations create highly emotive posts which many would be tempted to 'like', it may not be obvious you are actually supporting a post from a political or activist group. It is useful to note that social networks have 'report' functions, so that you can report posts if you want to.

- 4.7. Please be aware of the University's IT Regulations particularly section 4 "*Your use of IT facilities shall be in a manner that is consistent with your role*". Unless otherwise authorised it is generally not appropriate for staff to be updating or accessing their personal social media accounts during working hours.

Paul Lambert, IT Director.