Social media

Guidance for students

July 2018

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

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Social media guidance for students

Introduction

This guidance should be read alongside the <u>Policy on student use and misuse of social media</u>. There is also a Policy on employee use and misuse of social media for University staff members and accompanying social media guidelines for employees.

The University of Winchester promotes a creative and engaging learning environment for all students, and we recognise the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring, as well as its risks and hazards.

Most of what you should and shouldn't be posting on social media is common sense, however this guidance aims to support students' positive engagement with social media, and reminds students to consider the potential consequences before posting.

Three Principles for social media use

The University has three principles to help guide your use of social media:

Principle 1 - We believe social media is a positive tool for engagement and used in the right way can help you during your studies and in life.

Principle 2 - You are expected to operate within both the law and University policy in your interactions with social media – as you would in other aspects of life at University.

Principle 3 - You must take care not to act in a discriminating, harassing, bullying or untruthful way, which harms other people and, because of your association with the University, could also damage the University's reputation.

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Personal safety

Personal information

Never share personal information or passwords online. Keep all your personal details, including your address, private. If you're moving into student accommodation, we understand you may want to find out who your new housemates are. However, if you post online, everyone else can see your new address too. At university you might receive a lot of new friend requests - only accept people on social media who you know and trust.

Don't rely on privacy settings

It's wise to protect yourself by adjusting your privacy settings. However, don't always rely on these. Even if you only share with family and friends, someone can screenshot your post without your knowledge or consent, and share it to a wider audience beyond your control. If you don't want something to be seen by a wider audience, don't post it online.

Be wary of social check-ins

Checking-in online or enabling your location to be visible can make you vulnerable, especially if you're by yourself. Prioritise your personal welfare, and think before you check in.

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Communicating with University staff on social media

The *Policy on student use and misuse of social media* outlines that you are not obligated in any way to be a user of any social media platforms as a student at the University. You are not required to use social media as part of your studies, or for interactions with University employees.

Any direct online communication between members of staff and students should be through Canvas or University email, and not through social media.

University employees will use Canvas to communicate course information to you, including events or interesting articles. Social media, if used at all, will only be used to relay information that has already been posted on the formal channels of Canvas, University email and the University Intranet.
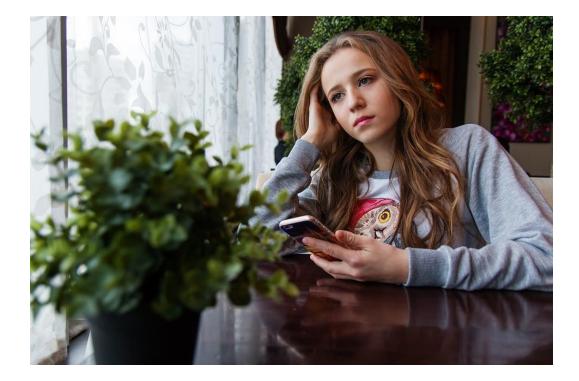
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Posting online

Consider and respect others

Don't post anything which could cause someone to feel bullied, or that could be seen as offensive, defamatory, or harmful in any way. Before posting, consider the consequences of your actions. Three questions to ask yourself are:

1. Is this how I would act in person?

2. Would I be happy with anyone else seeing this?

3. Would I want to be on the receiving end of this?

Beware of shaming pages such as 'Spotted in…' groups, as these can be deliberately malicious. The University takes bulling and harassment seriously. See section 6 of the policy for what to do if you are being bullied online and to familiarise yourself with what could happen if you are found to be misusing social media to bully or harass others. Not sure if you should post something or not? If in doubt, don't post.

Also we advise making sure what you're saying is true and genuine. Misreporting can be embarrassing, and you don't want to be the one to spread fake news. Healthy debates can be great, but sometimes it's best to avoid having confrontational discussions online; don't be a keyboard warrior.

Before posting about someone else, our advice is to check with them first. You may think that an embarrassing photo of your friend is share-worthy, but they may not want it posted online, and it could put you both in an awkward situation.

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Posting online (pt 2)

Focus on your future

Employers are increasingly using social media to look up potential job candidates. Think before you post: is this something you would be happy for your future boss to see? Your online footprint is permanent; once shared, posts and pictures can be difficult – or impossible – to completely remove online.

Consider your reputation and how you wish to present yourself publically. If it's not something you'd be comfortable telling a stranger, it's probably best not to post it online.

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Responsible use of social media

Inappropriate use

Inappropriate use of social media can have significant ramifications. Threatening or discriminatory behaviour is taken very seriously by the authorities and could lead to prosecution. False statements that cause 'serious harm' can lead to forced damages payments under the Defamation Act 2013. To find out more, take a look at *The Guardian* article Social media law: an essential guide.

Referencing the University

The University monitors all mentions and references to the University of Winchester online, and may take action if social media use is inappropriate. Your posts may be personal to you, but be aware that your actions online can impact not only your reputation but that of the University if you are known to be a student at the University of Winchester.

Report inappropriate behaviour online

The majority of social media sites have systems to report inappropriate posts. It's usually best not to engage with trolls who try to goad reactions. You can unfollow, unfriend and/or block anyone who you no longer wish to have contact with on social media.

If you have concerns about inappropriate behaviour from another individual at the University, speak to your personal tutor, Head of Department or Student Services who will advise you on what you can do.

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