



# Social Media Policy, Guidelines and Best Practice

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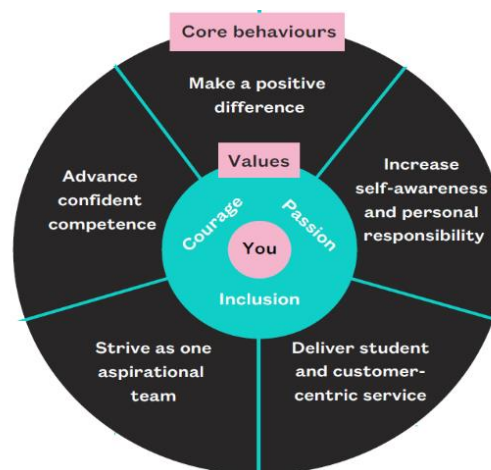
# 1 Purpose and Scope

## 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The University of East London embraces the responsible use of social media to communicate and build relationships with prospective and current students, alumni, employees, parents and community members. The University recognises the open and ever-changing purposes of social media, which can blend, at times, personal and professional roles.

## 1.2 The University's Values and Behaviours

1.2.1 The University's values and behaviours are part of the University's identity and how this is represented in all forms of engagement is critical to this identity. This also should be reflected across how we engage publicly in our social media channels. The Values and behaviours are:





## 1.3 Content

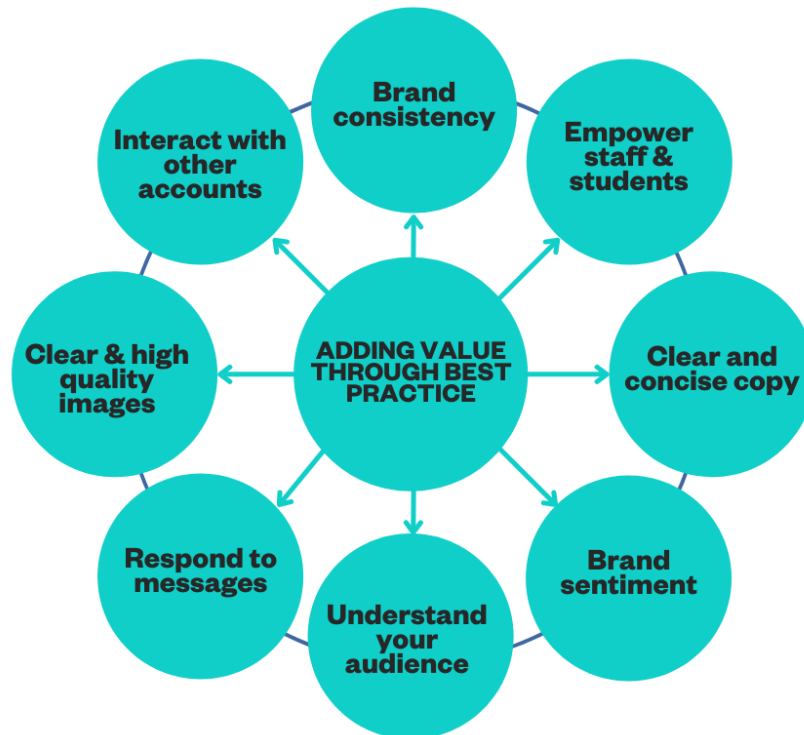
1.3.1 This document contains three distinct areas to ensure how we represent our values and behaviours identified above:

1. **Best practice** – Adding value to the organisation, staff and students through best practice of social media
2. **University policy** – Staff and students are guided on how to behave appropriately on social media. The policy aims to provide enough information so appropriate behaviour is adhered to. If broken, users could face criminal or disciplinary action.
3. **Brand guidelines and accessibility guidelines** – Hierarchy of branding and sub-branding that need to be adhered to, not breaking copyright and following legal guidelines for accessibility.

## 1.4 Best Practice

1.4.1 The University of East London recognises and embraces the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring, not only for the institution but for the individual. Adding value through best practice and empowering our staff and students on social media is key to achieving best practice across the university.

1.4.2 At an Institutional level it will provide authenticity, positive brand sentiment and reach to convey core messaging in a safe and appropriate manner. To the individual, empowerment and recognition can be achieved by leveraging the UEL reputation and being part of the brand identity. **For a more in depth look into best practice see point 4 in the document**



## 2 Policy Statement

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 For the purposes of this policy, social media is defined as a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other; or to share messaging in a public forum.

2.1.2 It can be used to share news, information and successes, keep staff, students, alumni, press and other key stakeholders up to date with important developments and promote healthy academic debate about controversial subjects and areas of research.



2.1.3 There is, however, an inherent risk involved in using social media, in that, it is an instantaneous and far-reaching form of communication and inappropriate use can impact upon staff, students and the reputation of the University.

2.1.4 The Social Media Channel Manager will be responsible for the policy. Anything that is deemed as inappropriate, offensive or breaking laws should be directed to the Social Media Channel Manager as an initial point of contact. These will then be escalated to the appropriate channel Legal, HR or Head of Student Services.

2.1.5 The Social Media Content Manager will be responsible for content. If the policy is broken, users could face criminal or disciplinary action.



## 2.2 Freedom of Speech

**2.2.1** The University fully endorses and supports the intentions of the governments Higher Education's (Freedom of Speech) Bill which promotes freedom of speech on campus and legal duties will also be extended to students' unions:

2.2.2 Social media platforms have revolutionised our ability to connect across historic social, political and geographic divides. Where previously gatekeepers mitigated and negotiated access to mass media platforms, today potentially anyone – and any content – can reach millions of individuals in an instant.



- 2.2.3 It is our basic human right to express ourselves freely and to take part in rigorous debate. Whilst we are legally allowed to articulate views which others may disagree, these viewpoints must not crossover into hate speech or inciting violence.
- 2.2.4 However, it is important to distinguish between lawful, if offensive, views on one hand and unacceptable acts of abuse, intimidation, and violence on the other.
- 2.2.5 Higher education providers and students' unions must ensure that they comply with their legal duties on discrimination and harassment as well as their legal duties to protect freedom of speech.
- 2.2.6 The same laws, professional expectations and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media and other University constituents apply online as they do in the real world. This policy and best practice for engagement are designed for employees and students participating in social media on behalf of the University.
- 2.2.7 This policy applies to all social media postings on an institutional site or as a representative of the University on a non-institutional site. The Social Media Channel Manager reserves the right to remove user-generated content or comments in accordance with this policy for the safety of students and staff.

**For full guidance on policies and procedures, please refer to Section 7.2 in the policy.**

## **2.3 Keep it legal - posting on behalf of the University East London**

- 2.3.1 Social media accounts created on behalf of the University of East London are the sole property of the University. If a university department, club or organisation account is linked to an individual person, that person relinquishes all rights to the account, unless they work with the Social Media Channel Manager to transfer ownership of the account.
- 2.3.2 All proposals to create social media accounts must be submitted to the Social Media Channel Manager for approval prior to creation and inclusion in the social media directory. There needs to be a strong business case for creating a new social channel, this includes having resource to run the account along with a clear content plan.
- 2.3.3 All social media accounts created on behalf of the university must be linked to a department's administrative email account or an employee's work e-mail account. All social media accounts and their passwords must be given to the central social media team, this is to ensure access can be gained if the user leaves the university.
- 2.3.4 An employee may never use a personal email account to establish a university-related social media account. More than one university





employee must have administrative access to the account. Administrative access will be terminated upon the employee's separation from employment, reassignment to another job or for disciplinary reasons.

2.3.5 The [business case form](#) must be completed and sent to [SMCM@uel.ac.uk](mailto:SMCM@uel.ac.uk)

## 2.4 Official Accounts are Prohibited from

2.4.1 To protect this service from abuse, comments must satisfy some basic conditions.

2.4.2 In order for this dialogue to comply with our policy any posts, comments or links to external websites should not include:

- Posting content that breaks the law including libel, illegal activity, inciting hatred on the basis of race, religion, gender, nationality or sexuality or other personal characteristics, terrorism and defamation.
- The University's social media channels may not be used to promote or advocate terrorism or radicalisation. We do not permit posting, downloading or sharing of content to, on or from our social media channels that promotes or advocates terrorist acts, or incites violence, celebrates terrorist act, aims to recruit individuals or encourages others to promote recruitment to terrorist organisation, or promotes or advocates raising money for anyone listed on the UK Home Office list of prohibited groups and individuals.
- The University uses social media management tools to monitor our social media channels and the University's social media team will



immediately remove any such content. Posting, downloading or sharing such content by students or employees of the University is a disciplinary offence and the University will take action. Once investigated, if there are no mitigating circumstances, the individual will be referred to the UK authorities, where appropriate.

- Posting or commenting on anything related to legal matters, ongoing investigations or litigation
- Using the University brand or name to endorse any view, product, private business, cause or political candidate
- Representing personal opinions as University endorsed views or policies
- Be respectful – comments should not be malicious or offensive in nature and should not constitute a personal attack on a person's character.
- Don't reveal personal details, such as private addresses, phone numbers, email addresses or other online contact details.
- The Social Media Channel Manager reserves the right to review and remove inappropriate content.
- Defamation - the action of damaging the good reputation of someone; slander or libel.
- Catfishing (or impersonating) a colleague or third party is unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with University [Disciplinary Procedures](#).



## 2.5 Staff using their own accounts

- 2.5.1 When using a personal social media account, staff must not make statements that purport to represent UEL. Staff members using personal accounts that clearly identify the University should use a disclaimer stating that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the University.
- 2.5.2 A suggested wording is:
- “The views expressed here are my own and do not reflect those of the University of East London.”*
- 2.5.3 Even when posting a personal account, social media should not be used to verbally abuse or intimidate work colleagues or students, or other users. Respect should be shown at all times for other people’s privacy and feelings.
- 2.5.4 Staff members should assume that everything they post online will be public and permanent, regardless of the privacy settings that are applied. Even when the University has not been explicitly mentioned, it can often be all too easy to make the connection between an individual and their role in the University.
- 2.5.5 Staff should be aware that social media content may easily become available to the public, including University colleagues, students and the media, and that inappropriate use could damage their reputation as well as the University’s brand reputation. Content that brings the University into



disrepute or that breaches the standards of conduct required of staff, may be addressed through the University's [Disciplinary Procedures](#).

- 2.5.6 In addition, the posting of private, sensitive or confidential information, either accidentally or intentionally, may lead to a breach of information security which could carry significant, legal and financial penalties for staff and the university.
- 2.5.7 Consent must be obtained in advance of posting pictures with people in it that relate to the University. If it is a student, they can give permission through their Student Portal account.
- 2.5.8 Staff must not post or share content that incites hatred; promotes or advocates terrorism or radicalisation; or that discriminates on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political or religious belief; or which contravenes UEL's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) and [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#).
- 2.5.9 If you feel attacked or harassed by a member of staff or student (via social media), please raise it with the Social Media Channel Manager [smcm@uel.ac.uk](mailto:smcm@uel.ac.uk) who will then liaise with HR or student complaints to investigate grievances [Complaints Policy Students Complaint Procedure Staff](#)
- 2.5.10 If you need more information regarding Internal Communications, please contact [communications@uel.ac.uk](mailto:communications@uel.ac.uk)



## 2.6 Student policy relating to the use of Social Media

- 2.6.1 Students that post on behalf of the university should refer to [sections 2.4](#) and [2.5](#) of the policy.
- 2.6.2 Students who have a social media presence which refers to the university please refer to the [Student Code of Conduct](#) or [Non-Academic Misconduct Policy](#).
- 2.6.3 If a student is attending or working for the university then refer to [sections 2.4](#) and [2.5](#). Respect should be shown at all times for other people's privacy and feelings.
- 2.6.4 Students should not post or share content that discriminates on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political or religious belief or which contravenes UEL's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).
- 2.6.5 In addition, the posting of private, sensitive or confidential information either accidentally or intentionally may lead to a breach of information security which could carry significant, legal and financial penalties for the student and university.
- 2.6.6 If posting pictures with people in it that relate to the University (staff members), consent must be obtained.



2.6.7 If you feel attacked or harassed by a member of staff (via social media), please report through the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) or [Staff Grievance Procedure](#).

2.6.8 If you feel attacked or harassed by a student (via social media), you can report the incident directly to the Student Conduct Team via the Report and Support tool available to all students and staff of the University of East London. Additionally, incidents can be reported by emailing the Student Conduct Team directly at [studentconduct@uel.ac.uk](mailto:studentconduct@uel.ac.uk) or by reporting an incident to a staff member, who can then get in contact with the Student Conduct Team.

## 2.7 Think about your Future

2.7.1 Individuals are personally responsible for their communications through social media. 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.

2.7.2 Keep this in mind when posting content. Inappropriate posting of content can damage your career potential, as potential (and current) employers often screen social media sites when considering applications.

## 2.8 Abuse/Harassment

2.8.1 What to do if you receive abuse or harassment through your personal or work social media accounts?



- Screenshot the abuse as evidence then refer to the complaints policy and procedure.
- You can also contact the Social Media Channel Manager on [SMCM@uel.ac.uk](mailto:SMCM@uel.ac.uk)

**Email address for reporting abuse** - [Student Complaints Procedure](#) or [Staff Grievance Procedure](#).

**Email address** for contacting the social media team regarding **best practice** - [socialmedia@uel.ac.uk](mailto:socialmedia@uel.ac.uk)

**Email address for safeguarding** [safeguarding@uel.ac.uk](mailto:safeguarding@uel.ac.uk)

2.8.2 It is imperative after any incident, the team leading on it, reports back to communications and social media. This is to ensure we have up-to-date knowledge of all outcomes.

## 2.9 Crisis Communications

2.9.1 All crisis and/or emergency communications will be generated by the University crisis communication team and will be posted on the main UEL University Facebook and Twitter feeds with links to additional information.

2.9.2 Departmental social media sites may never independently post emergency information without the co-ordination of the Social Media Channel Manager.



## **2.10 Monitoring of our Social Media accounts**

- 2.10.1 Our social media accounts (both main and school accounts) are carefully monitored on a daily basis by our social media team.
- 2.10.2 If a situation arises where a comment is deemed inappropriate, discussions will take part between the relevant teams and a course of action will be applied.
- 2.10.3 There are multiple social media accounts that don't fall under the main and school accounts. The use of the super user group (see page 10) is to ensure that the Social Media Channel Manager has an oversight of these accounts and will work effectively with the owners to ensure monitoring is overseen and build knowledge of escalation processes.



# Policy Owner: Position and Department

Version	Effective From	Amendments	Equality Analysis	Stakeholder Consultation (e.g. Disability & Dyslexia Team, Policy Review Group)	Approval Date	Author
Final	03/10/2022	Previous social media policy had a full review and was updated to provide clarity and ensure compliance.	03/10/2022	UEB UMB E&E VC&P Academic Board	03/10/2022	

Add a row each time the policy is updated (includes both minor and major updates)

This Policy is reviewed by [Choose an item.](#) and approved by [Choose an item.](#)