



Social Media Policy

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Document Author:	Kerry Williams
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Policy statement

Brunel College recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to:

- participate in interactive discussions
- engage with the wider community
- share information on particular topics

This also includes using a wide variety of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and wikis. However, employees' use of social media can pose risks to Brunel College's reputation, confidential and proprietary information. It can also jeopardise Brunel College's compliance with legal obligations.

This policy aims to minimise these risks, avoid loss of productivity and ensure that Brunel College's IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate business purposes. Brunel College expects employees to adhere to this policy, which outlines staff responsibilities when accessing and using social media websites.

Applicability

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels including staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

Third parties who have access to the Brunel College's electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

Scope and purpose

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, which includes:

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Wikipedia
- blogs
- all other social networking sites and internet posting forums

Brunel College has a separate policy regarding acceptable use of IT systems, and all staff should ensure that they read and understand that policy, as well as this social media policy.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both Brunel College and personal purposes, whether during working hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using its IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- encourage good practice
- protect Brunel College, its staff and clients

- clarify where and how existing policies and procedures apply to social media
- promote effective and innovative use of social media as part of Brunel College activities

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether Brunel College equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach.

Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with Brunel College's investigation. Brunel College also reserves the right to suspend internet access where it deems it necessary during an investigation. When considering any potential breach of this policy, Brunel College will consider the context of any social media posting.

Staff may be required to remove internet postings that are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy.

Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Responsible use of social media

The following sections of the policy provide staff with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

Protecting Brunel College's business reputation

Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about:

- Brunel College
- its clients
- its employees

Staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Brunel College business reputation, even indirectly.

Unless expressly authorised to speak on behalf of the Brunel College either using a Brunel College social media account or otherwise, staff should make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf. Staff should write in the first person and use a personal email address when communicating through social media.

Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate on social media. Staff should remember that what they publish might be available to be read by a wider audience for a long time. This audience includes the Brunel College itself, future employers and social acquaintances. Staff should keep this in mind before posting content.

If employees disclose their position as an employee of Brunel College, either using a Brunel College social media account or otherwise, they must also state that their views do not represent those of their employer. This does not include staff authorised to speak on behalf of the Brunel College. For example, employees could state, "the views in this post

do not represent the views of my employer". Employees should also ensure that their profile and any content they post are consistent with the professional image they present to clients and colleagues.

Staff should avoid posting comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as Brunel College performance. Even if staff make it clear that their views on such topics do not represent those of Brunel College their comments could still damage it's reputation or breach confidentiality obligations.

If staff are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should not make any communication until discussed with their line manager.

If staff see content on social media that reflects poorly on Brunel College or its stakeholders, they should contact their line manager. All staff are responsible for protecting Brunel College's business reputation.

Staff should use Brunel College (waspcentre) email addresses for the conduct of Brunel College business through social media. Use of private email addresses for Brunel College business is not allowed.

Respecting intellectual property and confidential information includes the following.

1. Staff should not do anything to threaten Brunel College's valuable trade secrets and other confidential information and intellectual property through the use of social media.
2. In addition, staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other organisations and individuals. This can create liability for Brunel College, as well as the individual author.
3. Staff must not use Brunel College logos, brand names, slogans or other trademarks in any social media post. This includes posting any of Brunel College's confidential information without written consent from the Headteacher.
4. To protect themselves and Brunel College against liability for copyright infringement, where appropriate, staff should reference sources of particular information they post or upload and reference them accurately. If staff have any questions about whether a particular post or upload might violate anyone's copyright or trademark, they should seek advice from the Headteacher before making the communication.

Respecting colleagues, students, clients, partners and suppliers includes the following.

1. Staff must not post anything that their colleagues, the organisation and its clients or stakeholders would find offensive. This includes discriminatory comments, insults or obscenities.
2. Staff must not post anything (comments, videos, images) related to their colleagues, or Brunel College clients and stakeholders, without their written consent.

Responsible personnel

All managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

All staff are responsible for the effectiveness of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Headteacher. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the DSL.

Exceptions

Exceptions to the guiding principles in this policy must be documented and formally approved by the Headteacher and Brunel College.

Policy exceptions must describe:

- the nature of the exception
- a reasonable explanation for why the policy exception is required
- any risks created by the policy exception
- evidence of approval by all appropriate parties

Review of this document: Kerry Williams. DSL. November 2024.

Next review date: 4th November 2026.