St Chad's College
Durham

Social Media Policy

St Chad's is an independent College and this policy is specific to the College. However, by virtue of being a recognised College of the University all our members (Governors, Fellows, Tutors, staff and common room members) are also governed by University policies and regulations. This policy should therefore be read in the context of, and with due regard to, the University's guidance on these issues, which can be found HERE.

Introduction

1.1. Social media has changed the way we communicate, both as an institution and as individuals. It has given us the opportunity to engage in online communication with our students, staff, parents, alumni, colleagues and friends about what is most important to us and to them, extending the reach of our community across the globe.

1.2. In recognising the right of staff to freedom of expression, the College is also conscious of the risks this can bring for College members (staff, students, Fellows, Governors, tutors, SCR members), in ensuring that they engage appropriately and safely using social media and specifically where private use may impact upon their work or upon the College/University.

1.3. This policy ensures good practice, protecting employees of St Chad's College and the College as a whole, including avoiding any incidents detrimental to reputation or involving any form of abuse. College members must understand the standards and conduct required by the University and be aware of the potential implications of uploading, downloading or viewing material, including any comments, remarks or posts, which could be considered abusive, defamatory or inappropriate, minimising any risks.

1.4. The College is under a duty to prevent extremism in accordance with the CounterTerrorism and Security Act 2015. You must not engage in any activity which could incite or promote terrorist activity including, but not limited to, accessing websites or social media content that might be associated with extreme or terrorist organisations and which could attract criminal liability. For procedures relating to research involving such material please refer to the University's IT regulations.

1.5. It is also illegal to post material that incites racial hatred or which could be considered to constitute sexual harassment.

1.6. It is easy for dialogue to be misinterpreted via social media, and therefore perception needs to be considered as well as intention. Inappropriate use could lead to action under the Disciplinary Regulations.

1.7. Nothing outlined within this policy is intended to infringe normal academic exchange or freedom of expression.

What this policy covers

This policy sets out the College's position on employees' and members' use of social networking sites and blogs. The College has a policy on Freedom of Expression which should be read together with this policy – nothing in this policy is intended to limit freedom of expression.

Scope

We expect all our employees, fellows (including honorary fellows, research fellows and visiting fellows), tutors, governors, students and anyone representing the College (or publicly affiliated to College) to follow this policy.

Policy elements

"Social media" refers to a variety of online communities like blogs, social networks, chat rooms and forums. This policy covers all of them.

Social networking sites and blogs offer a useful means of keeping in touch with friends and colleagues, and they can be used to exchange views and thoughts on shared interests, both personal and work-related.

Social media is a place where people exchange information, opinions and experiences to learn, develop and have fun. Whether employees are handling a corporate account or use one of their own, they should remain productive. This policy provides practical advice to avoid issues that might arise by careless use of social media in the workplace.

We consider two different elements: using personal social media at work and representing our College through social media.

Your responsibilities when using personal social media

The College does not object to you setting up personal accounts on social networking sites or blogs on the internet, in your own time and using your own computer systems. However, you must not do so on College media or in work time.

The following general guidelines apply to staff posting content on social media (other College members should adopt similar principles):

Do:
- Check with a line manager before publishing content that may have reputational implications for the institution
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views

- Make it clear who is posting content
- Use an appropriate and professional tone
- Be respectful to all parties
- Ensure you have permission to 'share' other peoples' materials and acknowledge the author
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner
- Manage your social media account(s) being mindful of the College's interests
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion
- Set up a shadow system i.e. a colleague who can edit posts
- Seek advice and report any mistakes to your line manager
- If you mention College (e.g. as your place of work) in posts, you should always include a form of words in your profile that makes it clear that any opinions are your own and do not represent those of the College.

Don't:
- Don't make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the College into disrepute, and damage its reputation.
- Don't use College branding on personal accounts
- Don't publish confidential or commercially sensitive material
- Don't breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation
- Consider the appropriateness of content, and don't link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content
- Don't use social media to air internal grievances

Your Responsibilities when representing the College on social media

Some employees are asked to represent the College by handling corporate social media accounts, or by contributing content on the College's behalf. The following paragraph relates specifically to behaviour on social media in these contexts.

We expect them to act carefully and responsibly to protect the College's image and reputation. We expect anyone representing the College (or publicly affiliated to College) to follow this policy and would expect from them higher standards of appropriate public discourse. All representatives should:

- **Be respectful, polite and patient,** when engaging in conversations on the College's behalf
- **Be careful** when making declarations or promises towards customers and stakeholders
- **Avoid speaking on matters outside their field of expertise**. Everyone should be careful not to answer questions or make statements that fall under somebody else's responsibility
- **Follow** our confidentiality policy and data protection policy and observe laws on copyright, trademarks, plagiarism and fair use
- **Never post discriminatory, offensive or libellous** content and commentary
- **Correct or remove** any misleading or false content as quickly as possible
- **Pause** for reflection before responding to the comments of others. It is often knee-jerk responses (encouraged by platforms like Twitter) that cause problems

<u>Third parties</u>

You must not disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to the College or to any third party that has disclosed information to the College. The College's Data Protection Policy (detailed elsewhere in the Employee Handbook) provides guidance about what constitutes confidential information.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the College policy on Computers and Electronic Communications (also detailed elsewhere in the Employee Handbook).

Responding to Visitors' Comments

Most social media platforms allow visitors to comment and discuss videos, pages, blog posts, etc. You should:

- **Encourage comments, and be responsive**. The more interaction between yourself and visitors will hopefully build up a community, and help gain trust from others.
- **Deal with negative feedback**. If users post complaints, or have other problems, follow them up positively and quickly (before many others join in!).
- **Monitor all comments**. If there is an option to be emailed whenever a user comments, use it. In social media platforms where this isn't possible, ensure that this is checked reasonably regularly. Use your discretion to remove advertisements, spam, and comments that are hateful, obscene, or defamatory. Also:
  - If no-one in your team is able to monitor comments for a short period (due to e.g. Christmas or Easter closures), do notify your followers of this. Otherwise users may become frustrated if their queries are not being answered after a few days.
- If visitors have queries, where possible **refer them to information on the College website** rather than directly answering their questions within the social media channel. If details (entry requirements, application deadlines etc) then change they will be updated on the website and there is less risk that people will find out of date information on social media channels.

Breaches of this policy

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with under the College's Disciplinary Procedure. You should be aware that the College may regard a breach of this policy as gross misconduct that may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal without notice.

Examples of non-conformity with the employee social media policy include but are not limited to:

- Disregarding job responsibilities and deadlines to use social media
- Disclosing confidential information through personal or corporate accounts
- Directing offensive comments towards other members of the online community

If you become aware of information relating to the College posted on the internet, you should bring this to the attention of your manager.