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UNIVERSITY

Policy on the Use of Social Media

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Policy on the Use of Social Media

Context

1. The growth of social media has changed the face of communication in many aspects of our day-to-day engagement with one another. However, like email before, this raises issues relating to formal and informal communications, understanding the boundaries between them and consideration of adopting the most appropriate means of communication to suit the context of the communication.
2. This policy supports colleagues across our University in considering the ways in which they address these issues, whilst establishing a clear focus on personal responsibility and reputation. It lays down as few regulations as possible (although, these must be given due weight and attention in reflecting upon the use of social media) but, rather, identifies underlying principles which should influence behaviour.

Core Principles

3. In communicating with students, colleagues, or anyone outside our University, we must all consider:
 - a. The context within which the communication is sent or received. Is it personal and private, or is it related or linked to our University? Will this be understood by all parties involved in the communication?
 - b. Even where it is personal and private, is there a link back to our University, for example a reference to the University on your on line profile?
 - c. The maintaining of suitable boundaries, both professional and personal, between employees and students in particular where mutual respect is an important part of the relationship at University.
 - d. The relationship between those involved in the communication. Is there an imbalance of power (real or perceived) within this relationship? Could the communication be perceived as dogmatic, inappropriate, or bullying?
 - e. The reputation of individuals involved in the communication, and of our University. Is the message being sent one which you would happily share with senior colleagues, or family?
4. These core principles should be used as a test in any cases where you are uncertain as to whether or not a communication should be sent, posted, interpreted or responded to. They will underpin consideration of any potential issues that may emerge from the use of social media.

Scope

- 6 This policy is applicable to all employees including those on fractional contracts and part-time lecturing staff.
- 7 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

Responsibility

- 8 Human Resources have responsibility for disseminating, promoting and reviewing this policy and, along with Marketing (in relation to official use), for providing advice and guidance on its application.
- 9 All users of social media are responsible for implementing and adhering to this policy.
- 10 This policy will be monitored on an annual basis and reviewed a minimum of every three years or sooner, in light of any legislative changes or organisational requirements, as appropriate.

Official Use of Social Media

Leeds Beckett Digital Footprint

11 There is a wide range of social media accounts and channels associated with our University, including those created by academic colleagues to promote courses, academic profiles or research-related information, those created by students to represent University-based clubs and societies, and those which represent Leeds Beckett University but are maintained by third-party partners working in conjunction with our University.

Creating a Social Media Account

12 The creation of any social media presence which purports to represent our University, or any part of our University, or any of its affiliate organisations in an official capacity, must be approved by the relevant Dean/Director and in consultation with the Marketing Service where appropriate.

13 In order to register and create the account the Marketing Service (email digitalteam@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) will require the following:

- A clear business case for its creation.
- An explanation of who the intended audience is and how this will meet their needs.
- A clear content plan, which should include sample posts, types of content to be created and the schedule of frequency of posting.
- Detail on the timeframe for responding to those who engage/ask questions via the account.
- The name and contact details of the person who will manage the account (the administrator/owner) and authorisation from the relevant Dean/Director.
- The name, proposed branding and design of the account.

14 The Marketing Service is also responsible for identifying and pursuing any infringements of our registered trademark via social media, or any behaviour which disparages our University, its services, or its employees.

Site Maintenance

15 Once the social media account is live, the administrator/owner must adhere to the following maintenance guidelines:

- Enquiries should be answered promptly and in accordance with the agreed timescales.
- The Marketing Service aims (and usually achieves) a one hour turnaround for responses in office hours. In most cases the administrator/owner will need to commit to replying on the same day, during office hours (with an aim of a four hour turnaround time).
- Accounts/profiles should be visited on a daily basis to ensure that inappropriate comments and/or spam are removed.
- Enquiries which deal with sensitive information, such as a student's personal or financial details, should be directed offline. All other enquiries should, as far as possible (and where reputational damage is not incurred by doing so), be publicly visible, to demonstrate the transparency of our customer service, and to allow others to benefit from the information provided in the response.
- If the business purpose of the account becomes defunct, it is the responsibility of the administrator/owner to delete or deactivate the channel.

Personal Use of Social Media

- 16 The University understands that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. Personal capacity for the purpose of this policy includes personal use whilst at work and outside of work, using University and non-University devices.
- 17 While they are not acting on behalf of the University, employees must be aware that they can damage the University if they are recognised as being one of our employees or a connection can be made to the University. (See also the section 'Social Media Communications' below).
- 18 Employees should be aware that social media sites are a public forum and should assume that entries on any social media will not remain private.
- 19 If employees say that they work for the University, for example in their online profile, any communications that employees make in a personal capacity through social media, must not give the impression that their comments are representative of our University. If employees do discuss their work online they must include in their profile a statement making it clear that the views expressed are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University.
- 20 Employees using social media for personal communication which is shared/viewed by students should be aware of appropriate boundaries being maintained and note that students are not bound by the same professional standards, expectations or guidance as an employee as set out in this policy. Employees are advised to exercise professional judgement when responding to student requests or sending their own social media communications to students.
- 21 All communications if relevant to a work dispute, however made, could end up as evidence including in legal proceedings as part of the obligation to disclose documents.
- 22 Employees should limit their personal use of social media whilst at work. Occasional personal use of social media at work is permitted provided that:
 - It complies with this policy
 - It does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content. (See our Disciplinary Rules)
 - It does not interfere with or compromise employees' employment responsibilities or productivity
 - It complies with any local protocols which specify limitations on the use of social media whilst at work
- 23 Inappropriate or excessive personal use of social media in the workplace may result in disciplinary action.

Social Media Communications

- 24 Employees need to take care when using social media. This includes when using social media in a personal capacity where that use has a connection to the University. For example, where it discloses an employee's affiliation with the University or where it relates, directly or indirectly, to other employees or students, clients, contractors or suppliers of our University. When using social media in this context employees must not:
 - Post content that is unlawful and/or in breach of a statutory duty.
 - Bully or harass any individual, for example by making offensive or derogatory comments in breach of our Dignity at Work and Study Policy, Equal Opportunities Statement and the Equality Act 2010.

- Post any content which defames our University, our staff, students or any third party; which could undermine public confidence in our University; or which could damage our reputation or business interests, directly or indirectly.
- Disclose confidential information regarding the University.
- Misrepresent the University by posting false or inaccurate statements or impersonate colleagues or third parties.
- Use the University's domain name for user accounts unless it is for official University purposes.
- Post comments which may jeopardise commercial sensitivity, confidential information and/or intellectual property.
- Post personal information without express consent, including where employees, students, clients, contractors or suppliers are not expressly named however our University reasonably believes that they are identifiable.
- Breach copyright or any other proprietary interest belonging to the University, for example using someone's images or written content without permission or failing to acknowledge work that is reproduced.
- Post images, photographs or videos of students or colleagues without having first obtained the other party's express permission to do so.

25 An employee who makes a defamatory statement that is published on the internet may be legally liable for any damage to the reputation of any individuals concerned, and/or for any damage to the business or trading reputation of any companies concerned.

26 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the University's other policies. If an employee's social media activities would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum.

Security and Identity Theft

27 In order to protect against identify theft employees must ensure that no information is made available through their use of social media (whether personal use or work related) that could provide a person with unauthorised access to the University and/or any confidential information.

Monitoring and Access

28 It is not Leeds Beckett University's policy or practice to routinely monitor employee social media usage however, the University reserves the right to undertake selective and proportionate monitoring in order to assist with complaints or disciplinary investigations. This is in line with University policy and relevant legislation and includes, but is not limited to, social media postings and activities. Where the University becomes aware of inappropriate use of the internet or social media, it reserves the right to investigate the matter further and to retain information that it has gathered on employees' use of social media and internet, as appropriate. This may include obtaining information from social media providers.

29 In the event that it is deemed necessary, the University also reserves the right to withdraw employees' access, via University computing facilities and systems, to any social media, without prior notice.

Disciplinary Action

- 30 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action, in accordance with the Disciplinary Rules and Procedure, up to and including dismissal.
- 31 Employees may be required to remove any social media content that is considered to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.
- 32 Further details of the University's Disciplinary Rules and Procedure are available on the HR web pages.

Related Policies and Documentation include:

- Email Communication – Guidelines and Protocols Email Communication
- 'Email must not be used for unlawful activities; commercial purposes unless carried out on behalf of our University; personal financial gain; or any other activity which contravenes University regulations.' (**Section 3, Clause 3.4**)

- Dignity at Work and Study Policy

'Bullying or harassment via electronic means (for example via email, social networking sites, the Web and mobile phones) is not acceptable'. (**Appendix 3, Clause 1**)

- Data Protection Policy

Our University's Data Protection Policy offers full guidance on adhering to the data protection legislation contained in the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA); please view **Section 8, clauses 8.1 – 8.2** inclusive.

- Use of Computers Policy

This policy states, in relation to the personal use of computing facilities: 'authenticated individuals are allowed to make reasonable use of Leeds Beckett University information systems provided that use does not interfere with the performance of their duties, or cause any difficulty or distress to others.' (**Section 4, Clause 4.2**)

Reviewed February 2016