

Leeds Beckett University

Social Media Policy for Students

Introduction & Scope

1. Social media is an integral part of modern life, and used appropriately is a productive means of keeping in touch and sharing information. Inappropriate use of social media can, however, cause distress to others, and may have a profound and lasting impact on an individual's future.
2. This policy applies to all students of Leeds Beckett University, regardless of their course, and all forms of social media, blogs, discussion fora or other user-generated content. Students studying certain courses which lead to professional recognition should consult their course handbook and related professional body documentation to see if additional regulations apply.
3. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Leeds Beckett University's General Regulations for Students; in particular the Student Code of Discipline, the Policy, Regulations and Procedures relating to Professional Suitability or Professional Misconduct, and the Use of Computers Policy.
4. This policy applies to actions taken by students within or outside periods of study, on or off University premises, whether the hardware, software, networks, sites, etc. were provided by the University or not, and regardless of whether the activity is overtly related to the University or not. It applies to all social media interactions that directly or indirectly, represent the University, posted at any time and from anywhere, and whether posted to an individual, a limited group or publicly. Comments that are later appended, and which are likely to have an impact of the University's reputation, fall in the scope of this policy, even if the original post does not.
5. The University respects privacy and understands that students may use social media channels in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have an impact on the University's reputation are within the scope of this policy.
6. The University may refer to social media and other websites when investigating breaches of discipline, for example allegations of cheating, harassment, or anti-social behaviour, in accordance with the relevant policies referred above. We will not take into account social media content in assessing a student application, unless the applicant highlights this as part of their application.
7. Students should be mindful that misuse of social media sites could constitute a breach of civil or criminal law and that action could be taken accordingly, either by the university or by affected individuals.
8. For the avoidance of doubt, nothing in this policy is intended to have the effect of limiting, or should be construed as intending to limit, either freedom of speech, within the law, nor academic freedom.

Principles

9. Students should remember that information posted on social media is considered as being in the public domain, even where 'privacy' settings may be applied. Consideration should therefore be given to the impact that activities on social media may have on:
 - a) other students;
 - b) members of staff of the university;
 - c) any other individual;
 - d) the university;
 - e) partnership organisations, including placement providers.

10. Consequently, whilst using social media sites, students should refrain from:
 - a) making defamatory comment[s] about an individual or organisation;
 - b) making directly or indirectly discriminatory comments;
 - c) engaging in criminal activity, or inciting others to do so;
 - d) telling lies or making misleading comments;
 - e) posting inappropriate pictures or videos;
 - f) bullying or harassing any other individual[s] either directly or indirectly;
 - g) breaching confidentiality, for example by revealing confidential information owned by the university or another person;
 - h) breaching copyright, for example by using someone else's images or written content without their permission, or by failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given.

11. Whilst using social media sites, students are recommended to consider:
 - a) taking effective precautions to ensure personal safety and protect against identity theft, for example through appropriate privacy settings and by not giving away excessive personal information;
 - b) obtaining permission from friends/others prior to posting images of them on social media sites;
 - c) the future impact of their electronic footprint on career prospects as social media content is increasingly accessed by potential employers;
 - d) the risk to their own registration, with the university and or a professional body, should they be found to be in breach of our Student Code of Discipline; our Policy, Regulations and Procedures relating to Professional Suitability or Professional Misconduct and/or the law.

12. Complaints about the misuse of social media by students can be made by any individual, regardless of whether they are a member of staff or student of Leeds Beckett University. Should you wish to make a complaint about the use of social media by a student or member of staff of the university you should refer to the Student Complaints Procedure at <http://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/studenthub/complaints/>

13. The University is mindful of its responsibilities under law, and will do all it can to uphold the dignity and respect due to all members of the university community. We will keep this policy under review, including in response to changes in social media technologies, and we reserve the right to take any necessary steps to protect staff, students and others, for example by blocking particular sites should that be necessary.