SOCIAL NETWORKING: GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERS

Social networking websites and Web 2.0 technologies provide an opportunity for people to communicate, socialise, learn, and share images, videos and links beyond geographical boundaries. Internet usage is growing and how people are using the internet is changing. Greater interactivity and user-generated content allow people to interact and collaborate as never before.

The implications for teaching and learning are profound and it is an expectation that teachers, both professionally and socially are exploring and exploiting the benefits of these new technologies.

The open nature of these opportunities means that teachers could be vulnerable if they do not observe some straightforward precautions. The following guidelines are designed to support your safe use and enjoyment of social media. However, by its very nature social media and use of the internet *is changing and developing all the time*. These guidelines may go out of date very quickly and serve as general advice only on how to avoid compromise in your professional life as a teacher and as an employee.

Key Benefits

Sites to include Twitter and Facebook can serve as a teaching and learning tool where videos and other materials can be made accessible to students and other teachers in a user friendly way. They can be a useful campaigning tool where dedicated areas can be set up by hash tags, groups or pages to get key messages out to a wide audience.

Interaction is instant and consistent. Social media can target users who have common interests and can reach across socially and geographically diverse groups

Sites to include LinkedIn provide links to like minded professional communities through a CV model. Second Life, a virtual world environment is colonised by an increasing number of education professionals and institutions in the Higher Education sector. Blogging provides a platform for views and discussions in the style of a diary, or personal website.

Conduct and Guidelines

The main challenge is that anyone can access whatever you tweet, post onto your Facebook pages or into any other social media site or environment. This includes information about your friends, family and relationships, your views and opinions your politics and religion and your photographs and your activities. Students, parents, pupils and past, current and future employers can access your information and you need to be aware of the implications of this.

Security

- To ensure that your Facebook account does not compromise your professional positions please ensure that your privacy settings are set correctly. A current recommended security level for your privacy setting is 'friends only' but this may change
- Ensure that you update yourself with and act upon any changes to privacy settings to Facebook as they occur
- Do not accept friend requests from a person you believe to be a parent, carer, or pupil at your past or current school or institution. Please be aware that past pupils may be Facebook friends of pupils still attending your school.
- If you are friends with a work colleague be aware they might not be as vigilant as you are with security issues
- Always make sure you log out of Facebook, Twitter or any other account after using it, especially when using a shared computer with other colleagues and pupils. Your account may be hijacked by others if you remain logged in, even if you quit your browser and shut the computer down
- Facebook has an instant chat facility that can be viewed later on. Make sure you erase your chat history before you log out.

Conduct

- Employers may search Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts looking for information before a job interview. If you tweet or blog make sure you include a disclaimer that your views do not reflect those of your school or employer, unless you are tweeting on behalf on your employer. If you are considering setting up a blog or tweet you are advised to discuss this with your employer first. If you have a Facebook account remove content you would not wish a current or future employer to see
- Parents, carers and pupils may access your profile and activities. If they consider the information inappropriate they could complain to your employer.
- Be aware of and act within the guidelines of social media and networking policies in your school or institution. Be mindful of any monitoring that may be carried out by your school or institution
- If you are responsible for IT or social networking in your school or institution make sure you have an IT policy in place with signifigant guidance about social networking for both staff, students and pupils
- Do not make disparaging or offensive comments about your employer or colleagues. This may be deemed as bullying or harassment

- Ensure that any comments and/or images you post could not be deemed defamatory, offensive or in breach of copyright legislation
- Be aware than other users could post and tag a photograph of you on Facebook where you are named. If you find inappropriate references to yourself on Facebook you should contact the user and ask for them to be removed
- Do not publish your date of birth or postal address on Facebook
- Cyber bullying is an issue across all social media. If you are aware of or a victim of cyber bullying seek immediate advice and guidance from your employer and from NSEAD.

Disciplinary action

Employer responses to the use of and nature of social media usage have received a high level of attention particularly through the press. In some cases inappropriate use of social media has resulted in disciplinary action.

Currently there are three kinds of usage that have resulted in disciplinary action across a broad sample of professions.

- Postings that reveal work related mis-behaviour. Feigning illness then posting images of yourself at Alton Towers
- Postings that express views that employers do not wish to be connected with, or that are considered offensive
- Postings connecting an adult and a minor that are deemed inappropriate.

Please be aware that this advice is not exhaustive. A good rule of thumb is not to post anything you would not wish everyone to see. Social media and internet usage is changing all the time. If you have any further questions or is anything is unclear then contact info@nsead.org

Without prejudice