



SOCIAL MEDIA: GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERS

Social-media and social-networking websites provide an opportunity for people to communicate, socialise, learn, and share images and content, videos and links beyond geographical boundaries. Greater interactivity and user-generated web content allow people to collaborate as never before.

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

The open nature of these opportunities means that teachers can 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 These guidelines may go out of date very quickly and serve only as general advice on how to avoid compromise in your professional life as an educator and as an employee.

Key benefits

Sites including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, TikTok and Twitter, can serve as teaching and learning tools, where videos and other materials are made accessible to students and other teachers in a user-friendly way. Social media can be a useful campaigning tool where, for example, hashtags, groups or pages allow key messages to reach a wide audience.

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

Sites, such as 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 or post. This includes information about your friends, family and relationships, your views and opinions, your politics and religion and your photographs and 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 or other social-media accounts, do 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' but this may change.
- Ensure that you update yourself with and act upon any changes to privacy settings to social media platforms 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 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.

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 have a Facebook, or other social-media account, remove content you would not wish a current or future employer to see.
- If you are considering setting up a blog or departmental social-media account, you must discuss this with your employer first.
- Parents, carers, colleagues 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 your school or employer's social media policies. 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 and/or social-media policy in place with significant guidance about social networking for both staff, students and pupils.
- Do not make disparaging or offensive comments about your employer or colleagues anywhere online. This may be deemed as bullying, harassment and may result in disciplinary action.
- Ensure that any comments and/or images you post could not be deemed defamatory, offensive or in breach of copyright or intellectual property legislation.
- Before posting images of students or their work online, check your school's policy on the sharing of such images and check that photographic consent has been agreed, with both parents and pupils.
- Do not post any student's examination work on any social-media platform. Posting of student's examination coursework can contravene guidelines and will put at risk your student achieving the award.
- Be aware that other users could post and tag a photograph of you on social-media forums where you are named. If you find inappropriate references to yourself on Facebook or other platforms you should contact the user and ask for them to be removed.
- Do not publish your date of birth or postal address on social media.
- We also recommend that you do not publish your email address on social media.
- Trolling or cyber bullying is an issue across all social media. If you are aware of or a victim of trolling seek immediate advice and guidance from your employer.

Disciplinary action

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

To date, the following usage of social media has resulted in disciplinary action across a broad range of professions.

- Postings that reveal work-related misbehaviour. Feigning illness then posting images of yourself in leisure activities.
- Postings that express views that employers do not wish to be connected with or that are considered offensive about your employer.
- Postings connecting an adult and a minor that are deemed inappropriate.

- Posting images of students and/or their work without photographic consent and agreement arranged by your school or institution.
- Posting of examination work on social-media platforms.

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 if anything is unclear, then contact info@nsead.org

Without prejudice