

Student Social Media Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Leeds Trinity University (“the University”) recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media presents but encourages a cautious and considered approach to its usage. There is an inherent risk involved in using social media in that it is an instantaneous, far-reaching and potentially long-lasting form of communication and its inappropriate use can impact not only the sender but also the University’s reputation and other students and staff.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. This policy adopts the following definitions:
 - 2.1.1. “T/the University” = Leeds Trinity University
 - 2.1.2. “T/he SU” or “LTSU” = Leeds Trinity Students’ Union
 - 2.1.3. “VLE” = Virtual Learning Environment
 - 2.1.4. “GDPR” = General Data Protection Regulation (UK)

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to all Leeds Trinity University registered students, including Partnership students and Apprentices. It is binding on all such students. Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken under the Student Conduct and Discipline Policy.
- 3.2. It extends to students’ use of social media in a personal capacity where this impacts the University, its students, staff or the wider community.
- 3.3. Students who are involved in Leeds Trinity Students’ Union (“the SU”), clubs, sports, societies, or any other aspect of the SU should refer to LTSU’s own social media policy.
- 3.4. This policy does not cover social media usage by university staff, which is covered in a separate policy.
- 3.5. For the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as any online interactive tool which permits or allows participation, interaction and exchanges. This includes existing platforms and any new applications that emerge as well as blogs, discussion forums, instant messaging services, and websites. Social media channels covered by this policy include, but are not limited to:
 - 3.5.1. Instagram
 - 3.5.2. Facebook and/or Facebook Messenger
 - 3.5.3. LinkedIn
 - 3.5.4. Twitter (also known as X)
 - 3.5.5. TikTok
 - 3.5.6. Discord
 - 3.5.7. Twitch
 - 3.5.8. Reddit
 - 3.5.9. YouTube
 - 3.5.10. Snapchat
 - 3.5.11. Pinterest
 - 3.5.12. Vimeo
 - 3.5.13. WhatsApp

- 3.6. This policy also extends to the use of the chat function (including channel posts and breakout rooms) in all conferencing software, such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom, as well as to forum posts in the University's VLE, whether these are used in a scheduled teaching and learning session or for communication between students when collaborating at other times.
- 3.7. This policy applies to social media used from any on-campus or off-site global location, including on personal devices. While posts added to public forums can be seen by any member of the public from the date of publication, students are asked to remember that posts added to private forums (including private messages between two parties) can also be shared publicly by others.

4. Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

- 4.1. Leeds Trinity University recognises and endorses freedom of speech and expression within the law. This policy should be read alongside the University's [Freedom of Speech and Expression Code of Practice](#), which is applicable to communications on social media.

5. Social Media in our Personal Lives

- 5.1. The University acknowledges that students may use social media in their private lives and for personal communications.
 - 5.1.1. In all cases where a private social media account is used which identifies the University, it must be made clear that the account-holder is a student at the University to avoid giving the impression that views expressed on or through that social media account are made on behalf of the University.
 - 5.1.2. In all cases where a personal communication references a member of the University community, the student must be aware that the University will treat actions that, for example, threaten, harass or bully either that member of the community or any other as being a breach of this policy.
- 5.2. Students should be aware of their association with, and their responsibilities to, the University, and ensure that their profiles and related content are consistent with:
 - 5.2.1. The University's policies, including (but not limited to) the Acceptable Use Policy and the Student Conduct and Discipline Policy (see Section 14.1);
 - 5.2.2. How they would wish to present themselves, including to potential future employers. Students should bear in mind that as part of standard pre-employment checks their future employers may search and review their social media activity several years after it was first posted, and that it might still be visible to some users on the internet even if the student thinks they have since deleted it.
- 5.3. Students must also be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything which they post online and should avoid posting anything online that:

- 5.3.1. They would not wish to be in the public domain, and/or
- 5.3.2. They would not be willing to say in person directly to another individual.

5.4. Students should also be aware that any digital material that they post online could reach a wider audience than they may expect or intend. Once digital content has been created and shared, students may have limited control over its permanence and audience (see Section 5.2.2 above). The University may treat it as foreseeable that information posted by a student on any social media platform will be disseminated to the world at large, and therefore it will not be open to a student to claim as a defence to any disciplinary action that they did not anticipate that content that otherwise breaches this policy would be revealed to third parties other than the intended recipient.

6. Expected Standards of Behaviour

- 6.1. Students are personally responsible for what they communicate on or through social media and they must adhere to the standards of behaviour set out in this policy and any related policies (see Section 14.1). They shall also, to the extent permitted by law, be deemed responsible for the actions of others (both within and outside the University community) who share content that they have posted.
- 6.2. Communications on social media must be respectful at all times and be in accordance with this policy. Use of social media must not infringe upon the rights or privacy of other students or staff, and students must not make ill-considered comments or judgments about other students, staff or third parties.
- 6.3. Students must take particular care when communications through social media can identify them as a student at Leeds Trinity University or its partner institutions to members of staff, other students, or third parties. Students should consider their online safety and thus should protect their personal information (including, but not limited to, their home address, telephone number and date of birth). Students should take care not to get addicted to social media activity.
- 6.4. The following **non-exhaustive** list is considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be sent via any method of social media:
 - 6.4.1. Confidential and/or commercially sensitive information (which may include research not yet in the public domain, information about fellow students or staff, personnel matters, non-public or not yet approved documents or information).
 - 6.4.2. Details of complaints and/or legal proceedings or potential legal proceedings involving the University.
 - 6.4.3. Personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission.
 - 6.4.4. Information in breach of another person or entity's copyright or other intellectual property rights (see Section 8 below).
 - 6.4.5. The encouragement of illicit drug-related activity or the depiction or encouragement of unacceptable, violent, illegal or dangerous activities (e.g., academic dishonesty, assault, fighting, vandalism, disorderly or drunken behaviour, or drug use).
 - 6.4.6. Comments posted using fake or spoof accounts or using another person's name without their consent.
 - 6.4.7. Any material (including images) that is or is intended to be threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or

- hostile towards any individual or entity, or amounts to a misuse of private information or breach of confidence.
- 6.4.8. Any other posting that constitutes a criminal offence (including under Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 and Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015) or is a breach of equalities legislation (derogatory or offensive comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age).
 - 6.4.9. Anything which may bring the University into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of colleagues, former colleagues, students, former students, staff, former staff, and those connected with the University in other capacities.
- 6.5. The University has well-established ways for students to raise any dissatisfaction or concerns that they may have such as the Student Complaints Policy. Concerns must be raised through such procedures and not on social media.

7. Cyberbullying via Social Media Sites

- 7.1. The University will not accept any form of bullying or harassment by students of members of university staff, students or other members of the University community.
- 7.2. The following **non-exhaustive** list of examples illustrate the types of behaviour displayed through social media communications which the University considers to be forms of cyberbullying:
 - 7.2.1. Maliciously spreading rumours, lies or gossip.
 - 7.2.2. Intimidating or aggressive behaviour.
 - 7.2.3. Offensive or threatening comments or content.
 - 7.2.4. Posting private images of an individual without consent (including, but not limited to, sexual images of an individual).
 - 7.2.5. Sharing unwanted images (including, but not limited to, sexual images).
 - 7.2.6. Posting comments/photos etc. deliberately mocking an individual with the intent to harass or humiliate them.
 - 7.2.7. Sending messages or posting comments with the intent to trick, force or pressure the receiver into doing something that they would not otherwise be comfortable doing (grooming).
- 7.3. Should a student feel they are being sexually harassed (whether as outlined in the list above or via any other means), they should consult Leeds Trinity University's [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) for guidance on the procedure to be followed.
- 7.4. The University will also not accept cyberbullying that takes place via other means of electronic communication such as email, text or instant messaging.
- 7.5. Any student who is experiencing cyberbullying by another student or a member of university staff will have the full support of the University.

8. Intellectual Property

- 8.1. All students must ensure that they have permission to share any third-party materials, including any copyright work and all images, photographs, videos, texts,

trademarks, service marks or logos (whether, in each case, registered or not) before uploading or linking to them via social media and, where sharing is permitted, should ensure that such materials or shared links are credited appropriately. In particular, students should not share University trademarks or logos or other materials (whether subject to copyright or not), including, but not limited to, lecture handouts, slides, and examination papers by social media unless they have express permission from the University to do so.

- 8.2. All students must check the terms and conditions of a social media account and/or website before uploading such material. By posting material to social media accounts and/or websites, you may be releasing ownership rights and control of the content. For this reason, you must exercise caution in sharing all information.
- 8.3. The University is not responsible for any content posted by its students unless authorised by the University.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

- 9.1. All students are responsible for:

- 9.1.1. Ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies (see Section 14.1 below).
- 9.1.2. Ensuring that any use of social media adheres to any professional standards and guidelines, and is in line with the professionalism and confidentiality rules of their area of the University and corresponding professional governing bodies, including (as relevant): the [Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants](#); the [Bar Standards Board](#) and the Bar Council; the [British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences](#); the [British Computer Society](#); the [British Psychological Society](#); the [Chartered Institute of Management Accountants](#); the [Chartered Institute of Marketing](#); the [College of Policing](#); the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network; the [Health Care and Professions Council](#); the [Institute of Paralegals](#); the [Law Society](#); the [Legal Services Board](#); the National Education Union; the [Nursing and Midwifery Council](#); the [Society for Sports Therapists](#); and the Solicitors' Regulation Authority.

10. Monitoring

- 10.1. The University reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review within the law, without further notice, student activities using its IT resources and communication systems, including, but not limited to, postings on the social media platforms listed in Section 3.5 points 3.5.1 to 3.5.13, to ensure that its rules are being complied with and such activities are for legitimate purposes.

11. General Data Protection Regulation (UK), the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000

- 11.1. GDPR and the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) apply to social media as they do in other contexts. Students must ensure that all posts comply with these legal requirements. A student who posts personal information of a third party on social media may be a data controller.
- 11.2. No personal information, including photographs and videos, should be shared on social media without the consent of the individual to whom it relates. Students should never, therefore, post other students' and/or staff's and/or a third party's personal information without their prior consent. Personal information is defined broadly as "any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ("data subject"); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person."
- 11.3. The [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#) may apply to posts and content that students upload to official University websites, or any other website belonging to a public authority. As such, if a request for such information is received by the University (or other public authority), the content that the student has posted may be disclosed.

12. Incidents and Response

- 12.1. Where a breach of this policy is reported or otherwise comes to the attention of the University, the University will review the circumstances and decide on the most appropriate and proportionate course of action. This may include referring the matter to be dealt with under the Student Conduct and Discipline Code (see Section 5.4 above) which may result in disciplinary action up to, and including, exclusion/termination of registration. The University may also remove or request the removal of items deemed by the University to be in breach of this policy from a University-approved social media account.
- 12.2. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of when the breach is committed and regardless of whether any University equipment or facilities are used in committing the breach.
- 12.3. Where conduct may be a criminal offence, the University may, in addition to its other rights, report the matter to the police. Beyond that, any member of staff, student or third party may pursue legal action against the individual in question if they choose to do so.

13. Reporting

- 13.1. Where students are in receipt of any content considered to be in breach of this policy, this should be reported to the University via the Report Concerns tool on the myLTU app. Any complaints received under this policy will be reported, on an anonymised basis where appropriate, to the relevant body within the University for regulation.

14. Procedure

14.1. The policy is affected by appropriate procedures and guidance which are reviewed and signed off by the relevant policyholder annually, for example:

14.1.1. The [Student Conduct and Discipline Code](#)

14.1.2. The [Acceptable Use Policy](#)

14.1.3. The [Prevent Policy](#)

14.1.4. Public [Safeguarding](#) information

14.1.5. The [Protection of Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#)