



Social Media Policy

BY LAW of

CHESTER STUDENTS' UNION

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Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

Social Media has been one of the revolutionary developments in communications. It has opened up the potential to network with large numbers of people quickly and selectively, to develop bespoke channels of information and content, to buy and sell outside hours and without leaving your home.

However, it has also raised serious concerns over the use and privacy of data, the potential for the spread of hate and false statements and isolation of its users.

This policy will help and encourage staff, trustees and volunteers of Chester Students' Union ('the Union') to use social media in a positive and exciting way, whilst recognising our need to manage and preserve personal and professional reputations and embrace our legal obligations around data and personal privacy.

The Union expects all employees and trustees to adhere to this policy, and this policy may be amended at any time.

2. Scope of this Policy

The policy applies equally to all employees and trustees of the Union. It will also inform the social media guidance issued to Union volunteers such as sport and society officers and StARs (Student Academic Representatives).

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media and postings on the internet. We recognise that this is a rapidly changing environment which is why we are not specifying the names of platforms.

It has been argued that it is possible to separate personal social media activity from professional social media activity. However, any personal social media account which can identify the person as working for the Union has the potential to harm our professional reputation and would therefore fall within the scope of this policy.

3. Social Media Accounts

No social media channel shall be created without the express permission of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or their nominee. This includes accounts for departments, projects, events and the creation of business accounts for your role. All accounts must be logged with the CEO.

As a general rule, accounts should normally only be created where there is a clear identified need for an additional bespoke channel. The main CSU social media accounts have a greater reach and hence more impact, and should always be our default form of communication. Union announcements should be communicated first through these channels and then shared and reposted from other accounts.

4. Misuse of Channels and Equipment

It should be noted by all staff and officers using equipment provided by the Union, the University of Chester or any partner organisation supplying equipment on our behalf, that any misuse could result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

The Union's IT facilities are provided by the University and all logins to the network, including remote access, are covered by their usage policies which all staff have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with and abide by.

All staff should note that the use of social media channels and other forms of digital communication to bully or harass others, or the posting of inappropriate content that brings the professional reputation of the Union into disrepute could result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

You should never use a Union account to promote or endorse any product unless otherwise agreed by the Union.

You should never post material unless you are certain you have the permission of the person who created it. To do so is theft and could involve you and the Union in a legal case. Many of our students will one day rely on intellectual property rights to make a living, so we have a duty to protect it.

Social media should never be used to gather personal and sensitive data. It is not secure and this will constitute a clear breach of a person's right to privacy. It will also leave them open to identity theft.

You should never use social media to share information or data about other staff, students, clients or customers of the Union.

5. Staying Safe on Social Media

The following sections are about using social media responsibly and safely. There is also a short section on guidelines to consider when planning your social media activity. The golden rule is if you are uncertain about publishing a particular post then there is probably a good reason for that, and you should seek further guidance or avoid posting.

We are proud that you work for the Union, and hope that you are proud to be a staff member here. We understand and support any member of staff who wishes to state on their personal accounts that they work for this Union. However, this comes with a responsibility to distance your views from ours.

It is not a total defence to put "these views are my own and in no way reflect the views of my employer", but it does help.

Respect

Do not post anything that is legally offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenities. Remember that social media accounts can be searched and previous posts may come to light and affect you in the present. It is good advice to look through and delete posts that you once posted in haste or ignorance.

Reputation Management

In the fast moving world of social media it is easy to post something quickly, thinking that you are just talking with friends. All posts, tweets and blogs constitute a published statement, therefore staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about the Union, other staff, students or trustees, our suppliers, or our commercial partners as this has the potential to damage our business reputation, directly or by implication.

We all get annoyed at the place we work sometimes, but you should avoid posting negative comments about our performance or our business. There have been recent cases in other organisations where such comments have resulted in grievances and disciplinary action. Remember we all have a contractual duty to protect the reputation of the Union.

As mentioned before it is not a total defence to put “these views are my own and in no way reflect the views of my employer” but it does help. Similarly think carefully about the image that your posts and pictures convey. Employers, contractors, and University staff will all look at your profile so think carefully about what image you wish to convey. If you want your personal account to be private, set the privacy settings accordingly.

Guidelines

As good practice for social media use, the following options are not exhaustive but are things to consider when managing multiple social platforms and creating engagement plans or strategies.

Share content

Producing original and consistent content (such as blog and vlog posts, graphics, live videos, images, articles and testimonies) is a great way to engage with your audience. Sharing the culture of an organisation offers a plethora of options for content and adds all important personality to the brand. This in turn helps to build a relationship with the audience.

Small positive campaigns, such as snapshots from members of staff as well as destination marketing, can really help to add a personality to social media activity. It is also a great way of inserting friendliness into a brand, to showcase talent in the workforce, and promoting the Union as a positive employer.

Stay active

Staying active is crucial to social media success. An inactive account is more harmful than having no account at all, so it pays to have a long-term engagement plan to help structure content. This latter point is particularly important for campaign work, as often when there are several events taking place, messages can be lost in the mire.

Find influencers

Connecting with industry influencers encourages others to engage with you. Being seen in the right circles - tapping into hashtags and using national days and events to shape messages around corporate values - immediately boosts credibility.

Be helpful

Successful social accounts do more than just sell a service, and talk about themselves - instead they offer additional value to users. Offering advice or informative content helps to keep users interested in what you have to say and positions you as a leading voice on current affairs.

Find the right audience

As previously mentioned, it is always worth remembering that the nature of social media means that everything you do is immediately made public. While the benefits of using social media are numerous and exciting, reaching the wrong audience is just as easy as reaching the right one.

6. Further Information

If in doubt about the policy you should seek advice from your manager or from the Chief Executive.