Social Media Guidelines

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The University of Leicester (the University) recognises that social media is a popular tool, which can be used to interact with colleagues and friends, and help develop skills and knowledge. However, the boundaries between our personal and professional lives in relation to social media can become blurred, and the growing use of social networking sites has created risks of serious legal and professional consequences, if used inappropriately (even inadvertently). These guidelines seek to make it clear to staff what is acceptable in terms of social networking in relation to their employment.

1.2. The University expects staff to demonstrate conduct that is in the interest of protecting its legitimate business and academic interests, and to prevent inadvertent damage to its reputation or colleagues.

1.3. The University expects staff to comply with these guidelines, however, it does not confer contractual rights, nor form part of any contract of employment, and may be amended by the University, or replaced at any time, following appropriate consultation with the recognised trade unions.

1.4. Misuse of social media may be addressed via the University’s Discipline Ordinance.

1.5. The University maintains the right of academic staff to exercise their Academic Freedom, and recognises academics may use social media material as part of their research. Where the researcher may consider the material to be controversial, they should notify their Head of Department/Manager.

1.6. The guidelines for the use of social media apply to all workers and members of staff of the University.

2. TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

2.1. For the purposes of these guidelines, social media is a collective term used to describe websites and applications, which enable users to create and share content online. As new social media outlets are continuously being created, members of staff are advised that these guidelines are applicable to any social media that they use.

2.2. The University recognises and accepts that its members of staff may keep personal and professional web logs (blogs) on the Internet. Use of blogs are also subject to these guidelines.
2.3. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to:

- Facebook
- Snapchat
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Google+
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Flickr
- Tumblr
- Reddit

3. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT WORK

3.1. University provided IT facilities, such as desktops, laptops, IT networks and internet access, are principally for academic and administrative activities (see University Information Security Policy ISP-S9, section 4). As such, staff can access social media websites using these facilities, provided that the use is for work, scholarly or related reasons.

3.2. Occasional use of social media via University IT facilities for personal reasons is also permitted, so long as the use does not breach any University Information Security Policies.

4. MONITORING USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING WORK TIME

4.1. The University undertakes limited routine monitoring of University IT facilities used by staff, and does so to ensure compliance with our information security policies and other University regulations.

4.2. In special circumstances, more intrusive monitoring may be necessary. The basis on which this monitoring would be carried out is explained in more detail in University Information Security Policy ISP-I6, sections 3 and 5. This could include monitoring any use of social networking sites from University IT facilities, if deemed necessary, including any personal use.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA OUTSIDE OF WORK

5.1. The University recognises that staff may use social media in a personal capacity, unrelated to work. In this respect, whilst not acting on behalf of the University, there is still the
potential to inadvertently damage the reputation of the University, fellow colleagues or those affiliated with the University.

5.2. The University recommends that staff regularly review their privacy settings on social media sites to avoid being inadvertently connected to defamatory comments or views.

5.3. Staff should be mindful that the information they share on social media is permanent and may be discovered even if the user has deleted their post(s).

5.4. The University accepts that staff may wish to state on their online profiles that they work for the University. Other details, however, such as name, twitter handle or the main title of blogs, must not contain the University’s name, nor give the impression that they are speaking officially for the University.

5.5. If staff are discussing work topics, it must be assumed that anything said could be seen by anyone, and reliance should not be put on privacy settings to protect information relating to the content shared.

5.6. Consideration should be given to the following – staff must not:

5.6.1 Bring the University into disrepute, for example by making defamatory comments about students, customers, colleagues or other groups (for example, comments that may be seen as slanderous and/or libellous), or by posting images (or links to images) that contain inappropriate and/or offensive content.

5.6.2 Breach confidentiality, for example by revealing trade secrets or information owned by the University or other organisations staff are working with, or by revealing confidential or sensitive information about a colleague or student (data protection).

5.6.3 Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or involve the bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by making offensive or derogatory comments relating to protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or by posting (or linking to) images that are discriminatory and offensive. Doing so may breach the University’s Dignity at Work Policy.

5.6.4 Discuss confidential business-sensitive information, our partner organisations or wholly-owned subsidiaries if that information has not already been made public.

5.6.5 Breach copyright, for example by using someone else’s images or written content, without permission, or failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something. Copyright is a legal issue, and our Library provide useful advice and guidance on this specific topic.

5.6.6 Make inappropriate postings (e.g. expert opinion) on behalf of the University.
6. REPORTING INAPPROPRIATE USE

6.1. If staff become aware of an individual or affiliate of the University using social media to express comments or views regarding another individual or affiliate of the University, which they feel may contravene these guidelines, they may wish to consider reporting such activity to their Head of Department/Manager.

6.2. Alternatively, the University Whistleblowing Policy may be used (if appropriate) to report social media activity that has caused concern. Anyone who discloses such information may be protected by the University’s Whistleblowing Policy.

7. INVESTIGATION INTO THE MISUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

7.1. The University values the opinions of members of staff, and expects them to familiarise themselves with these guidelines, as the misuse of social media may be considered under the Discipline Ordinance.

7.2. Examples of misusing social media could include incidents of bullying colleagues, or comments made about the University, which are defamatory or derogatory, as well as those stated in section 5.5, although this is not an exhaustive list. These forms of conduct may be investigated as gross misconduct in line with the Discipline Ordinance and, if substantiated, could lead to summary dismissal (dismissal without notice) from the University.

8. COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

8.1. The University recognises the diversity of its members of staff and the local community, and aims to provide a safe environment, free from discrimination, and to treat all individuals fairly, with dignity, and appropriately, according to their needs.

8.2. As part of its development, no adverse impact has been identified for any groups as a result of these guidelines, which are applicable to all.

8.3. Should a member of staff wish to report an issue, or require advice in relation to the interpretation of these guidelines, please contact HR.