

Social Media Guidelines for Students. Cover page – for information only

**This is a guide to help Colleges create their own social media guidelines for students. We have included some suggested wording, based on the University’s existing guides for staff, but tailored towards students. The guidance is not enforceable under statutes and ordinances unless otherwise stated.**

**They were developed through workshops with staff and students. One recommendation we have not had the resources to implement yet is that the guidelines be made more “student friendly” through the use of design, videos and editing. While the statement can be adopted and published, alongside the emergency assistance template, the rest of the guidelines would best be viewed as information for staff on how to advise students (ideally in face-to-face interactions), rather than the best format to present to students. OEAC is happy to present the guidelines to staff and offer advice on how best to communicate them to students. In future OEAC would like to work with colleges to further develop this initial set of guidelines. Given the pace of development in social media technology and use the guidelines should be reviewed annually.**

**This cover page and the appendices are for staff information only and should not be published to students in their current form.**



# Social Media Guidelines for Students

## Statement on social media use:

We (College name) recognise the numerous benefits and opportunities that a social media presence offers.

The College aims to build relationships and work with student members of the College to share information about the College’s activity online, and how to better support it. We will actively use social media to engage the public, communicate research and news about College life, and enhance the College’s profile online.

We welcome the fact that students will often come to College with an existing social media presence and that they may wish to expand that on arrival. We encourage students to make effective and appropriate use of social media; and to engage in conversations with the collegiate community. We have written these guidelines to help students manage social media accounts and to avoid the pitfalls that can be associated with ill-judged social media use. They should be read alongside related College and University policies:

* *Add College policies here*
* [Section 6 of the University Disciplinary code](https://www.proctors.cam.ac.uk/documents/discipline-1-1.pdf). See Appendix II
* [Harassment and sexual misconduct](http://www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/harassment-sexual-misconduct)

You might also find the following helpful:

* *College Policy on the acceptable use of computer facilities, email and the internet If you do not have a policy the University policy for staff is here.* [Use and Misuse of](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/computer.html) [Computing Facilities (taken from rules made by the Information Services](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/computer.html) [Committee)](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/computer.html)
* Those moderating group pages (for formal or informal societies) might find the

[Unive rsit y’s So cial Med ia Gu id e lin e s fo r staff](http://www.cam.ac.uk/brand-resources/guidelines/social-media) useful).

For assistance in improving your social media presence speak to the [college social media champion/officer] or visit the Office of External Affairs and Communications webpages: [www.communications.cam.ac.uk](http://www.communications.cam.ac.uk/).

Social media posts should operate within the framework of the law. Breaking the law will be considered seriously by the College and could lead to a student being investigated by the police and other relevant agencies. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the College may take appropriate action, in line with the *College Disciplinary Policy*.

## Guidelines on social media use:

A student’s private social media account is a valuable tool for them to use and it is their choice what to post. The following general guidelines could assist students make the most of their social media use while at College.

Do:

## Consider the effect your post might have on your future career and that of students around you. Where a student is on a professional programme of



**study misuse of social media may breach their profession’s codes of conduct**

* Treat others with respect when online
* Express opinions and be critical, but consider doing so in a balanced and measured manner and remain factual
* Ensure you have permission to ‘share’ other peoples’ materials and acknowledge the author
* Properly manage any group/ social/society social media account(s) – see below: “Moderation and management of society pages/ private groups etc”
* Think before posting - what you share, wherever you share it, could be made widely available to the public and media and, even if you delete it, could have a life well beyond what you intended
* Look at your privacy settings. Consider what personal information you share and whether you want to reduce the amount strangers can find out about you. Also consider what you say in your biographical/ profile section of your account. This can lead to added interest but also to unwelcome attention
* Be aware of your personal safety - check your geo-tag settings. Some apps and social media will reveal your current location to others
* Take a break from social media, especially if you feel it is taking up too much time or if you are feeling angry, tired, stressed or have been drinking alcohol
* Cross-promote your accounts and interact with the University and College social media accounts
* Consider the accuracy of any information and the veracity of the sources that you are sharing

Don’t:

* **Don’t break the law.** The errors most likely to be made include serious harassment and racial abuse, defamation (e.g. libel, where your comments seriously damage the reputation of someone) or committing contempt of court (posts relating to active criminal investigations and trials in a court of law)
* Don’t use University or College branding on personal accounts
* Don’t publish confidential or sensitive material
* Don’t breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation
* Don’t assume your information is private

## Moderation and management of society pages/ private groups etc:

Many social networks offer an opportunity for members of the public to comment below content that you have posted on behalf of a group of society. We would advise against letting this go un-checked, and, indeed, ideally you should follow and implement a moderation policy. As an example you could look at the moderation policy the University of Cambridge uses to manage its [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/notes/university-of-cambridge/how-we-moderate-our-facebook-page/10152906325459314/) (Appendix III)

## Harassment on social media

The College will act immediately to prevent, as far as reasonably possible, any damage to an individual, their rights. Anyone can report an incident to the institution. This should be directed immediately to [*member of staff responsible for student welfare, JCR/MCR*

*welfare officer*]. Where students are in receipt of offensive, unacceptable content via social media, this can be reported to *[member of staff responsible for student welfare, JCR/MCR welfare officer*].

## Damage to reputation

Anything that damages a student’s reputation can also damage the College’s and University’s reputation, intentionally or not.

## Emergency assistance

Given that the first time a student is likely to come to you for advice is when they are already experiencing problems we suggest any guidelines you develop features the following in a prominent position:

|  |
| --- |
| **HELP IS AVAILABLE:**  **If you are reading this because you are experiencing problems like bullying or harassment on social media, or are likely to be the centre of a media story which comes from social media then please follow these steps.** |
| **1: Consider closing down your social media accounts – either make them private or simply close them, removing the content from the public realm. Even posts in private groups may be accessible. Try to remove ‘tags’ which associate you with other people’s photos. The faster this is done, the smaller the opportunity for journalists or those who would wish you harm, to strip your accounts of information or harass you.** |
| **2: Contact (named College person) and/ or the** [**Office of External Affairs**](http://www.communications.cam.ac.uk/)[**and Communications**](http://www.communications.cam.ac.uk/) **immediately. They can help you to manage the situation and give advice.** |
| **3: “Delete and it’s gone”: delete abusive messages or unwanted messages**  **– do not respond in kind. (NB: before deleting messages which you might wish to keep as evidence, take a screengrab or similar record).** |
| **Links to major social media security pages:**  **Facebook:**   * **Deactivating or deleting your account:** [**https://www.facebook.com/help/250563911970368?helpref=hc\_global\_nav**](https://www.facebook.com/help/250563911970368?helpref=hc_global_nav) * **Security:** [**https://www.facebook.com/help/235353253505947/?helpref=hc\_fnav**](https://www.facebook.com/help/235353253505947/?helpref=hc_fnav)   **Twitter:**   * **Reactivate or deactivate account:** [**https://support.twitter.com/categories/282**](https://support.twitter.com/categories/282) * **Security:** [**https://support.twitter.com/articles/76036**](https://support.twitter.com/articles/76036)   **Instagram:**   * **Delete/ temporarily disable your account:** [**https://help.instagram.com/370452623149242/?helpref=hc\_fnav**](https://help.instagram.com/370452623149242/?helpref=hc_fnav) * **Security:** [**https://help.instagram.com/369001149843369**](https://help.instagram.com/369001149843369)   **Snapchat:**   * **Use search options in Snapchat Support:** [**https://support.snapchat.com/en-GB**](https://support.snapchat.com/en-GB) **YouTube:** * **Delete your channel:** [**https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/55759?hl=en**](https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/55759?hl=en) * **Security:** [**https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/2803240?hl=en&ref\_topic=2676378**](https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/2803240?hl=en&amp;ref_topic=2676378) |

ENDS

# Appendices

*These appendices are not to appear in any college guidelines and are to be used as information for tutors only.*

## Appendix I: Notes for Senior Tutors on advising students on social media.

**Confidentiality:**

Perceptions of what is confidential vary. For instance some people do not consider anything said in a meeting to be confidential unless it has been specifically mentioned. Our research shows many students feel this way. Therefore we suggest you make an announcement at the start of any meeting as to its confidentiality or label documents appropriately. You might also wish to stress confidentially in your guidelines, but be cautious not to step into the realms of appearing over-censorious.

The same lack of confidentiality can be said of ‘private’ social media groups. Platforms like Facebook or comment threads do not protect your comments from being reported more widely. Screenshots of private conversations (Facebook groups, texts, WhatsApp, Twitter DMs etc) have been widely used to break the walls of privacy and reveal secure information to the wider public.

## Using case studies:

Case studies date rather quickly but there is some anecdotal evidence that students react well to concrete examples.

Any one of a number of examples of the effect of social media shaming through media and the general public’s reaction can be found in Jon Ronson’s book So You’ve Been Publically Shamed.

Other case studies to mention:

* 2017 - Harvard revoked admissions offers of at least ten members of its incoming freshman class for the posting of “offensive” memes
* 2013: Young People’s representative in the Police. The UK's first youth police and crime commissioner was forced to resign after 6 days following criticism of messages she posted on Twitter. Police investigated her over tweets she posted between the ages of 14 and 16 which could be considered racist and anti-gay. The Mail on Sunday published the Tweets which also boasted about her sex life, drug- taking and drinking.
* The Office of External Affairs and Communications can provide up-to-date Cambridge case studies.

## Useful facts:

* In 2013, 45% of HR decision makers said they were already using social media tools in recruitment and 16 % said they were planning to in future (source: ACAS)
* In 2015, another survey of recruiters found that 61% were likely to reconsider a hiring decision based on the positive candidate’s social media profile. 65% said they would turn away potential employees that made references to marijuana use and posting pictures of alcohol consumption turned off 46 per cent. (Source: jobvite

/ Independent).

* In 2015 a report showed that that of 15,000 verified Twitter accounts journalists made up 24.6 percent. More than 70 percent of journalists see social media as a place to get stories.
* A study into the 2011 summer riots in the UK showed tweets being shared immediately by outlets like the Guardian. Social media now allows print and online journalists to compete with television in using posted content contemporaneously.

## Keep in mind: Social Capital vs Negative impact on future career

Social media users gain “social capital” through media use and the fact students have just gained a place at the University of Cambridge increases their social capital exponentially. Your policy should recognise the benefits students gain from this association (and recognise that they are likely to actively capitalise on that) while also reminding students that there are risks associated with the extra attention their posts will now receive.

Students also suggested in feedback that they did not necessarily see why their bad press meant bad press for the university. We found, however, that when we explained that bad news stories often impacted on our widening participation and promoting access initiatives, that students appreciated the link more. Even students who said they did not care if the university got bad press found the link with widening participation persuasive.

## Personal safety

Good social media use is not just about protecting your “brand”, be it personal or collegiate. It is often about personal safety. Apps and sites often use your location and reveal that location to others. Some students said they knew many of their friends were unaware of this and felt porters and staff were also not aware of this.

## Appendix II: Section 6 of the University Disciplinary code.

Section 6**:** No member of the University shall engage in harassment in the course of an academic, sporting, social, cultural, or other activity either within the Precincts of the

University or elsewhere in the context of her or his membership of the University or in circumstances where the victim of the harassment is a member, officer, or employee of the University or a College. Harassment shall include single or repeated incidents involving unwanted and unwarranted conduct towards another person which is reasonably likely to have the effect of (i) violating that other’s dignity or (ii) creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that other.

## Appendix III: University Facebook moderation page.

The University of Cambridge welcomes the community’s contributions to the online discussion environment on its Facebook Page (e.g. comments, photos and photo tagging). This page provides a place to discuss the University of Cambridge; its research, events and breaking news. The following guidelines are designed to help provide a quality environment for our fans. Please take a minute to read them and keep them in mind whenever you participate. The University of Cambridge abides by Facebook’s Terms and Conditions, and the University asks its Facebook Fans to do the same. In particular, please do not "post unauthorised commercial solicitations (such as spam)"; "bully, intimidate, or harass any user"; "post content that is hateful, threatening, pornographic, or that contains nudity or graphic or gratuitous violence"; or "do anything unlawful, misleading, malicious, or discriminatory" on the University of Cambridge’s Facebook Page. It is important to note that all comments and postings by fans on this site ("User Content") do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the University of Cambridge. The University of Cambridge reserves the right to remove any posts that contain commercial solicitations; are factually erroneous/libellous; are wildly off-topic; or that otherwise violate Facebook’s Statement of Rights and Responsibilities.

## Appendix IV: Positive impact of YouTube Vloggers

We have worked hard with student vloggers to promote their good work in order to reach audiences we traditionally have not interacted with well on our social media channels.

Messages from viewers include those from prospective students who have said the vloggers’ work has directly influenced their desire to come to Cambridge. During this years’ Freshers’ Fair OEAC staffed a stand and were told by one student:

“Your vloggers are what made me, as a black student, accept my offer. Before I saw them I was undecided about whether Cambridge was the place for me.”

Here is an example of some of the feedback on Cambridge volggers’ videos:

* **Chloe Mercer** I have been so inspired by all of these youtubers!! I am currently doing my GCSEs and I am going to work so hard to get to Cambridge
* **Haroon Ayub** All these diverse students bringing their seasoning to Cambridge!! On a serious note, every student in this video is so inspiring.
* **TheBlackerTheBerry** My fave youtubers together!!! I've died and gone to heaven! You guys are legit what inspires me to work so hard! much love

The most successful vloggers are followed by tens of thousands of people on their channels. For instance, one of the most successful, Ibz Mo, has 48,000 subscribers to his YouTube channel, with each video posted gaining thousands of likes and hundreds of comments. He is often acting as a Cambridge University admissions advice bureau, giving out information to prospective students. He cross promotes his YouTube work via Twitter (6,700 followers), Instagram (11,100 followers), Snapchat and Facebook (700 likes).

## Appendix V: How these guidelines were drawn up

We started with the University’s current social media staff guidelines for staff and then compared them with guidelines for students from universities globally. Many of the policies employed were deemed too prescriptive but we have adapted what we considered the best aspects of those policies.

We then presented the draft in its various iterations to workshops and talks, gaining valuable insights and feedback which were then used to inform the document.

The feedback used includes:

* An interactive workshop with staff, undergraduates and postgraduates at Pembroke College
* Meetings with student Vloggers (undergraduates)
* Feedback from talks with tutorial staff at Trinity College and Trinity Hall
* Feedback from talks with undergraduates at Homerton College and Clare College

## The OEAC team who worked on the draft:

Paul Holland (guidelines author), news communications manager Tom Williams, news communications manager

Tamsin Starr, news communications manager Angel Gurria, news communications manager Barney Brown, head of digital communications