University of London Social Media Policy

1. Definition of social media

For the purposes of this policy, social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public or internal forum. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Online social forums such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn;
- Blogs, video and image-sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr;
- Messaging technologies such as Skype, Lync, iMessage.

There are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. These guidelines should be followed in relation to any social media used.

2. Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all staff employed or engaged by or on behalf of the Central Academic Bodies and central activities of the University of London ("The Central University").

3. Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is:

i. To promote good practice
ii. To protect the Central University and its staff
iii. To clarify where and how existing policies and guidelines apply to social media
iv. To promote effective and innovative use of social media as part of official Central University activities

Nothing in this policy is intended to restrict or inhibit activities involving social media in accordance with departmental needs or legitimate academic research. In the event of any conflict between this policy and Ordinance 20 (http://www.london.ac.uk/977.html), the provisions of the Ordinance take precedence.

4. Use of social media at work

Staff may make reasonable and appropriate personal use of social media websites during authorised breaks or outside working hours, provided that this does not interfere with their duties.

Staff may be required to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites as part of their work where this is an important part of how the Central University communicates with its customers/clients and promotes its services. For example:

i. Writing for University blogs
ii. Managing a Facebook account
iii. Running an official Twitter account

Heads of Department are responsible for providing guidance in relation to appropriate work related use of social media. Where staff are expected to use social media as part of their work, they will also be expected to comply with any local departmental protocol.

Staff must be aware at all times that, while contributing to the Central University's social media activities, they are representing the Central University. Staff should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about the Central University in the public sphere. These safeguards include:

    i.   Making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the University;

    ii.   Ensuring that any public campaign is in line with University and departmental strategy;

    iii.   Ensuring that nothing in the messaging is in contravention of the law.

Any communications that staff make in a professional capacity through social media must not:

i.   **Bring the University into disrepute**, for example by:
- criticising or arguing with customers, clients, colleagues, students or rivals;
- making defamatory or libellous comments about individuals or other organisations or groups;
- posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content; or
- using social media to encourage radicalisation or extremism;

ii.   **Breach confidentiality**, for example by:
- revealing confidential information owned by the Central University;
- giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague or customer contact) or organisation (such as a rival business); or
- discussing the Central University's internal workings (such as future business plans that have not been communicated to the public);

iii.   **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;

iv.   **Breach data protection**, for example by:
- Disclosing information about an individual without their consent;
- Allowing unauthorised access to the personal data held on a social media account on behalf of the Central University; or
- Processing personal data in such a way that would breach the Data Protection principles;

v.   **Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual**, for example by:
- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnerships or age;

- using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the Central University); or
- posting images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content).

5. Monitoring use of social media during work time

The Central University reserves the right to monitor internet usage as per the provisions of the **Code of Conduct for the use of University of London IT Equipment and Systems** (http://www.london.ac.uk/4266.html)**.**

6. Social media in your personal life

The Central University recognises that many staff make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the Central University, staff must be aware that they can damage the University if they are recognised as being employed or engaged by or on behalf of the Central University.

Any communications that staff make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

  i. **Bring the University into disrepute**;
  ii. **Breach confidentiality**;
  iii. **Breach copyright**;
  iv. **Breach data protection;**
  v. **Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual**;

Please refer to Paragraph 4 for example communications.

7. Use of social media in the recruitment process

Unless it is in relation to finding candidates (for example, if an individual has put his/her details on social media websites for the purpose of attracting prospective employers), the HR department and managers should only conduct searches, either themselves or through a third party, on social media when these are directly relevant to the applicant's skills or claims that he/she has made in the recruitment process. For instance:

  i. a prospective staff member might claim that he/she has used social media in his/her previous job (for example, as a publicity tool); or
  ii. a prospective staff member's social media use may be directly relevant to a claim made in his/her application (for example, if he/she runs a blog based around a hobby mentioned in his/her CV or a skill in which he/she claims to be proficient).

There should be no systematic or routine checking of the online social media activities of prospective staff members, as conducting these searches during the selection process might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics (for example, sexual orientation or religious beliefs) played a part in a recruitment decision. This is in line with the University's Dignity at Work policy.

8. Disciplinary action over social media use

All staff are required to adhere to this policy. Employees should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the Central University, may constitute gross misconduct and could result in summary dismissal as per the Central University's Disciplinary Procedure.

9. Links to other polices and University Guidance

All existing Central University policies concerning employees also apply to the use of social media. These include HR policies, codes of conduct, corporate branding policies and acceptable use of IT. The following policies and guidelines are of particular relevance:

  i. Local departmental protocols on social media
  ii. Terms and Conditions of Employment: (http://www.london.ac.uk/4109.html)
  iii. Disciplinary Procedure (http://www.london.ac.uk/4123.html)
  iv. Grievance Procedure (http://www.london.ac.uk/4131.html)
  v. Dignity at Work (http://www.london.ac.uk/4121.html)
  vi. Code of Conduct for the use of University of London IT equipment and systems (https://intranet.london.ac.uk/1755.html)
  vii. JANET Policy (https://intranet.london.ac.uk/914.html)
  viii. Data Protection Policy (http://www.london.ac.uk/4119.html)
  ix. Financial Regulations (https://intranet.london.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/estates_and_facilities/Financial_Regulations_December_2011.pdf)
  x. Freedom of Speech (http://www.london.ac.uk/4298.html#c7206)
  xi. Prevent Policy (https://uolonline.sharepoint.com/Pages/ICT/Prevent.aspx)

Originally published October 2013 and reviewed March 2016