**Examples**

Personal posts where extra consideration of the policy is needed prior to posting:

* A post containing details of malpractice within the workplace (“whistleblowing”). The University has [guidance and a procedure for whistleblowing](https://hr.leeds.ac.uk/info/6/support-for-staff/12/whistle-blowing), and we would encourage all staff to use the whistleblowing process rather than social media so that any disclosures of malpractice can be dealt with correctly and promptly.
* A post is made, with positive intent, which is misinterpreted due to cultural differences, language barriers or out of date information. Always make sure you consider your audience or potential audience as posts can easily be shared. People can read posts and deliberately or unintentionally mis-interpret. Make sure any facts you are using are accurate and you have followed the Free Speech policy.

**Posts which might breach the Social Media Policy:**

* A post threatening an individual or entity. Irrespective of whether this was made on a personal account, a personal device or done outside of work hours, such posts would not be acceptable as it could bring the University into disrepute or compromise the safety of colleagues, former colleagues, students and officers of the University.
* A post endorsing a particular product/service and referencing that you use the product at work. This could be indirectly associated with the University and could be perceived as the University endorsing a particular product/service. To make this acceptable you could remove the reference to work and also add a disclaimer to make it clear that the account is private and are your own views. In doing so, you would avoid the impression that the views expressed are made on behalf of the University.
* Making or re-sharing a malicious rumour about another staff member which could harass or humiliate them. Although you may not be the author of the original post, liking or re-sharing such content may be considered as cyber bullying and a breach of the University’s Dignity and Mutual Respect Policy. This also applies to posts about people connected with the University or students.

**FAQs**

**Why have a Social Media Policy?**

* Social media is very much part of our lives today. Whilst there are significant benefits associated with social media, there are challenges and risks to its use. These risks could be to the University, or staff, students or to those connected to the University.
* The Social Media Policy aims to guide staff on using social media so that they can make informed choices when posting on social media platforms.
* This in no way seeks to restrict staff members’ freedom of speech - the University’s commitment to freedom of speech is covered by our **Freedom of Expression protocol** and the Social Media Policy makes reference to this protocol.
* The Social Media Policy simply intends to make clear the basic rules of social media online activity, and how colleagues can protect themselves against infringements of the law, or the potential to be accused as such by third parties.
* Social media policies have already been adopted by the vast majority of Russell Group universities and is standard practice in many sectors.

**Why is personal social media usage included within the scope of the policy?**

* There is a risk that personal social media communications could bring the University into disrepute or compromise the safety of colleagues, former colleagues, students and those connected with the University.
* Therefore, the policy encompasses all social media communications which directly or indirectly reference or associate with the University, a staff member, student or officer of the University, regardless of whether social media communications are sent on personal devices, private accounts or outside of office hours.
* It is important to note that the intended aim of the policy is not to intrude on private lives or monitor personal social media presence.

**Does the University monitor staff personal social media accounts?**

* No. The University does not monitor personal social media accounts.
* However, we do have a duty to investigate any reports of breaches of the Social Media Policy which are reported to us by individuals if the post could damage the University’s reputation or if they consider the post is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile.

**What happens if I make a mistake or post something breaching the policy?  What action may be taken?**

* Any reports of breaches to the Social Media Policy will be assessed on its own merits. Ultimately if the University has concerns about your post, you may be asked you to take it down; and/or be reminded of your responsibilities under the Social Media Policy; and/or be the subject of further investigation under the disciplinary or dignity policies, depending on the circumstances.