Royal Holloway, University of London

Social Media Policy

1. Policy statement

1.1. The university recognises the importance and value of social media in shaping public thinking about Royal Holloway and its purpose, work, services, employees, partners and students – both through accounts that directly represent the university and through the personal accounts of its staff. The university also recognises the importance of its staff joining in and helping shape debate and direction through interaction in social media.

1.2. This policy is intended to help staff make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as blogs, wikis, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards and comments on web-articles.

1.3. This policy outlines the standards Royal Holloway, University of London, requires staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the university will monitor staff’s use of social media and the action the university will take in respect of breaches of this policy.

1.4. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2. Who is covered by the policy

2.1. This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades at the university, including consultants, contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as ‘staff’ in this policy).

3. The scope of the policy

3.1. All staff are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the university and its services, employees, partners, students, and competitors.
3.2. Breach of this policy may be dealt with under the university’s Disciplinary policy and procedure or the College Statutes and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

4. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

4.1. The Director of Marketing & Communications has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

4.2. The Director of Marketing & Communications is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to the reputation and operations of the university.

4.3. All staff are responsible for their own compliance with this policy and for ensuring that it is consistently applied. All staff should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the relevant Head of Department for escalation.

4.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Head of Digital, or by emailing digital@rhul.ac.uk

5. Using social media sites as a direct representative or in the name of the university

5.1. Only approved staff are permitted to post material on social media as a direct representative or in the name of the university. Any breach of this restriction will amount to gross misconduct.

5.2. Before using social media sites as a direct representative or in the name of the university, or setting up social media accounts in its name staff must:
   (a) have read and understood this policy;
   (b) have sought and gained prior written approval to do so from the Digital Communications Officer responsible for social media, by emailing digital@rhul.ac.uk.

5.3. When using social media as a direct representative or in the name of the university the following condition will apply:
   (a) use must not breach any of the rules set out in section 8, below.

5.4. When using social media as part of a collaborative project, partnership or group that involves one or more external institutions or organisations, and where this usage directly represents or can be associated with the university, the following condition will apply:
   (a) use must not breach any of the rules set out in section 8, below.

6. Personal use of social media

6.1. Under this policy staff can own and manage personal social media profiles.
6.2. Where a member of staff has set up a personal profile, is active on social media in a personal capacity and uses those platforms to share information or views, the following conditions must be met:

(a) use must not adversely interfere with university business or commitments;

(b) should a staff member deliberately or inadvertently interact with a student of the university on social media, in a personal capacity, the principles of the Guidelines on Relationships Involving Staff, Students and Others Closely Associated with the College apply.

7. Work-related posts or activity on personal social media accounts

7.1. The university recognises the importance of social media in shaping public thinking about Royal Holloway and its purpose, work, services, employees, partners and students. The university also recognises the importance of its staff joining in and helping shape debate and direction through interaction in social media.

7.2. Therefore, work-related posts or activity on personal social media accounts are permitted, as long as the following condition is met:

(a) use must not breach any of the rules set out in paragraph 8, below.

8. Rules for use of social media

NB. This list of rules is not exhaustive. Due to the rapidly changing social media landscape, rules may be added, removed or altered to ensure the continuing relevance of the policy.

Whenever a member of staff uses social media, in accordance with this policy, they must adhere to the following general rules:

8.1. Users must not upload, post, forward or link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

8.2. When making use of any social media platform, users must read and comply with its terms of use.

8.3. Users may be honest and open, but must be mindful of the impact their contribution might have on people’s perceptions of the university. If a mistake is made in a contribution, users must be prompt in admitting and correcting it.

8.4. Users must not discuss colleagues, competitors, students or suppliers without their prior written approval.

8.5. When discussing topics that may be inflammatory or controversial, users must adhere to the university’s Freedom of Speech policy. The College is committed to the principles of free enquiry and free speech within the law.

8.6. Users must never publish another individual’s contact details on social media.

8.7. Users must not post copyrighted images, logos, photos or documents unless they have written permission to do so.
8.8 Users must not comment on legal matters related to the university.

8.9 If users notice any content posted on social media that is negative or critical of the university they should report it to the digital communications team by emailing digital@rhul.ac.uk

8.10 When interacting with students on social media in a work related capacity, or where that is a possibility, users must maintain a professional image and relationship.

9. Monitoring use of social media websites

9.1 Staff should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for work purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken under the Disciplinary policy and procedure.

9.2 Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against an individual staff member and the university. In particular uploading, posting, forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on social media, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

(a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);

(b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;

(c) material which is offensive, obscene, criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the university, its students or its staff;

(d) confidential information about the university or any of its students or staff (which a user does not have express authority to disseminate);

(e) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for a user or the university); or

(f) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

(g) material that constitutes bullying, harassment or victimisation.

Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary policy and procedure (for non-academic staff).

9.3 Any member of staff who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform their Human Resources Officer.

9.4 If a member of staff become aware of any use of social media by other members of staff in breach of this policy they should report it to the digital communications team by emailing digital@rhul.ac.uk.