



Fairfield School of Business

# Social Media Policy

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**Version:** 3.2

Category: Policies - Safety, Security and Environment

Owner(s): Academic Board

Approved by: The Board of Governors

Access: **Public** – Anyone can view this document

Scope: This policy applies to all taught provision at Fairfield School of Business (FSB)

# Acceptable Social Media Conduct

The following sets out FSB’s expectations regarding the use of social media by its students and staff, as well as agency staff, volunteers; it builds upon the codes of conduct that students and staff are expected to follow as part of the school’s academic community.

Regulations for the use of the School’s IT facilities are covered separately, however there may be some overlapping of themes regarding communication over company networks. For the avoidance of doubt, where an action would breach the school’s codes of conduct in a physical environment, it would do so in an online one.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Fairfield School of Business is committed to freedom of expression and recognises that the protections in UK law for people to hold and express their own opinions extends to their use of social media. However, the harm to individuals and communities that can be caused by the misuse of social media is well documented and the school has a duty of care to protect people from abusive and bullying behaviour.
- 1.2. It is therefore important for individuals to understand the distinction between personal and professional use of social media, and to be aware of the potential risks and consequences of the content they post, regardless of whether such posts are intended to be public or private, as private posts can easily be shared.
- 1.3. FSB will act in accordance with its policies where it becomes aware that an individual's use of social media gives cause for concern about their suitability to work at or attend the school, or where posts should pose a risk to the school's reputation or its mission.

## 2. Definitions and Applicability

- 2.1. For the purposes of this policy, '**social media**' is defined as any online interactive communication tool which encourages participation and exchanges. Current examples of these platforms include Facebook, 'X' (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, WhatsApp, wikis and blogs.
- 2.2. This policy also covers the practice of '**trolling**,' which refers to inflammatory, insincere, digressive, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community, which are distinguished from genuine academic discourse by the sole intent to intent of provoking emotional responses or dishonestly misleading people.
- 2.3. '**Moderation**' refers to the process by which content and the users that generate content are monitored in an online forum for adherence to the School's Codes of Conduct.
- 2.4. This Policy applies to all members of the school's academic community (both staff and students) and the content they post any social media platform; it applies equally to public as well as private social media postings, where such private postings are made public, regardless of whether the author has consented the publication.
- 2.5. Use of the School's Virtual Learning Environment and employee communications (i.e., emails and instant messaging on Microsoft Teams™) is covered separately in its IT Regulations, but aspects of this policy may apply to any shared forums, where individuals can post content as they would do on social media.

### 3. Online Conduct

3.1. The school's Codes of Conduct apply to individuals' use of social media as they would do in any other circumstances.

3.2. FSB may take action where an individual is found to have used social media to:

- i. make offensive and, or, derogatory comments.
- ii. harass or bully another individual or group in any way,
- iii. engage in the practice of 'trolling' as described in 2.2.
- iv. share indecent or profane content,
- v. dishonestly present themselves as someone else (either real or fictional) with the purpose of deceiving,
- vi. share copyrighted material without proper acknowledgement and permission of the copyright-holder,
- vii. unlawfully share personal data about a person to undermine their rights under the Data Protection Act; this includes the sharing of confidential information relating to any formal school function, such as assessment outcomes or disciplinary procedures.
- viii. seek to represent the school unofficially or present their opinions as being those of the school's without the written permission of the FSB Press Office. This includes using the school's branding and intellectual property (branding, logos trademarks etc.)

Where necessary, individuals should make it clear in their social media posts that views expressed are their own and not those of the FSB. For example, a disclaimer on FSB Blogs can state that the opinions and views expressed in FSB Blogs are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of FSB.

Only authorised individuals in the FSB Press Office can create official FSB social media pages and postings on behalf of FSB, under the approval of Senior Management.

3.3. Further to the above, the school will not permit individuals to advertise their services or post spam or junk messages on its affiliated social media platforms; such content will be removed by moderators without notice and those posting such material may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

## 4. Public Criticism of the School and its Affiliates

- 4.1. Nothing in this policy is intended to deter legitimate criticism of the school posted within public forum, such as for example on a review website, provided such criticism is fair and balanced and based on truthful experiences. However, anyone with a complaint or grievance is advised in the first instance to pursue this through the school's internal procedures, as this will usually be the most effective way to resolve an issue.
- 4.2. The school will usually respond to such feedback in good faith or challenge the views in a respectful way.
- 4.3. Where a public post should contain information which is inaccurate or manifestly untrue to unlawfully bring the reputation of the school into disrepute, FSB will pursue all recourses available to it to up to and including legal action against the individual(s) posting the content.

## 5. Social Media and the Prevent Duty

- 5.1. FSB acknowledges to role of social media in the proliferation of extremist views and the radicalisation of vulnerable individuals. The school subscribes to DfE briefings and training to maintain awareness of prevailing social media risks.
- 5.2. FSB may monitor, record, and block, the use of social media sites and apps where it considers there is risk that a person has been radicalised or drawn into terrorism. In determining whether content viewed, shared or posted falls under this category the school will consider:
  - Whether there are any indications that the person is supportive of terrorism, violent extremism, or is espousing hateful/harmful views that may suggest that they are vulnerable to radicalisation;
  - Whether there is any clear trigger – whether comments, or patterns of behaviour, or evidence of engagement with harmful material – that would justify intervention
- 5.3. Posting, sharing, or downloading terrorist or extremist materials may be a criminal offence under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and FSB will cooperate fully with the authorities when asked to do so.
- 5.4. Students and staff must also be aware of the school's expectation of them to exemplify its values in their interactions on social media during their studies or employment - <https://fsb.ac.uk/british-values>.

## 6. Reporting Misuse

- 6.1. Any evident misuse of social media should be brought to the attention of the FSB Senior Management immediately or by contacting the press office via: FSB PRESS OFFICE - Fairfield School of Business.
- 6.2. Social media posts that give cause for concern about a person's wellbeing or indicate a Prevent concern should be reported to the Campus Safeguarding Officer or the Dean.
- 6.3. Students who feel they are being bullied or harassed can report this confidentially in person or via email to [studentsupport@fairfield.ac](mailto:studentsupport@fairfield.ac) or by speaking to their personal tutor or course leader.
- 6.4. Members of staff should, in the first instance speak to their line manager or Head of Department, who will consult with the HR (Human Resources) Department. If the matter is not resolved informally, then a formal grievance can be raised with the HR department.

## 7. Moderation of the School's Social Media Platforms

- 7.1. FSB's affiliated social media platforms are monitored and updated by the Press Office on a regular basis and comments and material shared will be moderated by the Marketing Team to ensure it abides by FSB's policies and codes of conduct.
- 7.2. The school will ensure that the principles of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression are upheld on its affiliated social media platforms; FSB's moderators will receive appropriate training and guidance from senior academics in discharging this responsibility.
- 7.3. All data protection protocols will be upheld by moderation or editing of content on FSB Affiliated Social Media sites, but moderators will not seek to suppress legitimate discourse
- 7.4. FSB reserves the right to remove any posts that breach this policy in respect of Section 3.

## 8. Breach of the Social Media Policy

- 8.1. FSB will act in accordance with its policies and procedures as appropriate to the nature of any breach of this Policy.

- 8.2. Where breaches are investigated as potential misconduct, judgements will be made based on information available to the reviewing panel, regardless of how this information has come to FSB's attention; this means that comments or materials posted over a private network that have been made public, either with or without the consent, will be considered.
- 8.3. Sanctions for breaches of conduct will be administered in line with the school's disciplinary procedures and potentially those of the awarding body where applicable.
- 8.4. FSB will not under any circumstance require an individual to surrender access to a private social media account or network, as to do so would be unethical and a breach of that person's privacy. It may however extract a record of their actions on any IT platform or server operated by the school.

## 9. Student and Staff Blogs

- 9.1. Student and staff blogs are an opportunity to discuss topical ideas and highlight research and academic expertise within FSB. The following process is to be followed where individuals wish to use FSB's platform to share their ideas and opinions:
  - Blogs must be submitted to the Marketing Department for approval and sign off; The Marketing department will ensure the post does not breach FSB's codes of conduct or policies and will seek advice from senior academic staff where it has any concerns.
  - All blog articles give the views of the respective author, and not the position of FSB.
- 9.2. If a blog contributor or reader wishes to raise a complaint about comments or linked blog content, this must be discussed with their course leader, line manager or the Press Office in the first instance.

## 10. Policy Review and Update

- 10.1. FSB's Principal and Legal Advisor shall be responsible for reviewing this Policy to ensure that it meets all applicable legal requirements and reflects best practice and changes to this policy will be approved by FSB's Board of Governors.

## Appendix A: General guidance for those using the school's platforms

**Be clear:** social media is an informal method of communication, so the tone can be informal if it does not undermine the clarity of the post; be aware that humorous or ironic posts could be taken out of context and cause offence.

**Be courteous:** Some online interactions can be volatile, tempting users to behave in ways they otherwise would not. Do not forget that anything posted online can be seen by anybody, and it might not be possible to remove it.

**Be secure:** Never share confidential or sensitive information. The School's Data Protection Policy will help in understanding the level of confidentiality of diverse information.

**Be focused:** Ensure that items posted have relevance to the discussion or theme of the forum, avoid posting irrelevant or frivolous comments or material.

**Be honest:** If a mistake is made, do not try and delete it: followers may receive the message anyway. Instead, apologise and move on;

**Be transparent:** If participating in a social media affiliated with the school, clearly state your role and goals. Staff members should discuss with the FSB Press Office whether they are empowered to respond directly to users and when approval may be required.

Including a disclaimer ("all views are my own") can help clarify the status of a personally managed account but does not give licence to use social media irresponsibly.

## Appendix B: Legal Framework

**The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 (section 43(1))** places a statutory obligation on Higher Education Providers in England and Wales to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers.

This duty 'within the law' extends to ensuring 'so far as is reasonably practicable, that the use of any premises of the establishment is not denied to any individual or body of persons on any ground connected with (a) the beliefs or views of that individual or of any member of that body; or (b) the policy or objectives of that body.'

Under section 43(3), the School is also required to issue, and keep up-to-date, a policy of practice on freedom of speech, setting out the procedures to be followed by students and staff in connection with the organisation of meetings and activities which fall within any class specified within this policy, together with the conduct required of staff and students in connection with such meetings and activities.

For the purposes of the Act, the School's duty extends to Student Union activities.

**The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA)** makes it clear that all universities and colleges which register with the Office for Students (OfS) must uphold the existing laws around freedom of speech and follow the OfS's regulatory framework. Under the framework the governing bodies of registered universities and colleges should take 'such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured within the provider.'<sup>4</sup> HERA also includes a general duty for the OfS to protect institutional autonomy including academic freedom.

**The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023** requires universities, colleges and students' unions in England to take steps to ensure lawful freedom of speech on campus. This doesn't include unlawful speech, such as harassing others or inciting violence or terrorism. It is for universities, colleges and students' unions to consider whether the speech is lawful, by taking into account criminal law such as the Public Order Act 1986 and legislation such as the Equality Act 2010. They will also set out and publish a code of practice for freedom of speech on campus.

**The Education Reform Act 1988** (section 202) (reinforced by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017) makes clear that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions.

**The Public Order Act 1986 creates** criminal offences relating to public order; to control public processions and assemblies; to control the inciting of racial hatred or on the grounds of religion or of sexual orientation.

**The Protection from Harassment Act 1997** creates both civil and criminal offences for harassment and makes provision for protecting persons from harassment and similar conduct.

**The Human Rights Act 1998** Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion); Article 10 (freedom of expression); and Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association).

**The Equality Act 2010** requires the school, in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between diverse groups.

**The Terrorism Act 2006** creates offences relating to the encouragement of terrorism and dissemination of terrorist publications, including publishing, or causing another to publish, a statement likely to be understood as a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement to the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism with the intent that members of the public will be directly or indirectly encouraged or otherwise induced by the statement to commit, prepare or instigate acts of terrorism, or being reckless as to whether that effect will be caused. 4 Office for Students: Advice and guidance – Freedom of Speech 8

**The Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015** creates a general duty on the school when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism having regard to the duty to secure freedom of speech imposed by section 43(1) of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 when carrying out that duty.



## Version Tracking:

Version	Author / revisions by	Changes summary	Approved by	Date
1.0 – 1.1	Principal Head of Marketing	Original version and annual updates	Executive Committee	Mar 2017 Sep 2018
2.0 – 2.1	Quality Audit Manager Legal Advisor	Revised scope, additional provision for intellectual property, clarification on Prevent Duty and social media	Board of Governors	Sep 2019
2.2	Quality Audit Manager Legal Advisor	Annual review and update	Board of Governors	Oct 2020
3.0	Quality Manager Head of Marketing	Substantial revision to all sections and addition of legal framework.	Board of Governors	Jan 2022
3.1	Quality Unit	No major changes, review date put forward to September 2023.	Board of Governors	Sep 2022
3.2	Quality Manager Designated Prevent Lead	Minor procedural updates align to revised EQD policy – refence to new legislation.	Board of Governors	Jan 2024

**Date of next review:** September 2025