



Fairfield School of Business

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Social Media Policy

Version	3.3 Public
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Category	Regulations
Approved by	Board of Governors

Abstract:

FSB recognises the importance of social media in public life and the valuable role it has in promoting community, freedom of expression and the free sharing of ideas. We also acknowledge the risks that improper social media use can potentially have on the wellbeing, livelihoods and reputations of individuals. This policy seeks to minimise these risks by promoting a shared understanding of what, in FSB's view is and is not acceptable.

Applicability:

This policy is intended to cover the use of all and any social media platforms used by staff or students at Fairfield School of Business (FSB), subject to the limitations set out herein. 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 to the publication.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- *FSB's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (Student)*
 - *FSB's Employee Handbook*
 - *Freedom of Expression Policy*
 - *Academic Freedom Code of Practice*
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NB: Regulations for acceptable use of the School's IT facilitates are covered separately. However, there may be some overlapping of themes relating to 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.

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 FSB has a duty of care to protect people from abusive and bullying behaviour. It is therefore important to understand the distinction between personal and professional use of social media, and to be aware of the potential risks and consequences of posing content, regardless of whether such posts are intended to be public or private, as private posts can easily be shared.
- 1.2. 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, or attend a course at FSB, or where posts should pose a risk to the School's reputation or its mission.
- 1.3. Any breach of the Social Media Policy will be managed under the appropriate FSB disciplinary procedures.
- 1.4. Nothing in this policy is intended to have the effect of limiting academic freedom or freedom of expression within the law. Our Code of Practice on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Policy affirm our commitment to securing people's statutory right to question and test received wisdom and put forward innovative ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without jeopardising their academic or professional standing within FSB.

2. Definitions

- 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. 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. FSB Codes of Conduct apply to individuals' use of social media as they would do in any other circumstances.

3.2. FSB may take action against individuals where they use social media to:

- i. make offensive or derogatory comments,
- ii. harass or bully another individual or group in any way,
- iii. engage in the practice of 'trolling',
- 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 FSB unofficially or present their options as being those of FSB without the written permission of the FSB Press Office. This includes using FSB's 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, FSB 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 FSB posted within a 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 FSB's internal procedures, as this will usually be the most effective way to resolve an issue.
- 4.2. FSB 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 FSB 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. FSB 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 FSB 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 required to do so.

6. Reporting Misuse

- 6.1. Any evident misuse of social media should be brought to the attention of FSB's 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 a Designated 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 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. FSB 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 FSB's disciplinary procedures and potentially those of the awarding body where applicable.
- 8.4. FSB will never 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.
- 10.2. 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 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 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 or platforms (including online platforms) 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'.

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 builds upon the provision within the Education (No2) Act in relation to freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education institutions and in students' unions; and for connected purposes. The legislation is intended to strengthen the legal requirements on universities and colleges in relation to free speech and academic freedom and assert the [Office for Students](#)' regulatory role.

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.'⁴ HERA also includes a general duty for the OFS to protect institutional autonomy including academic freedom.

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.

Document governance

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**Responsible for updates to this content.*

***To be consulted on updates to this content.*

Versions

Version no.	Description of Changes	Approved by	Date
0.1 Draft	Original draft	-	-
1.0 – 1.1	Original version and annual updates	Executive Committee	Mar 2017 Sep 2018
2.0 – 2.2	Revised scope, additional provision for intellectual property.	Board of Governors	Sep 2019 Oct 2020
3.0	Substantial revision and addition of legal framework	Board of Governors	Jan 2022
3.1 – 3.2	Minor procedural updates. Alignment with EDI policy	Board of Governors	Sep 2022 Jan 2024
3.3	Review of Freedom of speech clauses, other minor revisions. policy ownership	Board of Governors	April 2025

