



Social Media Policy

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Aims and Objectives

New Collaborative Learning Trust (NCLT) recognises the benefits and opportunities that new technologies offer. This policy outlines the responsibilities of, and sets out the principles by which, all those who use the Trust and college IT infrastructure and social networking sites are expected to follow, whether on the premises or remotely. The policy applies to all employees, students, contractors and volunteers. It supports the Acceptable Use Policy and Staff and Student Codes of Conduct and aims to ensure that organisational risks are effectively managed in order to:

- Safeguard young people
- Protect the reputation of the Trust, staff and students
- Protect the IT infrastructure
- Encourage good practice.

Definitions and Scope

Social media is the term used to describe the online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to share information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social networking applications include but are not limited to blogs, online discussion forums, collaborative spaces and media sharing services, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, WhatsApp, snapchat etc.

The Trust is committed to maintaining confidentiality and professionalism at all times, whilst also upholding its reputation by ensuring employees and students exhibit appropriate conduct.

Data Protection and Monitoring

Computers and devices which are the property of the Trust are primarily designed to assist in the performance of work duties and to ensure the appropriate use; the Trust's internet software monitors all website visits by employees and students for business and security purposes. Therefore, staff and students should have no expectation of privacy when it comes to the sites they access from college computers and devices or from their personal devices via the college wired or wireless network.

The Trust will adhere to its obligations under the legislation relevant to the use and monitoring of electronic communications, which are predominantly the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000; the Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000; the Communications Act 2003; GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018; the Human Rights Act 1998; the Defamation Act 1996; the Equality Act 2010 and the Computer Misuse Act 1990.

Permission should be sought from the IT Support Department to download software to avoid viruses. Security features such as firewalls will be managed by the IT Support Department.

Acceptable Use of Social Media

The Trust IT systems are first and foremost educational/business tools, and as such personal usage of the systems is a privilege and not a right. Students and staff are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites where this is part of the normal work relating to their work or studies. Those responsible for contributing to the Trust's social media activities should be aware at all times that they are representing the Trust. Other than that, staff and students should limit their use of social media to break/lunch times and/or when travelling (before and after working hours) unless directed to access such a site for educational or work purposes. Its use at College should be restricted to the terms of this policy.

The Trust accepts that students and staff may wish to use social media channels as a way of communicating personally with the public and/or friends. Staff and students may wish to use their own personal devices, (including laptops, handheld devices and smart phones) to access social media websites, while at college. Staff and students should be aware that the terms of this policy extend to this type of use. Personal use of social media should not interfere with studies or work and abuse of this policy will be considered a disciplinary offence as outlined in the Student/Staff Code of Conduct.

Students are not permitted to video lessons in any form for their own purposes or for the purposes of others, unless in exceptional circumstances where they have asked for and been given permission to do so by the teacher. Please note even where permission has been given to video, any images should not be forwarded, published amended or placed on any electronic media platform without explicit authorisation of the person/people on the images.

When staff use blogs to discuss their work, they must ensure that confidential information is not revealed. This might include aspects of Trust/College policy or details of internal discussions. If in doubt about what might be confidential, staff members should consult their line manager. If a blog makes it clear that the author works for NCLT or a college, it should include a simple and visible disclaimer such as "these are my personal views and not those of NCLT". Staff members who already have a personal blog or website, or are considering starting blogging, and which indicates in any way that they work at the Trust/college should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with their line manager who should then inform the IT Support Department.

The IT Support Department is responsible for the writing, overseeing, monitoring and updating of the Trust and College entries on the free online encyclopedia Wikipedia in association with senior staff. No staff or student must write or edit the Trust/college entry. Staff and students should always contact the IT Support Department if they find errors in online encyclopedias relating to NCLT/New College (such as Wikipedia).

Abuse of this policy will be considered a disciplinary offence.

Privacy Settings and Personal Information

Default privacy settings for some social media websites allow some information to be shared beyond the individual's contacts. All staff and students should be mindful of the information

they disclose on social networking sites. Through the open nature of such sites, it is also possible for third parties to collate vast amounts of information.

In such situations, the user of the site is personally responsible for adjusting the privacy settings for the account. The IT Support Department would be happy to assist anyone who is unsure how to do this.

Responsibilities

All staff and students are responsible for complying with the requirements of this policy and for reporting any breaches of the policy to their Progress Tutor in the case of students and their line manager or Human Resources in the case of staff. If staff or students have concerns about information or conduct on social media sites that are inappropriate, offensive, demeaning or could be seen to be harassment/bullying, they should also report this to the above immediately. If appropriate the Trust may report an offence to the Police.

The IT Support Department is responsible for maintaining the computer systems and for supporting staff and students in the proper usage of the systems.

It is the responsibility of staff and students to choose a strong and secure password.

Staff have the responsibility and a professional duty to ensure confidentiality, both inside and outside of work. Where reasonable staff must ensure that no personal information is disclosed in the public domain where individual students or other staff can be identified. Accidental disclosure could lead to disciplinary measures, and willful and malicious posting could constitute a breach of the rights and freedoms of the data subject and could therefore be deemed a criminal act.

Appropriate Conduct – Staff

The line between public and private, professional and personal is not always clearly defined when using social media. If an individual identifies themselves as a member of the Trust/college staff (even if indirectly), this has the potential to create perceptions about the Trust/college to a range of external audiences and also among other colleagues, students and friends.

When communicating either in a professional or personal capacity, within or outside the workplace, employees and students must:

- Conduct themselves in accordance with other policies, procedures and the Code of Conduct and GDPR.
- Be professional, courteous and respectful as would be expected in any other situation. Think carefully about how and what activities are carried out on social media websites.
- Be transparent and honest. The Trust will not tolerate employees making false representations. If employees express personal views, it should be made clear that the views do not represent or reflect the views of the Trust/college.
- Be considerate to their colleagues and not post information when they have been asked not to. They should also remove information about a colleague or the organisation, if that colleague asks them to do so.

The following are examples of inappropriate conduct:

- Engaging in activities that have the potential to bring the Trust/College into disrepute or that may have the potential to cause serious harm to the business.
- Breach of confidentiality by disclosing any personal information.
- Making comments that could be considered to be bullying, harassing or discriminatory.
- Posting remarks which may inadvertently cause offence and constitute unlawful discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation.
- Posting or uploading inappropriate comments, images, photographs and/or video clips about colleagues, ex-colleagues, governors, students or ex-students, parents or carers.
- Publish defamatory and/or knowingly false material about the Trust/College, other employees/students.
- Engaging in discussions or anything which may contravene the Trust's Single Equality Scheme.
- Use of offensive, derogatory or intimidating language which may damage working relationship.
- Pursuing personal relationships through social media with any current students or ex-students for 2 years after them leaving college.
- Participating in any activity which may compromise the individual's position at the Trust/college.
- Behaviour that would not be acceptable in any other situation.
- Knowingly accessing, viewing or downloading material which could cause offence to other people or may be illegal.
- Posting any material that breaches copyright legislation.
- Doing anything that may conflict with the interest of the Trust/College.
- Using social media website in any way which is deemed to be unlawful.
- Be mindful that any posts that you make using social media sites are generally in the public domain for a long time and can be accessible by future employers and this may hinder your future progression.
- If your social media profile states that you are an employee of NCLT/New College, it should also state that the views expressed are your own and do not represent the college.

The above examples are not exhaustive or exclusive. Any breach of this policy and any excessive personal use of social media websites will be dealt with in accordance with the Trust disciplinary procedure. Information available on social media sites could be produced as evidence by either the trust/college or employee/student, should it be necessary either as part of the college procedures or in legal proceedings.

Appropriate Conduct – Students

All students should ensure they adhere to the following points;

- Students should not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame other students, their family members, members of staff or bring the Trust/college into disrepute.
- Students should not post content that may be viewed as racist, homophobic, bigoted or demeaning to a particular group of individuals.

- Students should not post/transfer messages/images that are sexual in nature, depict graphic violence or which may offend on the basis of race, sex, religion, national or ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- Students should not have any contact with any member of staff through any personal social medium.
- Be mindful that any posts that you make using social media sites are generally in the public domain for a long time and can be accessible by future university or employers and this may hinder your future progression.
- If your social media profile states that you are a New College student it should also state that the views expressed are your own and do not represent the Trust/College.

Relationships on Social Media Websites

Social media is used by many people, particularly students to communicate with their peers and the public and by the Trust/College itself on official, rather than personal pages of websites such as Facebook. However, in the same way that staff would not pass on their personal address or contact details to students, employees must not form personal relationships with any students or ex-students for 2 years after the student leaving college and must ensure that professional boundaries are maintained at all times. Entering in to such relationships through social media websites may lead to abuse of an employee's position of trust and breach the standards of professional behaviour and conduct expected.

An exception to this would be in the case of an immediate family member and this should be brought to the attention of your line manager immediately.

WhatsApp communication between staff and students is inadvisable; communication of teaching resources only should only be carried out through the Trust approved channel (Teams). The Trust's policy is that communication through Facebook, Instagram, Teams etc.. are for College teaching resources only, and should only be permitted on accounts and profiles which have been approved by the Data Protection officer/ head of school. Personal accounts should not be used for College purposes.

Equally, students must not accept and/or invite employees of the Trust to be 'friends' on personal social media accounts or other online services, unless there is a departmental account which has been created specifically and solely for academic purposes.

Should a circumstance arise where a member of staff has unknowingly interacted with a student on social media, the Trust would expect there to be a disclosure made to Human Resources immediately the situation becomes apparent and the interaction discontinued straight away.

Staff are also advised to consider the appropriateness and impact of relationships on social media with work colleagues.