NUS
Social Media Policy

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Related Policies:	**a)** Data Protection **b)** Information Technology **c)** Staff Disciplinary **d)** Officer Disciplinary **e)** Code of Conduct **f)** Staff Protocol **g)** Equality, Diversity and Inclusion **h)** Dignity at Work **i)** Recruitment and Selection		

REVIEW HISTORY		
Date	**Name**	**Notes**
Feb 2019	Claire Marsland	_Review and rewrite_
May 2021	Jane Gilchrist	_Review and amendments_
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Social Media Statement

NUS recognises that social media provides unique and positive opportunities to participate in interactive discussion and share information with a wide range of audiences and stakeholders. However, improper use of social media can pose risks to our reputation, our confidential and proprietary information, and could jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations. It could also undermine our drive to promote a healthy organisational culture and healthy political spaces.

To support the safe and productive application of social media, we have written rules to explain the standards expected when using it in communication and interaction, both internally and externally. We expect social media users to adhere to this policy, to minimise the risk of damage to any individual, or to our organisation's reputation or business interests.

nus
national union of **students**

1. Scope

1.1   The policy applies to all employees of National Union of Students (UK) and NUS Students' Union Charitable Services. The policy applies to full or part-time employees including full time elected officers, agency workers, self-employed contractors, consultants, board directors, trustees, committee members and volunteers. It applies to election candidates from the point of nomination and event delegates for the duration of an event. NUS also considers that the policy applies to anyone who 'holds themselves out to be' a representative of NUS – as such it covers those who do not actually have a relationship with NUS but present themselves as some kind of spokesperson for NUS. All of these individuals will be collectively referred to as **'social media users'** in this policy.

1.2   Where the policy refers to 'NUS' it means both National Union of Students (UK) and NUS Students' Union Charitable Services or a company under their control.

1.3   'Social media' are websites, interactive media and applications that enable users to create and share content, to notify and communicate quickly, or to participate in social networking and dialogue.

1.4   The policy deals with all forms of social media including Google, LinkedIn, X/Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, Wikipedia, Meta (inc. Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Threads), TikTok and all other social network sites and internet postings, including blogs.

1.5   It applies to the use of social media for both personal (where it can be linked to NUS) and business purposes, during office hours and otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether social media is accessed using NUS IT facilities or equipment, or equipment belonging to individuals personally.

1.6   In relation to employees, this policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time. Amendments to this policy will be discussed, and if necessary agreed, with the recognised trade union as identified in the union recognition agreement.

2. Purpose

2.1.   The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines to users of social media on how it should be used personally and in an organisational context.

2.2.   To set out the risks presented when these guidelines are not followed.

2.3.   To set out the context in which NUS and social media users may use social media and the standards of responsible use.

2.4.   To clarify the action that will be taken if the policy is breached.

3. Principles

3.1.   All NUS staff and social media users are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of business and professional conduct, and for upholding our organisational values.

3.2.   NUS recognises the value and impact that social media has when used appropriately. We recognise that people use social media in both their personal and professional lives, and our policy reflects this.

3.3.   All social media users share responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. Any social media user who sees something on social media which breaches this policy, or which may be damaging to other users or to our organisation's reputation, should report it to their line manager as soon as possible.

3.4. A breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action via the appropriate conduct policy depending on the type of social media user. For employees, this action may be up to and including dismissal.

3.5. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether NUS equipment or facilities were used for committing it.

3.6. Any social media user suspected of committing a breach will be required to cooperate with our investigation into it.

3.7. Social media users may be required to remove postings which are judged to be a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with this request may result in disciplinary action.

4. Responsibility for this Policy

4.1. The NUS UK and NUS Charity Leadership Teams have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

4.2. The Leadership Teams of NUS UK and NUS Charity will monitor and review the implementation of this policy and related procedures on a regular basis, to ensure NUS responds to relevant new developments and acts in accordance with best practice.

4.3. All social media users are responsible for the success of this policy and should comply with its terms. Users should ensure they take the time to read and understand it.

4.4. Any misuse of social media should be reported to your line manager or a member of the NUS UK or NUS Charity Leadership Team. Line managers may seek support and guidance from the Directors of NUS UK or NUS Charity on any action to be taken.

4.5. Questions about the content or application of this policy should be addressed to the line manager who may seek support and guidance from the Directors of NUS UK or NUS Charity on any action to be taken.

5. Legislation

5.1. NUS will adhere to key legislation in our social media policy:

- Defamation Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Investigatory Powers Act 2016
- Investigatory Powers (Interception by Businesses etc. for Monitoring and Record-keeping Purposes) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/356)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679 EU)

6. IT Equipment, Storage and Access

6.1. NUS' IT and communications equipment are organisational tools which exist primarily to help employees to perform their professional duties and meet their work obligations. This is set out in our Information Technology Policy.

6.2. The content of NUS IT resources and communication systems are our property. We may store copies of data or communications for a period of time after they are created and delete them in line with our Data Retention Schedule.

6.3. We reserve the right to monitor and review social media users' online activities using our IT resources and communications systems, to ensure our policy is being complied with and for legitimate business purposes.

6.4. Social media users should note that email, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp and other instant messenger material on NUS' IT equipment and systems are retrievable, even if deleted locally. They can be accessed in an investigation and used as evidence in any disciplinary or legal action, where relevant.

6.5. Social media users may wish to use their own personal devices to access their own social media while at work. Ideally such access should be confined to lunch periods or other short breaks. Personal use of social media should not be excessive and should not interfere with them carrying out their professional duties and responsibilities whilst at work.

7. Responsible Use of Social Media

7.1. The distinction between private, professional and personal use of social media may not always be well defined and this can present risks to NUS. Many of our stakeholders' view of NUS and our work is through social media. Any social media user who posts on social media and who identifies themselves as an officer, volunteer or staff member, even in a personal capacity, has the potential to create perceptions about NUS to their audience and they should remain aware of this.

7.2. Social media users are personally accountable for what they post, past and present, on social media and may be held liable for it where it compromises themselves, others or NUS.

7.3. Social media users should adhere, at all times, to the rules of the social media platforms they're using, e.g. Facebook Community Standards, Instagram Community Guidelines, X/Twitter Rules, etc. Users should note that failure to comply with such rules may result in their access being revoked and action being taken under these rules by the platform owners, separate from any action NUS might take.

7.4. Social media users should be professional, courteous and respectful at all times while using social media.

7.5. Social media users should be mindful of the fact that social media is not a place to criticise work, individuals or teams as set out in the Staff Protocol policy.

7.6. NUS understands that working in a competitive political environment, where people have strong and passionately held views, often generates robust and fast-moving debate and, potentially, unhealthy political behaviours. Social media users should consider carefully their approach, language and tone when using social media and should remain aware of the potentially damaging impact that their posts could have on others. Everyone has the right to work in an environment free from intimidation or aggression.

7.7. Under the terms of GDPR and data protection social media users should always avoid sharing personal information about others in their posts (e.g. names, email addresses etc).

7.8. Personal and professional use of social media should be kept separate to avoid posting from or linking to the wrong account.

7.9. Where users of social media are expressing a personal view, the post should be made from a personal account, and it should make clear that it is their own view which does not reflect or represent the view of NUS as an organisation.

7.10. Where expressing personal views in line with clause 7.9, users should still adhere to the terms of this policy in their posts.

7.11. Social media users should ensure that their privacy settings are adjusted appropriately to minimise the risk of material or posts being visible beyond their intended audience.

7.12. When using social media, users should remain aware that conversations on social media are public. Even within a private group or when using direct messaging, there is no guarantee that the message will not be shared with a wider audience, either accidentally or deliberately. Social media users should not have an expectation of privacy on social media platforms.

7.13. If any social media user sees content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on NUS or our stakeholders, they should contact their line manager to report it as soon as possible. All social media users share responsibility for protecting our business reputation.

8. Prohibited Activity

8.1. Social media users are prohibited from using social media to:

8.1.1. Jeopardise or breach NUS' confidentiality or intellectual property

8.1.2. Breach our obligations relating to the rules of any relevant regulatory bodies, (e.g. Charity Law and party-political campaigning.)

8.1.3. Post material that would breach copyright legislation or the intellectual property of another individual or organisation. (e.g. Sources should be referenced or cited appropriately. Similarly, images, brand names and trademarks should not be used without permission.)

8.1.4. Breach our Data Protection Policy (e.g. disclosing personal information about another person online, such as an employee or member.)

8.1.5. Defame or disparage NUS or its members, customers, clients, business partners, suppliers, volunteers or other stakeholders (e.g. posting critical or scornful comments about people or products)

8.1.6. Harass, victimise or bully other social media users or third parties in any way or breach our Dignity at Work Policy (including cyber-bullying, stalking or trolling.)

8.1.7. Unlawfully discriminate against other social media users or third parties or breach our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (e.g. using terms which attack, denigrate or ridicule people on the basis of the protected characteristics named in the Equality Act 2010, such as race, gender or age.)

8.1.8. Breach any other laws or ethical standards, such as using it in a misleading, malicious or false way (Examples include posting offensive material such as

pornography or extreme violence, offensive language such as excessive swearing or malicious name-calling, claiming to be someone other than yourself, revealing sensitive or personal information about someone to cause distress or damage).

8.2. Social media should never be used in a way that would breach any of our published policies, protocols or codes of conduct. If a social media post would breach a policy in another forum, e.g. face-to-face or in writing, it will also breach it in an online forum.

8.3. Where social media users have any doubt about whether their use of social media could constitute a risk to the organisation, or they're unsure what policies or regulations apply, they should speak to their line manager before posting. Advice and guidance can be sought from a member of the NUS UK or NUS Charity Leadership Team.

9. Cyber-Bullying

9.1. Trolling, cyber-bullying or any other form of online abuse, intimidation or harassment will not be tolerated. Activity such as this can have a profoundly damaging and undermining impact on people, adversely affecting them both personally and professionally.

9.2. Any social media user who is found to have engaged in any kind of online abuse, such as cyber-bullying or trolling, will be subject to disciplinary action via the appropriate conduct policy depending on the type of social media user. Such activities may be considered gross misconduct, which can result in dismissal.

9.3. Anyone who feels that they themselves, or someone else, is being subjected to trolling, cyber-bullying or other online abuse should speak to their line manager or, in their absence, their Department Director, without delay. Please refer to the Dignity at Work Policy for further information.

9.4. NUS will support social media users who have experienced or who are experiencing online abuse. Support can include practical measures such as ensuring that they understand how to block unwelcome online contact, getting abusive content taken down, contacting the social media platform where their platform rules have been breached, and by reporting the matter to the police, where necessary.

9.5. Emotional support will also be offered to protect the mental health and personal wellbeing of those affected. Guidance and advice should be sought from the HR Team in relation to this.

10. Business Use of Social Media

10.1. Social media users are permitted to make responsible use of social media sites from NUS' IT network where this is part of their normal duties of work.

10.2. Staff have direct internet access from their work phones and computers and, as such, have scope to access social media and other internet sites at their discretion. Where they do so, it must be in full compliance with all aspects of this policy.

10.3. Social media users who manage social media accounts on behalf of NUS should ensure that accounts are password-protected, and that passwords are kept safely. Passwords for these NUS accounts should be shared with their Department Director to ensure business continuity in line with the communications protocol.

10.4. Social media users who take part in NUS' social media activities should be aware that they are representing NUS as an organisation. Where users are required to speak on behalf NUS in their role, training and guidance on appropriate and positive use will be given before they do so (e.g. as part of the induction for elected officers, during conferences and elections, in response to press queries etc.).

10.5. Depending on the nature of the topic, we may require social media users to seek approval from a member of the NUS UK or NUS Charity Leadership Team and we may set restrictions on what can be posted, according to either the nature of the communication and/or the sensitivity of the situation at the time.

10.6. Any social media user who is contacted for comment, including via social media, about NUS, its activities or other staff or officers, should direct the enquiry to a member of the NUS UK or NUS Charity Leadership Team. Social media users should not comment or release statements without written approval from a member of the NUS UK or NUS Charity Leadership Team.

10.7. Any social media user who is unsure or has questions about their use of social media for work or personal purposes should feel comfortable and confident about raising the issue. They should speak to their line manager in the first instance. Guidance and support will be available from a member of the NUS UK or NUS Charity Leadership Team.

11. Recruitment and Selection

11.1. NUS uses social media (including X/Twitter, LinkedIn and Workplace) to advertise job vacancies and promote employment opportunities to a wide audience.

11.2. Recruiting managers may be encouraged to raise awareness of job vacancies through their own professional networks.

11.3. We may access professional networking or career development social media sites, such as LinkedIn, to perform due diligence on candidates. Where we do this, we will act in accordance with our data protection and equality policies. For example, we will be mindful of unconscious bias where information relating to a candidate's personal characteristics is disclosed by a review of such sites.

11.4. Recruiting managers should not reference or 'check out' the personal social media accounts of applicants as part of any pre-employment process.

12. Communication Review of Procedures

12.1. NUS will communicate its social media guidance to social media users through induction and periodically through various communications channels.

12.2. The operation of this policy and related procedures will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure NUS responds to relevant new developments and acts in accordance with best practice.

12.3. Employee social media users are encouraged to contact their line manager in the first instance with any suggestions, comments or feedback that they may have on how these policy and procedures may be improved.