

## Principles: Responsible use of Social Media

### 1. SCOPE OF THESE PRINCIPLES

#### 1.1 Purpose of this Framework/Who is covered by this Framework

Social media is a part of everyday life, and is for many a valuable means of communication. The whole of Newman's community uses social media to enrich their personal lives, communications, learning and career opportunities, as well as to further the reputation of the University and bring it to the attention of a wider audience.

This Framework aims to protect members of our University community from the misuse of social media and clarify how this Framework aligns with other university policies and procedures. The Framework is a supportive document intended to help members of our University community to get the best from their use of social media. The University recognises the importance of utilising social media across a wide range of activities and therefore encourages all staff (including workers engaged by the University) to make the best use of social media in line with our [Strategic Framework 2020-2025](#).

These principles provides a framework for **staff, students, contractors, casual staff, Council members and the University's Collaborative Partners** around the use of social media by Newman University community in interactions with Newman University staff, students, potential students and other beneficiary groups. It also aims to ensure that the Newman community are able to make the best use of social media while maintaining a professional environment and protecting themselves as well as the reputation of the University to ensure it is not brought into disrepute or subject to derogatory treatment on any social media platform. These principles communicate the responsibilities of Newman University staff and students when using social media and outlines the consequences of breaching the Principles.

All staff, students, contractors, casual staff and Council members who make comment on University social media channels (central University and local University accounts) and/ or comments pertaining to the University on personal accounts must be aware of and comply with the Principles.

The University considers that this framework is about behaviours where the context highlighted is social media and understanding appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. Consequently, these behaviours could happened face to face or online and therefore, principles apply to **each and every policy document that applies to staff, students, contractors, casual staff and Council members**.

All members of our University community are personally responsible for what they communicate on or through social media

Use of social media must not infringe on the rights, or privacy, of others and we must not make ill-considered comments or judgements about other members of our University community.

We all must be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything posted online.

Any digital material posted online could reach a wider audience than was expected or intended. Once digital content has been created and shared, there is limited control over its permanence and audience.

## 1.2 WHAT IS COVERED BY THE FRAMEWORK

These Principles:

- set out the basis of requirements and expectations of staff and students regarding use of social media pertaining to the University;
- aims to protect the University and its staff and students from potential risks of social media use and to put in place mitigations against these risks, as well as outline how to escalate concerns;
- outlines the responsibilities of users of Newman University branded accounts (including central University accounts and local University accounts such as Faculty and departmental or programme and subject accounts); and
- covers expectations of our community using social media in a personal capacity, especially when personal accounts are being used to comment on matters pertaining to the University.

The social media channels covered by these Principles include **but are not limited to**:

- Social networking websites such as Facebook and WeChat
- Video and photo sharing websites such as Flickr, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube
- Messaging sites such as WhatsApp, Messenger and SnapChat
- Micro-blogging sites such as Twitter
- Networking sites whether personal or professional such as LinkedIn

## 1.3 Postings and messages via social media

These platforms are a simple and effective way to share information and communicate with the rest of the team/groups of students in real-time. Employees must consider what they are using such platforms for, whether it is a primary communication channel or supplementing email. You must think about what information you can share within a message/chat group. Please note that messages may be used as evidence for grievance, disciplinary process or Employment Tribunal and may be requested and released as part of a Data Subject Access request. If you are using these platforms on your personal phone for work purposes, then you may be required to make the contents of the relevant message/chat group conversation accessible. If you would like guidance or training on using instant messaging please contact the CRM and Digital Marketing Officer ([n.sekhon-sharma@newman.ac.uk](mailto:n.sekhon-sharma@newman.ac.uk))

## 1.4 Breach of these Principles

Any breach of these Principles and its associated procedures by staff may be investigated in accordance with the University's conduct and performance management procedures. Breaches of this Principles and its associated procedures by students may be resolved in accordance with relevant University policies, procedures and regulations relating to student conduct.

If you see something disturbing, upsetting or inaccurate on social media relating in any way to the University, please contact the CRM and Digital Marketing Officer by emailing [socialmedia@newman.ac.uk](mailto:socialmedia@newman.ac.uk). If you receive an out of office response please contact the Director of Communications and Marketing or the Marketing Team ([marketing@newman.ac.uk](mailto:marketing@newman.ac.uk)). As with all of the University procedures, reports will be taken seriously and those persons reporting will be provided with the appropriate support.

## 1.5 Procedures Ownership

The procedures underpinning these principles is owned by the Director of Marketing and Communications and the Director of Marketing is responsible for the procedure. It has been approved by the University's

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Operations Team (UOT). Any questions about the operation of this procedure or any concerns that the procedure has not been followed should be referred in the first instance to the Director of Marketing.

## 2. THE FRAMEWORK STATEMENT

### 2.1 Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of this framework are that it will aim to maximise the benefits and opportunities of social media as a communication channel, while supporting our community to communicate safely and responsibly online, while protecting the University's reputation.

### 2.2 Procedures and Guidance

These procedures should be referenced in conjunction with the University policy documents concerning staff, casual staff, contractors, students and Council members.

## 3. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The terms set out in this section apply to these procedures

**Social media:** The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIRP) definition of social media is "the term commonly given to internet and mobile based channels and tools that allow the users to interact with each other and share opinions and content. It involves the building of communities or networks and encourages participation and engagement".

**User-to-user service:** According to the On-line Safety Bill this means an internet service by means of which content that is generated directly on the service by a user of the service, or uploaded to or shared on the service by a user of the service, may be encountered by another user, or other users, of the service.

**Beneficiary groups:** The groups which Newman University exists to serve as set out in the University's Strategy. These are categorised as: our students, who progress to be our graduates and alumni; external organisations (businesses, public entities, the not-for-profit sector and the professions); and Birmingham and the West Midlands region, and wider society.

**Central University accounts:** Official corporate social media accounts that are actively managed and monitored and which represent the work and views of Newman University. These include the main corporate Newman University accounts on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram.

**A Social Media Pile On:** an argument or attack of a large amount of people against a smaller group of people, a person or an individual brand. In real terms this simply means that if someone has a point or gripe to make with a company and posts on social media about it, then lots and lots of other people agree and 'pile on' to this grievance it can cause a real problem for the media and PR relations of the brand that it is happening to.

**Cyberbullying:** Means the use of the Internet and related technologies to harm or harass other people, in a deliberate, repeated, and hostile manner. Cyberbullying behaviour includes (but is not limited to): maliciously spreading rumours, lies or gossip; intimidating or aggressive behaviour; offensive or threatening comments or content; posting private images of an individual without consent; sharing unwanted images; posting comments/photos etc. deliberately mocking an individual with the intent to harass or humiliate

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them; sending messages or posting comments with the intent to trick, force or pressure the receiver into doing something that they would not otherwise be comfortable doing (grooming). In the context of these procedures, **it includes conduct of colleagues in private groups** such as WhatsApp when used for colleagues and teams in the University to communicate with each other.

**Harassment:** When someone behaves in a way which makes another person feel distressed, humiliated or threatened (for example, unwanted contact, abuse and bullying online and stalking).

**Hate speech:** Public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group, based on factors such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. Hate speech includes communications of animosity or disparagement of an individual or a group on account of a group's characteristics such as race, colour, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.

**Local University accounts:** Official social media accounts for areas within Newman University (e.g. Faculties, Department, Subject/Programme areas, Newman Students' Union, departments such as Alumni, Business Engagement and Careers and Placements, as well as Research Institutes and Centres). Local accounts also refer to third parties who manage social media accounts on the University's behalf (e.g. collaborative partners). These are actively managed and monitored and represent the work and views of the area of Newman University that they represent, for example, Faculty or departmental marketing teams or academic colleagues.

**Social media:** Platforms that enable users to create and share information or ideas with others or to participate in social networking, whether known now or developed in the future.

**Trolling:** This is making a deliberately offensive or provocative online post with the aim of causing distress or eliciting an angry response. Trolling behaviour may also include stalking a victim's posts in order to respond in an offensive or provocative manner.

#### 4. INTRODUCTION

The Marketing and Communications team coordinates social media marketing activities for Newman University, managing channels at an institutional level, and liaising with the Faculty and Professional Service teams for local level social media activity as well as other colleagues for other social media accounts across the University. The main social media channels used by the University are: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and WhatsApp.

Newman University regulations and policies apply to staff and students when using social media. It is expected that staff and students will treat others with respect when engaging with Newman University social media accounts and commenting on matters pertaining to the University on social media. These procedures not intended to prevent staff or students from using social media to talk about experiences or to express critical views appropriately, but to support them in doing so to protect them and the University's reputation.

- If a student or member of staff becomes aware of a breach of these Principles, this should be escalated as outlined in this Procedures. Types of unacceptable behaviour include (but are not limited to): cyberbullying; trolling; harassment; hate speech; posting or re-posting fake news, discriminatory material and offensive or defamatory images or using offensive or defamatory language; and any other activity that may bring Newman University into disrepute or threaten the safety of staff and students or anyone connected with the University.

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- Students and staff must bear in mind that posting offensive comments on a public site can damage their reputation, and may be seen by potential contacts and employers, which could consequently call the colleague or student's judgement and character into question.
- There is no compulsion for any Newman University student or staff member to engage on social media, and they are not obliged to engage or connect with any other individual.

Staff may make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media accounts from Newman University devices. Time spent on social media during working hours should be during break times and must not interfere with other duties.

## 5. CREATION OF NEW SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

A list of official social media accounts is available on the intranet page [Newman University Social Media Accounts](#). Staff should consider the following when using an official Newman University social media channel to make a public statement about the University:

- Does the communication have a purpose and a benefit for the University?
- Has permission been obtained from a line manager before a formal request to the is actioned?

Before embarking on a public campaign using social media, all existing channels should be considered before creating a new account. If a new channel is being considered, agreement is required from the CRM and Digital Marketing Officer (email [socialmedia@newman.ac.uk](mailto:socialmedia@newman.ac.uk))

Official Newman University social media channels have a strategic purpose to communicate with key target audiences, to positively promote the Newman University brand.

If a colleague or team wishes to create a new account at either University or local level, careful consideration must be given to its objectives and whether these can be met through an existing account. In addition, other factors need to be considered, such as: the target audience and their information needs; the content to be shared; how producing content and monitoring the account will be resourced; and how this account sits together with those already established across the University. Where several members of staff require access to the same social media account, there must be an agreed designated owner.

Colleagues who wish to create a new account must contact the Director of Marketing and Communications for advice. They will need to confirm the plans for resourcing and ongoing maintenance of the site as well as a content plan for the account's launch and first six months. The Director of Marketing and Communications will be able to advise on naming conventions. The account and its designated owner will be registered with the Marketing and Communications department.

## 6. POSTING ON NEWMAN UNIVERSITY'S CENTRAL UNIVERSITY ACCOUNTS

Posts made on social media accounts representing Newman University are considered to be endorsed by the University. It is therefore essential that before a message is posted by a member of staff or a student, it should be carefully considered to ensure that it will not bring the University into disrepute or damage its reputation.

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Social media marketing activities on University accounts for the University, Faculty or at departmental/department level may be undertaken provided that such use is in an official capacity, has approval from the relevant Director or Executive Dean and acts in accordance with these Procedures. Social media posts on University accounts should reflect the University's brand and values.

Safeguards should be put in place to minimise the risk of communication errors via social media, including checking content with a colleague before publishing. Content posted or promoted on central University accounts must be respectful of and courteous to others.

Content posted or promoted on central University accounts must not in any way contravene [Freedom of Expression Code of Practice](#) and more particularly harass, bully or intimidate others or encourage others to do so; incite violence or hatred; or be abusive in relation to an individual's characteristics such as age, sex, disability, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. Central University accounts must not be used to criticise or argue with colleagues, students, customers, partners or competitors. Colleagues must ensure that posts do not breach confidentiality, make defamatory comments or breach copyright.

Communications through social media must not: include confidential information about an individual or organisation; contain information about the University that is not in the public domain, including commercially sensitive information; breach copyright or intellectual property rules; use a subject's images, video or written content without permission; contain 'spam', such as third party advertisements, affiliate links etc; or appear to link Newman University with groups, political affiliations or other organisations unless there is an official connection. Content must be accurate and must not commit to something which the University does not intend to deliver, with careful attention to adhering to consumer law.

Newman University expects colleagues to strictly adhere to the [Freedom of Expression Code of Practice](#). Furthermore, it is important that intellectual property is considered when posting on social media. Colleagues must consider whether they are permitted to copy information and whether the material being posted is the intellectual property of the individual colleague or the University. If the material being posted does not belong to the individual or the University, it may infringe someone else's copyright, unless they have given prior permission to use the material. Colleagues must also be careful about disclosing intellectual ideas through social media, particularly in relation to inventions that might be patentable. Information on social media sites is unlikely to remain confidential and disclosure could result in the University's inability to register certain intellectual property rights.

In the event of incorrect information being posted on social media, this should be corrected at the earliest opportunity.

## **7. PERSONAL ACCOUNTS**

It is recognised that both colleagues' personal and professional social media accounts can be important channels for colleagues' professional activity, to develop and engage with their professional networks and to raise the profile of their work. When posting matters pertaining to Newman University on personal social media accounts, Section 6 of this Framework applies.

It is imperative that it is clear when a post is a colleague's personal opinion. Colleagues must make it clear on the profile statement of their personal accounts or elsewhere that the views expressed are their own and must ensure that personal views are not positioned as those of the University. If personal accounts are used to comment on a matter pertaining to the University, a disclaimer should be included in the account holder's profile, stating *"Opinions in posts on this account are my own and do not reflect the views of my*

*employer*". However, the presence of such a disclaimer does not provide a defence against any comments made that conflict with the University's policies and any potential breach would be considered under the University's disciplinary policies (staff or students).

Colleagues must consider whether their individual social media accounts are considered professional or personal? For example, individual Twitter and LinkedIn accounts might be used on a professional basis but individual Instagram and Facebook accounts might remain personal and would not be engaged in on a professional basis including accepting connections/followers/friend requests.

Colleagues must carefully consider what they are posting on their individual accounts when it relates to the University, and they must not share confidential or proprietary information under any circumstances. If a concern is raised regarding content posted on a colleague's social media account, the University may request the removal of content. If the matter is considered to be serious (e.g. harassment of a colleague or posting confidential information), it may be escalated and addressed as outlined in Section 9 of these Procedures.

Staff are discouraged from accepting or initiating friend requests from applicants or students in their personal social media accounts, because friends/followers may then have access to everything personal that the member of staff has ever posted.

Where there are good pedagogical or business reasons to use social media, staff should consider platforms such as WhatsApp for time-limited groups or those where details of personal lives are not available for students to access. As an extra safeguard, it would also be good practice to inform a line manager of any use of social media in connection to work.

Students' personal social media activity may be of interest to Newman University if reference is made to the University, its students, staff or other beneficiary groups. The University is likely to be concerned if a post or comment mentioning Newman University breaches any of the principles outlined in these Procedures. Students must not present themselves as speaking as a representative of Newman University on social media without permission to do so by an authorised member of staff.

## **8. CRISIS AND EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

Central University accounts provide important channels of communication with staff, students and wider stakeholders during emergency and crisis situations. Information shared in such circumstances must be very carefully controlled, to ensure it is timely, consistent and accurate. It must be issued in consultation with authorities with which the University is working with, such as the emergency services.

All crisis communications from the University must be issued via the main central the University main social media accounts (email [socialmedia@newman.ac.uk](mailto:socialmedia@newman.ac.uk)). In the event of a live crisis affecting the University, staff, students or others associated with the University, colleagues and students must not make any comment, update or express an opinion on the matter on the University or personal social media accounts.

In order to minimise the risk of issuing conflicting and/ or incorrect information being posted in the event of a live incident, information or updates must not be issued from other Newman University social media accounts (e.g. for departments, subject areas etc). Any questions or enquiries received on other University social media channels during a crisis must be signposted to the main channel.

To make comments in such a situation could have serious consequences, such as undermining a live police investigation. The exception is colleagues with access to the central University accounts with prior authorisation from a member of the University Executive.

## **9. ESCALATION OF BREACHES TO THESE PRINCIPLES**

It should that the University has a duty to report any activity involving criminal or unlawful behaviour to the police.

Members of our University community as users of social media may witness other members of society increasingly using social media for raising complaints and grievances. However, any individual within our University community wishing to raise a complaint, report a crime or an incident should do so via the established university channels, or by contacting the Police; they **should not** raise complaints or air grievances via social media. Individuals should contact the university and/or the Police as soon as possible, saving any evidence, e.g. screenshots of social media. Remember that by airing any grievance or complaint publicly, it may limit any action that can be taken and can lead to civil action against the author if the complaint is found to be false.

Where an employee releases information through social media that may be regarded as Public Interest Disclosure, the University's [Public Interest Disclosure \('whistle-blowing' procedure\)](#) will be considered before any further action is taken.

### **9.1 Breaches by staff, casual staff, Council members, contractors and any member of the organisation of which is a collaborative provider of Newman University:**

Alleged breaches or non-compliance of these Principles must be referred to the Head of Digital Marketing in the first instance for the matter to be reviewed and escalated to the Executive Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Communications if required. If a colleague has not complied or has breached these Principles, the sanctions are as follows:

- If the breach is not considered to be serious by the Director of Marketing and Communications, colleagues in the Marketing and Communications Directorate will seek to resolve the matter informally and directly with the member of staff and, where necessary, their manager.
- If it is considered by the Director of Marketing and Communications to be serious and/ or not resolved after informal attempts to resolve the matter, the Director of Marketing and Communications may refer the matter to the manager or member of UOT who may consider taking formal action in accordance with relevant University performance management guidelines or procedures or applicable policies or contracts.

### **9.2 Breaches by students**

Students' use of social media must comply with the rules of conduct outlined in these Principles. Alleged breaches of these Principles must be referred to the Director of Marketing and Communications in the first instance, and the matter will be escalated to an appropriate member of staff from within the Faculty. They will try to resolve the matter informally if possible, but for serious and/ or continued breaches of these Principles, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the relevant student conduct policy and/or

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regulation (including the Regulations on Fitness to Practise). Sanctions imposed on a student as a result of a breach of this Principles may need to be disclosed in any fitness to practise disclosure request.

## 10. OTHER INFORMATION TO CONSULT:

These principles apply to **each and every policy document that applies to staff, students, contractors, casual staff and Council members.**

However, below are some key policies and also some external sources of support

Newman policies:

[Complaints](#)

[Dignity at Work](#)

[Dignity at Study](#)

[Bring Your Own Device](#)

[Staff Disciplinary Policy](#)

[Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)

[IT User Policy](#)

[General Conditions of Use of Computing and Networking Facilities](#)

[IT Security Policy](#)

[Safeguarding Policy](#)

[Public Interest Disclosure \('whistle-blowing'\) Policy](#)

[GDPR and Data Protection Policy](#)

[Student Charter](#)

[Newman University Expected Conduct](#)

[General Academic Regulations](#)

Other policies/sources of support:

[On-line Safety Bill](#)

[Equality Act: Guidance](#)

[Office for Students statement of expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education](#)

[National Helpline for Cyber Bullying](#)

[National Helpline for Bullying on Social Media](#)

[Revenge porn helpline](#)

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# Annex A – How to use social media

## How to use social media

### Tips and best practice on staying safe and managing your reputation

We all recognise the enormous benefits and opportunities that social media presents and we actively encourage our University community to use social media to communicate and keep in touch with latest news and research in their area.

#### Social media

Despite the opportunities, there are risks. Social media allows individuals to communicate with a potentially large audience, and sometimes its informality can encourage us to be less cautious than we would ordinarily be. Social media is 24-7 and global. It moves quickly and the most effective content is timely. If you are making an external announcement, social media is an integral part of your communications plan for disseminating the news, and shouldn't be an after-thought a week later.

These tips are to help you when you are considering posting on social media. They will help you manage your professional reputation and ensure you follow university guidelines and the law.

The University's Marketing and Communications Directorate are able to provide support and guidance for users of various social media technologies.

Use of social media must not infringe on the rights, or privacy, of others and must not make ill-considered comments or judgements about others.

- **Remember, everything you post online is public.** Once it's out there you lose control of how others might interact with it. Posting anything online (even on closed profiles or private messaging services, like WhatsApp, for example) has the potential to become public, even without your knowledge or consent.
- **Think before you post.** Would you be happy for your family, lecturer or future employer to see it? If not, then it's probably not a good idea to post it. There have been a number of high profile cases where students across the country have been disciplined after offensive comments made on private messaging services, like WhatsApp, were captured and subsequently shared.
- **Think about who you might actually be engaging with.** Take a step back and think! You might find that you are arguing with a bot rather than an actual person, with the bot designed specifically to provoke inflammatory posts. What do you hope to achieve with a post, are you contributing to a pile on? Are you grandstanding to your own echo chamber?

- **If you have published content which invites direct responses, be sure to keep track of the engagement with that post.** This is a good opportunity to communicate directly with stakeholders and visible conversation encourages others to step forward and participate. However, it is also important to keep an eye out for any inappropriate responses or comments on your posts, for example those selling inappropriate items or use of offensive language or images, and remove these.
- **Consider how the content of your messages may appear to others.** Offensive materials, including text, images and video, have the potential to cause serious upset and severely damage your professional and personal reputation. Consider how others may perceive your content. How could a potential employer view the content? **Employers are increasingly checking the digital footprint of potential staff.** This means looking at old tweets, posts and comments on forums. Will sharing the content result in you falling short of expected standards at university and the law? If so, it could result in the university taking disciplinary action. Don't forget, it can be hard to take something back once it has been shared, copied, or redistributed.
- **Check your privacy settings.** Protect your personal information and that of others that could be misused. Think about who can see your address, telephone number, date of birth and email address. And definitely don't share your bank details online. Also remember that while you may be sharing the content privately (on your own private profile or in a private forum) others can share that content publicly if it is available.
- **Use Secure Passwords.** Remember to use a secure password and current advice for this is to use a pass phrase of three or more words that you can picture in your head. Never re- use passwords across different websites. Where possible use second factor authentication methods, which may include sites sending an SMS or an authenticator app on your phone. For further information see <https://www.getsafeonline.org/protecting-yourself/passwords/>
- **Make sure you familiarise yourself with expectations regarding professionalism and confidentiality on your course,** especially if your course is accredited by a professional body. If you breach the code of conduct of a professional body, it is very likely to affect your ability to study and your future career.
- **Be aware of sharing third-party materials.** Do you need permission to share the materials or should you, as a matter of courtesy, contact the party? Make sure you check before posting as infringement of rules could break copyright and/or intellectual property laws.
- **Finally question everything you read online.** Not everything you read might be completely accurate. Who wrote it? Where did it come from? Does the imagery look poor quality? If you think it looks or sounds inaccurate, it's probably best avoided. Writing and distributing inaccurate statements about people and organisations can be unlawful and lead to legal action.