



**BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY**

**Document Administration**

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## BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

### Notes of Guidance on the Use of Social Media

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University recognises that social media is frequently used by students and staff, and acknowledges that social media has the potential to be used positively in the personal, professional and academic spheres.
- 1.2 However, there are some risks associated with social media use of which members of BGU need to be aware. In particular, it is important to understand how use of social media could bring you into conflict with University regulations or how it impacts on your own professional identity.
- 1.3 The scope of this guidance extends to all students and staff who engage in online conversations or share content using social media.

#### 2. Guidelines for use of social media

- 2.1 If your social media presence refers to the University, you should make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the University.
- 2.2 Although social media can be used for private communications, anything you share on social media could end up being publicly available whether by mistake or through malice. Therefore, caution should always be used when choosing what to share. The best practice is **not** to share anything over social media that you really would not want everyone to see.
- 2.3 Always get consent before posting personal details of other people. Remember that whilst you might not want to keep certain things (e.g. location, place of study/work, etc.) private, somebody else may want to do so. Also specifically consider the University's Code of Practice for the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults.
- 2.4 Communication using social media carries the same need as all other communication, that is: to respect everyone's equality and dignity. As stated in the Dignity Policy for Staff and Students: *'Any form of harassment, discrimination, bullying and victimisation is unacceptable.'* Please refer to that policy for definitions of these behaviours as well as the implications and complaint process.
- 2.4 The Procedures relating to Student Disciplinary Offences apply to behaviour on social media, just as it applies to behaviour elsewhere. Misconduct is defined there as: *'improper conduct or obstructing the proper functioning or activities of the University or of those who work and study in the University. It also includes conduct which damages the University or the reputation of the University on or off campus and misconduct of University students within a placement setting.'*



Facebook or other social media sites may be set up for the benefit of groups of students and staff, related to a specific programme or subject; it is to be noted that communication on such sites, even though not moderated by the University, should comply with the University's Codes of Practice.

Members of staff should also familiarise themselves with the Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy and Procedure.

### **3. Guidelines for setting up social media accounts closely connected to the University, or which could be perceived as such**

- 3.1 In the course of your work or study at BGU, you may be required to set up a social media account that is closely linked to such study or work, and where you are therefore representing BGU one way or the other. For instance, you might be promoting your subject or programme, or perhaps an internal department or external-facing service.
- 3.2 When setting up a social media account that is, or may be perceived, as closely linked to BGU, it is important that such accounts have been officially sanctioned by BGU. When considering setting up such an account, please contact the BGU Marketing Department before proceeding. The BGU Marketing Department will help you to ensure that when you are representing BGU, you are following the correct textual, pictorial and content guidelines agreed by and for the University.
- 3.3 BGU asks all its members using social media, and especially those people representing, or appearing to be representing, something on social media on behalf of the University, to keep in mind both the value of truthfulness in communication and also the value of good behavior, remembering that breaking either of these codes may lead to a costly and complex defamation case.
- 3.4 Whilst it is always important to ensure that the information one sends out in any media is accurate and up-to-date, it is especially so when using a social media account that is officially linked to BGU, or that could be perceived as such. Universities need to adhere to legislation such as all relevant Data Protection legislation from 2008 revisions onwards and the Consumer Rights Act 2015, as well as the consumer rights related guidelines set by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). It is crucial for universities that all information provided by them, or on their behalf, is accurate and up-to-date, and that it provides the correct impression of the institution, particularly on the opportunities to study therein. When setting up a linked account, or an account that could be perceived to be linked to BGU, please contact BGU Marketing first for advice on relevant legislation, rules and regulations.

### **4. Reviewing of these Guidelines**

- 4.1 These guidelines will normally be reviewed every three years, unless technological advancements or other developments make an earlier review necessary.