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Social Media Policy – Students

1. Overview

1.1. The Evolution Foundation College recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media presents. We actively use social media to engage with students and the general public, to celebrate success, and enhance the Evolution Foundation College's profile online. Therefore, Evolution Foundation College also actively encourages Evolution Foundation College students to make effective and appropriate use of social media channels and to use them to engage in conversations with the Evolution community.

1.2. Despite the opportunities presented by social media, there are risks. Social media allows individuals to communicate either in their name or anonymously with a potentially huge audience, and sometimes its informality can encourage us to be less cautious than we would be using other more traditional methods of communication and interaction. Inappropriate use of social media can be damaging to the reputation of the Evolution Foundation College as well as have a negative impact on staff and students.

1.3. This policy is for students and provides information on the appropriate use of social media when connected, or linked in some way, to their status as a student of Evolution Foundation College, or when directly or indirectly referencing the Evolution Foundation College in any way.

Scope

2.1. For the purpose of this policy, the term 'Social Media' is used to describe virtual channels dedicated to live streamed or scheduled uploads, community-based input, interactions, content sharing and collaboration through the building of virtual networks and communities.. It also includes any other means of communicating on the internet where members of the public (including staff or students) may reasonably access the communication.

2.2. They currently include, but are not limited to, Facebook (and Messenger), Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Wechat and Pinterest.

2.3. This policy applies to social media communications made both on public and private forums by students including those communications which directly or indirectly reference the Evolution Foundation College. This policy applies to social media from anywhere both on and off-site and on personal devices whether to an individual, group or the world.



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2.4. While posts added to public forums can be seen by any member of the public from the date of publication, students are asked to remember that posts added to private forums can also be shared publicly by others. Students may be subjected to disciplinary action where they have been careless or reckless in the communication they have posted, even when they believe the forum to be private. There have been a number of high-profile cases in recent years where students across the country have been disciplined after offensive comments, made on private messaging services such as WhatsApp, were captured and subsequently shared. With this in mind, students should remember that action can be taken by the Evolution Foundation College if behaviour failing to meet policy guidelines is identified either publicly or privately.

Student responsibilities

3.1. Students are encouraged to be mindful of how their identity, statements or views appear online and are reminded that future employers and industry contacts may view social media profiles when recruiting to gain information about a candidate's character, personality or employability. Students should therefore be conscious of publishing both texts and digital posts that may hinder them, for whatever reason, in the future.

3.2. Students are encouraged to review their existing social media accounts and, where appropriate, to transition to a more professional appearance.

3.3. All students must read and act in accordance with the principles of these guidelines, and any subsequent updates to them.

3.4. In addition, it is recommended that students read and act in accordance with the rules and guidelines set out by individual social media companies and providers.

3.5. Students should check the terms and conditions of a social media account and/or website before uploading material to it; by posting material to social media accounts and/or websites, ownership rights and control of the content may be released. For this reason, it is important to exercise caution in sharing all information, especially where the information, expressly or by implication or innuendo, identifies a third party.

3.6. Students must be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything posted online. Therefore, students should avoid posting anything that:

3.6.1. They do not wish to be in the public domain

3.6.2. Contravenes sections 4, 5 and 6 of this policy.

3.7. Students must be mindful that 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.



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4. Behaviour and conduct on social media

4.1. Students are personally responsible for what they communicate on or through social media and they must adhere to the standards of behaviour set out in this policy and any related policies

4.2. Students as users of social media may witness other members of society increasingly using social media for raising complaints and grievances.

However, any student wishing to raise a complaint, report a crime or an incident should do so via the Evolution Foundation College channels, e.g. Complaints and Appeals Policy, they should not raise complaints or air grievances via social media. This is the fastest way to get a response and resolution to your problem. Students should contact the Evolution Foundation College 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.

4.3. Use of social media must not infringe on the rights, or privacy, of other students or staff and students must not make ill-considered comments or judgements about other students, staff or third parties.

4.4. We recommend that permission to share third party material, including all images, photography, text and videos, should be sought and recorded in a tangible format before uploading them to or linking them via social media. Furthermore, where permission is obtained, we recommend such materials should be credited appropriately.

5. Content Guidelines for Social Media

The following non-exhaustive list is considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be posted:

5.1. Confidential information (which may include research not yet in the public domain, information about fellow students or staff or personal matters, non- public or not yet approved documents or information)

5.2. Details of complaints/potential complaints and/or legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving the Evolution Foundation College

5.3. Personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission

5.4. Comments posted using fake accounts, made-up names or using another person's name without their consent.



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5.5. Inappropriate material, including but not limited to images, that is, or may be perceived to be threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile towards any individual, group or entity.

5.6. Any other posting that constitutes, or may constitute, a criminal offence.

5.7. Anything which may bring the Evolution Foundation College into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of colleagues, former colleagues, students, staff and those connected with the Evolution Foundation College.

5.8. Students should be mindful that statements on social media that cause harm to an individual, including to their reputation, or that interfere with an ongoing disciplinary/legal process may create a potential claim against the individual making the statement. Furthermore, this may extend to the sharing of statements made by others.

5.9. Students should also be aware that communications on social media are also subject to legislation, which aim to prevent interference with legal proceedings regardless of intent to do so.

5.10. An individual, including the complainant, may undermine proceedings or processes by publishing information, including imagery, relating to existing or potential complaints and/or legal proceedings. This may be done in the heat of the moment; however, students should be aware that by doing so they might bring the Evolution Foundation College into disrepute or compromise the safety of the Evolution Foundation College community. As such, this conduct may be seen to be of an unacceptable nature, as per paragraph 5.5 above.

5.11. Students and student groups or societies must take particular care not to state or imply that their views are those of Evolution Foundation College when using social media, nor use the Evolution Foundation College logo at any time.

6. Cyber bullying

6.1. The Evolution Foundation College will not accept any form of bullying or harassment by or of members of the Evolution Foundation College, students or visitors.

6.2. The following non-exhaustive list of examples illustrate the types of behaviour, displayed through social media, which the Evolution Foundation College considers to be forms of cyber bullying:

- Maliciously, negligently or recklessly spreading rumours, lies or gossip
- Intimidating or aggressive behaviour, as perceived by those viewing the social media
- Offensive or threatening comments or content, as perceived by those viewing the social media
- Posting comments/photos etc. deliberately, negligently or recklessly mocking an individual



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with the potential to harass or humiliate them, as perceived by those viewing the social media.

6.3. Cyber bullying may also take place via other means of electronic communication such as email, text, instant message, video, audio or images – edited or otherwise.

7. Student use of official Evolution Foundation College accounts

7.1. Some students may contribute to the Evolution Foundation College’s official social media activities as part of their role, students should be aware that while contributing to the Evolution Foundation College’s social media activities they are representing the Evolution Foundation College.

7.2. Misuse of official Evolution Foundation College accounts may lead to suspension and possible disciplinary action.

8. Breach of the policy

8.1. If a student is found to have acted in breach of this policy this may lead to consideration of disciplinary action being taken against them.

8.2. Any individual suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with any investigation in accordance with the disciplinary procedure.

8.3. Any individual may be required to remove internet or social media posts that are found by the Evolution Foundation College to be in breach of the policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in further disciplinary action.

8.4. Any breach of this policy must be reported in line with Evolution Foundation College’s Complaints and Appeals Procedure. In the first instance, any breaches must be brought to the attention of the Evolution Foundation College Director.

9. Monitoring

The Evolution Foundation College will:

9.1. Ensure this policy, and any changes, is accessible to staff and students

9.2. On occasion, provide guidance for students on how to stay safe online when using social media.

9.3. Monitor references to the Evolution Foundation College on social media and the internet and respond to complaints regarding student conduct on social media.



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9.4. Take disciplinary action where inappropriate behaviour is exhibited that affects students, staff, the Evolution Foundation College or members of the public.

9.5. Annually review and update this policy, where appropriate, and any other associated policy and guidelines and publish details of any change.

10. How to use social media

Tips and hints on staying safe and managing your reputation:

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

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.

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 Evolution Foundation College guidelines and the law.

10.1. **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.

10.2. **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.

10.3. **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?

10.4. **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 Evolution Foundation College and the law? If so, it could result in the Evolution Foundation College taking disciplinary action. Don't forget, it can be hard to take something back once it has been shared, copied, or redistributed.



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10.5. **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.

10.6. **Use Secure Passwords.** Remember to use a secure password. 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/>

10.7. **Make sure you familiarise yourself with expectations regarding professionalism and confidentiality** especially if your role is accredited by a professional body. If you breach the code of conduct of a professional body, it is very likely to affect your future career.

10.8. **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.

10.9. **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.