DOWNING COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE

Social Media Policy

Policy/guidance owner	Junior Bursar
Approving committee	1. Fellowships (FC) 1. General Purposes (GPC) 1. College HR (CHR) 2. Information Management (IMC) 3. Governing Body (GB)
Administrator	College Secretary
Scope	All staff, Fellows, and representatives of student bodies, who directly or indirectly, represent the College online
Last reviewed	FC: 03.05.23 GPC: 22.05.23 CHR: 24.05.23 IMC: 25.05.23 GB: 22.06.23
Next review date	22 June 2026
This document may only be modified with the ratification of the approving committees. Please contact the administrator with any queries.	

Context

The College recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities that a social media presence offers. We aim to share information about the College's activities online to engage both current and prospective students, Fellows, teaching and non-academic staff, clients, and the public. Social media accounts provide a flexible delivery platform, and College staff, where appropriate, are encouraged to make effective and appropriate use of them.

Staff are expected to promote, protect and enhance the College's reputation in their professional use of social media.

This policy provides a framework for staff to use when engaging on social media in a work capacity, or in a personal capacity when referencing the College or their employment.

Scope

For the purposes of this policy, social media is defined as any online interactive communication tool which encourages participation and exchanges. Common examples include; Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn.

This policy is for all those roles, academic, administrative, and representatives of student bodies, who directly or indirectly, represent the College online. It applies to online communications posted at any time and from anywhere, whether to an individual, a limited group or the world.

All communications included in this scope are subject to the relevant rules and policies covering College-related activity. These include, where appropriate, College statutes and ordinances and policies contained in the staff handbook.

Personal usage vs. professional usage

The College respects privacy and understands that staff may use social media accounts in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the College's reputation are covered by this policy.

Professional responsibilities apply regardless of the medium being used. All social media communications that might affect the College's reputation, whether made either in a private or professional capacity, should be thought through carefully.

Professional communications are those posted through a College account. The Communications Manager is responsible for the content of College accounts and, as such, all posting should take place under their direction.

Personal communications are those made via a private social media account. Where a private account is used which clearly identifies Downing College as your employer it should be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the College if there is any possibility of this being misunderstood. Personal accounts must not be created which include any part of the college name in the account identifier or display name. An appropriate disclaimer, such as: "the views expressed here are my own and in no way reflect the views of Downing College" should be included. If you, or the content that you post, links you to the College, you should expect that it could be re-published by the national or international press and by proxy, attributed to the College.

The College is strongly committed to the principle of freedom of speech and expression, and this includes interactions through social media. All members of the College that use social media are expected to use it responsibly and within the law.

Policy

Guidelines for Professional Usage

Staff who contribute to the College's social media activities (for example by managing a Facebook account/running an official Twitter account) must use the same standards of professionalism they use in all other aspects of their work.

Staff who use social media as part of their jobs must follow these rules:
- Give the same regard to confidentiality, ethics and messaging that you would with any other form of communication about the College in the public domain.
- Make sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the College.
- Refrain from disclosing confidential information, personal data, trade secrets, or financial data.
- Refrain from belittling or criticising the College, its competitors or any other third parties.

- Be aware of who owns third-party content, and of any intellectual property restrictions.
- Consider the global nature of social media and make sure communications are appropriate for a global audience.
- Ensure that administrative access to social channels is handled in a secure manner.

New Account Creation

Any individual wishing to open a new College social media account must seek approval from the Communications Manager. The College is, in general, keen to keep the number of College social media channels in use to a minimum. Please consider the following before seeking approval:
- Is there a clear business case, that cannot be met by a pre-existing channel, for creating a new account?
- Do you have a clear strategy and content plan?
- Is there enough time and resource required to run the account?

Requirements:
- Discuss and agree an appropriate account name with the Communications team.
- Set the account up in such a way that multiple people within your department can share the load of running it, or that if a staff member who setup the account leaves, access to the account is still possible. Consider whether it is most appropriate to set up the account using a general email address

Responsibilities
All staff are responsible for:
- Knowing the contents of this guidance
- Attending appropriate training
- Informing the relevant Head of Department where a College account is to be used
- Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content they have posted via local accounts

Line Managers and Heads of Departments are responsible for:
- Addressing concerns or questions regarding posts or comments via official and personal accounts
- Reporting outcomes to the Communications Manager or Junior Bursar.
- Attending additional relevant training

Screening (Job Applicants / Prospective Students / Donors)

Staff will not use social media to screen job applicants, unless there is a legitimate reason to do so (for example, the role has a significant public-facing element to it, or is involved with publicity and presenting the College to the general public). However if aspects of a prospective employee's social media profile are brought to our attention and give rise to concerns about their suitability for the role in question, we may need to consider them.

Security

Staff are responsible for ensuring that passwords and other access controls for College social media accounts are of adequate strength and kept secure. Staff should be familiar with privacy settings and ensure that these are appropriate for both content and intended audience.

When making use of social media accounts there are various security and misuse risks to address. Staff should be aware of the risk of false information being posted on the institution's behalf or of impersonation through the creation of fake accounts.

Staff should ensure that any devices that have social media login details stored on them are set to lock automatically after each use. If any devices which contain login details are lost or stolen, staff should change the passwords of all social media accounts that the device was connected with and let other managers of the accounts and the Communications team know.

Use of other people's materials

Sharing content such as images, photographs and video is extremely popular and easy to do via social media accounts. While this may have value in an educational context, there is a risk of breaching the rights of individuals who own the different media e.g. images rights, patents, copyright in a blog, or rights associated with collaborative outputs. All staff should ensure they have permission or other justification to share content in this way. Content is particularly risky where it is commercially valuable, confidential and/or sensitive.

Staff will not post any images, photographs, videos, text etc. via social media accounts without appropriate permission from the rights holders. If unsure, staff are advised to check permissions attached to digital content prior to posting via social media.

Liking and sharing relevant posts from other user's social media accounts is good practice. It shows that your account is giving back to the community and not just broadcasting its own messages. However, you should validate the authenticity of any users that you would like to share content from.

Personal information

Personal information is information about a particular living person (which includes photography or other recording media). No personal information will be shared via social media accounts without consent unless it is in line with our Data Protection Policy. Any queries or concerns regarding this should be referred to the College Data Protection team (data.protection@dow.cam.ac.uk) prior to posting the information in question.

Moderation

Many social networks offer an opportunity for members of the public to comment below content that you have posted on behalf of the College. If staff have concerns regarding public comments on College social media accounts, please consult with the Communications team who will refer the query onward to the Office of External Affairs and Communications if necessary.

Incidents and response

The College will act immediately to prevent, as far as reasonably possible, any damage to an individual, their rights or the College's reputation. Any stakeholder or member of the public may report an incident to the College. Minor incidents should be dealt with following discussion with your head of department. Serious incidents should be directed immediately to the Junior Bursar. Where it appears that a breach has taken place, the Junior Bursar will review what has happened and decide on the most appropriate and proportionate course of action. Where staff are in receipt of offensive, unacceptable content via social media, this should be reported to a relevant Head of Department immediately. Where questionable content has been sent to the College, the Junior Bursar should be informed prior to any response being submitted.

Unacceptable Conduct

Digital communications by staff should be professional and respectful at all times and in keeping with this guidance. Unacceptable conduct may include, but is not limited to:

- Defamation: damaging the reputation of a person or an organisation;
- Discrimination: making or showing an unfair or prejudicial distinction between different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of gender reassignment, race, age, sex, sexual preference, disability, religion or belief, being married/in a civil partnership or being pregnant/on maternity leave;
- Political: any content that presents the College as having a particular political viewpoint;
- Offensive: profane language or hate speech.
- Harassing/bullying: applying aggressive pressure or intimidation;
- Pornographic: obscene or sexually explicit videos, photographs, writings;
- Proprietary: breach of data protection, communicating trade secrets, pending litigation or disputes, and financial information;
- Infringing copyright law: proper copyright and reference laws should be observed when posting online. If you have not taken the photo, created the imagery or written the wording, then always make sure you ask the owner for permission to use it;
- Promoting or inciting criminal behaviour.

Staff should not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of colleagues or make ill-considered comments or judgments about staff.

Unacceptable conduct will be taken extremely seriously by the College and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant member of staff, and escalated where appropriate. The College will take appropriate action when necessary in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the College will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the College will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies and may take action according to the Disciplinary Policy.

Use of social media at work

The College permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media accounts. Staff would normally be expected only to access personal social media during breaks. Where we suspect excessive use and consider this use to be interfering with relevant duties, staff may be subject to disciplinary action.

Education and training

From time to time the College will provide staff with additional guidelines and training. Staff who use College social media accounts should seek training on relevant safeguards and acceptable practice.

Approving Committees:
Fellowships Committee (03.05.23)
General Purposes Committee (22.05.23)
HR Committee 24.05.23 *(by email circulation)*
Information Management Committee 25.05.23 *(by email circulation)*
Governing Body (22.06.23)