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| **Px**  **VOLUNTEER SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY & GUIDELINES** |  |

**Document Owner: Marketing & Communications Manager**

**Introduction**

1. This document is designed for volunteers who use, or wish to use, social media within their volunteer role at the University of Northampton Students’ Union. The document provides guidance on the Union’s social media policy and usage; how, why and when to use social media; and advice on etiquette and best practice.
2. The Union expects all who administer or contribute to Students’ Union social mediato understand how to use the media appropriately and to read and follow the guidelines set out below*.* Participators should also note that they have a legal responsibility to accurately and fairly represent the Union in any public online space and are expected to uphold the integrity of the organisation. If you have any queries about the policy, please contact the Marketing & Communications Manager.

**Purpose of Policy**

1. The purpose of this policy and set of guidelines is to:
   1. Provide support and best practice guidance for volunteers using or wishing to adopt social media for their student group, which are component parts of or affiliated to the Students’ Union
   2. Encourage effective and beneficial use of social media;
   3. Protect the Union and its community;
   4. Create consistency and coherence across all social media activities.

**Definition of Social Media**

1. Social media is an ever-developing area of technology, with new platforms coming online all the time. The term ‘social media’ is commonly given to web-based applications which allow users to interact with each other and share views, information, interests and other content. Social media is based around online communities or networks and encourages participation and engagement by users.
2. Current leading examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr and YouTube, and tools such as wikis and blogs. However, the social media landscape can and does change rapidly: what is popular today may drop significantly in popularity the following year, and new tools may arise just as quickly. As such this list is not definitive.

**Social Media Channels at the University of Northampton Students’ Union**

1. The Union has embraced the use of social media as an important and valuable part of its communications and marketing activities. Not only does social media allow us to share our news, events, activities and important information with our immediate audiences and with the wider world, but it also allows us to listen, respond and build relationships with our members.
2. The social, conversational element is central to our use of social media, and our approach favours genuine and informal communications and relationship-building over overt marketing methods.
3. The creation of social media channels in the promotion of student groups and for the purposes of communication are encouraged. However, all new channels should be communicated to the Marketing & Communications Manager alongside relevant contact details for the channel’s administrator.
4. All social media channels must follow brand guidelines when using the Students’ Union brand or any of its sub-brands, including Stallions, the University of Northampton Students’ Union name or University of Northampton name.
5. Social media channels utilising the Students’ Union brand, its sub-brands, the University of Northampton Students’ Union name or University of Northampton name must be consistent with the aims and objectives set out in the respective Student Group’s constitution. Posts must be relevant to these aims.
6. The persons responsible for a social media account will be responsible for the channel’s use, any information posted on it and will be the contact in the event of a crisis

**Personal Use of Social Media by Students’ Union Volunteers**

1. Volunteers should be aware that when using social media in their personal life what is published often cannot be isolated from their role as a representative of the Students’ Union and may be picked up by the media and students. As such, they can still be held to account for views expressed when not acting in an ‘official’ Students’ Union capacity.
2. To minimise risk, volunteers are advised to add a disclaimer to their social media presence, such as: “The views I express here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the University of Northampton Students’ Union” or similar, particularly where they actively use their personal accounts to communicate with students.
3. As with other forms of publishing, all volunteers should be aware of issues such as libel, defamation and slander.
4. Employees should also bear in mind their responsibilities under the Students’ Union Code of Conduct and Equal Opportunities Policy. Similarly, students are reminded that they remain bound by the University of Northampton’s Student Code of Conduct and policies in addition to those of the Students’ Union.

**Social Media Guidelines**

1. Posts must not bring the Students’ Union into disrepute, for example by:
   1. Insulting members, colleagues, staff or other institutions. Discussion and debate is acceptable, personal attacks are not;
   2. Making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups;
   3. Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content.
2. Posts must not breach confidentiality, for example by:
   1. Revealing confidential intellectual property or information owned by the organisation;
   2. Providing confidential information about an individual or organisation;
3. Posts must not breach copyright, for example by:
   1. Using someone else’s images or written content without permission;
   2. Failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something;
4. Post must not be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, in any way for example by:
   1. Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age;
   2. Using social media to bully another individual (such as a member, a colleague or a staff member);
   3. Posting images that are discriminatory or offensive, or links to such content.
5. Anything posted reflects directly on both the Union and your student group, posts must be respectful at all times.
6. Social media allows us to share information almost instantly, as a result audiences often expect information to appear straight away. It is best practise to manage expectations. Where possible, volunteers should make it clear when the people interacting on social media platforms can expect a response.
7. Developing a tone of voice that is friendly and relatively informal is the most effective in engaging students in social forum.
   1. Volunteers should try to avoid using slang, ‘text speak’, or using sentence fragments.
   2. Poor spelling, punctuation and grammar also reflect poorly on individual pages. Take time to write and check posts for both clarity of message and for errors before publishing.
8. Social media posts are competing for attention alongside hundreds of others, so put some thought into how to gain the reader’s attention. 
   1. Consider the **words** they use and the order they use them.
   2. The audience is most likely to be interested by an interesting detail or fact rather than a reiteration of an entire article or headline.
   3. Humour is acceptable, but employees must avoid anything that might be construed as offensive.
   4. Photos and videos are the *most* effective means of gaining attention and generating conversation.
   5. No more than one exclamation mark per sentence is ever necessary. Capital letters should be limited to key words and not entire sentences.

**Public Use of Social Media Channels**

1. Users should be encouraged to post respectful comments on the social media sites. User comments may not contain:
   1. Profane language or content
   2. Comments that may be perceived as incendiary
   3. Promotion, fostering or perpetuation of discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, public assistance status, sexual orientation or any other such distinction.
   4. Sexual content or links to sexual content
   5. Solicitations or links to commerce, such as, but not limited to, third party goods, services, or events except where otherwise agreed with the Marketing & Communications Manager
   6. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
   7. Content that violates legal ownership or interest of any party
   8. Content that breaches confidentiality or privacy
   9. Content that breaches Students’ Union Policy
2. Comments that contain the above mentioned topics should be subject to immediate removal by account administrators.

**REVIEW**

1. This policy will be reviewed bi-annually at the Marketing & Communications Meeting, before submission to the SMT, as per the Document History attached.

# Document History – Social Media Policy and Guidelines

**Date of this revision**: 04/09/14

**Date of next revision**: tbc

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| 04/09/14 | n/a | **First issue** |  |

## Owner

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## Approvals

Approval will be made via email from a valid email address as shown below.

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