Student Social Media Policy

Introduction

At Hartpury, we recognise that social media channels provide students with unique opportunities to participate in discussions, share information on topics of interest, and learning and studies can be enriched through social media activity and engagement. Social media is also a valuable means for students to stay in touch with friends and family and enhance their personal life and career opportunities.

Purpose

This policy contains requirements for compliance and is intended to support students in making the best use of social media sites without compromising personal security, current/future career opportunities; (particularly if students are studying for a professionally accredited programme or award), and/or the reputation of Hartpury.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Provide students with information on the expected standards of behaviour on social media and highlight the potential risks it may pose.
- Define the responsibilities of using social media for Hartpury purposes.
- Highlight potential risks of using social media for personal use and in a professional capacity.
- Raise awareness of relevant UK legislation, regulations and Hartpury policies.
- Minimise the potential negative reputational impact for students and Hartpury because of students' use of social media.

Scope

This policy covers all aspects of social media/social networking, in any capacity, including but not limited to services such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Whatsapp, Tik Tok, wikis, profile blogs and other electronic communication apps.

The policy is designed to ensure that students:

- Fully appreciate the possible reputational, legal and ethical implications of engaging in social media and other online communication.
- Understand that there is the potential for misuse of it, whether intentionally or otherwise, and that this may have serious implications.

Student Responsibilities

This policy outlines the standard of behaviour expected when students are communicating online and on social networking platforms.

As a student, you are responsible for:

- Ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with these conditions and with other relevant laws and Hartpury policies.
- Complying with these conditions when using Hartpury IT online services arranged by or for Hartpury.
- Communicating responsibly online and appropriately monitoring, updating and managing the content you have posted.

Expected Standards of Behaviour

If students use social media, they are responsible for how they use it to communicate. Students should be aware that posts on social media may not stay private (even on closed profiles or groups), as it can be difficult to control how widely any material posted is shared or copied.

The standards of behaviour expected in the physical world also apply online and on social media/ networking channels. Online behaviour should never violate Hartpury regulations, policies or obligations students' have. Their use of social media must not infringe on the rights or privacy of Hartpury, other students, staff or members of Hartpury.

The following non-exhaustive list may be considered unacceptable online behaviour:

- Sharing confidential information (which may include research not yet in the public domain, information about fellow students or staff or personnel matters, non-public or not yet approved documents or information).
- Hate speech of any kind (see section below on 'Cyber Bullying & Hate Crime)
- Sharing details of complaints, disciplinary hearings or proceedings (including legal proceedings) with Hartpury.
- Using accounts in another person's name without their consent.
- Comments or material, including images, that constitutes bullying or is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory or hostile towards any individual or entity.
- Any posting that constitutes a criminal offence.
- Anything, which compromises the safety of students or staff of Hartpury

As a student, you are required to:

- Conduct yourself in a manner which demonstrates respect for Hartpury staff, students and members of the University;
- Act in line with the Student Disciplinary Policy (University students), Academic Behaviour Management Policy (College Students) and Non-Academic Behaviour Management Policy (University and College residential students) which govern expectations of student conduct;
- Ensure that you comply with any professionalism and confidentiality codes of conduct for your particular study discipline or research area. For example, Veterinary Nursing / Sports Therapy students must retain professionalism and respect confidentiality.

Cyber Bullying & Hate Crime

Hartpury is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment within which all staff and students can flourish and achieve their potential, and which is free from bullying and harassment.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online and can occur through text, apps, social media forums and can include sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone

else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Harassment is unwanted behaviour, which you find offensive or which makes you feel intimidated or humiliated. It can happen on its own or alongside other forms of discrimination. The unwanted behaviour could be:

- Spoken or written words or abuse.
- Offensive emails, tweets or comments on social networking sites such as intimidating or aggressive behaviour, images and graffiti, maliciously spreading rumours or lies.
- Physical gestures, offensive or threatening comments or content posting comments/photos etc.
- Facial expressions, jokes or deliberately mocking an individual with the intent to harass or humiliate.

The Crown Prosecution Service describes **a hate crime** as *"Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice, based on a person's disability or perceived disability; race or perceived race; or religion or perceived religion; or sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation or transgender identity or perceived transgender identity*." The CPS categorise hate crime when hostility is displayed through one of the four measures;

- Intimidation
- Harassment
- Damaging Property
- Violence.

Further details relating to hate crime are in the Student Anti-Bullying Policy and Harassment and Bullying Policy published on the Hartpury website.

Support Available

If you feel you have been affected by the online behaviour of others, please contact the Hartpury Wellbeing team who are able to offer support

Consequences of a Breach of This Policy

Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary or behaviour management action, or possible sanction under the Fitness to Practice Policy (for University students only) if you study a professional programme. Any disciplinary or behaviour management action may include reference to the social media or digital publication which may be used in evidence. As part of this procedure, you may be requested to remove the post, failure to do so may lead to disciplinary or behaviour management action.

Where it is believed this policy has been breached, consideration of the law, Hartpury regulations and the context of the issue will be taken into account.

It should be noted that disciplinary or behaviour management action may be taken against a student regardless of the network or device used to access the online material.

Related Legislation, Polices and Procedures

Legislation referenced:

● General Data Protection Regulations 2018 & Data Protection Act 2018

● Equality Act 2010

● Communications Act 2003

● The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 & Terrorism Act 2000

- Malicious Communications (NI) Order 1988

- Electronic Communications Act 2000

- Freedom of Information Act 2000

- Protection from Harassment Act 1997

- Obscene Publications Act 1994

- Copyright (Computer Programs) Regulations 1992

- Computer Misuse Act 1990

- Human Rights Act 1998

Reference to Other Policies

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy & Procedures
- Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Student Anti-Bullying Policy
- Student Codes of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Student Disciplinary Policy (University Students)
- Academic Behaviour Management Procedure (College Students)
- Non-Academic Behaviour Procedure (College Students & University Students in Hartpury Managed Accommodation.)
- Academic Regulations (University Students)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

As with all Hartpury policies and procedures, due care has been taken to ensure that this policy is appropriate to all members of staff and students regardless of their age, disability, ethnicity, gender, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and transgender status.

The policy will be applied fairly and consistently whilst upholding Hartpury's commitment to providing equality to all.

Hartpury is committed towards promoting positive mental health and aims to create a culture of support where staff and students can talk about mental health problems without the fear of stigma or discrimination.

Approval and Review Cycle

Date Last Approved	New Policy
Policy Owner	Vice Principal Resources
Approving Committee	SMT
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