Social Media safety guidelines for students

The University recognises that social media acts as an important form of communication in daily life; it is fast, reliable and easy to use. The University also encourages and recognises the right to freedom of speech within the law.

However, it is also important to be mindful that the use of social media can carry risks.

As such, these guidelines aim to help students stay safe online whilst making the most of the many benefits social media provides. It is also intended to make students aware of the impact and consequences that may occur following the misuse of social media.

Think before you post

Think before you post on social media. Even if you have updated your privacy settings, information you post or associate yourself with can be shared, saved, replicated and edited without your consent. Similarly, search engines can highlight posts years after they were initially made. As such, you can never be sure how many people can access the information you post.

With this in mind, the University advises the following:

- **Be secure –** avoid sharing confidential or sensitive information. Such as, your address, birthday, contact details etc., as well as information or images that may highlight your house is empty or that you are alone somewhere (for example, standing at Keynes bus stop). It is also advised that you should check the terms and conditions of the social media platform you are using, so you are aware how your information will be used.

- **Be considerate –** think before sharing content that includes photos, images or recordings of members of staff or students without their permission, or content that may be considered embarrassing or abusive.

- **Be mindful** – social media is not the place to post if you find your emotions are running high; think twice before posting if you are feeling angry or upset. You may post something that you end up regretting.

- **Be aware** – check if you need permission to reproduce or share information, including photographs, lecture notes and slides. Do not post anything confidential or which belongs to someone else without their permission.

- **Be respectful** – consider how a post may be viewed by others; don't post or promote content on social media which harasses, bullies or otherwise intimidates.

Response and disciplinary procedures

The University of Kent is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning, working and social environment. As such, inappropriate use of social media may result in disciplinary action being taken under the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

Disciplinary action could, in serious cases, lead to suspension or expulsion.

Behaviours that may be considered as inappropriate use of social media include:

- Threatening behaviour; threatening to harm another person (physical, emotional, reputational);

- Posting offensive content. For example, posting offensive comments about someone's racial, sexual, gendered, religious identity and/or physical appearance;

- Posting personal information or content about someone without their consent;

- Sharing screenshots of images, conversations etc. without the original author's consent, e.g. a Whatsapp conversation, Snapchat post etc.

- Sharing or creating sexual materials, or sharing content with the intention to sexually harass;

- Repeated unwanted contact with another person;

- Posting content that includes indecent, disorderly, threatening, intimidating or offensive language, photos or other content (blogs, social networking websites);

- Post content which may damage the reputation of the University, or damages relationships with the local community or other organisations

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Please note, these are examples of inappropriate uses of social media, and does not form an exhaustive list.

Reporting inappropriate use of social media

If you see something posted online that may be considered inappropriate, please contact the Student Conduct and Complaints Office.

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