



# **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

## **1. Introduction**

PPA recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media presents. We actively use social media to engage with students and the general public to promote and celebrate successes and enhance PPA's profile online. Staff and students are actively encouraged to find creative ways to make effective and appropriate use of social media channels and to use them to engage in conversations with the PPA community.

Despite the opportunities presented by social media, there are risks, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation. Inappropriate use of social media can also be damaging to the reputation of PPA as well as have a negative impact on staff and students.

This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by the Academy, its staff, and students.

This policy works alongside PPA's policies, including but not limited to, the following:

- Bullying and Harassment
- Safeguarding
- Freedom of Speech, Privacy, and GDPR standards
- Student Code of Conduct
- Staff and Student Handbooks

## **2. Scope of Policy**

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. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation and wikis are among the different types of social media. It also includes any other means of communicating on the internet where members of the public (including staff and students) may reasonably access the communication.

They currently include, but are not limited to, Facebook (and Messenger), Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, Clubhouse, WeChat, Weibo, Discord and Google+.

This policy applies to social media communications made both on public and private forums by students including those communications which directly or indirectly reference PPA. This policy applies to social media uploaded anywhere and on personal devices whether to an individual, group or the world. 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 (including private messages between two parties) can also be shared publicly by others.

### **3. Responsibilities**

The Academy respects privacy and understands that staff and students may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the Academy's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media account. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with, or impacts on, the Academy, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the Academy with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the Academy are outside the scope of this policy.

Digital communications to students are also considered. Staff may use social media to communicate with learners via an academy social media account for teaching and learning purposes but must consider whether this is appropriate and consider the potential implications.

Students are encouraged to be mindful of how their identity, statements or views appear online and are reminded that current and 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 consider that any content they publish online may be viewed by a future employer.

**N.B. Staff members are restricted from befriending or following any current students on any social media platform.**

### **4. Content of Posts**

## **Tone**

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining suitable levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:

- Engaging
- Conversational
- Informative
- Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

## **Use of images**

The Academy use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to:

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought from those within the photos and videos. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload student pictures online other than via Academy owned social media accounts and with their permission.
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on Academy social media accounts.
- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

## **4. Organisational Control**

### ***Roles & Responsibilities-***

- **Senior Management Team**
  - Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use
  - Developing and implementing the Social Media policy
  - Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.
  - Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required
  - Receive completed applications for social media accounts
  - Approve account creation
  - Create the account following COO approval
  - Store account details, including passwords securely
  - Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account
  - Control the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring)
- **Staff**
  - Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
  - Attending appropriate training
  - Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content he/she has posted via Academy accounts
  - Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the Academy

## **5. Behaviour**

The Academy requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour set out in this policy and other relevant policies and are personally responsible for what they communicate.

Digital communications by staff must be always professional and respectful and in accordance with this policy. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about other staff. Academy social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the Academy.

Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to Academy activity.

The following non-exhaustive list of content is considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be posted. Any such post will be taken seriously by the Academy and should be reported as soon as possible to the Senior Management Team and escalated where appropriate.

- 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).
- Details of complaints/potential complaints and/or legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving PPA.
- Personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission. Comments posted using fake accounts, made-up names or using another person's name without their consent, including submitting other students' details for surveys, forms and open letters.
- Inappropriate material, including but not limited to images, that are, or may be perceived to be threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile towards any individual, group or entity.
- Records, recordings and/or photographs made without the consent of one or more parties concerned and released without a clear public interest case.
- Any other posting that constitutes, or may constitute, a criminal offence.
- Material to prepare to engage in or engage in academic offences.
- Material taken from assessments or scripts.
- Any academic work completed by the student in part or full.
- Anything which may bring PPA into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of colleagues, former colleagues, students, staff and those connected with the Academy.

The use of social media by staff while at work may be monitored, in line with PPA policies. The Academy permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with

relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.

PPA will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, PPA will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, we will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and take action according to the disciplinary policy.

## **6. Legal Considerations**

- Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

## **7. Handling Abuse**

- When acting on behalf of the Academy, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, Academy users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken.
- If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed Academy protocols.

## **8 . Monitoring Posts about the Academy**

PPA will:

- Ensure this policy, and any changes, is accessible to all staff and students
- Monitor references to PPA on social media and the Internet and respond to complaints regarding student conduct on social media
- Take disciplinary action where inappropriate behaviour is exhibited that affects students, staff, PPE or members of public in accordance with PPA's codes of conduct.
- Annually review and update this policy, where appropriate, and any other associated policy and guidelines and publish details of any changes.

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**Policy Updated: September 2023**

**Policy Review Due: February 2024**

