

**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

# Purpose

In order to remain competitive, serve our customers and give our employees efficient tools to do their jobs, the College continues to adopt and make use of new methods of communication and information exchange. As a result, employees may have access to one or more forms of social media services.

The College encourages the use of these media and associated services as they can make communication more efficient and effective and because they are valuable sources of information about vendors, customers, technology and new products and services. However, all employees and everyone connected with the College should remember that the use of social media must always be for the purpose of facilitating and supporting the College's business.

This policy cannot lay down rules to cover every possible situation. Instead, it is designed to express the College's philosophy with regard to social media and to set down the general principles employees should apply when using this form of interactive online media.

# Scope

All employees of Homerton College are covered by this policy.

# Definition of Social Media

For the purposes of this policy, social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes social forums such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video and image sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr.

Employees should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Employees should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use.

# Use of Social Media at work

The College encourages employees to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites as part of their work. It is an important part of how the College communicates with its customers/students and promotes its services.

Employees may contribute to the College’s social media activities for example by managing a Facebook account or running an official Twitter account. Employees must be aware at all times that while contributing to the College’s social media activities they are representing the College.

Employees should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about the College in the public arena. Staff using social media as part of their job must adhere to the following rules and safeguards:

* Making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the College
* Obtaining permission from a manager before embarking on a public social media campaign
* Ensuring a manager or colleague has checked content before it is published

Any communication that employees make in a professional capacity through social media must not bring the College into disrepute by, for example:

* Criticising or arguing with customers or colleagues
* Making defamatory comments about individuals or other organizations or groups
* Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content
* Breaching confidentiality e.g., revealing information owned by the College or giving away confidential information about an individual such as a colleague or customer contact
* Do anything that could be considered discriminatory, bullying or harassment of any individual e.g., making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or age

# Excessive use of Social Media at work

Employees should not spend an excessive amount of time whilst at work using social media websites, even if they claim to be doing so as part of their work. Employees should ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their other duties.

# The monitoring of Social Media during work time

The College reserves the right to monitor an employee’s internet usage but will endeavor to inform an affected employee when this is to happen and the reasons for it. The College considers that valid reasons for checking an employee internet usage include suspicion that the employees has:

* Been spending an excess amount of time using social media websites for non-work related activity
* Acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy

The College reserves the right to retain information that it has been gathered on employees’ use of the internet for a period of one year.

Access to particular social media websites may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.

# Personal use of Social Media

Access to social media in a personal capacity at the College is restricted to lunch breaks and before and after the working day, unless specific permission is granted by the line manager.

The College does recognise that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity and whilst they are not acting on behalf of the College they can damage the College if they are recognised as being one of our employees. Employees are allowed to say that they work for the College, which recognises that it is natural for staff to discuss their work on social media. However, if employees discuss their work on social media, for example, giving an opinion on their specialism, they must include on their profile a statement along the following lines:

“The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer”.

Any communication that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must not bring the College into disrepute, for example:

* + Criticising or arguing with customers or colleagues
  + Making defamatory comments about individuals or other organizations or groups
  + Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content
  + Breaching confidentiality e.g. revealing information owned by the College or giving away confidential information about an individual such as a colleague or customer contact
  + Do anything that could be considered discriminatory, bullying or harassment of any individual

e.g., making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or age

# Use of Social Media in Recruitment Process

Unless it is in relation to finding candidates for example if an individual has put his/her details on social media websites for the purpose of attracting prospective employers, the Personnel Department and managers will not, either themselves or through a third party, conduct searches on applicants via social media. Conducting these searches during the selection process might lead to a presumption that an applicants protected characteristics for example sexual orientation or religious beliefs, may have played a part in a recruitment decision.

# Disciplinary Action over Social Media use

All employees are required to adhere to this policy. Employees should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy for example bullying of colleagues or causing serious damage to the College may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.

**Social Media Guidelines**

(a) This set of social media guidelines aims to set standards that are expected of all students with respect to the prevention of harassment; they are not intended to inhibit students’ rights to freedom of speech.

(b) You should mindful that information shared on social media becomes public information and you should not use social media in any way that may compromise your reputation and, if you are studying or intending to work in a professional area such as health, education, social work or law, your ‘fitness to practice’. Any content that you post about yourself or others could be brought to the attention of the College or University, future employers and/or professional bodies and may be detrimental to your studies and/or future career. It is increasingly common practice for employers to use the internet to search for information about, or the behaviour of, those whom they are considering for employment.

(c) You may not claim to speak on behalf of, or represent, the College on social media websites without the College’s prior permission. You should not declare, imply or indicate that the content of any social media site under your control is representative of the College.

(d) Social media (for example Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, Instagram and open forums and blogs) are now a common feature of everyday life, enabling and supporting both students and staff in academic and collaborative opportunities. Unfortunately they are open to misuse and increasingly cited in cases of harassment, bullying and crime. Any form of harassment, including on social media platforms, is unacceptable and will be treated very seriously by the College.

(e) You should be aware that while you yourself may not have posted offensive comments, by endorsing those made by others through for example retweeting, liking, commenting on or sharing the comments of others, you may thus be risking your own reputation and/or be breaching the College’s disciplinary regulations. Comments made on social media may be subject to civil action if they can be reasonably be construed as defamatory or libelous: that is damaging someone’s reputation and exposing them to hatred, ridicule or contempt. It is the same offence even if you have repeated comments by reposting or retweeting or otherwise endorsing them.

(f) You should respect individual rights to privacy and have regard for the feelings of others. You must not disclose personal details, including pictures, of other students or staff without their prior permission.

(g) You may not use the College’s logos, crest etc. without the College’s prior written permission.

(h) You should be mindful of the enduring nature of information posted on social media sites and should be careful not to write posts or share information, particularly when under the influence of substances that can affect judgement or behaviour (e.g., alcohol), that you may later come to regret.

(i) You should take precautions when utilising social media sites to ensure your own personal safety and to protect against identity theft. You should exercise caution when accepting or sending invitations to interact over social media with anyone you have not met face to face.