

Social Media Communications Policy

Index

<u>1.</u>	<u>Introduction</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>2.</u>	<u>Institutional social media accounts</u>	<u>3</u>
	2.1 Authorised users	3
	2.2 Creating social media accounts	3
	2.3 Prevent: duties and compliance	4
	2.4 Inappropriate content and uses	4
<u>3.</u>	<u>Staff personal social media accounts</u>	<u>4</u>
	3.1 During working hours	4
	3.2 Expressing views about Bloomsbury Institute	4
<u>4.</u>	<u>Students' social media accounts</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>5.</u>	<u>Safe and responsible social media use for all</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>6.</u>	<u>Copyright</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>7.</u>	<u>Security and data protection</u>	<u>6</u>
	7.1 Maintain confidentiality	6
	7.2 Protect social accounts	6
	7.3 Avoid social scams	6
<u>8.</u>	<u>Compliance</u>	<u>7</u>
	8.1 Monitoring social media use	7
	8.2 Potential sanctions	7
<u>9.</u>	<u>Review of the Social Media Communications Policy</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>10.</u>	<u>Related regulations, policies and procedures</u>	<u>7</u>
	<u>Appendix A: Social Media – 10 Top Tips</u>	<u>9</u>

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The Social Media Communications Policy will be reviewed annually by our Senior Management Team (SMT). Any amendments require the approval of our Senior Management Team.

1. Introduction

Social media is an effective and valuable tool to reach and communicate with a wide range of audiences and stakeholders. A regular and engaging presence on social media can also contribute to increased awareness of Bloomsbury Institute and our values.

This policy applies to all Bloomsbury Institute staff and students who use social media, no matter where it is used and/or accessed. It is relevant for all social media channels including, but not limited to, Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram, WhatsApp and TikTok.

This policy, in conjunction with our [Information Control Procedures](#)¹, outlines the guidelines for managing Bloomsbury Institute social media accounts, as well as how staff and students use their own personal social media accounts.

2. Institutional social media accounts

This covers all use of social media accounts owned and managed by Bloomsbury Institute.

2.1 Authorised users

Only staff who have been authorised to use Bloomsbury Institute's social media accounts may do so. Authorisation is provided by the Head of Marketing, Communications and UK Student Recruitment and is typically granted when social media-related tasks form a core part of a staff member's job.

Having only a limited number of staff to manage and use the accounts ensures that our social media presence is consistent and cohesive.

The following staff members have key responsibilities:

- the Head of Marketing, Communications and UK Student Recruitment is ultimately responsible for ensuring that Bloomsbury Institute uses social media safely, appropriately and in line with Bloomsbury Institute's communication strategies and Communication Principles. They are responsible for working with the appropriate team to roll out campaigns through our social media channels.
- the Digital Communications Officer is responsible for the day-to-day management of our social media accounts. They are also responsible for ensuring that requests for assistance and support made via social media are followed up.
- the Digital Communications Officer is responsible for managing all enquiries through Facebook, X and Instagram messages, comments and posts. The Student Recruitment Officer is responsible for WhatsApp enquiries.

2.2 Creating social media accounts

Only the Head of Marketing, Communications and UK Student Recruitment can create new social media accounts. New social media accounts in Bloomsbury Institute's name must not be created by anyone else. If there is a case to be made for opening a new account, employees should raise this with the Head of Marketing, Communications and UK Student Recruitment.

Bloomsbury Institute operates its social media presence using the most appropriate social networks, given available resources.

¹ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies/>

2.3 Prevent: duties and compliance

As stated in our [Information Control Procedures](#)² and in line with our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)³ and our Prevent obligations, if one of our students, staff members or external stakeholders were to post a comment on one of our social media accounts that could be deemed to be offensive or have the potential to 'radicalise' others, then the comment would be removed and the contact would be blocked.

If the contact was a member of our staff, then this would be passed on to our Prevent Lead for further investigation.

If the contact was not a member of staff, then the matter would then be passed onto the Director of the Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success (SEWS), for further investigation.

2.4 Inappropriate content and uses

All posts from company social media accounts represent Bloomsbury Institute. It is vital that all content and messages published are appropriate, carefully considered and checked for accuracy.

Posts must be in line with our purpose and values and must not be the subject of inappropriate content. Overall, social media posts should not damage the reputation of Bloomsbury Institute or bring us into disrepute. For further guidelines, please refer to section 5 of this policy.

3. Staff personal social media accounts

This covers all use of personal social media accounts owned by Bloomsbury Institute staff.

It is vital to bear in mind that any social media account is a public record, even if an account is no longer active. It is important for staff to understand that as the content of a social media post is a public record, social media posts from old accounts may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, even if the account is no longer active.

3.1 During working hours

Staff may use their personal social media accounts for work-related purposes during working hours, but must ensure this is for a specific work-related reason (e.g. competitor research). Use of social media should not affect the ability of staff to perform their normal duties.

Use of social media accounts for non-work purposes is restricted to non-work times, including during lunch.

3.2 Expressing views about Bloomsbury Institute

Staff should ensure it is clear that their social media account does not represent Bloomsbury Institute's views or opinions.

Staff may wish to include a disclaimer in social media profiles, or specific posts: 'The views expressed are my own and do not reflect the views of my employer.'

Staff may occasionally be asked not to post about a certain topic by the Strategic Leadership Team.

In line with our [Staff Disciplinary Procedure](#)⁴, staff are liable for and may be subject to disciplinary action, for saying anything negative about Bloomsbury Institute or anything that would or would have the potential to bring us into disrepute.

² <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies/>

³ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies/>

⁴ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies/>

4. Students' social media accounts

Any social media account, whether active or not, is a public record. As with any company or staff accounts, accounts owned by students are linked to not only an individual's reputation but Bloomsbury Institute's too. Depending on how social media is used by students, this can have a positive or negative impact.

Posting or interacting with anything that could be deemed offensive, discriminatory or unlawful can have serious consequences, such as:

- Impacting on a student's academic journey and future employment opportunities
- Damaging Bloomsbury Institute's reputation
- The student being subject to Bloomsbury Institute's disciplinary procedures
- Legal action from other users and organisations.

We will work to ensure that our students are aware of these considerations.

5. Safe and responsible social media use for all

When using both personal and company social media accounts, students and staff must not:

- create or transmit material that might be offensive or incur liability for Bloomsbury Institute
- post messages, status updates or links to material or content that is irrelevant to business (when using a company social media account) or inappropriate. (Inappropriate content includes: pornography and obscene or indecent images, racial or religious slurs designed to promote and incite race or religious hatred, offensive comments in relation to anyone with any of the 9 protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010, information encouraging criminal activities, websites that are linked to a proscribed terrorist organisation and information that generally promotes or incites acts of violence or terrorism, or materials relating to cults, gambling and illegal drugs.⁵ Please note that this list is not exhaustive.)
- use social media for any illegal or criminal activities
- send offensive or harassing material to others via social media
- broadcast unsolicited views on social, political, religious or other non-business-related matters
- send or post messages or material that could damage Bloomsbury Institute's image or reputation
- interact with Bloomsbury Institute's competitors in any ways which could be interpreted as being offensive, disrespectful or rude
- discuss colleagues, competitors, customers or suppliers without their approval!
- post, upload, forward or link to spam, junk email or chain emails and messages.

⁵ This definition of inappropriate content or material also covers any text, images or other media that could reasonably offend someone on the basis of race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.

For more information on how to use social media safely and responsibly for institutional accounts, as well as how to raise our profile, please refer to Appendix A: Social Media – 10 top tips.

6. Copyright

Bloomsbury Institute respects and operates within copyright laws. All staff and students must not use social media to:

- publish or share any copyrighted software, media or materials owned by third parties, unless permitted by that third party. If staff wish to share content published on another website, they are free to do so if that website has obvious sharing buttons or functions on it.
- share links to illegal copies of music, films, games or other software.

7. Security and data protection

Staff and students should be aware of the security and data protection issues that can arise from using social networks. Social media should be used responsibly and in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR), our [Data Protection Policy](#) and our [Confidentiality Policy](#)⁶. More information about how to protect your social media accounts can be found below.

7.1 Maintain confidentiality

All users must not:

- share or link to any content or information owned by Bloomsbury Institute that could be considered confidential or commercially sensitive.
- share or link to any content or information owned by another organisation or person that could be considered confidential or commercially sensitive. For example, if a competitor's marketing strategy were to be leaked online, employees of Bloomsbury Institute should not mention it on social media.
- share or link to data in any way that could breach Bloomsbury Institute's Data Protection Policy or Confidentiality Policy.

7.2 Protect social accounts

All social media accounts should be protected by strong passwords that are changed regularly and shared only with authorised users.

The Head of Marketing, Communications and UK Student Recruitment is responsible for managing institutional social media account passwords and ensuring they are strong and changed on a regular basis.

Wherever possible, all staff and students should use two-factor authentication (often called mobile phone verification) to safeguard company accounts. For further information and guidance, please refer to our [Password Policy](#)⁷ or email IT Services at itsupport@bil.ac.uk.

7.3 Avoid social scams

Staff and students should watch for phishing attempts, where scammers may try and trick people to gather information relating to either Bloomsbury Institute or key stakeholders.

⁶ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies/>

⁷ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies/>

Sensitive details should never be revealed through social media channels. Stakeholder identities must always be verified in the usual way before any account information is shared or discussed.

All users should avoid clicking links in posts, updates and direct messages that look suspicious. In particular users should look out for URLs contained in generic or vague-sounding direct messages.

8. Compliance

8.1 Monitoring social media use

Institutional IT resources, including computers, laptops, smart phones and internet connections, are provided for legitimate business use. Bloomsbury Institute therefore reserves the right to monitor how social networks are used and accessed through these resources. Such monitoring will only be carried out as authorised by SMT.

All data relating to social networks written, sent or received through Bloomsbury Institute's computer systems is part of official Bloomsbury Institute records. Data should be treated confidentially and comply with both our Data Protection Policy and Confidentiality Policy.

In accordance with our Information Control Procedures, our institutional social media accounts shall be audited periodically by the Head of Marketing, Communications and UK Student Recruitment, and monitored daily by the Digital Communications Officer.

8.2 Potential sanctions

Knowingly breaching this Social Media Communications Policy is a serious matter. Staff and /or students who do so may be subject to disciplinary action in line with our Staff Disciplinary Procedure.

9. Review of the Social Media Communications Policy

The Social Media Communications Policy will be reviewed annually by our Senior Management Team (SMT). Any amendments require the approval of our Senior Management Team.

10. Related regulations, policies and procedures

- Brand Guidelines
- Communication Principles
- Confidentiality Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- House Style Guidelines
- Information Control Procedures
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Password Policy
- Prevent Policy
- Social Media – 10 top tips

- Staff Disciplinary Procedure
- Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures

Appendix A: Social Media – 10 Top Tips

There are many benefits from using social media – reaching and engaging with different audiences and building relationships – but with this can also come a number of risks. From posting discriminatory content to disrespecting people's privacy, it's vital to keep in mind these potential hazards before hitting the post button.

Whether you're using Bloomsbury Institute's social media accounts, or you're a member of staff using social media for professional reasons, our 10 Top Tips can guide you through the social media basics. These guidelines will prepare and assist you in using social media in a safe and responsible way and show you how to raise Bloomsbury Institute's profile.

1. Use Bloomsbury Institute branding

Whenever relevant and suitable, brand your social media post. This way you can spread the word about Bloomsbury Institute and all the work that we do. You can use our logo, colours or branded images. For more information, refer to our Brand Guidelines (found in the Brand Library on SharePoint) or email the Head of MCSR, elvie.shergold@bil.ac.uk for logos and branded material to share.

2. Start with our purpose and values

We're a values-driven Institute and that means we live by our purpose and values. Before you publish anything on social media, it's a good starting point to refer to our values as these are a reminder of how we behave:

Dare to be different. Make it happen. Don't be mean.

And once you've shared meaningful content, people will learn what we're passionate about and what we stand for, in turn attracting like-minded people and organisations to Bloomsbury Institute.

3. Avoid a 'traditional' sales and marketing approach

Social media is saturated with companies and organisations selling their products. As you'd guess, users get very tired of this and will often unfollow those posting too much of the same thing.

We pride ourselves on not using traditional marketing and sales tactics, which involve getting in front of as big an audience as possible to gain the largest number of engagements as possible. Instead we see people on social media as individuals with individual interests, to engage with those who are the right fit for us.

To do this, we listen to our audience to gain a better understanding of their motivations. We then post content on social media that will interest them, such as students' stories, to reach people who will thrive at Bloomsbury Institute.

4. Remember our Communication Principles

Social media is known for its more informal way to communicate. This suits our Communication Principles well, which is simple, clear and easy to understand, but our tone also needs to be credible so as to maintain our professional reputation. Our Communication Principles is to be used across the whole of the Institute and everyone has access to a digital copy of the Communication Principles on SharePoint,

5. Respect others' privacy

We often post pictures and mention staff, students or stakeholders on our social media channels. Make sure you always ask a person's permission before uploading their picture or quote.

Sometimes it's suitable to tag a person – e.g. if a lecturer is speaking at a conference on behalf of Bloomsbury Institute – but only if their own social media account is a professional, not a personal one.

6. Check and double check before you post

Check the content of your post – is this in anyway offensive? – but also for any grammatical or graphic errors. Even if this is just a small spelling mistake or a blurry picture, it can make Bloomsbury Institute seem unprofessional.

And if you were to publish something that was offensive or discriminatory, you're not only damaging your own name but Bloomsbury Institute's too which could result in legal action.

7. Be honest and admit mistakes

If you do make a mistake, which other users may point out, admit it and take responsibility. We all make mistakes but lying or deleting a post can escalate the issue. Respond with a thanks if a user points out the mistake and then edit the original post, or re-post it.

8. Monitor and reply to comments

Engagement, conversations and comments on a post are great! They can increase awareness of Bloomsbury Institute and kick-start a conversation about issues and subjects that are close to our heart.

Remember to respond to all comments with a simple thanks or to continue the conversation. If you do the latter, keep in mind our vision and values and steer away from viewpoints that could be controversial.

9. Respond to negative feedback

If you receive any negative feedback or comments, you'll also need to reply to these. Ignoring a person's feedback is ignoring and dismissing someone's feelings and can reflect poorly on Bloomsbury Institute and how we deal with criticism.

Respond and try to take the conversation into private messages or email. Once you've responded, feedback the negative comments to the relevant Head of Department/Division who will follow this up to try and resolve the problem.

The MCSR team will lead on responding to all feedback, but please do email them if you spot any feedback across social media which hasn't been responded to.

10. Have fun!

It's easy to get caught up in guidelines, worrying about what – and what not – to say. It's important to remember that social media is meant to be a fun space and it's always good to try new things.

If they don't work, that's fine as we can learn from them. If they do work, that's great, as we can do more of it.