



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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| Process Area | Business Systems |
| Reference Number | BUS/007 |
| Directorate | Finance & Planning |

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| 005 | Nov 2024 | Amendments to roles and responsibilities, updating to include all current uses of social media | ST | Governing Body | Nov 2027 |

If requested, the College will make the policy available in alternative formats to accommodate visual impairments. The policy can also be downloaded from the College website and made available in alternative languages upon request.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Southern Regional College (SRC) recognises that social media sites have become important and influential communication channels for our staff and students. The overall goal of this Policy is to help clarify how best to enhance and protect the personal and professional reputations of our students and staff when participating in social media and social networking.

SRC welcomes the responsible use of social media technologies to support, engaged and transformative learning and to reach out effectively to our broader community. Our rich and diverse use of social media also allows us to share, in a public way, the many qualities and strengths of our further education and training institution.

2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to social media and networking websites, discussion forums, image sharing networks, blogging and publishing networks, professional forum review sites, video or game hosting, and streaming platforms for both professional and personal use.

3. DEFINITIONS

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| Staff: | Everyone employed directly and indirectly by SRC including non-paid volunteer workers both in work and outside working hours. |
| Student: | A student is defined as a person who is registered with the College for a programme of learning. |
| Social Media: | The use of and participation in social media and includes but is not limited to e-mail, blogs, forums, micro-blogging, social networking, social network aggregation, wikis, social bookmarking, social curation sites and tagging, photo sharing, video sharing and virtual worlds. It is acknowledged that the scope of this Policy will continue to evolve as new technologies and tools become available. |
| College Community | Staff, students, designated partners and governing body. |

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

It is essential to maintain a clear professional distance between staff and students and a professional relationship in staff-to-staff interactions. To keep that professional distance staff should not be interacting with students online other than through official SRC channels such as;

- SRC e-mail accounts (including instant messaging via Microsoft Teams)
- SRC VLE;
- SRC corporate social media sites; and
- SRC Faculty or department approved social media sites (authorised accounts only).

Inappropriate behaviour on social media sites where SRC is linked to the individual will represent a breach of college rules and will result in disciplinary procedures being actioned.

For example, the following is a list of inappropriate activity for a member of staff (Note this is not an exhaustive list):

- post any material critical of the College or colleagues on any social media site. Any criticisms of the College or its community members must be made through SRC's internal procedures;
- posting personal or sensitive information online e.g. full home postal addresses or medical information, particularly if that information has been sourced as a result of a staff member's role within the College, will constitute a breach of data protection legislation.
- post comments that run counter to the College's Equality Opportunities Policy and/or Harassment Policy;
- post comments that recommend, or appear to endorse, law-breaking of any kind;
- post comments that exhibit or appear to endorse behaviour that could be argued to encourage "copycat" behaviour by students. This would include for example, dangerous driving, alcohol or drug abuse;
- communicate with students or parents on the Internet other than by emails sent from an @src.ac.uk address or via an official SRC social media site for College communication purposes;
- invite students to see their own personal social networking sites where permission is required to see those sites;
- if a personal friend or family member becomes a student at the College, you must maintain the same professional relationship with that individual on social networking sites as you would within the College; and
- look at the individual social networking sites of students.

Staff are also referred to the Safeguarding Policy which reminds staff that they should not abuse the trust relationships they have with young people and vulnerable adults. This would include any form of sexualised or bullying conversation or comment through the medium of the Internet. Staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a student by allowing students to become emotionally dependent on them and not taking action to stop this. This would include conversing with a student on the Internet on any matters other than those that are directly related to College business.

4.2 Marketing Responsibilities

Disseminating Official Information

Marketing and other designated offices are responsible for posting and publishing online official information on behalf of the College. These staff are also responsible for replying to direct enquiries from stakeholders through social media sites on matters related to college delivery.

As part of the social media framework, SRC maintains an official presence on YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, X and Instagram. These sites offer content to inform audiences about life at College and to promote products and services. SRC maintains an institutional

presence on these sites with content produced or endorsed by the College. These sites are maintained by the Marketing Department to reach a range of stakeholders.

College-Moderated Social Networking Pages

SRC has college-moderated social media sites overseen by Marketing staff. These sites can be used by the campus community to disseminate information to various audiences including prospective students, employers and visitors of the College.

Administrative Access to SRC Branded Social Media Pages

Prior approval must be obtained from the Head of Marketing before any social media sites are setup as a moderated and maintained official presence of the College.

At least one member of the Marketing Team shall be included as an administrator on any such social networking site. There are several important reasons for this:

- We are assured that these networks are managed when staff members leave.
- This practice allows us to communicate efficiently during an emergency.
- It allows us to track usage and quickly remove content that violates this policy.
- Site administrators are still responsible for their social media pages with the Marketing team member typically serving as a backup.
- On a regular basis the Marketing Team will audit the additional social media sites which have been created by faculties and functional areas. Any sites found to be breaching any of the statements outlined in this policy or those sites which are dormant will be removed immediately.

4.3 Department-Moderated Page Administrators

Individual departments may choose to establish a department-moderated site when these college-moderated sites are not applicable for their needs. Departments are required to contact the Head of Marketing in order to have approval for such sites.

If You Operate A Department-Moderated Social Networking Page

Departments shall consider their particular audience, message and goals and have a strategy for keeping information on their social media page up to date. The intention and purpose of the department-moderated pages should be specific in order to protect the College's brand. Efforts shall be made to tag to institution-moderated pages managed by Marketing and/or to link to College content on www.src.ac.uk when relevant. Use of images, naming conventions, pictures/graphics and posted content must directly relate to the particular department or activity to avoid confusion with institution-moderated pages.

The College may encourage faculties and functional areas to use the College presence to strengthen the SRC brand and make use of benefits such as content exposure on established platforms. "Alternate" accounts that appear to represent SRC's official presence on these sites are not permitted.

4.4 Student responsibilities

Students need to understand that as members of a wider college community they do not have total freedom to express themselves as they wish. The following types of communication are not allowed and will result in the Student Disciplinary Policy being used:

- post any comment that could be viewed as bullying or harassing another member of the College community, student or member of staff. It will be viewed as particularly serious if a student sets up a site or page which has the clear purpose of criticising, bullying or harassing another member of the College community. It will also be viewed as particularly serious if a student makes libellous statements about any other member of the College community;
- post any comment that breaks the terms of the College Equal Opportunities Policy and/or the Harassment Policy; and
- post any comment that explicitly encourages other members of the College community to actively break the law. It will be viewed as particularly serious if a student actively encourages others to take prohibited substances or commit violence.

Students are reminded that material posted on the Internet can be very hard to remove. They would always be well-advised not to post photographs of themselves or other members of the community that they might not wish others to see, now or in the future. They would also be well-advised not to make written comments that could be used against them in future.

5. PROCEDURE FOR IMPLEMENTATION5.

5.1. General (Concerns staff and students)

SRC recognises the open nature of social media which is often used for both personal and professional purposes. Social media can also create a sense of role ambiguity. It may not always be clear when one is speaking on behalf of the College, sharing facts, or sharing personal/professional opinions. This Policy is designed to help our employees and students navigate through this ambiguity and clarify certain responsibilities when posting material online.

It is important to keep in mind the privacy concerns inherent in using social media websites. Any information posted on them can be made public, even when information has been deleted by the user in some cases. Information can be shared with many people with just a click of the mouse. Therefore, the College expects and encourages all those participating on the sites associated with the College to exercise caution and responsibility when using social media sites.

SRC is open to others voicing their opinions and contributing to relevant discussion through social media platforms. Users may complain or disagree with other posts. However, the nature of such content should at all times remain respectful. Any inappropriate, obscene, or defamatory posts will not be tolerated. Users who abuse this Policy will be subject to College disciplinary procedures.

Social media websites that SRC utilises to establish its own pages or blog sites also have their own terms and conditions and Policies. All employees and students of the College who utilise such sites must adhere to these Policies if they choose to use social media. Neglecting to follow the Policies may lead to removal of these accounts by the site host.

Posts from any users, including students and employees, are not to be considered an endorsement and do not necessarily reflect the mission, values and policies of SRC. Posts and/or comments must come from real user accounts and when needed, provide a valid e-mail address at which the user can be contacted.

Users who choose to post, comment, or link text and/or multimedia on SRC websites or social media sites agree that such material may be reproduced, distributed, edited, and published in

any form and on any media. Users agree not to violate copyright laws, post spam or advertisements, impersonate others, or partake in any type of hostile behaviour, in any media.

All content generated on SRC, or any other social media sites is public; therefore, we ask that you consider your own privacy at all times before posting and/or commenting.

SRC site moderators are permitted to remove immediately any content posted by any type of user which violates this Policy.

5.2. UK GDPR

The College's Data Protection Policy clearly outlines staff responsibilities in respect of their management of College data. These responsibilities also extend to the use of any College data on the online sites and platforms. Under the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UK_GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and Data Protection Regulations you must not extract personal data from any social media platform and store it elsewhere. You must at all times adhere to the College's Privacy Notice and Data Protection policy regarding the collection and processing of personal data. This Privacy Notice is available on the College website.

5.3. Be aware of liability

Individuals are legally liable for their posts on their own pages and the pages of others.

Obviously, using SRC computing resources to threaten or harass anyone is a violation of the Acceptable User Policy (AUP) and the College's Equality Opportunities Policy and/or Harassment Policy which forbids any unlawful harassment which includes any behaviour (verbal, written, or physical) that abuses, assails, intimidates, demeans or victimises or has the effect of creating a hostile environment for any person based on protected characteristics (i.e. race, colour, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, parental status, family relationship status, physical or mental disability, military status). Violating any SRC policy while using social media can trigger consequences under the College Disciplinary Policy.

5.4. Protect confidential and proprietary information

Do not post confidential or proprietary information about SRC students or employees.

5.5. Respect copyright and fair use

When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the College.

5.6. Use SRC intellectual properties only with permission

No user may establish social networking pages that use the SRC logo or other intellectual properties such as photography, video, artwork, and publications copyrighted to the College without authorisation from the Colleges Marketing department. It is a violation of social networking site policies to represent an institution without authorisation.

5.7. Be a respectful community member

When you find yourself disagreeing with others, keep your comments appropriate and polite. If you find yourself in a position where the dialogue becomes antagonistic, avoid becoming defensive, ask for advice on handling sensitive issues and topics.

5.8. When using College e-mail

You are accountable for all activity conducted with your College e-mail address or when identifying yourself as a member of the College community. The @src.ac.uk address attached to your name may indicate to others that you are acting on the College's behalf so be clear when that is not the case.

5.9. Know the terms of service of your social media platform

Be sure to understand and follow the terms and community guidelines of any social media platform you use. You are personally responsible for compliance.

5.10. Be accurate and transparent

Have the facts before you post. If you post inaccurate information, then correct it quickly. Social networks are successful when they offer authentic and direct communications via user-generated content. Social networks are interactive with a two-way flow of information.

5.11. Respect others' privacy

Take care not to post private information concerning others such as an e-mail from a colleague or contact information. Please exercise good "netiquette." Social networks are in the public realm and are not appropriate venues for the discussion or dissemination of private matters.

5.12. Consider the intended audience when posting

College moderated pages are frequented by prospective students, alumni, friends and other interested parties. The College encourages thoughtful social media interaction and does not seek to censor contributions to any posts or threads. However, profanity, racist, sexist, or derogatory remarks, content that incites hate or encourages unethical or illegal activities, comments on litigation involving the College, spam and off-topic remarks will be removed and the user could be banned from further participation on the page.

5.13. Be relevant and respectful

Be thoughtful, accurate, relevant and respectful on social media sites. Social networks are successful when members contribute thoughtful and relevant content. Have a comment? Post it. Have a suggestion? Tell us about it. Have a different opinion? State it, respectfully. Want to offer a unique perspective? Share it. Want to air a grievance? Take care to ensure that your statements are relevant and do not violate confidentiality and others' privacy. Social networks are often not the best forums for raising grievances that might be better addressed in other venues or handled privately.

5.14. Be aware of your impact

Social media often span traditional boundaries between professional and personal relationships. If you have ever identified yourself as part of SRC online, readers will associate you with the college, even if you are posting from your own account. Use privacy settings to restrict personal information on otherwise public sites. Choose profile photos and avatars carefully. Be thoughtful about the type of photos you upload.

5.15. Be calm

If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, do not post until you calm down. Even if your settings are "private," posts and comments can be found, copied and forwarded. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you would not say it publicly, do not say it online.

5.16. Resolving conflict

Social media technology is evolving, and no policy or procedure can address all of the particular situations and circumstances that may arise.

5.17. Understand how your role may impact how others interpret what you say

If you choose to list your work affiliation on a social network or identify your association with the College, then you should regard all communication on that network as you would in a professional network. What you publish online should never be attributed to the College and shall not appear to be endorsed by or originating from the College unless you are authorised to officially act in this capacity on behalf of the College.

5.18. Respect College time and property

As stated in the Acceptable User Policy (AUP) SRC computers and your work time are to be used for college-related educational and business purposes. It is appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing work goals, such as seeking sources for information or working with others to resolve a problem. Limited personal use of computing resources is acceptable as long as it does not violate any policies, but for the most part, you should maintain your use of personal sites to your own time using non-SRC computers.

6. DISTRIBUTION

Policy Centre on SharePoint

All clients

College Website

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Staff Related Policies

- Data Protection (UK GDPR) Policy
- Disability Policy - All Staff
- Communications Policy
- Equality and Good Relations - Staff and Students Policy
- Harassment Policy - All Staff
- Health and Wellbeing – Staff and Students
- Network Acceptable Use Policy
- SRC Brand Guidelines
- Disciplinary Procedure – Support Staff and Lecturing Staff

Student Related Policies

- Complaints and Compliments Policy
- Equality and Good Relations - Staff and Students Policy
- Health and Wellbeing – Staff and Students
- Safeguarding Policy
- Network Acceptable Use Policy
- Disciplinary Policy Students

8. FLOW CHART

None.