

## **University of Cumbria Social Media Statement for Staff, Students, and Associates**

Social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, and others offer powerful tools for communication, collaboration, and engagement. The university recognises the value of these platforms in enhancing learning, research, professional networking, profile raising and community building.

However, the use of social media also carries responsibilities and potential risks to personal reputation and the reputation of the university.

### **Scope**

This statement applies to all staff, students, and associates of the university who engage in social media activities, whether in a personal or professional capacity, where their affiliation with the university is known, implied, or can be reasonably inferred.

### **Core Principles**

- **Respect and Professionalism**  
Users must uphold the same standards of behaviour online as they would in face to face interactions. This includes treating others with respect, avoiding offensive or discriminatory language, and maintaining professionalism.
- **Representation and Affiliation**  
When identifying as a member of the university, users must ensure that their posts reflect the values and reputation of the institution. Personal opinions should be clearly distinguished from official university positions.
- **Confidentiality and Data Protection**  
Users must not share confidential, proprietary, or personal information about students, staff, or university operations. All activity must comply with the university's Data Protection Policy and relevant legislation.
- **Compliance with Existing Policies**  
Social media use must align with existing university policies, including:  
[Student Code of Conduct](#)  
[Prevention of Bullying Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#)  
[Freedom of Speech](#)  
[Safeguarding](#)  
[Data Protection](#)  
[Information Technology](#) – this suite of policies includes Digital Resource Acceptable Use policy, E-Safety Policy and Info Security Policy  
[Staff Code of Conduct](#)
- **Academic and Professional Integrity**  
Users must avoid plagiarism, misrepresentation, or any form of academic dishonesty in their online communications.
- **Safety and Wellbeing**

Users should be mindful of the impact their posts may have on others' mental health and wellbeing. Cyberbullying, harassment, or any form of online abuse will not be tolerated.

### **Guidance for Specific Groups**

- **Staff**  
Should use social media responsibly in line with their professional roles. When engaging in public discourse, they should clarify when views are personal and not representative of the university.
- **Students**  
Are encouraged to use social media to enhance their learning and community engagement, while adhering to the standards of conduct expected by the university.
- **Associates**  
Including contractors, visiting academics, and alumni, should respect the university's reputation and values when referencing their affiliation online.

### **Monitoring and Enforcement**

The university reserves the right to monitor public social media activity where it relates to its operations or reputation. Breaches of this statement may result in disciplinary action under the relevant staff or student code of conduct procedures.

The university's [Student Code of Conduct](#) explains the expectations relating to the behaviour of students in meeting social responsibilities, legislative and regulatory requirements, professional expectations and standards. These expectations include the use of social media. The Student Disciplinary Procedure is used when an allegation, concern or grievance is made against a student, or a group of students, to decide whether or not the Student Code of Conduct has been breached.

A separate Social Media Policy for staff is in development, building on this statement. Whilst recognising the opportunities and benefits that social media brings there are also risks if it isn't used appropriately. The staff policy aims to set out the university's approach for all employees as well as how they can protect themselves from any associated risks.

Author: Lynn Bewley, Head of Strategic Communication and External Affairs

Senior Lead: Cathy Lambert, Pro Vice Chancellor Student Journey and Academic Registrar

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