

Social Media Policy

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Purpose: To set out the organisational approach to the use of social media, both in a private or official function while employed by Royal Holloway Students' Union. The goal is to ensure we protect the reputational integrity of the organisation and staff understand their responsibilities when using social media. The document should be read in conjunction with the Internal Communications Policy.

Audience: Permanent staff, casual staff.

1. Overview

- 1.1 This policy covers everything you need to know when using social media in either a private or official function while employed by Royal Holloway Students' Union. The policy will outline the different channels used by the Union and will set out guidance around how these should be used in communicating with our audience.
- 1.2 It applies to any staff member that has a personal social media profile or has been delegated responsibility for an official account.
- 1.3 The constant growth and use of social media presents a risk to RHSU and this policy has been designed to mitigate these, with a particular focus on protecting the reputational integrity of the organisation.
- 1.4 Other principles that guide this policy include the Charities Act 2011, The Lobbying Act 2014 (Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014) and the Students' Union's Constitution.

2. Defining Social Media

- 2.1 For the purpose of this policy, social media is any online platform or app that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum.
- 2.2 This includes larger platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat and TikTok but also extends to video sharing sites, forums and blogs.
- 2.3 You should be aware that the above list is not exhaustive and that due to the constantly changing digital environment, you should follow these guidelines in relation to any form of social media that you use.

3. Official RHSU Accounts

- 3.1 The Students' Union owns and operates a number of official social media accounts across a range of platforms, including (but not limited to) the @SURHUL and @PackhorseEgham Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts, official Facebook accounts for sabbatical officers and Facebook pages for Gigs and Events (@RHSUGigs) and Student Opportunities (@RHSUOpportunities).

- 3.2 Passwords for these accounts are held centrally by the Marketing and Communications department. Associated email addresses and passwords for these accounts must not be changed without authorisation from the Communications team.
- 3.3 Day-to-day responsibility for the Union's accounts lies with the Communications team and the content posted on these is based around a pre-populated schedule that can be viewed via the editorial calendar on Asana.
- 3.4 Certain permanent staff members may be granted admin rights for accounts related to their role e.g. The Packhorse management team can access the @PackhorseEgham accounts.
- 3.5 Before setting up any official RHSU-related accounts, you should seek advice from the Marketing & Communications Manager or Head of Marketing and Communications. This is to ensure any account which is set up fits our overall communication strategy and brand guidelines.

4. Personal Accounts

- 4.1 The Students' Union recognises that you may make use of social media in a personal capacity. While you are not acting on behalf of the organisation in doing so, you need to be aware of the risk to the Union's reputation if you post content that could be seen to be discriminatory, offensive or cause concern – more information on the type of content you should be mindful of is covered in 7. Content Guidance.
- 4.2 Personal accounts should not include any reference to the Students' Union in the name of the account/handle as this may give the impression your account is acting as an official channel for the Union.
- 4.3 Employees are not allowed to claim to speak on behalf of the organisation unless authorised.
- 4.4 RHSU permanent staff must not comment on or like any content related to any Students' Union policy position or comment on/like/share information specific to individual candidates standing in any election.

5. Student Staff Accounts

- 5.1 Student staff can – and are encouraged to – exercise their right as members and engage in debate on issues relating to the Students' Union's policy positions and annual elections.
- 5.2 As part of the Union's management of student staff, a number of channels have been set up on Microsoft Teams for the purpose of shift swaps and internal communications.
- 5.3 From April 2022, permanent-student staff WhatsApp and Facebook groups managed by RHSU staff will be closed. Please refer to the Internal Communications Policy for further information.

6. Sabbatical Officer Accounts

- 6.1 To protect the work-life balance of sabbatical officers and ensure student points of contact are consistent, we operate official sabbatical officer accounts that are separate from an officer's personal account.
- 6.2 Officers should use their official accounts when interacting with students on social media and in representing the views of the Students' Union on a platform.

6.3 Like student staff, officers can engage in debate on Students' Union policy and annual elections. The exception to this is during an election period where official accounts cannot be used to endorse or interact with candidates standing in an election – the use of personal accounts for this purpose is allowed.

6.4 It is recommended that officers set time-based boundaries on profiles to limit their exposure out of general office hours – please speak to the Communications team on how to manage this.

6.5 At the end of an officer's time in office, the official account password(s) will be reset and given to the Communications team so that it can be transferred over to the incoming officer.

7. Content Guidance

7.1 The Students' Union utilises a specific tone of voice across all of our channels which is defined in detail in the RHSU Content Style Guide. Essentially, we aim to speak in a friendly, approachable and informal tone that reflects the audience we are communicating with.

7.2 A key part of the Union's role is encouraging and participating in debates relating to our work. In an official capacity we use the sabbatical officer accounts to respond to individual posts on policy while our organisational account is used for official statements and general communications. When responding to issues robust debate is encouraged; rudeness, abuse and bullying are unacceptable.

7.3 When using social media in either a personal or official capacity you should not:

- Bring the Students' Union into disrepute, for example:
 - i. Criticising or arguing with customers, colleagues or members
 - ii. Making defamatory comments about individuals, other organisations or groups
 - iii. Posting content that is inappropriate or links to inappropriate content
- Breach confidentiality of the organisation, for example:
 - i. Revealing information that is subject to an embargo and not in the public arena
 - ii. Reveal any trade secrets or information owned by the organisation
- Breach copyright laws, for example:
 - i. Using someone else's images or written content without permission
 - ii. Failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something
- Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
 - i. Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to an individual's protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act 2010
 - ii. Using social media to bully another individual
 - iii. Posting images or content that is discriminatory or offensive

Failure to comply with the above will be treated as misconduct and you will be referred to the staff disciplinary procedure. Please refer to the Disciplinary & Capability Policy for further information.

8. Posting to Third Party Groups

8.1 There are many social media pages, groups and accounts which are owned and operated by third parties which may carry the Royal Holloway name or be aimed at Royal Holloway students. It makes sense for the Union to use these groups to speak to students, however, you should use an official account to do so.