



Guildhall School Student Social Media Policy

This policy is of relevance to staff and students

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1 Introduction

1.1 Guildhall School recognises and embraces the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring as a tool. We actively use social media to celebrate success, promote performances and programmes, and enhance the School's profile online. We often encourage students to make effective use of social media in order to help build your profile as an artist/performance maker.

1.2 There are, however, a number of risks involved in using social media. It is an instantaneous and far-reaching form of communication and inappropriate use can impact upon staff, students and the reputation of the School. Social media allows individuals to communicate either in their name or anonymously with a potentially huge audience, and sometimes its informality can encourage us to be less cautious than we would be using other more traditional methods of communication and interaction.

1.3 This policy provides information for students as to the appropriate use of social media when connected to their status as a student of the School, or when directly or indirectly referencing the School or any member of the School community.

1.4 It should be noted that the principles of freedom of expression and academic freedom apply to the use of social media; however, the School requires responsible and legal use.

2 Scope

2.1 For the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as any online interactive tool which encourages participation, interaction and exchanges. This includes existing platforms and any new applications that emerge as well as blogs, discussion forums, instant messaging and any website which allows public commenting or posting.

2.2 This policy applies to all students and to any personal communications within a social media platform which directly or indirectly reference the School or any member of the School community. There is a separate City of London policy for members of staff, who are employees of the City of London, and therefore staff usage of social media falls outside of the scope of this document.

2.3 This policy applies to social media communications made at any time, whether privately or publicly, and from anywhere, including away from campus and on personal devices, whether to an individual, to a limited group or to the world.

2.4 The School acknowledges that students may use social media in their private lives and for personal communications. Personal communications are those made on, or from, a private social media account, such as a personal page on Facebook or a personal blog. In all cases where a private social media account is used which identifies the School, it must be made clear that the account holder is a student at the School to avoid the impression that views expressed on or through that social media account are made on behalf of the School. In all cases where a personal communication references a member of the School community the student must be aware that the School will treat actions that, for example, threaten, harass or bully such a member of the School community as falling within this policy.

2.5 Students may be subjected to disciplinary action where they have been careless or reckless in the communication they have posted, even when they believe the forum to be private. There have been a number of high-profile cases in recent years where students across the country have been disciplined after offensive comments, made on private messaging services such as WhatsApp, were captured and subsequently shared. With this in mind, you should remember that action can be taken by the School if behaviour failing to meet policy guidelines is identified either publicly or privately.

3 Student responsibilities

3.1 As a student you should be aware of your association with and responsibilities to the School, and ensure that your profiles and related content are consistent with:

- the School's policies, including but not limited to, the student code of conduct, bullying/harassment, safeguarding, and acceptable use of IT (see section 4.4 for further details), with which you agree to comply when you enrol at the School
- how you would wish to present yourself – including to future employers

3.2 You should also be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything which you post online. Therefore, you should avoid posting anything online that:

- you would not wish to be in the public domain; and/or

- you would not be willing to say personally to the face of another individual

3.3 You should also be aware that any digital material that you post online could reach a wider audience than you would have expected or intended. Once digital content has been created and shared, you will have limited control over its permanence and audience. The School may treat it as foreseeable that information posted by a student on any social media platform will be disseminated to the world at large, and therefore it will not be open to a student to claim as a defence to any disciplinary action that they did not anticipate that content that otherwise breaches this policy would be revealed to third parties other than the intended recipient.

3.4 Students are encouraged to be mindful of how their identity, statements or views appear online and are reminded that future employers and industry contacts may view social media profiles to gain information about a candidate's character, personality or employability. You should therefore be conscious of publishing both texts and digital posts that may hinder you, for whatever reason, in the future. You are encouraged to review your existing social media accounts and, where appropriate, to transition to a more professional appearance.

3.5 It is recommended that students read and act in accordance with the rules and guidelines set out by individual social media companies and providers. You should check the terms and conditions of a social media account and/or website before uploading material to it; by posting material to social media accounts and/or websites, your ownership rights and control of the content may be released. For this reason, it is important to exercise caution in sharing all information, especially where the information, expressly or by implication or innuendo, identifies a third party.

3.6 You should note that you have the right of erasure under data protection legislation, and that you can request that social media companies remove content concerning yourself. It should be noted that there are circumstances where the social media company can refuse to remove content, for example where content might be used as evidence in legal proceedings.

3.7 You should note any personal data uploaded onto social media about yourself is normally regarded as being put into the public domain, and therefore has significantly less protection from data protection legislation.

3.8 Students registered on professionally accredited courses should be aware that unacceptable online behaviour may breach the code of conduct of their chosen profession and may have implications for Fitness to Practise.

4 Expected standards of behaviour

4.1 You are personally responsible for what you communicate on or through social media and you must adhere to the standards of behaviour set out in this policy and any related policies (see section 4.4). You will also be deemed responsible for the actions of others (both within and outside the School community) who share content that you have posted.

4.2 Communications on social media must be respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Use of social media must not infringe on the rights, or privacy of other students, and you must not make ill-considered comments or judgments about other students, staff or third parties.

4.3 You must take particular care when communications through social media can identify you as a student of Guildhall School to members of staff, other students, or other individuals.

4.4 All use of social media must comply with the School's policies, including:

- Academic regulatory framework section 5A: student code of conduct and disciplinary procedure
- Harassment, Bullying & Sexual Misconduct policy
- Online Bullying, Harassment and Abuse guidance
- Safeguarding policy
- IT Acceptable Use, Security and Best Practice of IT and Telecommunications Equipment policy
- Maintaining Good Campus Relations in HE policy
- digital/online teaching and learning policies and practice

4.5 The following non-exhaustive list may, according to the circumstances (and subject to 1.5), be considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be posted:

- confidential and/or commercially sensitive information (which may include teaching or research content that is not in the public domain, information about fellow students or staff or personnel matters, non-public or not yet approved documents or information);
- personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission;
- recordings and/or photographs made without the consent of one or more parties concerned and released without a clear public interest case;
- recordings or any content from School-owned material or interactive learning platforms including but not exclusively, E-Stream, Moodle, Zoom and MS Teams;
- details of complaints and/or legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving the School;
- comments posted using fake accounts or using another person's name without their consent;
- material, including images, that is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile towards any individual or entity, or amounts to a misuse of private information or breach of confidence;
- any other posting that constitutes a criminal offence (including under the Communications Act 2003 section 127 and the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 section 33);
- anything which may bring the School into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of colleagues, former colleagues, students, former students, staff, former staff, and those connected with the School.

4.6 The School has well-established ways for students to raise dissatisfaction or concerns, and we regularly communicate these processes to students. Any student wishing to raise a complaint, report a crime or an incident should do so by visiting our [How to Raise a Concern](#) page, or by contacting the Police; you should not raise complaints or air grievances via social media. You should contact the School and/or the Police as soon as possible, saving any evidence, e.g. screenshots of social media. This is the most appropriate way to raise your concern and get a response to your problem.

4.7 If you air a grievance or complaint publicly, it may limit any action that can be taken. An individual, including the complainant, may undermine proceedings or processes by publishing information, including imagery, relating to existing or potential complaints and/or legal proceedings. This could in turn compromise the safety of the School community. As such, this conduct may be seen to be of an unacceptable nature, as per paragraph 4.5 above.

4.8 Raising a complaint publicly can also lead to civil action against the author if the complaint is found to be false. Statements on social media that cause harm to an individual, including to their reputation, or that interfere with an ongoing disciplinary/legal process may create a potential civil claim against the individual making the statement. This may extend to the sharing of statements made by others. Communications on social media are subject to legislation which aims to prevent interference with legal proceedings regardless of intent to do so.

4.9 Permission to share third party material, including all images, photography, text and videos, should be sought and recorded in a tangible format before uploading them to or linking them via social media. Where permission is obtained, we recommend such materials should be credited appropriately.

4.10 The School is not responsible for, nor does it hold any ownership, of any content posted by its students, other than content posted by students using School accounts, or in the course of their duties, as a form of professional communication. If you are using a School account, a staff member should always be informed and give permission first. You should be aware that while contributing to the School's social media activities you are representing the School, and misuse of official School accounts would constitute a breach of the student code of conduct.

4.11 Students, and student groups, e.g. student societies, must take particular care not to state or imply that their views are those of the School when using social media, nor use the School logo at any time.

5 Online bullying and harassment

5.1 The School will not accept any form of bullying or harassment by students or members of staff, students or other members of the School community. Further details are available in the Harassment, Bullying & Sexual Misconduct policy.

5.2 The following examples illustrate the types of behaviour, displayed through social media communications or other forms of electronic communication such as email, text or instant messaging, which the School considers to be forms of online bullying:

- maliciously spreading rumours, lies or gossip
- intimidating or aggressive behaviour
- offensive or threatening comments or content, including hate speech
- posting private images of an individual without consent (including, but not limited to, private sexual images of an individual)
- sharing unwanted images (including sexual images)
- posting comments/photos etc. deliberately mocking an individual with the intent to harass or humiliate them
- sending messages or posting comments with the intent to trick, force or pressure the receiver into doing something that they would not otherwise be comfortable doing (grooming)

5.3 Any student who is experiencing online bullying by another student or a member of staff will have the full support of the School. The Online Harassment, Bullying and Abuse Guidance outlines the procedure to be followed if you feel you are being bullied, harassed or victimised online.

6 Monitoring and action as a result of breach of this policy

6.1 The School will monitor references to the School on social media and respond to complaints regarding student conduct on social media. If a student is found to have acted in breach of this policy this may lead to consideration of disciplinary action being taken against them.

6.2 A student may be required to remove internet or social media content which is found by the School to be in breach of the policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in further disciplinary action.

6.3 Where conduct may be a criminal offence, the School may report the matter to the Police. The School may also report any social media posts in breach of platform guidance to the relevant social media platform for removal, subject to enquiry. The School will work closely with the Police, where necessary, to establish a timeline to report the post for removal as quickly as possible whilst ensuring any investigation is not jeopardised. Further details can be found in the Online Harassment, Bullying and Abuse Guidance.

Annex A

Tips on staying safe on social media and managing your reputation

These tips are to help you when you are considering posting on social media. They will help you manage your professional reputation and ensure you follow School guidelines and the law.

- Remember, everything you post online is public. Once it's out there you lose control of how others might interact with it. Posting anything online (even on closed profiles or private messaging services, like WhatsApp, for example) has the potential to become public, even without your knowledge or consent.
- Think before you post. Would you be happy for your family, teachers or future employer to see it? If not, then it's probably not a good idea to post it. There have been a number of high-profile cases where students across the country have been disciplined after offensive comments made on private messaging services, like WhatsApp, were captured and subsequently shared.
- Consider how the content of your messages may appear to others. Offensive materials, including text, images and video, have the potential to cause serious upset and severely damage your professional and personal reputation. Consider how others may perceive your content. How could a potential employer view the content? Employers are increasingly checking the digital footprint of potential employees. This means looking at old tweets, posts and comments on forums. Will sharing the

content result in you falling short of expected standards at Guildhall School and the law? If so, it could result in the School taking disciplinary action. Don't forget, it can be hard to take something back once it has been shared, copied, or redistributed.

- Check your privacy settings. Protect your personal information and that of others that could be misused. Think about who can see your address, telephone number, date of birth and email address. And definitely don't share your bank details online. Also remember that while you may be sharing the content privately (on your own private profile or in a private forum) others can share that content publicly if it is available.
- Use Secure Passwords. Never re-use passwords across different websites. Where possible use second factor authentication methods, which may include sites sending an SMS or an authenticator app on your phone. For further information see <https://www.getsafeonline.org/protecting-yourself/passwords/>
- Be aware of sharing third-party materials. Do you need permission to share the materials or should you, as a matter of courtesy, contact the party? Make sure you check before posting as infringement of rules could break copyright and/or intellectual property laws.
- Do not post solutions to assignments on the internet or social media or use the internet or social media to facilitate cheating in assessments. If you upload your own answers to coursework then these may be used by others in their own assignments. You could be found guilty of committing the academic offence of collusion.
- Finally, question everything you read online. Not everything you read might be completely accurate. Who wrote it? Where did it come from? Does the imagery look poor quality? If you think it looks or sounds inaccurate, it's probably best avoided. Writing and distributing inaccurate statements about people and organisations can be unlawful and lead to legal action.

Find further help and advice:

[Get Safe Online | Free, online security advice](#)

[Staying safe online - Victim Support](#)