



College council will review this policy annually

Date approved: March 2019

Date of next review: 2020

RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy is to support acceptable and beneficial use of social media by staff employed at **Doncaster Secondary College**. It is recognised that most employees may use or interact with social media at work and in a personal context. It is recognised that there is great potential for the use of social media in school communities to enhance educational outcomes, and as a means of communication.

Department employees, school council members and volunteers at Doncaster Secondary College must understand and meet the obligations and recommended standards of behaviours set out within existing Department instruments, policies and guidelines when using social media tools for personal or professional purposes.

Social Media Risks

The following are some of the major risks associated with the use of social media:

- reputational damage to organisations and people;
- disclosure of confidential information and breach of privacy laws;
- posting of offensive, bullying, harassing, and discriminatory material;
- misuse of intellectual property and breach of copyright laws; and
- for teachers, breaching the *Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct* issued by the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

What is Social Media?

Social media is any form of online or web-based publication, forum or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, blogs, forums, discussion boards, chat rooms, Wikis, Twitter and YouTube.

GUIDELINES

Employees must recognise:

- online behaviour should at all times demonstrate respect for the dignity of each person;
- the need to behave in an ethical manner when using social media (even for personal communication) as those communications can reflect on their role as an employee of the Department.
- their ability to serve as a positive role model for students and as a representative of the School is a critical aspect of their employment; and
- social media activities may be visible to current, past or prospective staff, students and parents.
- employees will avoid the potential of breaching this policy and compromising the professional expectations of them at the School if they do not use personal social media forums to:
 - post any material about the School (eg. students, parents, policies, employees etc); or
 - post inappropriate material about themselves; or
 - make inappropriate contact with members of the school community.

Work-related use of Social Media

Student Learning

The use of online learning communities by employees for educational purposes must be in accordance with other relevant School policies and procedures relating to online learning.

Generally

When using social media for work related purposes (e.g. closed group for an overseas event, Alumni Development) employees must:

- first obtain the consent of the Principal (which can be for a specific instance or for a general purpose or role) before:
 - posting any material that may be perceived as being made “on behalf” of the School (eg. any commentary, School information, photographs of the School, students, staff or other identifying images); and
 - photographs or any other intellectual property of proprietary using the School’s logo, trademarks, official materials; and
- not post inappropriate material or commentary that breaches other policies outlining expected behaviours of employees at the School: and
- close the group at the conclusion of the event, or by negotiation with the Principal, but no longer than 2 months.

If there could be reasonable concerns that posting any material could be considered inappropriate (eg. in light of potential privacy or copyright obligations), then an employee must first raise those concerns with the Principal before posting the material.

Personal use of Social Media

Generally

It is recognised that employees may use social media in their personal life. However, it is also recognised that such use may impact on the employment relationship.

Accordingly, employees’ personal use of social media must:

- not bring the School into disrepute or interfere with, or compromise their duties or responsibilities to the School or students;
- comply with other policies of the School and professional standards that outline expected behaviours of employees when posting personal comments that relate to, or can be identified as relating to, School issues (eg. discussing or referencing employees, students, policies or anything related to, or reflecting upon the School); and
- take steps to ensure that friends, family or other acquaintances are aware of the need to use discretion when they post images or information about the employee on their own social media forums.

To avoid potentially breaching this policy or compromising the professional expectations of them as employees at the School, it is recommended that employees’ use of social media not involve connections with the following persons on social media forums (for example, being “friends” on Facebook):

- recent former students (i.e. enrolled at the School within a two-year period before connecting/and only if they have no other siblings currently enrolled at the School); or
- parents of current students;

unless special circumstances exist (eg. a parent is a personal friend or former student is a relative) and the employee has advised the Principal of the connection and the circumstances.

Students

Members of the College community must not connect with students or interact with, or post images of, students on their own private social media forums (for example, employees must not be “friends” with students on Facebook).

An exception to this requirement is when prior approval for the connection has been obtained from the Principal on the basis that an employee and a student will appropriately interact within the valid context of a legitimate purpose (for example, both are family members/relatives, or both are members of a community sporting team and interactions are purely for the purpose of participating in that sport).

Security, Privacy and Access

To avoid potentially breaching this policy or compromising the professional expectations of them as employees at the School, it is recommended that employees:

- ensure the privacy settings of their social media profiles are appropriately set to avoid putting their privacy at risk (for example, minimum recommendation for Facebook accounts: settings set to “only friends” and NOT “Friends of Friends” or “Networks and Friends” as these open your content to a large group of unknown people); and
- recognise that even if they implement the maximum-security settings for their social media profiles, the security settings on social media forums cannot guarantee that communications placed online do not become more publicly available than was intended (employees should always assume that posts or communications online may become public).

Employees must understand that the type of security settings used cannot excuse breaches of this policy if the material posted is inappropriate and becomes more publicly available than was intended.

Consequences of Breaching this Policy

Non-compliance with this policy may be grounds for disciplinary action. Depending on the seriousness of the circumstances, disciplinary action can be up to and including termination of employment.

Related Policies and Resources

The Social Media Policy has linkages to other relevant School policies and professional expectations, for example:

- *Code of Conduct/Behaviour Policy – DSC Dignity & Respect Statement*
- *ICT Acceptable Usage Policy*
- *Prevention of Bullying Policy*
- *Privacy Policy*
- *Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct issued by the Victorian Institute of Teaching*
- [Bullying](#)
- [Duty of Care](#)
- [Parent Complaints](#)
- [Relationship with the Media](#)
- [Reporting \(emergency and incidents\)](#)
- [Responding to Threatening Persons](#)
- [Suitable Teaching and Learning Resources](#)
- [Using Technology to Support Teaching](#)
- [Learning on Line](#)
- [Using Social Media: Guide for DEECD Employees in Schools](#)

A range of Step-by-step Guides are available via the following link. They provide practical steps and actions that will further support Department employees in educational settings to protect, respond to or manage an online incident of concern:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/prinsteps.aspx>

- Step-by-step Guide for Responding to Online Incidents of Inappropriate Behaviour by Students

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/bullystoppers/stepbystepconcernstudent.pdf>

- Step-by-step Guide for Removing Inappropriate Content from a web site, Facebook or other Social Media Site

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/bullystoppers/stepbystepincontent.pdf>

- Step-by-step Guide for DEECD Employees to Access Legal and Wellbeing Support for Online Incidents of Concern.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/bullystoppers/stepbystepconcernstaff.pdf>