

## E-COMMUNICATION POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

**TYPE:** Policy & guidelines

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**PURPOSE:** These guidelines set out Solihull College & University Centre's strategy for communicating with students, employers, potential customers and staff and the principles which students are expected to follow.

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**SCOPE:** This policy applies to students.

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**RESPONSIBILITY:** The Vice Principal HR & Student Services is responsible for this policy. The Director Student Services & Equality is responsible for the monitoring of the policy.

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**LEGAL CONTEXT:** Laws on copyright, Data Protection, privacy, defamation, slander, Communications Act 2003.

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### PUBLICATION:

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**Student Hub:** (Y/N)

Reviewed By	Created	Last Reviewed	Next Review Date	Total Pages
Pete Haynes,	July 2011	August 2018	August 2020	8

## **SECTION 1: Introduction and Purpose**

### **Guidelines for Students**

The following document is to be used in conjunction with Solihull College & University Centre's (SCUC) Code of Conduct; the Computer & Telephone Acceptable Use (Students) Policy; the Safeguarding of Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy.

These guidelines set out Solihull College & University Centre's strategy for communicating with students, employers, potential customers and staff and the principles which students are expected to follow.

The document gives interpretations for current forms of communication. Interactive technology is fast moving and it is impossible to cover all circumstances. However, the principles set out in this document should always be followed. For this purpose the document will be subject to regular review by the Social Media Working Group and by senior leadership.

Solihull College & University Centre recognises that digital social networking is extremely popular and acknowledges the right of students to freedom of expression. Whilst students are encouraged to recognise and make use of the obvious benefits to learning of interactive technology, they must also be aware of the potential legal implications of material which could be considered abusive or defamatory.

The intention of this document is to provide a structured and managed approach to communicating with other students, employers, and staff via social media.

Furthermore, it is not to stop students from conducting legitimate activities but is intended to highlight those areas in which issues, in particular in relation to Safeguarding Young People and Vulnerable Adults, and bullying and harassment of students or staff, can arise.

The purpose of this guidance is therefore:

- To ensure that professional boundaries are maintained for the protection of both staff and students
- To ensure that students and employees of Solihull College & University Centre are not placing themselves at risk of an allegation being made that their conduct in communicating with others is inappropriate
- To protect the reputation of employees of Solihull College & University Centre as a whole from abuse through staff usage of social networking and personal internet sites.

## **SECTION 2: GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Definition of social media**

In the context of this document, social media includes all types of electronic and digital communication. This means:

- a. all websites (including mobile phone apps and desktop applications) that facilitate the communication of written words, videos, images and photography over the Internet. This would include sites such as (though not restricted to) Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, and MySpace, but also web blogs, user groups and web forums, website user comments and email discussion lists
- b. mobile phone use including texting
- c. use of tablets
- d. email

### **2. Solihull College & University Centre's philosophy on social media**

Social media is increasingly becoming a practical and enjoyable means for many people to communicate with their friends, family and peers.

Social media provides the opportunity to facilitate good and constructive communication between staff, lecturers, students and prospective students..

SCUC recognises the potential to help reinforce public relations and engage with our wider audience and stake holders, from new and prospective students through to local businesses and media agencies.

### **3. Why use social media?**

Staff can use social media as another way to: share news of assignment dates, trips and events, share pictures of student events (but they must have your permission to use your photograph) and promotional videos.

### **4. Students as representatives of Solihull College & University Centre**

We want our students to be proud of being a Solihull College & University Centre Student. During induction students will learn about the expectations we have of them as students and the expectations they can have of us. We have a professional responsibility to protect those who are potentially vulnerable and be respectful of colleagues and students. SCUC staff have an obligation as employees to support and protect the reputation of the College when engaging in any public relations activities. This refers to activity both on official social

media sites and personal social media usage.

#### **5. Referring to other students or staff on personal social media**

The college promotes positive working relationships. These can easily be damaged by a thoughtless comment. Whilst we understand that online conversations can and do replace face to face conversations between students, under no circumstances should you make reference to any student or member of staff that is negative or disparaging.

Any student, who can be identified as a student of the College/ university centre through personal social media sites must also adhere to the Code of Conduct. Negative or disparaging comments made by individuals regarding college staff or students within social or digital media falls under the same Code of Conduct. Bullying via social media, phone, tablet or email will not be tolerated in any form and the Disciplinary Procedure will be applied if this takes place. The police may also be informed dependent on the circumstances.

#### **6. Confidential information**

Discussions on social media sites are often informal so it's important to remember that you must not discuss or share any confidential information regarding another student.

#### **7. Copyright, defamation and other legal issues**

Please be mindful of UK laws that may be brought to bear upon your use of social media.

For example, posting someone else's work without permission is not only socially unacceptable but may also be in violation of copyright laws, and allow others to plagiarise student or staff work. Flippant or irresponsible comments may similarly breach laws.

Please also be aware that there are laws that protect an individual's or organisation's reputation whenever a statement regarding them is published or communicated to a third party. Should the content be deemed to be inappropriate or bring the College's reputation into disrepute then this may lead to an internal investigation in line with the Disciplinary Procedure and appropriate action taken.

Note: Individuals have been taken to court for making slanderous comments on Twitter.

#### **8. Acceptable use**

We actively encourage students to use social media to collaborate, organise and aid the discussion and exploration of their courses, course subjects and

course work. Any social media sites in use in the college are set up by Marketing.

### 9. **Unacceptable use**

Where it is found that a student or representative of SCUC fails to abide by these guidelines and engages in damaging or abusive dialogue or communications, disregarding their obligations as a student to act responsibly on social media networks, we will have no option but to progress the matter to disciplinary. We will conduct a formal investigation in line with the Disciplinary Procedure and a decision will be made about the student's place in college.

### 10. **Social media Dos and Do Nots!**

#### a. **Do**

- Positively engage with your fellow students and/or staff if a social media page is in place for your course
- Follow SCUC on Twitter and/or Facebook

#### b. **Do not**

- Attempt to become 'friends' online with staff outside of the professional contact via a course Facebook page
- Attempt to contact staff by text or mobile phone unless you are given a college phone number, for example, for use during a trip or visit or are calling the official college number
- Name individuals, make negative comments or encourage negative debate
- Use images or video or music without permission
- Offer up personal information that would be inappropriate to others
- Make inappropriate personal comments online
- Publish pictures or videos that may be considered harassing, libellous, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, damaging to individuals or the College reputation, or personal dignity, or otherwise disparaging or objectionable in any manner or nature.
- Impersonate other individuals when you submit information.

11. If you have a concern about any aspect of social media involving SCUC students or staff, including cyber bullying, speak to your personal tutor or one of the Safeguarding Officers.

## **SECTION 3: SOLIHULL COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY CENTRE WEBSITES (including Apps)**

14. **solihull.ac.uk** is the main website. Other approved sites may exist at any given time.

**15.** Any site purporting to be a Solihull College & University Centre site **MUST** be authorised by the Executive Management Team and managed by the Marketing Department.

## **16. MySC**

MySC (Formerly MYSOLCOM) is a private social network for lecturers and students to connect, communicate and collaborate in a safe and secure environment. MYSC will be the primary form of communication from the College to students for important notices, events and benefits. It is an expectation that all staff and students at the College access the app.

This network will enable you to:

- Connect with your student group
- Create a class group providing important up to date information
- Ask your tutor questions and provide help to other students
- Know what's going on at the College
- Communicate with staff and your fellow students through a secure and monitored communication method

It is available on:

- Desktop PCs: Navigate to <https://wameducation.com/mysolcom>.
- Laptops
- iPad
- Smartphone

## **17. Solihull College & University Centre Facebook Pages**

<http://www.facebook.com/Solihull.College>

SCUC's Facebook page (managed by Marketing) together with Moodle, provides the opportunity and forums for controlled student academic and college related discussion. In exceptional circumstances, and only with the approval of the EMT, additional SCUC Facebook sites may be created. These will be managed following a strict protocol.

- i. If approved by EMT, Marketing will set up the page and give user admin rights to the appropriate member of staff (you will need to be a Facebook user).
- ii. The Marketing Manager in consultation with the School Head will name your Facebook page, and use the following convention:  
Solihull.College – 'your course'; or Solihull.College – 'your service'.
- iii. When adding photos and images of people or their work you must have their explicit, written permission to do so.

Please bear in mind we have a responsibility to protect our students and any

vulnerable or at risk individuals, in which case it may often be inappropriate to include photos and personal details of students.

iv. Marketing will post relevant messages across all SCUC Facebook pages.

## 15. Twitter

<https://twitter.com/SolihullCollege>

SCUC has an Official Twitter account. No other Twitter accounts should be set up without the express authorisation of EMT.

## 16. YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/user/TeamSolihull>

There are many issues and pitfalls associated with setting up You Tube sites, for instance around:

- Copyright
- Accuracy
- Privacy rights

For this reason SCUC must ensure that content on You Tube is managed centrally and in a structured way.

SCUC has a Youtube account. Any video content must be passed to the Marketing team to be published on your behalf.

## 17. LinkedIn

<http://uk.linkedin.com/in/solihullcollege>

LinkedIn is a networking site for professionals. Hence, its benefit is really for keeping in touch with ex-students and businesses. Staff cannot be in contact through Linked In with students who are currently enrolled at SCUC.

## 18. Other sites

There are many other social networking sites, with new ones particularly exploring geo-location tools on smartphones, popping up all the time. Again, if you are looking at trying out any other form of social media, please be aware that the same controls will apply.

## SECTION 4: MOBILE PHONES

## **19. Use of personal mobile phones**

Most students own a mobile phone and should expect contact from SCUC staff to this number.

Contact will be from college landline numbers, on occasions work mobile phones, by text via Pro-Monitor or Text Tools. SCUC owned mobile phones are available for staff for trips off site etc.

Staff will not use their personal mobile phones to contact students and will not give students home or personal mobile phone numbers.

Please be mindful that mobile phones can be misused, for instance uploading of inappropriate content onto file sharing video sites, inappropriate messages to harass or intimidate others. Students are reminded of our expectations under section 5 above.

If you need to take images as part of your learning eg a group activity, as a record of a trip or an event, then you should ask your tutor for use of a SCUC owned camera. You must not take images using your mobile phone.

## **20. Text Messaging**

The ability to use text messaging provides new opportunities for the college as it facilitates the spread of information to potential students, current students and colleagues.

We expect our staff to ensure that all communications are made within the guidelines as defined in SCUC's staff policy on the use of internet and email, for their own protection and for that of the students.

Students will be contacted by text using Pro-Monitor, text tools or from an approved SCUC owned phone.

## **SECTION 5: DISPLAY SCREENS / TV SCREENS**

Display and TV screens are an official method for communicating approved content to students. Any screens and their usage must be approved by the Executive Management Team.