



# **Social Media Policy**

**November 2023**

## History of Changes

<b>Version</b>	<b>Description of Change</b>	<b>Authored by</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.1	Date changes and reference to policies updated	Debbie Kerr	November 15
1.2	Minor changes to terminology	Debbie Kerr	October 18
1.3	Changed dates and job titles only	Debbie Kerr	January 2020
1.4	Minor changes and updates – change to recording of social media sites to be held by marketing	Debbie Kerr	November 2023

# **Social Media Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

The use of online social media sites has become a very significant part of life for many people. They provide a very positive way to keep in touch with friends and colleagues and can be used to exchange ideas and thoughts on common interests, both personal and work-related and to promote ideas and beliefs.

There are many benefits to social media when used responsibly however when used carelessly or irresponsibly the behaviour at the very least can be rude or offensive and may even be illegal.

This policy is intended to provide clear guidance and advice on the use of these sites to avoid circumstances occurring where content posted by the individual contravene their conditions of employment or impact on the reputation of the College.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all staff of the College.

## **3. Key Principles**

- 3.1 If an employee's personal internet presence does not make any reference to the College and the College cannot be identified, the content is unlikely to be of concern to the College. If employment or study at the College is referred to then the information posted would need to comply with the conditions outlined below. This includes reference to the College being the employer within the personal profile.
- 3.2 It is permissible to create a web presence through a blog or social network site for marketing or educational purposes. The College has detailed guidelines appended to the policy to help support employees who wish to create a web presence for these purposes.
- 3.3 Where a web presence has been created for activity linked to employment at the College the creator of the web presence is responsible for all content posted and access by others and must monitor contributions to ensure that they are appropriate, will not cause offence and do not infringe any third parties legal or moral rights. Details of the web presence should be recorded within the college's records and held in the Marketing Department's register of social media sites as detailed within the Social Media Guidelines.

- 3.4 Posting any images or information about students is not acceptable unless it forms part of an educational activity and the students' consent has been given, in writing, prior to the exercise. In the case of students under the age of 16 the consent of the parent or guardian should be given.
- 3.5 An individual is free to talk about the College. However, instances where the College is misrepresented or brought into disrepute may constitute misconduct or gross misconduct and disciplinary action will be applied.
- 3.6 An employee must not disclose confidential information relating to his/her employment at the College.
- 3.7 Sites must not be used to be offensive or verbally abuse staff or students. Privacy and feelings of others must be respected at all times. Employees must obtain the permission of individuals before posting contact details or pictures. Care must be taken to avoid using language which could be deemed as offensive to others.
- 3.8 If information on the site raises a cause for concern with regard to content posted by third parties or conflict of interest, employees must raise the issue with their line manager.
- 3.9 If approached by a media contact about content on a site relating to Borders College, employees must advise their line manager and the Marketing Department.
- 3.10 Viewing and updating social media sites unconnected with the workplace during working times, unless in exceptional circumstances and this has been agreed in advance as appropriate by the line manager. Reasonable access is acceptable before/after working hours and during work breaks.
- 3.11 Relevant legislation, including copyright and GDPR must be adhered to.
- 3.12 Sites must not be used for accessing or sharing illegal content. Any instance involving illegal content or offensive material, or which breaches equality legislation, will be reported to the police. All inappropriate use will be reported to the service provider to allow them to remove the content from the site.
- 3.13 Any serious misuse of Social Networking sites that has a negative impact on the College may be regarded as a disciplinary offence.
- 3.14 The College does not discourage staff and students from using such services. However, all should be aware that the College will take seriously any occasions where the services are used inappropriately. If occasions arise of what might be considered to be online bullying or harassment or discrimination or victimisation, these will be dealt with in the same way as other such instances of bullying and harassment or discrimination or victimisation.

## **4. Responsibilities**

- 4.1 The SLT are responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- 4.2 The Director of People Services is responsible for the operation of this policy.
- 4.3 All staff are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

## **5. Related Documents**

Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Harm

Employee Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

Student Positive Behaviour Policy and Procedure

Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure

Copyright Policy

Professional Conduct Between Staff and Students Policy

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Employee Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure

## **6. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

# Social Media Guidelines

This document has been prepared as a starting point for the use of social media at Borders College and should be used as a guide for operating any site that pertains to be an official Borders College site.

## 1. Introduction

Borders College supports the use of Social Media by employees to connect with students, colleagues, alumni, employers, colleagues and more. This guide provides information on how to do so effectively, safely and within the college's social media policy. Social media is constantly changing. As a result, this handbook will continue to evolve. If you have suggestions, please email [hr@borderscollege.ac.uk](mailto:hr@borderscollege.ac.uk).

Social media has changed the way we communicate – both as an institution and as individuals. Social media means that anyone with an internet or mobile connection now has the ability to create a dynamic Web presence. These can be updated, wherever they are whenever they want, and share their content instantly with friends and followers around the world. Social media has given Borders College the opportunity to engage in ongoing “conversations” with our students, staff, parents, alumni, colleagues, employers and friends about what is most important to them, extending the Borders College community to the world.

Borders College recognises and uses social media as part of their marketing and promotions toolkit. All use of Borders College branded social media needs to be considered from a corporate perspective to ensure that the brand and reputation of Borders College is managed. Individual users will have the ultimate responsibility of managing their social media presence on a regular basis.

An essential starting point for any social media project is to make your line manager and Marketing aware of your plans and register your site with them for tips and advice as they have extensive experience in the use of social media.

## 2. Considerations When Beginning to Use Social Media

Applications that allow you to interact with others online require careful consideration to assess the implications of “friending,” “linking,” “following” or accepting such a request from another person. For example, there is a potential for the misinterpretation of relationships. In particular, where the social media is used for staff-student interaction, closer consideration should be given to the implications. There is also the potential for the inadvertent sharing of protected information. The following are some guidelines to follow to ensure protection for yourself and Borders College.

### **3. General Guidelines**

Sharing Borders College news, events or promoting College and student work through social media tools is an excellent, low-cost way to engage the community and build our brand. Employees are encouraged to repost and share information with their family and friends that is available to the public. The best way to share Borders College news is to link to the original source. When sharing information that is not a matter of public record, please follow the guidelines below.

#### **Maintain Confidentiality**

Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Borders College, its students, its alumni or your fellow employees. Use good ethical judgment and follow Borders College policies and requirements within your responsibility as a Borders College employee.

#### **Maintain Privacy**

Do not discuss a situation involving named or pictured individuals on a social media site without their written permission. As a guideline, do not post anything that you would not present in any public forum.

#### **Respect Borders College Time and Property**

It's appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing work goals, such as seeking sources of information or working with others to resolve a problem. You should participate in personal social media conversations in your own time.

#### **Do No Harm**

Let your Internet social networking do no harm to Borders College or to yourself whether you're navigating those networks on the job or off.

#### **Understand Your Personal Responsibility**

Borders College staff are responsible for the content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated content. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time – protect your privacy.

#### **Be Aware of Liability**

You are responsible for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be copyright infringement, defamatory, proprietary, libellous, or obscene (as defined by the courts). Increasingly, employers are conducting Web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.

### **Maintain Transparency**

The line between professional and personal business is sometimes blurred. Be thoughtful about the content and potential audiences of your postings. Be honest about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a Borders College staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your views as an individual, not as a representative of Borders College.

### **Correct Mistakes**

If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If you're posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post—just make it clear that you have done so.

### **Respect Others**

You are more likely to achieve your goals or influence others if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

### **Be a Valued Member**

If you join a social network, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Don't hijack the discussion and redirect by posting self/organisational promoting information. Self-promoting behaviour is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from Web sites or groups.

### **Think Before You Post**

There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts and pictures years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed. Post only pictures that you would be comfortable sharing with the general public (current and future peers, employers, etc.).

## **Social Media Guidelines When Posting as an Individual**

Borders College uses social media to supplement traditional press and marketing efforts. Employees are encouraged to share Borders College news and events, which are a matter of public record, with their family and friends. Linking straight to the information source is an effective way to help promote the mission of Borders College and build community. When you might be perceived online as an agent/expert of Borders College, you need to make sure it is clear to the audience that you are not representing the position of Borders College or Borders College policy. While the guidelines below apply only to those instances where there is the potential for confusion about your role as a Borders College agent/expert versus personal opinion, they are good to keep in mind for all social media interactions. When posting to a social media site you should:

### **Be Authentic**

Be honest about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a Borders College staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your personal views and are not speaking as a formal representative of Borders College. If you identify yourself as a member of the Borders College community, ensure your profile and related content are consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues.

### **Use a Disclaimer**

If you publish content to any website outside of Borders College and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with Borders College, use a disclaimer such as this: “The postings on this site are my own and do not represent Borders College’s positions, strategies or opinions.”

### **Don’t Use the Borders College Logo or Make Endorsements**

Do not use the Borders College logo or images on your personal online sites. Do not use Borders College name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate.

### **Take the High Ground**

If you identify your affiliation with Borders College in your comments, readers may associate you with Borders College, even with the disclaimer that your views are your own. Remember that you’re most likely to build a high-quality following if you discuss ideas and situations civilly. Don’t pick fights online.

### **Don’t Use Pseudonyms**

Never pretend to be someone else. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors.

### **Protect Your Identity**

While you should be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use. Don't list your home address or telephone number. It is a good idea to create a separate e-mail address that is used only with social media sites.

### **Does it pass the Publicity Test?**

If the content of your message would not be acceptable for face-to-face conversation, over the telephone, or in another medium, it will not be acceptable for a social networking site.

Ask yourself, would I want to see this published in the newspaper or posted on a billboard tomorrow or ten years from now?

### **Respect Your Audience**

Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the Borders College community. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered sensitive – such as politics and religion.

### **Monitor Comments**

Most people who maintain social media sites welcome comments – it builds credibility and community. However, you may be able to set your site so that you can review and approve comments before they appear. This allows you to respond in a timely way to comments. It also allows you to delete spam comments and to block any individuals who repeatedly post offensive or frivolous comments.

A common practice among individuals who write about the industry in which they work is to include a disclaimer on their site, usually on their "About Me" page. If you discuss Further or Higher Education on your own social media site, we suggest you include a sentence similar to this: "The views expressed on this [blog, Web site] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Borders College." This is particularly important if you could be perceived to be in a leadership role at Borders College.

## **Social Media Guidelines When Posting on Behalf of Borders College**

Online collaboration tools provide low-cost communication methods which foster open exchanges and learning. While social media tools are changing the way we work and how we connect with the public and other higher education institutions, the Borders College policies and practices for sharing information remain the same. In addition to the general guidelines discussed above, when you are creating or posting to a social media site on behalf of Borders College you need to:

### **Seek Approval**

Any messages that might act as the “voice” or position of Borders College should be approved by your line manager or carried out by individuals with delegated authority to undertake this.

### **Be Accurate**

Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It’s better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible – that’s how you build community.

### **Be Transparent**

If you participate in or maintain a Social Media site on behalf of Borders College, clearly state your role and goals. Keep in mind that if you are posting with a Borders College username, other users do not know you personally. They view what you post as coming from the Borders College. Be careful and be respectful. What you say directly reflects on Borders College. Discuss with your line manager the circumstances in which you are empowered to respond directly to users and when you may need approval.

### **Be Timely**

Assign an administrator (member of your team) who can regularly monitor postings and content. Aim for standard times for postings and updates. The recommended minimum frequency is once to twice a week. But be sure not to overload your updates. Followers will stop paying attention if you overload them with information.

### **Be Responsible**

What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing on behalf of Borders College is not a right but an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect. If you want to participate on behalf of Borders College, be sure to abide by its standard practice guidelines.

### **Respect Others**

Users are free to discuss topics and disagree with one another, but please be respectful of others’ opinions. You are more likely to achieve your goals if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

### **Be a Valued Member**

If you join a social network like a Facebook group or comment on someone's blog, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Post information about topics like Borders College events or a book you've authored only when you are sure it will be of interest to readers. In some forums, self-promoting behaviour is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from websites or groups.

### **Be Thoughtful**

If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material in your role as a Borders College employee, ask your line manager before you post.

### **Use of the Borders College Logo**

If you create a social media site on behalf of Borders College, use simple graphics that represent the Borders College brand and make sure you get permission from the Marketing Department before you use them.

## **Safety & Privacy Tips for Social Media Networking**

The internet is open to a world-wide audience. When using Social Media channels, ask yourself:

1. Did I set my privacy setting to help control who can look at my profile, personal information and photos? You can limit access somewhat but not completely, and you have no control over what someone else may share.
2. How much information do I want strangers to know about me? If I give them my phone number, address, email, a list of possessions (such as my CD collection) how might they use it? With whom will they share it? Not everyone will respect your personal or physical space.
3. Is the image I'm projecting by my materials and photos the one I want my current and future friends to know me by? What does my profile say to potential students, employers and other stakeholders? Which doors am I opening, and which am I closing?
4. What if I change my mind about what I post? For instance, what if I want to remove something I posted as a joke or to make a point? Have I read the social networking site's privacy and caching statements? Removing material from network caches can be difficult. Posted material can remain accessible on the internet until you've completed the prescribed process for removing information from the caching technology of one or multiple (potentially unknown) search engines.
5. Have I asked permission to post someone else's image or information? Am I infringing on their privacy? Could I be hurting someone? Could I be subject to libel suits?

6. Does my equipment have spyware and virus protections installed? Some sites collect profile information to SPAM you. Others contain links that can infect your equipment with viruses that potentially can destroy data and infect others with whom you communicate. Remember to back up your work on an external source in case of destructive attack(s).

## Social Media Strategy Checklist

1. **Team:** Identify the person or persons who will have primary responsibility for populating, maintaining and monitoring your site. Ensure they have the time and enthusiasm to devote to this project. List the team members.
2. **Primary Goals:** Are you trying to communicate a campaign, generally promote your department or communicate with students, employers or alumni? Define your goal for your social media presence.
3. **Measuring Success:** Determine how you will measure the success, or lack of success, of your site. Increased traffic to your Web site? Better communication with students? A new network of colleagues? List how you plan to measure the site's success, and the tools you'll use to track that success.
4. **Audiences:** Identifying your audiences will help you tailor your content and also choose the right tool. List your primary audiences.
5. **Current Conversation:** This is when the listening begins. Survey the social media landscape for the "thought leaders" in your field. What are people already saying? What are people saying about you? Who is saying it? List the topics, people and sites that are leading the conversations that are relevant to you.
6. **Content:** Identify the content you have to share. Is it primarily news updates, student collaborative project, research developments, or networking information? Photographs? Video? List the content you will be sharing via social media.
7. **Name and Design:** Identify a simple and descriptive name for your profile that clearly identifies your affiliation with Borders College.
8. **Evaluation:** Set a timeline for when you will conduct an evaluation of your site's success, using the goals and measures identified above. At that time, be prepared to realign your site's content. Ongoing evaluation should also be part of your strategy. Define your timeline.

9. **Seek Support and Assistance:** Discuss your plan with Marketing. Where the primary function of the site is marketing or communications the Marketing Department will provide invaluable guidance on all aspects of the social media presence. Where the plan is for educational purposes then working with the E-Learning Team will assist you in planning access and the use of learning material. Make sure you register the account details on your register with the Marketing Department.
  
10. **Administrative contacts and access:** There should be a procedure in place so that more than one member of staff has the administrative contact details and access to the site to be able to deal with any issues that arise.

All social media site details must be registered, and access details recorded and notified to your line manager.

## **Borders College Social Media Register**

This information should be sent to the the Marketing Department by the social media site owner. The Marketing Department will hold the College register of Social Media sites.

Name of Social Media Platform
Date of Creation
Expiry Date
URL of Page
Account Holders/Account Users
Objectives of site
Notes

Status: Approved by JCCP  
Policy Dated: November 2023  
Author: Director of People Services  
Review Date: November 2026  
Equality Impact Assessed: September 2012