



Social Media Policy for Students and Staff

*Policy updated April 2025
 Approved SMT April 2025
 Pending Academic Council approval academic year 2025/2026*

Version history:

Document Title:			RCSI Social Media Policy (for Staff & Students)		
Name of Unit:			DVCAA office, HR & Communications Department		
Rev	Status	Author(s)	Reviewed By	Approved By	Issue Date
1	Draft	MB & KO'S	Consultation Group	Amendments Suggested	27 th November 2019
2	Draft	MB, KO'S & Consultation Group	Consultation Group	Consultation Group	17 th December 2019
3	Draft	MB, KO'S & Consultation Group	Academic Council	Amendments Suggested	15 th January 2020
4	Draft	MB, KO'S & Consultation Group	Academic Council		12 th February 2020
5	Final	MB, KO'S & Consultation Group	MHSB		
6	Reviewed	PC & MOD	RCSI Policy Consultation Group	Senior Management Team	25 th October 2022
7	Reviewed	PC & MOD		Senior Management Team	22 nd April 2025

1. Introduction

RCSI recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media provides. Social media is a tool used to enhance profile and reputation, celebrate success, communicate research, leverage key activities and initiatives, share news and build and maintain relationships with key stakeholders online. Therefore, RCSI actively encourages staff and students to use social media platforms in a positive, constructive and responsible manner.

While many positive opportunities are presented by social media, there are also associated risks. Often, the lines between an individual's personal or professional views and those of RCSI as an institution can become blurred. Even when an account states that 'views are personal', the views can be perceived externally as those of RCSI as an institution.

2. Purpose

This policy helps to clarify how to use social media platforms to protect and benefit the University, its staff and its students.

This policy provides guidance to all staff and students¹ on how to responsibly use social media to maximise benefits whilst mitigating risks. In particular, it provides information on staff and student responsibilities when communicating via social media.

The purpose of this social media policy is to:

- Enable RCSI's staff and students to use social media in its various forms to make RCSI more accessible and visible to online audiences as a leading centre for professional education, research and innovation in healthcare.
- Enable RCSI's staff and students to use social media to appropriately enhance and add value to their activities and achievements
- Ensure that RCSI's reputation nationally and internationally is protected.
- Ensure RCSI's staff, students, patients, people under the care of and all people affiliated with the RCSI are protected.
- Set out the responsibilities of staff and students when using social media.
- Ensure privacy rights are maintained and that social media activity does not lead to the discovery of data that would otherwise have rightfully remained undisclosed.
- Ensure a consistent messaging and branding approach to social media across the University.
- Signpost to staff and students resources and contacts that will support them in enhancing their social media presence and that of the University.

¹ See 'Scope' for further details

3. Definition

RCSI defines social media as interactive online environments where content is created, consumed, promoted, distributed, discovered or shared.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all RCSI staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students, PhD students, Researchers, and all those operating on behalf of the University, such as contractors, honorary appointees, agency staff, visiting academics and international and transnational operations of RCSI, hereinafter, collectively referred to as 'Users'.

This policy governs the use of social media;

- By Users communicating with, on behalf of or in reference to the University
- For both University business and personal purposes
- On platforms representing the University and/or perceived to be representative of the University

The policy applies to the above whether inside or outside of normal University work/study time and whether on RCSI or personal devices.

5. RCSI Academic Freedom Statement

While recognising that social media plays an important role in the context of academic freedom, the principles of RCSI's Academic Freedom Statement² apply also to the use of social media and the University requires responsible and scholarly use in line with this policy.

² *'Academic freedom within RCSI is valued as the freedom to teach, speak, conduct and publish research, and participate in professional or representative academic bodies without interference, censorship or penalty, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly endeavour'.*

6. RCSI Social Media Platforms

The corporate RCSI social media accounts are linked below.

<u>Channel</u>	<u>Link to page</u>	<u>Managed by</u>
LinkedIn	http://www.linkedin.com/company/rcsi	Communications Department
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/rcsi_irl	Communications Department
X (FKA Twitter)	https://twitter.com/RCSI_Irl	Communications Department
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/rcsi123	Communications Department

Threads	https://www.threads.net/@rcsi_irl?hl=en	Communications Department
BlueSky	https://bsky.app/profile/rcsi.bsky.social	Communications Department
TikTok	https://www.tiktok.com/@rcsi_studentlife	Marketing Department

7. RCSI Affiliate Accounts

RCSI understands that specific departments, Schools, research groups, clubs and societies benefit from having their own, distinct social media presence, which collectively enhances RCSI’s overall online visibility. Each affiliate – be it a department/School/club/ society - is responsible for monitoring and managing their specific social media account(s) in accordance with the contents of this policy. It is important that RCSI’s online presence is kept relevant and up to date, therefore social media accounts that are not in use should be deactivated

While affiliates accounts will handle their own social media interactions in most cases , the Communications Department retains ultimate authority over all affiliate accounts. This includes the power to review, amend or deactivate any content or account that does not align with this policy or that is not representative of RCSI’s mission and values.A register of all RCSI affiliate accounts (e.g. Departments, Schools and research groups), including the person(s) within the department/team/group who are responsible for the monitoring and upkeep of the account is available on request from the Communications Department.

Note: if there is a change to the person(s) managing affiliate accounts, please notify the RCSI Communications Department.

8. Setting up new RCSI Social Media Accounts

Before setting up a new affiliate RCSI social media account, it is important to consider whether there is a different audience or set of objectives which cannot be met through an existing account(s).

In order to establish a new social media account, permission must be obtained from RCSI’s Communications Department. The person(s) who will be responsible for managing the account will be required to meet with a member of the RCSI Communications team. The Department will provide guidance and advice on how to get started and how to develop a social media plan, giving careful consideration to:

- The target audience and their information needs
- The content to be shared

- The visual appearance of the profile and necessary branding
- How producing content and monitoring the account will be resourced
- How this account sits together with those already established across the University

Any social media site or page directly related or perceived to be representative of RCSI, currently existing or newly created without authorisation by the Communications Department will be subject to review and may be amended or removed, in line with Section 10 of this policy.

9. Social Media Usage Policy – Responsibilities

Users must at all times use social media sites and pages in a responsible manner, having due regard to the rights and reputation of themselves, the University and of all others. In particular, Users responsibilities include the following:

- It is the responsibility of Users to read this policy and act in accordance with it
- It is the responsibility of Users to act in accordance with the rules and guidelines set out by individual social media companies and platforms.
- Users should check the terms and conditions of social media platforms before uploading material to it; by posting material to social media platforms, ownership rights and control of the content may be released. For this reason, it is important to exercise caution in sharing information, especially where the information, expressly or by implication or innuendo, identifies a third party.
- Users should be mindful of how their identity, statements or views appear online.
- Users should be mindful that any content posted, shared or endorsed online has the potential of reaching a wider audience than expected or intended.
- It is recommended that users should adopt secure account practices such as enabling multi-factor authentication (MFA) to protect accounts from unauthorised access.
- Users must endeavour to ensure the authenticity of any content they share on social media and not knowingly share misinformation. This includes verifying facts, sources, and the accuracy of information before posting, particularly where information has been generated by artificial intelligence tools. Misinformation can damage the credibility of both the individual and RCSI.
- Users are personally responsible for what they communicate on or through social media and must adhere to the standards set out in this policy and all other relevant University policies³.
- Users must at all times respect the confidentiality and privacy rights of patients, the University, colleagues, staff, students and alumni.
- Users must not post, share or engage in content that is deemed to be, or could be perceived as, inappropriate, discriminatory, threatening, harassing, indecent,

illegal, obscene, bullying, defamatory, slanderous, violent, or hostile towards any individual, group or entity.

- Users must not use pseudonyms or seek to impersonate any other person or entity online.
- Users must not infringe copyright and/or intellectual property rights. When posting, users must be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of the University and others, including those relating to images, videos, data and all other forms of copyright and or/ intellectual property.
- The RCSI name and logo, including all names and logos under the trademarks of RCSI, must not to be used to promote a cause, petition, political party or candidate.
- Users should avoid posting or sharing content that they do not wish to be in the public domain.
- On personal social media accounts, Users must take particular care to state that views are their own and not those of RCSI.
- Users must not use social media as a means of engaging in argumentative conversation.
- Users must not use social media as a means for submitting or voicing a complaint against RCSI ⁴.
- Users must not post, share or engage in content that contravenes GDPR rules or intrudes on any privacy rights.
- When posting photographs or any form of visual media involving identifiable individuals Users must ensure compliance with regulations on data protection and privacy.
 - This includes obtaining explicit consent from individuals depicted in any imagery outside public spaces
 - Written permission from a parent or legal guardian must be secured if the photography involves individuals under the age of 18. Permission slips are available upon request from the Communications Departments.
- Users are responsible for ensuring insofar as possible that the content they create and share is accessible to all audiences by utilising accessibility functions on social media platforms e.g. the addition of descriptive alt text to images and ensuring video content is captioned. Users are encouraged to seek guidance from the Communications and EDI teams.

³ **Staff:** *Data Protection Policies, Dignity at Work Policy, Staff Disciplinary Procedure, Equal Opportunities Policy, Grievance Procedure, Intellectual Property Policy, Protected Disclosure Policy, IT Acceptable Usage Policy, IT System Access Policy, Internet Usage Policy, Child Safeguarding Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, EDI Policy*

Students: *Student Agreement Policy, Disciplinary Regulations, IT Acceptable Usage Policy, RCSI Student Privacy Policy, RCSI Student Complaints Procedure, Student Dignity and Respect Policy*

⁴ This includes the University and all its campuses, staff, faculty, alumni, students, researchers, PhD students, research outputs, projects and any University related news.

10. Risks of Social Media

RCSI also wants to ensure that our staff and students are protected from possible risks associated with social media. While social media serves as a dynamic platform for communication and engagement, its misuse can inadvertently lead to reputational damage, the violation of privacy rights or, offend individuals or groups. Awareness and understanding of these risks are crucial for safely navigating social media interactions.

Below are some examples of how difficult situations can arise from the use of social media:

Example A

An RCSI student on a clinical rotation takes a photo of the list of procedures planned for the day and posts it on Instagram with the caption 'A busy day ahead!'. The post was visible to all 200 of the student's followers. Although the student did not realise it, the uploaded photo of the list of procedures had some patient's names listed at the side. One of the comments under the photo reads 'Hey, the third patient on the list is my next door neighbor!'.

Example B

An RCSI employee operating a X account under the name of their Department retweets a post by a political party accompanied by a strong, opinionated comment and engages in argumentative conversation with another X user. Within three days, the post and comments are viewed and reshared by over 1000 other X users. Many of these users begin to follow @RCSI_irl in response, suggesting they think these views are those of RCSI's.

Example C

A staff member posts an opinion from their personal social media account which results in an argumentative exchange. An external individual is offended by the comments. They identify the author as an RCSI staff member and raise the issue with RCSI saying that RCSI's values and reputation are being undermined.

Example D

A WhatsApp group for students on rotation is created. One of the students starts to send messages to another student who had not previously agreed to share their number, asking them out repeatedly and sending messages at all hours of the day and night.

Below are some examples of racism and inappropriate behaviour on social media:

Example A

An RCSI student is in the changing room and removes their hijab momentarily. Another RCSI student takes a photo of the student without their hijab and shares it on a WhatsApp group and with other students.

Example B

A staff member posts a number of racist slurs pertaining to the Traveller community from their personal social media account.

Example C

Messages are exchanged in a student WhatsApp group, which are of an anti-Semitic nature. The exchange occurs between multiple students.

The above examples demonstrate behaviour that is unacceptable and does not align with RCSI's values. RCSI is committed to embedding a culture that is safe and welcoming for all, where everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Bullying, harassment or behaviour that contravenes these standards are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

11. Breach of the Policy

In the interest of User safety, RCSI reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed to be in breach of this policy.

On receipt of notice (or where the University otherwise becomes aware) of any suspected breach of this policy, the University will be required to conduct further enquiries and reserves the right to remove, or require the removal of, any content that is deemed by the University to be in breach of this policy.

Concerns may be raised not only by RCSI students or staff, but also potentially by external sources.

RCSI will take appropriate action against Users when an allegation of a breach has been identified. Action taken against Users who act in breach of this policy will be in line with the relevant University policy³.

12. Social Media Training & Support

Supporting our staff and students to engage on social media is an important objective at RCSI. We want to equip Users with the skills to communicate effectively on social media in a way that builds personal profiles and amplifies our institutional efforts to enhance our reputation online.

The RCSI Communications Department has developed a number of helpful guides such as a social media toolkit, social media top tips for clubs and societies, content style guide and the RCSI Brand Guidelines. These guides provide information on how to get started, how to set objectives, how to create content and how to track progress. RCSI staff can access these informative guides on the staff portal and students can request a copy by emailing the Communications Department. The Communications team also host several social media workshops throughout the year for staff. All new events will be announced on Workvivo.

13. Raising Queries or Concerns

Any staff or student who is concerned about any activity on social media regarding themselves, a student, staff member or the University in general, should contact the Communications Department immediately so that appropriate action can be taken at the earliest possible time.

The Communications Department will progress the matter, if appropriate, with the relevant professional service department (Student Welfare or Human Resources) so that dedicated support can be offered to those affected.

In addition to internal supports provided directly by RCSI, we also provide staff and students with access to a free confidential counselling and well-being service. See the contact details for staff and students below, should you require it.

Staff Contact Details



Employee Assistance Programme

24/7 Mental Wellbeing Support Programme

Freephone IRE: 1800 903 542 S
WhatsApp: Text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010 100% CONFIDENTIAL

Student Contact Details



The SAP is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

We offer support with:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Low mood
- Marital or relationship problems
- Family problems
- Loss & grief
- Substance abuse issues

Contact the SAP service on:
UK Freephone: 0800 0318227
Or
WhatsApp: Text 'Hi' to 074 1836 0780
100% CONFIDENTIAL

If a breach of this policy is considered to have occurred, as a standard action, the matter will be brought to the attention of the staff member or student involved. They will be briefed on the Social Media Policy and a full investigation will be instigated if warranted.

14. Monitoring of Policy

This policy will be reviewed periodically or as required. RCSI will ensure this policy, and any future changes, are accessible to all Users.

⁵ Staff – Human Resources Department, Students – Registry@rcsi.ie

Appendix 1 – Researched Policies

DCU

DeMontfort University Queens University Belfast Kings College London

The University of Liverpool