



# John Moores Students' Union

## Social Media Policy

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## **1. General Statement of Policy**

JMSU uses social media as a key channel to communicate with members, support student voice, promote opportunities and represent the interests of students. As a democratic and member-led organisation, social media plays an important role in enabling participation, engagement and transparency.

This policy sets out the standards and requirements for the use of social media in connection with JMSU. It is intended to support effective and responsible use, while protecting the safety, wellbeing and rights of individuals, and safeguarding the reputation, integrity and legal obligations of the organisation.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all individuals acting in connection with JMSU, including staff, student staff, elected officers, trustees, student representatives, volunteers and affiliated student groups such as societies and sports clubs.

It applies to official JMSU social media accounts, accounts operated by affiliated groups, and personal accounts where an individual is identifiable as representing or being associated with JMSU. The policy applies at all times, including outside working hours and on personal devices.

This includes both public platforms and JMSU-managed private or closed digital spaces like WhatsApp.

## **3. Aims & Objectives**

The aims of this policy are to ensure that social media is used effectively, responsibly and in a way that supports JMSU's purpose and values. The objectives of this policy are to:

- a) provide clear expectations for individuals using social media in connection with JMSU
- b) support positive engagement with students and the wider community
- c) protect the safety, wellbeing and rights of individuals
- d) ensure compliance with legal, regulatory and organisational requirements
- e) safeguard the reputation and integrity of JMSU
- f) ensure appropriate governance, oversight and management of official social media accounts
- g) support elected officers and student representatives to use social media confidently and responsibly within their roles

## **4. Principles**

- 4.1 All use of social media in connection with JMSU must be responsible, accurate and lawful, and should reflect the values and objectives of the organisation. Activity should contribute to a respectful, inclusive and safe student environment and should not cause harm to individuals, groups or the organisation.
- 4.2 JMSU recognises and supports lawful freedom of expression. Individuals are entitled to express personal views, including those that may be controversial or unpopular. However, this must be balanced with the responsibility not to breach the law, this policy or other JMSU policies, or to create environments that are unsafe, abusive or discriminatory.
- 4.3 JMSU will not restrict lawful expression solely on the basis that it is controversial. However, it will take action where behaviour crosses into harassment, discrimination, abuse or other forms of harm.
- 4.4 Elected officers are expected to demonstrate these principles to a higher standard, recognising that their conduct may reasonably be interpreted as representing JMSU and influencing the wider student community.

## **5. Roles & Responsibilities**

- 5.1 Overall responsibility for this policy rests with JMSU. Trustees are responsible for oversight of risk and governance, and the Senior Leadership Team is accountable for implementation. Operational responsibility sits with relevant staff functions, including communications, safeguarding and student engagement.
- 5.2 All individuals covered by this policy are responsible for their own conduct and must ensure they have read and understood this policy; ensuring that any use of social media (professionally and personally) is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies.

## **6. Standards of Conduct**

- 6.1. Individuals are responsible for their conduct on social media where it relates to JMSU. The following are examples of content that is considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should not be posted by a member of staff either through JMSU branded or personal social media accounts (This list is not exhaustive and is provided for guidance.):
- a) content that is discriminatory, intimidating, threatening or amounting to bullying or harassment;
  - b) disclosing any confidential information about JMSU and its associated entities,
  - c) posting any confidential information (including indications of forthcoming developments or funding bids, data or software code, information about colleagues or personnel matters, trade secrets, minutes, details of unresolved grievances, non-public or not yet approved documents, news or information);
  - d) posting the work of someone else without obtaining permission from the owner to do so and, where appropriate, crediting the author;
  - e) reference to any confidential business strategy, intellectual property, management plans,
  - f) management forecasting or plans for innovation not in the public domain;
  - g) details of internal complaints and/or legal proceedings involving JMSU and/or any current or former student(s) or staff of JMSU where such sharing will breach data protection legislation or subvert due process; personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission;
  - h) content posted to impersonate colleagues, JMSU accounts, students and/or third parties related to JMSU
- 6.2. Criticism of JMSU, its policies or its activities is a legitimate part of student engagement and democratic life. However, this must not extend to personal attacks, abusive behaviour or conduct that creates a hostile or unsafe environment.
- 6.3. Where there is uncertainty about whether content is appropriate, individuals are expected to exercise judgement and seek advice before posting.
- 6.4. Care should be taken when engaging with children, young people or vulnerable individuals, including maintaining appropriate boundaries and using official channels where possible. Please refer to Safeguarding Policy.

## **7. Management of JMSU Accounts**

- 7.1 Official JMSU social media accounts must be managed in a controlled and accountable manner. All accounts must be registered with JMSU and have clearly identified ownership. Access must be limited to authorised individuals, with appropriate arrangements in place to ensure continuity where roles change. Day-to-day

content may be posted by authorised account users within agreed guidelines. Content relating to sensitive, high-profile or reputational issues should be escalated to the Content & Engagement Manager or a member of SLT for approval where appropriate. Examples include media interest, safeguarding concerns, political sensitivity, legal risk, or reputational impact beyond routine engagement

- 7.2 Where accounts are operated by elected officers in an official capacity, they must be recognised as JMSU accounts and transferred appropriately at the end of the officer's term. All official accounts remain the property of JMSU.
- 7.3 Content published through official accounts must be accurate, appropriate and aligned with JMSU's values and legal responsibilities. Such accounts must not be used to endorse individuals, candidates or external organisations without appropriate authorisation, nor to share confidential or commercially sensitive information.
- 7.4 Appropriate security measures must be in place at all times, including the use of strong passwords, secure access arrangements and, where available, multi-factor authentication. Any suspected compromise of an account must be reported immediately.
- 7.5 Account owners are responsible for ensuring that accounts are monitored on a regular basis and that content and interactions are moderated in line with this policy.

## **8. Student Groups & Affiliated Accounts**

- 8.1 Affiliated groups are responsible for the management of their own social media accounts but must operate in line with this policy and any relevant JMSU policies, including the Activities Policy.
- 8.2 Groups are expected to ensure continuity of access between committee members, use appropriate naming and branding, and moderate content responsibly. JMSU reserves the right to intervene where accounts are misused or present a risk to individuals or the organisation.

## **9. Personal Social Media**

- 9.1 Personal use of social media during working hours should not be excessive or interfere with a member of staff's role or commitment to JMSU. JMSU reserves the right to restrict access to social media sites if it deems it necessary to do so.
- 9.2 JMSU does not seek to restrict personal use of social media. However, where an individual is identifiable as being associated with JMSU, they must take care not to imply that they are speaking on behalf of the organisation without authority and must not share confidential or sensitive information or post content that could reasonably cause serious harm to others or to JMSU.
- 9.3 Elected officers should exercise particular care in how they present their views online. Due to their role, their activity may be interpreted as reflecting JMSU's position, even where this is not intended. Officers should therefore take reasonable steps to distinguish between personal views and official positions and avoid creating confusion.
- 9.4 Engagement with content, including liking, sharing or reposting, may be perceived as endorsement. Individuals, and particularly elected officers, should consider this when interacting with content, especially where it relates to sensitive or contested issues.

- 9.5 Individuals should also be aware that social media content may remain accessible over time and may be associated with their role, even where it was posted prior to holding a position. Those holding or seeking elected office are expected to take reasonable steps to understand and review their publicly accessible digital presence. JMSU recognises that views may change over time and will consider the context and timing of historical content when assessing concerns.
- 9.6 Staff are reminded that other members of staff and/or students may see their activity on social media. Even when privacy settings are used, there is no guarantee that posts cannot be copied or shared.
- 9.7 Statements that views are personal do not remove responsibility for content.

## **10. Elections & Campaigning**

- 10.1 During elections and referenda, social media must be used in a way that supports fairness and transparency. Official JMSU accounts must remain neutral unless otherwise authorised, and JMSU platforms must not be used to improperly influence democratic outcomes.
- 10.2 Candidates and campaigners are required to comply with Elections Regulations, which set out detailed expectations for social media use during these periods.

## **11. Communication & Content Standards**

- 11.1 All communications made in connection with JMSU should be appropriate to the context and audience. Content should be accurate, proportionate in tone and respectful of intellectual property rights.
- 11.2 Where individuals engage in campaigning, activism or commentary on social issues, they should be clear whether they are acting in a personal capacity or representing JMSU. Elected officers may advocate on issues relevant to their role; however, official JMSU positions must be based on agreed policy or democratic mandate. Personal views must not be presented as organisational positions.
- 11.3 Care should be taken when engaging with politically sensitive or contested issues, and advice should be sought where appropriate.
- 11.4 Content should, where possible, be accessible and inclusive in format, including consideration of captions, clear language and inclusive imagery.
- 11.5 JMSU will respond to complaints or criticism on social media where appropriate, in a proportionate and respectful manner.

## **12. Digital Space & Communications**

- 12.1 JMSU recognises that communication increasingly takes place through group-based and messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp, Discord and similar tools. Where these are used in connection with JMSU activity, they fall within the scope of this policy.
- 12.2 When creating or managing digital spaces, individuals must ensure that they are appropriate, inclusive and aligned with JMSU's values. This includes having a clear purpose, appropriate oversight, and arrangements in place to manage conduct and escalate any safeguarding or welfare concerns. Relevant JMSU guidance must be followed before establishing any group-based communication.

- 12.3 Group-based communication should be used where appropriate, and individuals should maintain suitable boundaries, particularly where they hold representative roles.
- 12.4 JMSU reserves the right to intervene where digital spaces connected to its activity are misused or present a risk to individuals or the organisation.

### **13. Crisis & Incident Management**

- 13.1 In the event of a significant incident or reputational risk, control of messaging will be coordinated through authorised staff. Posting on official channels may be restricted, and scheduled content may be paused to ensure that communications are appropriate and sensitive.
- 13.2 Approval may also be required for high-risk or sensitive content outside of crisis situations.
- 13.3 Serious or high-risk issues should be escalated to senior staff where appropriate. Significant incidents may be escalated to the Trustee Board in line with JMSU's governance arrangements.
- 13.4 Content & Engagement Manager will develop a Crisis Communication Plan.

### **14. Implementation & Monitoring**

- 14.1 JMSU may moderate content on its social media platforms to ensure compliance with this policy and to maintain a safe and respectful environment. This may include the removal of content, restriction of access or escalation of concerns. Moderation decisions will be proportionate and focused on preventing harm. This includes moderation of both public content and JMSU-managed private or closed digital spaces.
- 14.2 JMSU may monitor official accounts and publicly available references to the organisation where appropriate. Monitoring will be proportionate and carried out in line with legal and ethical standards.
- 14.3 JMSU will provide appropriate guidance and support to ensure that individuals managing social media have the knowledge and skills to do so responsibly. Compliance with this policy will be monitored, and action taken where breaches are identified.

### **15. Breaches of the Policy**

- 15.1 Failure to comply with this policy may result in action being taken in line with JMSU procedures. This may include removal of content, restriction of account access, suspension of social media privileges, disciplinary action under relevant JMSU procedures, or referral to external authorities where required
- 15.2 Serious incidents arising from social media activity will be managed in line with JMSU's reporting obligations, including referral to relevant authorities where required.

### **16. Data Protection Legislation and Freedom of Information Act 2000**

- 16.1 Data protection legislation applies equally to social media as it does in other contexts. Staff must ensure that all posts comply with relevant data protection legislation and JMSU's Data Protection Policy.
- 16.2 No personal information should be shared on social media without the consent of the individual to whom it relates. Staff should therefore never post other staff, students' or a third-party personal information without consent. This may also potentially be a criminal offence, liable to prosecution by the Information Commissioner's Office.

- 16.3 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 may apply to posts and content uploaded to official JMSU websites, or any other website belonging to a public authority. As such, if a request for such information is received by JMSU, content uploaded to JMSU social media accounts may be disclosed.

## **17. Inspection & Audit Review**

- 17.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner to ensure that it remains effective, proportionate and aligned with legal requirements and sector expectations.
- 17.2 The job titles referred to in this Policy are subject to change. If there is any doubt about designated roles, final clarification will be given by the Chief Executive Officer.

## **18. Related Policy**

- 18.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and documents:
- a) JMSU Staff Handbook
  - b) JMSU Safeguarding Policy
  - c) JMSU Data Protection Policy
  - d) JMSU Finance Procedures & Rules
- 18.2 This is not an exhaustive list and JMSU Policies can be found at <https://www.jmsu.co.uk/about-us/how-we-work/our-rules-policies>