



Oriel College

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND GUIDANCE

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A. Introduction

Social media are interactive technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing and aggregation of content, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks. Social Media use has risen exponentially since its inception and it is a tool that is used by almost every single member of our community.

Social media can bring enormous benefits and opportunities. However, it also brings with it significant risks. The central University has developed social media guidance for students: [University Social Media Guidance for Students](#)

B. Scope

This policy provides guidelines to help faculty, staff, and students who create and manage social media presences as representatives of the college, either as individual professionals, on behalf of their academic or administrative departments, or as students representing college student organisations.

C. Information Security Classification

This policy will be published on the College's website.

Copies of the policy will also be available on the College's internal SharePoint resource, or from the Governance Officer (governance@oriel.ox.ac.uk).

D. Delegated Authority

The Governing Body has delegated authority for reviewing this policy to the Head of Communications, who brings the policy to the House Committee for annual review.

E. Definition of Terms

What is "social media"?

Social media is defined as pictures, videos, texts, podcasts, etc. ("media") shared ("social") on web-based applications that enable others to interact by posting, sharing, commenting, etc. Through its institutional social media presence, the college communicates directly with and receives instant feedback from online communities that include students, faculty, staff, alumni, prospective students, families, fans, and the media.

Types of social media

Social media include a variety of online tools and services that allow users to publish content and interact with their audiences. Today's most common types of social media include:

- Social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Media sharing networks (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube)
- Discussion forums (e.g., Reddit, Quora)
- Bookmarking and content curation networks (e.g., Pinterest)
- Consumer review networks (e.g., Yelp, Tripadvisor)

- Blogging and publishing networks (e.g., Medium, WordPress, Tumblr)
- Interest-based networks (e.g., Goodreads, Last.fm)
- Social shopping networks (e.g., Etsy)
- Sharing economy networks (e.g., Uber, Airbnb)
- Anonymous social networks (e.g., Whisper, Ask.fm)

Official Oriel College social media

The Communications Office maintains the official social media platforms that are recognised as the voice of the college online. The only two exceptions are the X and Instagram account that are maintained by the College Library Team. The official Oriel College social media accounts are:

- **X:** <https://twitter.com/orieloxford>
- **X:** <https://twitter.com/OrielAlumni>
- **X:** <https://twitter.com/OrielLibrary> (managed by the Oriel College Library Team)
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/OrielCollegeOxford>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/orielenses>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/ocsboxford> (managed by the Centre for the Study of the Bible)
- **LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/school/oriel-college-oxford>
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/orieloxford/>
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/oriellibrary> (managed by the Oriel College Library Team)
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/ocsb.oxford/> (managed by the Centre for the Study of the Bible)
- **Twitter (X):** https://twitter.com/OCSB_Oxford (managed by the Centre for the Study of the Bible)
- **Youtube:** https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3P0zz1rU_TtVeUIQfEUsrA
- **Bluesky:** [@orieloxford.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/orieloxford.bsky.social)
- **TikTok:** <https://www.tiktok.com/discover/oriel-college-oxford>

All official social media accounts are expected to adhere to this policy. The social media accounts outside of the official accounts that are managed by students will be expected to refer to [University Social Media Guidance for Students](#).

F. Policy Statement

Policy statement and use of official social media

Social media are platforms used extensively for people to interact with individuals and organisations. Social media provide a mechanism for information delivery and consumption through the publication of and interaction with timely and relevant content. Oriel College regards the use of social media as an element of institutional communication to be shaped and guided by the college and appropriate policies.

Social media can bring benefits and opportunities to an academic community, including enabling global communication and collaboration and promoting healthy and lively academic debate.

There is, however, an inherent risk involved in using social media, in that it is an instantaneous and far reaching form of communication and inappropriate use has the potential to cause serious, and sometimes unexpected and long-term, consequences.

This policy outlines the potential impact social media misuse can have on you and other users.

Freedom of speech and academic freedom

Freedom of speech and academic freedom are central tenets of college and university life, including in a social media context.

G. Procedure

Guidelines for the use and management of official Oriel social media

Comply with college policies

All content posted on college social media channels should comply with college policies and procedures. Policies and procedures that are relevant are:

- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Staff Handbook
- Student Handbook

Social media comment policy

Oriel College reserves the right to delete posts or comments on any official college social media accounts that contain:

- Profanity
- Personal attacks
- Bullying/harassment
- Racist/sexist/homophobic/other slurs
- Abusive or threatening content
- Sexually explicit or obscene visuals or text
- Violations of copyright/privacy laws
- Spam or commercial solicitations

All content, comments, and posts on Oriel College's social media channels are bound by the terms of service for that social media service. Read, understand, and obey the terms of service of all social media you use.

Below are the terms of service for accounts in use by the college:

- [Facebook terms of service](#)
- [X terms of service](#)
- [Instagram terms of service](#)
- [LinkedIn terms of service](#)
- [YouTube terms of service](#)
- [TikTok terms of service](#)
- [BlueSky terms of service](#)

Notify the college

Any staff, student or academic who would like to have an official Oriel social media presence should contact the communications office to ensure that all college social media sites coordinate with other college sites and their content as well as follow this social media policy and other guidelines.

College spokespeople

Oriel College does not have an official spokesperson online except the official accounts listed above. No employee or staff has authority to respond on behalf of the College directly to users through their own personal social media accounts. All responses will be through the official college accounts.

Employees should discuss with their supervisors any questions they have as to whether and when they are authorised to respond directly to users through the official accounts. If the supervisor is unclear about levels of authority, please contact the Communications Office.

Dormant sites

Official social media accounts should be monitored and updated frequently. Sites that are dormant should be reassessed or taken down.

Protect the college voice

Posts on official college social media sites should protect the college's voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. Do not try to remove or send/post a written reply to unfavourable opinions, negative comments or criticism about Oriel. Any official response, if needed, will be made by the Communications Office.

Posting on personal Social Media Accounts

The College is not responsible for, and does not hold any ownership of any content posted on personal social media accounts by its academics, students, staff or any member of the college community.

Release of confidential information about Oriel College or its students, faculty, staff, alumni or any other confidential information about any members of the Oriel Community is strictly discouraged at all times and in all media, including personal social media.

Confidential material can include personal confidential information about an individual or information which is confidential for professional reasons, including:

- Trade secrets
- Confidential research data
- Personal information about another individual (such as information about their medical history, or sexuality). Please see the College's **GDPR and Data Protection Policy** for further details on the definition of 'personal data'.
- Details of complaints and/or legal proceedings

When posting online there may be circumstances in which you risk giving the impression that you are speaking on behalf of the college or university or your department. If in doubt, you should consider adding a disclaimer to make it clear that you are posting in a personal capacity.

As a reminder, any content posted in any online space, regardless of the intent for privacy, has the potential to be publicly and permanently visible.

Anyone who posts to a blog or other social media channels is liable for that content. Individuals have been held personally liable for commentary deemed to be confidential, copyrighted, defamatory, libellous or obscene.

H. Responsibilities

Be respectful

Be respectful of and do not disparage Oriel, its students, other employees, vendors, suppliers, and other institutions, being mindful that social media are widely viewable on the web. Do not vent personal complaints about supervisors, co-workers, or Oriel or engage in name-calling or other behaviour that will reflect negatively on Oriel's reputation.

Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the college.

Be thoughtful

If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material on our official social media channels, consult your supervisor or the Communications Office before you post.

Think twice before posting

Social media sends your message around the world instantaneously. Before publishing content, make sure you want everyone to read what you've written. Any comment that would not be made in a public forum should not be made on a social media account. Assume that nothing is private even if it is direct messages or other forums that give the illusion of privacy.

Check posts carefully

By their very nature, social media communications move quickly. Be sure of your facts. Take time to look over grammar and spelling.

Social media is a conversation not a monologue

Posts may generate responses; social media tries to encourage this interaction. Evaluate responses to reflect the college voice, at no point can responses degenerate to uncivil, heated arguments. If you have doubts about responding, consult your supervisors or the communications office.

Protect identity

At all times, the college will be considerate of personal information, seeking consent before it is shared. At no point should any information which could compromise an individual such as personal telephone numbers, personal emails, or home address be shared on Oriel's social media channels.

University IT Services have published some helpful [guidance on etiquette in emailing and on newsgroups](#), much of which will be applicable for social media as well.

I. Consequences of non-observance

For employees

Any employee who is found to have committed an act of discrimination, or breached this policy in any other way, will be subject to action under the College **Disciplinary Procedure** up to and including dismissal.

For students

Using social media to post offensive or abusive comments, images or other content may result in disciplinary action by the Senior Dean. This could include:

- Serious misconduct including harassment or bullying
- Accessing, downloading or storing illegal material

Potential further consequences

Future employment

Many employers now carry out an internet search before making offers of employment, so bear this in mind when posting material online, and when setting the privacy settings for your social media accounts.

Civil and/or criminal legal action

Various civil and criminal laws also apply to content posted online.

- Civil claims that could be brought include actions for defamation, harassment, breach of intellectual property rights, fraudulent misrepresentation or breach of confidence.
- Criminal offences that could occur online include harassment, stalking, hate crimes, coercive or controlling behaviour, disclosing private sexual images without consent, blackmail, malicious communications and terrorism offences.

Intellectual property

Be careful not to infringe copyright by posting others' content online (photographs, text, videos, music etc) without ensuring that you have permission to do this, including by checking the terms of any licence, for example, you may need to credit the author and/or link to the licence.

- If you are posting an image of a logo or trademark, always check that you have permission to do this. You may have the photographer or designer's permission, but not necessarily that of the owner of the logo/trademark.
- You should also consider checking the terms and conditions of social media accounts and/or websites before uploading material as by doing so you may be releasing ownership rights and control of content.

Breach of the University Code of Discipline

Using social media to post offensive comments, images or other content may also be a breach of the University Code of Discipline under Statute XI and could result in disciplinary action by the Proctors.

Such material could constitute:

- "harassment" under Section 2(m) of the Code of Discipline, as defined in the University's Harassment Policy
- a breach of section 2(h) of the Code of Discipline: engaging in "violent, indecent disorderly, threatening or offensive behaviour or language".

J. Reference

- [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy](#)
- [GDPR and Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Grievance Procedure](#)
- [Disciplinary Procedure](#)
- [Staff Handbook](#)
- [Student Handbook](#)

Also see the University's [IT Regulations](#)

K. Policy Version Control Table

Version	Owner	Agreed by House Committee	Agreed by Governing Body	Reason for amendment	Amended by	Next review	Further notes
v.1	Head of Communications and Governance Officer	1 May 2024	15 May 2024	This is the original version.	Head of Communications and Governance Officer		
v.2	Head of Communications and Governance Officer	13 June 2025 (in circulation)	18 June 2025	Annual review.	Head of Communications and Governance Officer	Trinity Term 2026	