

	POL-IPS-026	Rev: 2.0	Valid until: 11/04/2025
	<h1>IPS International Social Media Policy</h1>		
Author or latest reviewer name	Kier Price	Date: 11/04/2023	
Authoriser name	Kier Price	Date: 11/04/2023	

Introduction

IPS International recognise the importance of internet and mobile communications technology as a means of communication, both in the workplace and at home. Whilst we support the use of social media for work-related purposes, we also understand it carries certain risks, including breaches of confidentiality and damage to a company's reputation. This policy outlines the standards we require our employees to observe when using social media in connection with their work for the company or when referencing the company, whether in a personal or professional capacity.

All employees are responsible for complying with the requirements of this policy and for reporting any breaches of the policy to their line manager or Head of Department. If an employee encounters inappropriate, offensive, demeaning, or bullying conduct or information on social media sites, they should report it to the appropriate person. IPS International takes reports seriously and will investigate and take appropriate action as necessary.

Social Media

Introduction:

This policy governs the use of social media by all employees, contractors, and representatives of the company in a personal or professional capacity. 'Social media' refers to internet-based applications that allow users to collaborate or interact socially by creating and exchanging content, such as social networks, community sites, blogs, or web forums. Examples of this include Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter however this list is not exhaustive.

Purpose:

Social media platforms allow us to build connections and share ideas and content broadly and quickly, and IPS International supports its use. However, improper use of social media may give rise to a breach of employment contracts, company policies, defamation, or reputational damage to IPS International or its stakeholders. Improper use may include (but is not limited to), making defamatory statements, violating confidentiality agreements, engaging in harassment or discrimination, or sharing false or misleading information.

Scope:

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and representatives of the company, regardless of their position or location. Its intended to ensure that employees understand the rules governing their use of social media in relation to their work for IPS International or when referencing IPS International. The policy is in place to guide employees in the responsible use of social media, minimise risks, and ensure consistent standards of use.

Compliance:

This policy does not seek to regulate how staff use social media in a purely private capacity, if use has no bearing on IPS International or its activities. This policy is intended to ensure

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that staff understand the rules governing their use of social media in relation to their work for us, or when referencing IPS International . The policy is in place to guide other in the use of these platforms and services responsibly, to minimise the risks set out above and to ensure consistent standards of use regarding social media.

This policy therefore applies where:

- Use of social media relates to IPS International or its activities;
- Use of social media relates to or is otherwise connected with your work, whether the intended use is personal or professional;
- Used to represent yourself, or are otherwise identifiable, as someone employed by, or otherwise associated with, IPS International .

Monitoring

IPS International reserves the right to monitor, intercept, and read communications, including those made using social media platforms. This is to ensure compliance with our policies, to prevent breaches of confidentiality, and to protect the company's reputation.

In addition, we may monitor the use of social media in general and keep track of what is being said about IPS International, as well as other providers, apprentices, or employers. This responsibility falls under the jurisdiction of the Digital Marketing Department, who will take appropriate action as necessary to address any issues or concerns that arise. We believe that this is an important measure to ensure that social media is being used in a responsible and professional manner, and to protect the interests of IPS International and those we work with.

The Policy

Acceptable Use of Social Media at Work

At IPS International, we recognise that our IT systems are primarily used for business purposes, and any personal use of social media is a privilege, not a right. Therefore, we have set out the following guidelines to regulate the acceptable use of social media websites:

Reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites is allowed for employees whose work involves contributing to our social media activities. If you are contributing to our social media activities, you are representing IPS International and are expected to follow the guidelines listed below:

- Only interact on approved platforms about sector developments
- Ensure that all communications are of high quality, including being grammatically correct, accurate, objectively justifiable, reasonable and appropriate
- If you become aware of adverse criticism of IPS International, inform your line manager, Head of Department and the Digital Marketing Co-Ordinator. Do not respond without their express approval
- Comply with the terms and conditions and policies of the social media platforms used

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- Seek approval from your line manager or Head of Department before creating or exchanging comments on Colleagues, Learners, Employers or Suppliers.

Personal use of social media is allowed during official rest breaks, if it is reasonable and appropriate and does not interfere with work duties and responsibilities.

The above guidelines also apply to the use of personal devices to access social media websites at work.

Excessive personal use of social media and abuse of this policy will be considered a disciplinary offence.

Please note that these guidelines do not regulate how employees use social media in a purely private capacity, provided that the use does not interfere with IPS International or its activities.

Appropriate Conduct

Do not use your work email address to sign up for personal social media websites.

There is no expectation of privacy or confidentiality in anything you create or share on social media platforms. When you create or exchange content using social media, you are making a public statement. Your content will not be private and can be forwarded to third parties without your consent. Consider the potential sensitivity of disclosing information (such as health information) to the world. Once sensitive or confidential information (or offensive or defamatory information) has been disclosed, it cannot be recovered and may result in liability for both IPS International and you personally.

When creating or exchanging content on a social media platform, you must comply with your contract of employment.

- Do not discriminate against other members of staff, students, or third parties, or breach the equality policy.
- Do not harass or bully other members of staff or breach the harassment and bullying policy.
- Do not promote political or social groups that are not aligned with IPS International.
- Do not breach the data protection, internet, email and communications, information security, and/or whistleblowing policies.
- Respect any confidentiality obligations and do not disclose sensitive material or infringe any intellectual property or privacy rights of IPS International or any third party.
- Do not make defamatory or derogatory statements about IPS International, its staff or students, or employers.
- Do not create or exchange or link to abusive, obscene, discriminatory, derogatory, defamatory, or pornographic content.
- Do not upload, post, or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.

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- Regularly review privacy settings on your personal social media accounts and appropriately restrict people who can read your comments. However, even if privacy and security settings are restricted, be aware that anything you post on social media sites may be made public by onward transmission.
- Review the content of your personal social media accounts on a regular basis and delete anything that could reflect negatively on you in a professional capacity or on IPS International.
- Consider the copyright of the content you are sharing and, where necessary, seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload student pictures online other than via IPS International-owned social media accounts provided media consent has been given to do so.
- Exercise professional judgment about whether an image is appropriate to share on IPS International's social media accounts. Students should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule, and must not be on any list of those whose images must not be published.

Inappropriate Conduct and Excessive Use

If an employee is found to be in breach of this policy, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. It is important to note that breach of this policy may be considered as gross misconduct in certain circumstances, which may result in immediate termination of employment.

Employees should be aware that creating or sharing content on a social media platform may still amount to misconduct, even if it takes place:

- On a personal account with appropriate privacy settings;
- Outside normal working hours; and/or
- Without using IPS International's computers, systems, and networks

Inappropriate conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Discrimination against other staff, students, or third parties, which is a violation of our equality policy;
- Harassment or bullying of other staff members, which is a violation of our harassment and bullying policy;
- Promotion of political or social groups that are not aligned with IPS International;
- Breach of data protection, internet, email and communications, information security, and/or whistleblowing policies;
- Violation of confidentiality obligations and/or infringement of intellectual property or privacy rights of IPS International or any third party;
- Making defamatory or derogatory statements about IPS International, its staff, students, or employers;
- Creation or exchange or linking to abusive, obscene, discriminatory, derogatory, defamatory, or pornographic content;

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- Uploading, posting, or forwarding any content belonging to a third party without their consent;
- Sharing student pictures online outside of IPS International's owned social media accounts, unless media consent has been given to do so.

Employees should also be aware that excessive personal use of social media at work or using work email addresses to sign up for personal social media websites is not permitted.

Any abuse of this policy will be considered a disciplinary offense.

End of Policy