# Social Networking Policy

| | |
|---|---|
| **Policy Prepared by:** | Tim Hanks |
| **Job Title/Role:** | Director of IT |
| **Policy Ref. No.:**<br><br>**Q/P 193** | **Date of this version:** 12<sup>th</sup> August 2012<br><br>**Review date:** August 2014<br><br>**Upload to College website?** No |
| **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT:** | <u>**Screened By:**</u><br><br>**Date:**<br><br><u>**Full EIA:**</u> **N/A / Completed by\***<br>*Delete / add detail as appropriate<br><br><br>**Date:** |
| **Approved by:** | Director of IT |
| **Date:** | 13<sup>th</sup> August 2012 |

# Social Networking Policy

## 1.    Introduction

1.1.    Social Networking raises a number of issues for the College in terms of interactions between learner and learner, and staff and learner.

1.2.    Sites such as Facebook, Bebo and Twitter are ways in which members of the College community can communicate with each other and learners and staff can be unaware of the implications of their comments or postings.  In particular, comments that might be considered as unimportant or throwaway when spoken face to face can become something much more powerful when posted online and thus viewable by a wide circle of people.  Also, internet interactions between staff and learners have the potential to be much less professional than they would in other contexts

## 2.    Policy Statement and Scope

2.1.    <u>Learners</u>

2.1.1.    Learners need to understand that as members of a wider college community they do not have total freedom to express themselves as they wish.

2.1.2.    The following types of communication are not allowed and may lead to a learner being disciplined in accordance with the College's disciplinary procedure or, in extreme cases, involve notification of the Police or other external bodies:

2.1.2.1.    Posting any comment that could be viewed as bullying or harassing another member of the College community: learner or member of staff.  It will be viewed as particularly serious if a learner sets up a site or page, which has the clear purpose of criticising, bullying or harassing another member of the College community. It will also be viewed as particularly serious if a learner makes libellous statements about any other member of the College community;

2.1.2.2.    Posting any comment that breaks the terms of the College Equality and Diversity Policy;

2.1.2.3.    Posting any comment that explicitly encourages other members of the College community to actively break the law.  It will be viewed as particularly serious if a learner actively encourages others to take prohibited substances, or commit violence; and

2.1.2.4. Learners should be aware that material posted on the internet can be very hard to remove. They are therefore always well-advised not to post photographs of themselves or other people that they might not wish others to see, now or in the future. They are also well-advised not to make written comments that could be used against them in future

2.2. Staff

2.2.1. Staff are expected to exercise appropriate discretion and maintain a clear professional distance between themselves and learners. To keep that professional distance, staff should follow this code of conduct and avoid the following examples of types of interaction. Failure to do so could represent a breach of the College Code of Conduct and could therefore lead to implementation of disciplinary procedures

2.2.2. Types of interaction that Staff must avoid:

2.2.2.1. Interact with learners online other than through the College email system;

2.2.2.2. Post comments, photographs etc. critical of the College on any forum, web-site, social networking site, blog etc. (In future this code of practice will simply use the term "comments" and "post" as abbreviations);

2.2.2.3. Post comments critical of any other member of staff. Any criticisms of the College or its community members must be made through appropriate channels;

2.2.2.4. Post comments that run counter to the College's Equality and Diversity Policy and mission;

2.2.2.5. Post comments that recommend, or appear to endorse, law-breaking of any kind;

2.2.2.6. Post comments that exhibit grossly irresponsible behaviour, or appear to endorse irresponsible behaviour, that could be argued to encourage "copycat" behaviour by learners, for example, dangerous driving or substance abuse;

2.2.2.7. Communicate with learners or parents on the internet other than by emails sent or through any approved College Facebook page;

2.2.2.8. Allow learners to see their social networking sites where permission is required to see those sites; and

2.2.2.9. Participate in the individual social networking sites of learners

## 3. Policy Objectives

3.1. Make clear to learners the limits of "free speech" on the internet

3.2. Draw clear boundaries that staff must not or would be ill-advised to cross

3.3. Lay out the potential penalties for breaking the code of practice

## 4. Policy Implementation

4.1. The College expects all of its staff and students to comply fully with this Policy and its principles

4.2. Disciplinary action may be taken against any employee or student who breaches any of the instructions or procedures following from this Policy

## 5. Responsibilities

5.1. It is the responsibility of all staff and students to promote this policy and abide by the good practice it aims to promote

## 6. Related Policies, Procedures and Codes of Conduct

6.1. IT Code of Conduct, which this Code in no way supersedes

6.2. College Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, which states that all staff should develop respectful, caring and professional relationships between themselves and young people. Staff behaviour should demonstrate integrity, maturity and good judgement

6.3. Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure

6.4. Disciplinary Procedures