

# SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

## Policy Review

Author/Owner	Position	Approved by:	Approval Date	Review Cycle Review Date	Published on Website Y/N
Katherine Bolton	Head of Marketing & Communications	SMT – Rob Stuckey, AP 	28.03.2025	2 years February	Y

## Document Control – Revision History (Policies Only)

Author	Summary of Changes	Date	Version	Recommend to SED Y/N
Rowen Campbell	Significant changes to acknowledge increased use of new technologies and roles/responsibilities of both staff and students.	19.04.16		Y
Katherine Bolton	Some changes to reflect the new approval process; new page requests are not a given, they come to both Marketing and then to COG for approval pre set-up	05.05.17		N
Callum Cook	Some changes to reflect new and emerging technologies as well as the integral usage of video content for the college and therefore the requirement that staff understand that video content can be used for up to six months after their end date.	17.05.21		N
Katherine Bolton	Added Social Media Critical Incident Action Plan as part of Prevent Strategy	25.01.23	v1	
Katherine Bolton	Update in relation to the OU requirements, including direct reference to YCUC and 2.3 freedom of expression, 2.4 - where content of personal social media accounts may be of concern to the college. Added reference to contractors	19.06.23	v1.1	N
Katherine Bolton	Reviewed - minor changes	28.02.25	v1.1	N

## Initial Equality Impact Screening

**Has anyone else been consulted on this policy and/or procedure?** Michelle Joy in reference to the Prevent Strategy. Sian Deasy in relation to the OU audit.

**What evidence has been used for this impact screening (e.g. related policies, publications)?** Prevent Strategy and Safe Audit. OU Audit.

### Declaration (please tick one statement and indicate any negative impacts)

I am satisfied that an initial screening has been carried out on this Policy and/or Procedure and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. There are no specific negative impacts on any of the Protected Characteristics groups.

I recommend that an Equality Impact Assessment is required by the Equality and Diversity group, as possible negative impacts have been identified for one or more of the Protected Characteristics groups as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage & civil partnership
- Pregnancy & maternity

<b>Completed by:</b>	Katherine Bolton	<b>Position:</b>	Head of Marketing & Communications	<b>Date:</b>	13/02/2023
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Reviewed by Equality & Diversity Group: YES/NO

If Yes: Date:

I confirm that any recommended amendments have been made

## Contents

1.	PURPOSE OF THE POLICY.....	2
2.	SCOPE .....	3
3.	RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY .....	8
4.	RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, DOCUMENTS, DEFINITIONS .....	10

### 1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- 1.1 This policy sets out the expectations Yeovil College staff and students should follow when using social media, and the principles they should adhere to. It covers all social networking sites such as Facebook and X, as well as Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, TikTok and other social platforms Yeovil College chooses to use. The policy also covers blogs, blog posts, forums, chat rooms and personal websites. It will apply to new platforms as they are launched.
- 1.2 The widespread and increasing use of social and web-based media raises potential concerns for the College in terms of interactions between students and between staff and students, as well as the potential negative impact comments about the College can have when the comments are made public. However, Yeovil College is focused on using social media in a positive way. Social media has both replaced and complemented traditional advertising, enabling the college to reach more people live and more frequently, improving the consumption and regularity of messages.
- 1.3 Yeovil College understands that use of the College’s social media platforms is separate from using personal accounts and it is therefore prohibited to use a Yeovil College account for personal use/gain or to pursue a personal agenda. The College expects users to adopt a common-sense approach where social media engagement is concerned and has put this policy in place to provide clarity and consistency.
- 1.4 This policy has been developed to:
- i. promote positive social media engagement.
  - ii. protect Yeovil College, its staff and students.
  - iii. provide guidance to staff and students so that social media can be used responsibly.
  - iv. draw clear boundaries that it would be inappropriate for staff and students to cross.
  - v. to encourage good practice.

- vi. to promote effective and innovative use of social media as part of the College's activities.
- vii. to provide a swift response to dealing with critical incidents against our Prevent action plan<sup>1</sup>.

- 1.5 Yeovil College is an active user of social media – primarily Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok and X (but not limited to these) – to promote the College's activities and successes, and as a communication tool with students. The College understands that social media offers a great opportunity to engage directly with our customers and to build relationships, raise the profile of the College locally, and to gauge opinion.
- 1.6 Yeovil College actively encourages both students and staff to enhance their whole college experience, as well as to supplement their learning.
- 1.7 This Social Media Policy is not intended to stifle the freedom of online communication, but rather to protect the reputation of the College, its interests and those of students and staff, and to mitigate any risk.
- 1.8 The Policy provides detailed actions on dealing with critical incidents on social media, including both written and visual content which could be interpreted as bullying or harassment, and the use of poor language choices and factually incorrect references, against our duty of care to staff and students and our Prevent action plan.

## **2. SCOPE**

- 2.1 This policy covers the following:
- 2.1.1 All Staff, whether they are employed directly or indirectly by Yeovil College, including volunteer workers, contractors and other associates.
  - 2.1.2 All Students who have enrolled on a full or part time course of study, an Apprenticeship, Traineeship, a University Centre qualification or distance learning course and applies to their use of social media at all times.

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<sup>1</sup> In line with the principles of the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and Procedure, available at <https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports/>

- 2.1.3 All associated parties where their use of social media relates to incidents involving students who have enrolled on a full or part time course of study, an Apprenticeship, Traineeship or distance learning course and staff.
- 2.1.4 For the purposes of this policy, the use of and participation in social media includes, but is not limited to:
- Blogs, vlogs
  - social networking sites (such as Facebook, X, TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn),
  - websites
  - social bookmarking and tagging,
  - photo sharing and video sharing
  - Virtual worlds and Virtual Reality.
- 2.1.5 As new social media platforms/technologies and tools become available, they will automatically be included within the scope of this policy.
- 2.1.6 The College does expect that whenever someone clearly identifies an association with Yeovil College and/or discusses their employment or study, they do so appropriately and in a manner consistent with the College's values and other policies.

### **Creation of Social Media Accounts**

- 2.1.7 The creation of a Yeovil College branded social media platform is not an automatic right. Should a member of staff wish to set up a social media platform e.g. a Facebook page or X feed, for their curriculum area, they should consult their Assistant Principal in the first instance. Secondly, a business case should be developed and presented to Marketing and Communications for first draft approval or rejection before being presented at SMT by the Head of Marketing and Communications for final approval or rejection. If approved, a robust security system will be discussed with the member of staff to ensure that they can meet the stringent requirements for running their own individual site. At this point, the member of staff may wish to no longer to continue with the request.
- 2.1.8 The Marketing and Communications Department must be kept informed to ensure the College is able to keep track of sanctioned social media platforms. Staff should understand that they are acting as a voice of Yeovil College when engaging audiences through a College social media account and are therefore expected to act in the best interests of the

College. The owner of the platform is responsible for seeking the correct permissions with regards to all imagery, videos, quotes and language. The Marketing and Communications Team have the right to withdraw content at any time.

- 2.1.9 The Marketing and Communications Department will hold all log-in details for all new social media accounts. These details will change once every half term and as members of the Marketing and Communications Team, or members of the page administration team, or any other significant person leave the college. Individual teams must not change their log in details without communicating new details to the Marketing and Communications Team.
- 2.1.10 Should a student wish to set up a social media platform to support their College activities or curriculum, then they should consult their tutor initially, who should then discuss with the Marketing and Communications Department. In some cases, SMT approval may be required.
- 2.1.11 Students are not authorised to set up pages under the guise of Yeovil College or Yeovil College University Centre (or under any other Yeovil College sub-brand) and they must not use any Yeovil College corporate assets, nor the Yeovil College naming conventions or logos.
- 2.1.12 Yeovil College cares deeply about ensuring its students and staff are safe and protected online, both on and off the campus, though students and staff are expected to take their own reasonable precautions to stay safe when using social media. The College's Marketing and Communications Team can help with advice and suggestions if required.
- 2.1.13 If content might be deemed contentious in any way, students and staff should consult the Marketing and Communications Team immediately before taking action.
- 2.1.14 Anyone using social media on Yeovil College campuses is obliged to comply with the College's policy on the acceptable use of Acceptable use of IT<sup>2</sup> for example, when using the college's campus Wi-Fi, Smoothwall will pick up any content that may indicate risk to a student such as violence, suicide, radicalisation, criminal activity, or any inappropriate use of college resources.

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<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports/>

## **Content Creation & Misuse of Social Media:**

2.1.15 Sharing content is a big part of social media but users should be aware that it is not always appropriate to share College-related data or information. For instance, this may include:

2.1.15.1 information about college developments such as new courses, qualifications, partnerships, buildings etc where decision making has not yet been finalised, and it does not correspond with Marketing's agreed practice and publicity.

2.1.15.2 information about students that is considered private and confidential without their agreement such as names, course choice, grade and mark information, their personal circumstances and private life including sharing information relating to protected characteristics.

2.1.15.3 information about staff that is considered private and confidential without their agreement such as their personal circumstances and private life including sharing information relating to protected characteristics.

Where there is any doubt about potentially confidential information, advice should be sought from tutors/line managers, and considered in line with Data Protection Policies, Acceptable Use of IT Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and Learner Disciplinary Policy and Procedure<sup>3</sup>.

2.1.16 Neither students nor staff should post information or photographs relating to peers/colleagues without their permission and should remove information if asked to; there are appropriate sign off procedures which adhere to UK GDPR regulations.

2.1.17 Offensive comments should not be made online about Yeovil College students or staff under any circumstances. This could be construed as cyber-bullying and would be dealt with as a disciplinary offence. Comments will be removed, and offenders will be banned or blocked from our sites.

2.1.18 Yeovil College reserves the right to monitor the usage of social media, and other sites covered by this policy, where there is cause for concern, to prevent a crime or to protect the College and its business.

2.1.19 Where a profile page makes it clear that the author is associated with Yeovil College, either as a student or as a member of staff, there should be a simple, succinct and obvious

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<sup>3</sup> Available at <https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports/>

disclaimer such as “these are my personal views and not those of Yeovil College”. Such a disclaimer does not negate the need to follow the guidelines set out by this policy.

- 2.1.20 Students and staff using social media in a personal capacity should do so in line with College policies, i.e. at lunchtimes, breaks or free periods only. Yeovil College respects privacy and understands that students and staff may use social media in their private lives.
- 2.1.21 Where students and staff have made comments or posts on their private social media page, blog or website that constitute a criminal or civil offence (such as a defamatory comments), individuals will be held personally responsible.
- 2.1.22 Should a student or member of staff think that something on their social media page, blog or website could be considered a conflict of interest, they must discuss it with their tutor/line manager and with the Marketing and Communications Team. This would include instances of impartiality or confidentiality.
- 2.1.23 If a student or staff member is contacted by the press about anything on their blog that relates to Yeovil College, the Marketing and Communications Department must be consulted immediately.
- 2.1.24 Staff and students who do identify an association with the College:
  - i. MUST NOT engage in any activities on social media that could bring Yeovil College into disrepute or damage the reputation of the College.
  - ii. MUST NOT use any website to attack or abuse in any way students, teachers, tutors or colleagues.
  - iii. MUST NOT post comments that might be seen as offensive or derogatory.
- 2.2 The reputation of Yeovil College is of utmost importance and maintaining it is crucial. The College’s audiences online must be as confident in the integrity of the College and its brand as they are offline. It is vital, therefore, that no contribution to any form of social media undermines the College’s reputation, whether posted by staff or students.
- 2.3 Yeovil College supports and encourages freedom of expression and academic freedom, and this not impacted by this policy.

2.4 A student's personal social media profile and comments are unlikely to be of interest to Yeovil College, where no direct or indirect reference is made to it, any individual or groups of students, employees, partners and suppliers. However, the college may be concerned where the nature of a communication is regarded as being defamatory or misleading, where it undermines professional credibility or integrity or safety of students, employees, partners and suppliers or potentially damages the reputation of the College.

### **3. RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY**

#### **3.1 The Marketing and Communications Team is responsible for:**

3.1.1 Maintaining a directory of all Yeovil College social media accounts, to include named users and their contact details.

3.1.2 Delivering technical and strategic advice on social media.

3.1.3 Reviewing and updating all guidance materials relating to social media, including best practice.

3.1.4 Investigating incidents and resolving issues that arise from social media, where appropriate Student services will be involved as appropriate if student related.

3.1.5 Removing any material posted that might be detrimental to the College's reputation, or to that of a student or member of staff, or that is in breach of other staff policies.

#### **3.2 Curriculum Area Managers and their nominated staff are responsible for:**

3.2.1 Ensuring they have read and understood all relevant Yeovil College policies.

3.2.2 Informing the Marketing and Communications Team where an institutional account is being used and providing/registering named users and contact details.

3.2.3 Monitoring media activity and content relating to the curriculum area.

3.2.4 Responding to comments or questions via official channels in a timely manner and reporting any issues or concerns to the Marketing and Communications Team.

3.2.5 Sharing the social media policy and guidance, and any updates, with departmental colleagues.

**3.3 Staff members responsible for Yeovil College's social media accounts are required to:**

3.3.1 Ensure they have read and understood all relevant Yeovil College policies before posting content using a College social media account.

3.3.2 Ensure that all use of social media relating to the College is carried out in line with the social media policy, and other relevant policies.

3.3.3 Regularly monitor, update and manage all content posted via their relevant account.

3.3.4 Not share login details or enable other staff to access the College accounts.

3.3.5 Not add in new administrators without the Marketing and Communications Team firstly approving.

3.3.6 Seek advice if there is any question that content could be viewed as damaging to the reputation of Yeovil College, its students, or members of staff.

3.3.7 Have a strategy/plan in place to demonstrate how the use social media will support departmental strategy.

3.3.8 Ensure there is always a member of staff who can edit and authorise posts. The Marketing and Communications Team must be informed of any changes to staff contact details in case of an urgent issue.

3.4 The Safeguarding, Equality & Diversity Group will review and amend this policy in the light of issues raised by changes in the use of social media.

**3.5 Effective and innovative uses of social media include:**

3.5.1 Yeovil College recognises the opportunity to communicate with prospective and existing customers through social media as part of an integrated marketing strategy. All students,

staff and third parties are asked to give permission for their photographs to be used for any marketing purpose. Staff will understand that if they are to leave their post, all video content will be used for a maximum of twelve months following their end date to enable the Marketing and Communications Team to re-record all appropriate content which may include talking prospectus, promotional videos, taster sessions and all curriculum/business support college showcased content. This applies to voice overs, presentations, Teams/Zoom/other virtual communication tools presentations and all other appropriate digital video content.

- 3.5.2 Social media has the potential to support/advance learning opportunities and Yeovil College encourages its use in this way.
- 3.5.3 Yeovil College supports the use of social media within the organisation and externally as a means of collaboration with other organisations, individuals and stakeholders.
- 3.5.4 We may refer to social networking sites when investigating breaches of discipline, e.g. cheating, harassment, anti-social behaviour.
- 3.5.5 Any questions relating to this policy should be directed to the Marketing and Communications Team who will regularly monitor the impact of this policy to reflect the fast moving, changing online environment and technologies. The Marketing and Communications Team may also update or amend the policy if an incident is recorded, or if a particular concern is raised.

#### **4. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, DOCUMENTS, DEFINITIONS<sup>4</sup>**

- Code of Professional Standards
- Data Protection Policy
- Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Acceptable Use of IT Policy
- Learner Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

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<sup>4</sup> Published Yeovil College policies and procedures are available at <https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports/>. Internal policies and procedures for staff only (including the Code of Professional Standards, Staff Disciplinary and Grievance Policy and Respect at Work Policy and Procedure) are available for College staff via the Policies and Procedures area of the Yeovil College SharePoint.

- Marketing Branding Guidelines (for internal reference, available via the Yeovil College Marketing Department)
- Respect at Work Policy and Procedures
- Safeguarding & Prevent Policy
- E-safety Protocol
- The Online Safety Act 2023

## **Social Media Critical Incident Action Plan**

### **Yeovil College and Yeovil College University Centre**

1. Annually review social media policy, approved by the Yeovil College Corporation, is in place and publicly available on the Yeovil College website <sup>5</sup>.
2. Social media is monitored for around 18 hours per day, approximately 5.30am to 11pm, and notifications are set to immediate and live notification on several devices across the team, enabling immediate action, correction and redaction.
3. All issues are flagged immediately with Head of Marketing and Communications prior to decision to escalate to Principal. Escalation happens instantly and an immediate decision can be reached between the Head of Marketing and Communications and Principal.
4. We have a zero tolerance to inappropriate language, images and video, racial comments, references to extremism, implicit or explicit references to the prevent agenda, in line with our Prevent Policy, Acceptable Use of IT Policy and Social Media Policy<sup>6</sup>.
5. We will not tolerate factually incorrect references, incorrect information, references which could suggest bullying, negativity, harassment and non-approved content, and any unduly, unjustified or disparaging content.
6. Inappropriate content, comments, private messages are dealt with on an individual basis and judged fairly. Screen shots are taken prior to any action, and where appropriate sent to a combination of CAM, SPM, Head of Student Support, APs, VPs, Principal. This may result in content and imagery being removed for social media channels, without prior notice. This may also result in the removal or blocking of a person(s) from engaging with our channels, without prior notice.
7. Where deemed appropriate, people accessing our social media may be monitored without removal. This decision will be directed by either the Head of Marketing and Communications or via the Head of Student Support.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.yeovil.ac.uk](http://www.yeovil.ac.uk)

<sup>6</sup> We encourage free speech, and commentary which differs from our own perspective, is encouraged, so long as it falls in line with our tolerance of our social media policy.

8. Inappropriate content by current students will be copied and shared with their SPM, CAM and Head of Student Support
9. Third parties may be involved, including but not exclusively, the police, LADO, social services, 14-19 partnership, other colleges or school. The decision to inform third parties will initially sit within the remit of the Head of Student Support.
10. In extreme cases, the Head of Marketing and Communications will temporarily close all/appropriate social media channels enabling all appropriate time and decisions to be taken.
11. We maintain a position of zero response/zero comments on third party social media platforms. Where appropriate, we will deal with any comments off-line and respond outside of social media, being mindful of the original intent around posting on social media.