Policy Name: Social Media and Social Networking
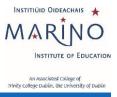
Policy Title:	MIE Policy on Social Media and Social Networking
Description:	The purpose of this policy is to support the use of social media and social networking resources by staff and students alike.
Author (Position):	Director of IT & eLearning
Version:	1.1
Approved By:	MIE Governing Body
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Date of Next Policy Review:	June 2027 (or as necessary)

MIE Policy on Social Media and Social Networking

1. Context

Marino Institute of Education, herein referred to as MIE, is committed to providing staff and students with guidelines, in their capacity as members of the MIE community, on use of social media while on or off campus networks and their associated environments.

1.1. Social networking and social media are powerful communication tools which can have a significant impact on organisational and professional reputations. MIE has developed a policy to help clarify how best to use these tools to the professional benefit of the Institute, to include its staff and students. Examples of social networking websites are LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, Tik Tok, Wikis etc.

1.2. Both in professional and institutional roles, employees need to follow the same behavioural standards online as they would in real life. The same laws, professional expectations and guidelines for interacting with staff, students, alumni, donors, media and other Institute constituents apply online as in the real world.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support the use of social media and social networking resources by staff and students alike.

3. Use of online social networking

3.1. MIE acknowledges that you, the staff and students may make use of online social networking resources to supplement and enhance your professional development and networking.

3.2. "Social networking services" are online services which enable the sharing and publication of content with other users. These include, but are not limited to, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Snapchat, Instagram, Tik Tok and virtual learning environments such as Moodle[1].

3.3. "Publication" means any text or other content (including text, image, video, audio and any combination of these) made available in the context of any social

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[1] See Virtual Learning Environment Policy

networking service. This includes any status updates, direct messaging via Moodle or any blog entries, contributions to wikis etc.

3.4. In this policy, "in connection with a user's work" is to be broadly understood, meaning any activity involving the use of online social networking services which is referable, to you in your capacity as a staff member or as a student of a MIE course. This includes not only any activity engaged explicitly in an academic capacity, but also any activity engaged in using a user ID which is also used, or is directly connected to one used, in explicitly academic contexts.

3.5. You, as a user of social networking resources ("users") must comply with the terms of this policy at all times when using any social networking resource in connection with your work or study.

3.6. We recommend that you clearly segregate those social networking services which you wish to use in connection with your work/study and those which are used purely for social purposes.

3.7. Please note that there are conditions in your employment contract or agreed to upon student registration or in any other contract entered into between you and MIE, and in Institute policies or outlined at your IT induction, which may apply regardless of the existence of a connection with your work and/or study, such as conditions relating to the expression of political or controversial opinions. This policy does not affect or limit the application of any such conditions.

3.8. Professional conduct rules also require confidentiality. This requirement in no way affects or limits the application of such rules.

4. Reputation

4.1. Be mindful that, whenever you are using a social networking service of MIE, you need to maintain a professional image. Your usage of any social Networking Service in connection with MIE must be fully consistent with that imperative. If in doubt, seek the permission of MIE from The President, Director of IT & eLearning and/or Communications Officer or Social media marketing team members] before making any statement concerning MIE, its responsibilities or policies, on a social Networking Service. If in doubt, leave it out.

4.2.   Many social networking services are characterised by the relative informality of the communications which make up their information flow. When using social networking services in connection with work if you are an MIE staff member, you should at all times maintain a level of courtesy and appropriateness consistent with MIE's image and public role, regardless of the tone of other communications in the information flow[2].

4.3.   Users who are employees of MIE should not express any political, religious, or contentious views, or views which may cause offence, in any Publication made on or through a social networking service.

4.4.   Also, be aware that even where a publication is initially made available only to a closed group of online contacts (such as MIE's Moodle network), it is very easy, in an online environment, for part or all of the publication to be re-published and made available to others without your consent.

4.5.   You should not become a member of groups or establish connections with persons which would be incompatible with MIE's image and public responsibilities or where such association or connection may cause offence to others.

4.6.   Requests for connections are generally best made on the basis of direct contact with the addressee or through an introduction from a direct contact unless a direct "cold calling" approach appears appropriate in the circumstances, however any such approach must be in accordance with applicable Data Protection Legislation, 2018[3].

5. Review of Publications

5.1.   Many social networking services enable various types of publications to be made available to other users or to the internet at large, such as status updates, comments, reviews or blog posts. Be mindful at all times of the legal and reputational risk involved in any act of publication, both for you and for MIE.

5.2.   Unless a specific arrangement is put in place providing otherwise, publications other than status updates and messages to specified, limited recipients, should be reviewed by the relevant staff member of MIE before being published online.

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[2] See MIE Staff & Students Code of Conduct for Use of IT Systems
[3] See Data Protection Policy

5.3. It is often worthwhile to leave any publication lie for an hour or two after drafting before publishing it online. This rule should be adhered to with particular care in cases where the Publication is a response in a heated debate, where it touches on a controversial topic or where it is a "spur of the moment" post. This rule may be tempered where a swift response or up-to-the-minute information is required (for example if an issue regarding student misconduct occurs), but in such cases it is best to ensure a second pair of eyes reviews the Publication before it is published.

5.4. Spell-check, sense-check and properly punctuate all publications, no matter how short or informal.

6. Personal Information and Privacy

6.1. Be aware that personal information which you publish may become widely available as a result. Though privacy settings on certain social networking services may allow you to restrict the range of persons who are entitled to access your information, these settings are rarely 100% effective: security breaches may occur, or other users may make the content available to others without your consent. When making information available through a social networking website, it is best to assume that such information might be released into the public domain. You should therefore make available only such information as you would be comfortable to have released into the public domain.

6.2. MIE may access records of time spent on the internet and sites visited by you and may monitor such usage in accordance with applicable data protection legislation. As the internet is an unsecure form of communication, MIE cannot guarantee the privacy of any communication made through, or information held on, any social networking service accessed via our IT systems, including mobile devices. We will process any personal data relating to your internet usage in accordance with our Privacy Statement.

6.3. Absolutely do not publish personal or private information about any MIE employee, student, or third party.

7. Confidentiality

7.1.   The confidentiality of third parties (e.g., stakeholders, associated organisations or members of the public) should be strictly respected in all communications and publications made in the context of a social networking service.

7.2.   The internal affairs of MIE and any sensitive or otherwise confidential information should not be discussed or disclosed in any communication or publication made in connection with a social networking service.

8. Intellectual Property

8.1.   Do not make available any Publication or make any other use of social networking services which could result in a breach of the intellectual property rights of any third-party.

8.2.   Be particularly mindful of the need to avoid plagiarism. As with any publication, quotations should, as a rule, be acknowledged, marked with quotation marks, and citations provided. You may follow the American Psychological Association (APA) referencing system recommended by MIE.

8.3.   It is generally acceptable to provide links to other online content where that content is freely available on the web, though you should be careful to acknowledge the source, especially when it is not obvious from the linked content. If in doubt, contact a MIE staff member, such as the President, Director of IT & eLearning, or Communications Officer, for their view before you link material in this way.

9. Abuse

9.1.   In using social networking services, you must comply with this policy, the MIE IT Acceptable Use policy, the MIE Policy "Bring Your Own Device", the Privacy Statement, the Website Cookies Policy, and the Marino Institute of Education Website(s) Terms of Use policy, your contract of employment and all other applicable statutory and contractual obligations, codes of conduct, rules, policies and guidelines which apply to both staff and students ("Applicable Rules").

9.2.   Breach of Applicable Rules may result in suspension of access to social networking services, suspension of information technology services, disciplinary proceedings, and any other appropriate action by MIE.

10. Formal communications

Communications through social networking services are capable of giving rise to contractual obligations, so please refrain from sending formal communications, such as communications containing results of research or studies, by means of social networking services other than through the generic MIE name or under a blog pre-approved by the Leadership Team.
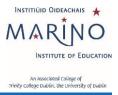
11. Time

Social networking services have the potential to be time-consuming. You may use social networking services in a limited way during working hours, but this is on the understanding that you will manage your time responsibly and that your use will be primarily for the purpose of professional development or the development of MIE.

12. Recommended and Suggested Uses

12.1. This section sets out suggestions for the effective use of social networking services, and some guidelines which you must abide by if you choose to use certain social networking services in connection with your work.

12.2. For the avoidance of doubt, you, as a user of social networking services (including, but not restricted to, those services specifically promoted by MIE, e.g. the MIE Facebook profile, MIE X profile, MIE networks or blogs hosted on the MIE website, the MIE LinkedIn profile, or Moodle), must comply with the general rules set out in sections 1 to 9 above. In addition, when making publications on behalf of MIE via social networking services, you should always be cognisant of your duties of trust and confidence, good faith, and loyalty to MIE as an employee, student, or affiliated party. In this regard, you should ensure the accuracy of any publications and avoid defamatory statements at all times, while always taking a non-alarmist and risk aware approach to the dissemination of information. Disclosure of any proprietary or confidential information relating to MIE, including relating to its staff, management, or students, is prohibited without management permission.

12.3. Sharing services

i. There are a range of websites which enable you to share various types of content, such as photographs (Flickr), videos (YouTube, Vimeo), bookmarks and recommendations (Yelp, Delicious, Digg, Reddit), etc. These services can be useful in disseminating good quality information and here again a degree of online visibility can be generated for you by consistently sharing quality content.

    ii.   Where you make use of any sharing services in connection with work, you should be mindful of the rules set out in this Policy regarding formality and appropriateness.

    iii.   In particular, you should avoid sharing or recommending materials which might cause offence, or which would otherwise be incompatible with MIE's image and public role.

13. Information and Data Compliance

13.1. All users of the institutional network to access social media must comply with the MIE's IT Acceptable Use Policy and relevant copyright legislation as outlined on the IT Support for Staff[4] & General Data Protection[5] sections of MIE's Virtual Learning Environment and website.

13.2. In accordance with MIE's responsibilities under the General Data Protection Policy, student personal data must not be stored and/or maintained in third party hosted services where it may be at risk of being compromised.

14. Responsibility

14.1. The Director of IT & eLearning has responsibility for this Policy.

14.2. The Director of IT & eLearning, with support from the Heads of Departments, is responsible for the implementation of the Social Media & Social Networking Policy with respect to MIE.

15. Related Documents

15.1. Marino Institute of Education Privacy Statement

15.2. MIE IT Acceptable Use Policy

15.3. MIE Policy "Bring Your Own Device"

15.4. MIE Website Cookies Policy

15.5. Accessible Information Policy

15.6. Marino Institute of Education Website(s) Terms of Use

15.7. MIE Staff & Students Code of Conduct for Use of IT Systems

15.8. Data Protection Policy

15.9. Virtual Learning Environment Policy

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[4] See MIE Staff & Students Code of Conduct for Use of IT Systems
[5] See Data Protection Policy