

## Social Media Policy

### 1 Policy Statement

The Learning Institute operates as an outreach arm of the Westcountry Organisations Trust (WeST) and its policies adhere to those of WeST but include points specific to adult education and training. The objective of this policy is to attain and maintain high standards of use and engagement with social media throughout the work of the Learning Institute. All persons conducting activities under the name of the Learning Institute will adhere to this policy.

The use of social media is wide spread in our society, both for personal and business purposes. Social media presents unprecedented communications opportunities and risks. The Learning Institute wishes to encourage the safe and responsible use of social media as part of its teaching & learning and business support provisions. The purpose of this policy is to minimise the risk to the Learning Institute through this use.

### 2. Scope

This Policy applies to all social media services or applications used by employees, learners or contractors. Social Media/Networking is defined as a website, service or other application which enables users to communicate with each other by posting/sharing information, comments, messages, images, videos etc. This therefore includes, but is not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Wikipedia, Whisper, Instagram, Vine, Tumblr and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs.

### 3. Legislation

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Copyright Designs & Patents Act 1988
- Malicious Communication Act 1998

### 4. Responsibilities

Everyone has a responsibility to give full and active support for the Policy by ensuring:

- The Policy is known, understood and implemented
- Behaviour not in accord with the Policy is challenged.

### 5. Actions to Implement and Develop Policy

#### 5.1. Use for Business Purposes

Approval should be obtained from the Learning Institute director prior to creating any social media accounts or groups that will be used for Learning Institute purposes. Business purposes include, but are not limited to:

- Promotion of departments/facilities

- Promotion of events
- Communication with learners
- Learner discussion groups

## 5.2. Personal Use

Occasional personal use of social media during working hours is permitted so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content, does not interfere with your employment responsibilities or productivity and complies with this policy. Personal use is a privilege and not a right. It must not be overused or abused. The Learning Institute may withdraw permission for it at any time or restrict access at its discretion.

## 5.3. Acceptance of Friends

Social media is used by many people to communicate with their peers and the public. In the interests of ensuring professional boundaries are maintained employees must not become friends with, add to their personal social media network or otherwise communicate with any potential students (applicants), current students, former students unless a clear reason exists, for example, the student is a relative or family friend. Entering into such a relationship may lead to abuse of an employee's position of trust and breach the standards of professional behaviour and conduct expected by the Learning Institute.

## 5.4. Prohibited use

Users must not use social media in either work or personal time to:

- Make statements that could be deemed to be defamatory, offensive, obscene, abusive, proprietary, or libellous
- Make statements that would contravene this, or any other Learning Institute policy.
- Discuss students or co-workers or publicly criticise Learning Institute policies or personnel
- Post images or videos that include learners on social networking sites
- List their Learning Institute e-mail address as a contact address for personal social network accounts, other than those aimed specifically at the professional market and used for networking and career development, such as LinkedIn
- Misrepresent the Learning Institute's or WeST's interests, whether these interests are in the public domain or not.
- Act, without permission, as a spokesperson for the Learning Institute or WeST.
- Carry out any action which adversely affects the Learning Institute's or WeST's reputation or undermines its core business or related interests.
- Publish information that would be in breach of the Data Protection or Information Security policies
- Staff and learners should not create pages, sections, news groups or equivalent on social networking services that claim to be linked to or represent the Learning Institute without authorisation
- Misappropriate or infringe the intellectual property of other organisations and individuals.

All staff should assume that their contributions on social media will be associated with the Learning Institute's business and also seen and read by other members of staff.

## 5.5. Guidelines

When making use of social media users are advised to:

- Review the security and privacy settings on all social networking services they use. We recommend that all privacy settings be set to “only friends”. “Friends of Friends” will allow anyone who is a friend of any of your friends to see your profile, photos of you, comments you have posted etc.
- Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that they are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for people to see.
- Consider the appropriate use of social media/networks to ensure that the safeguarding of students is maintained at all times.
- Ensure any publically visible (or potentially publically visible) activity on social media/networking sites reflects the Learning Institute’s core values and principles and that their profile and content posted is consistent with the professional image presented to colleagues and students.
- Make it clear in social media postings, or in their personal profile, that they are speaking on their own behalf and not on behalf of the Learning Institute, for example by labelling their entry as “views are my own and do not represent those of my employer”

## 6. Monitoring

The Learning Institute/WeST reserves the right to monitor, log and access internet access with or without notice, to or from any device owned by the Learning Institute, or connected to the Learning Institute’s IT Systems to ensure this policy is being complied with.

## 7. Consequences of failure to comply with legislation or policies

If a user fails to comply with the provisions outlined in this document, their access to IT Systems may be withdrawn and future access may be restricted. This may affect the individual’s ability to undertake the duties of their job or continue their studies. Serious or consistent non-compliance with this policy may be considered to be a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with in accordance with the Learning Institute’s student disciplinary procedures and those of partner organisations or WeST’s staff disciplinary policy. Acts of a criminal nature, or any safeguarding concerns may be referred to the police, Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and other relevant agencies.

## 8. Related Policies

- WeST Harassment and Bullying Policy
- WeST Data Protection Policy
- WeST Information Security Policy
- WeST E-Safety Policy
- Learning Institute Acceptable Use of IT
- WeST Staff Disciplinary Procedure and Policy

## 9. Review

The Learning Institute Governing Board is responsible for the periodic review of this Policy.