

## Social media guidance for Fellows and staff

June 2021

As an institution committed to the principle of freedom of speech and expression within the Law, St Catharine's College recognises and values the contribution of the responsible use of social media in both work and personal lives today.

St Catharine's expects all members of our community to use social media in the context of facilitating an inclusive and tolerant environment in which students, staff and Fellows can live and work, and ensuring that relationships within the College are based upon respect for each person's professional skills and for their unique contribution to the life and work of the College.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to Fellows and staff on their existing obligations and to share best practice on navigating these responsibilities while making the most of social media.

### **Existing obligations**

Ultimately, behaviour consistent with creating a safe and supportive community is already required by:

- **The law<sup>1</sup>:**
  - For example, serious harassment and abuse, defamation (e.g. libel, where your comments seriously damage the reputation of someone) or committing contempt of court (posts relating to active criminal investigations and trials in a court of law) are all crimes and have been for a long time, well before the advent of social media.
- **College policies:**
  - These are [published on the website](#) and updated on a rolling basis or due to changes in legislation.
  - The College does not routinely screen personal social media profiles, but reserves the right to consider them if aspects of these are brought to its attention and give rise to concerns about an individual's conduct, or potentially present a reputational risk to the image of the College.
  - The College does not use social media to screen job applicants or students as part of the recruitment selection process unless included in the CV or application.
  - Individuals should be mindful when setting their privacy settings on personal social media accounts that any personal material that, even indirectly, becomes associated with the College (e.g. through sharing with work colleagues, likes etc.) and gives rise to concern may be considered a conduct issue and dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary process.

Given this, and for the avoidance of doubt, individuals must not (whether in a personal or College capacity):

- use social media to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against members, staff or third parties; to make false or misleading statements; or to impersonate colleagues or third parties;
- give your personal contact details (such as personal phone number, home address, email, Skype address or other communication routes) to a child or adult at risk, or use any unofficial route to communicate with a child or adult at risk;
- interact in a personal capacity with children or adults at risk outside of the regulated activity, including through any form of social media, for example, by becoming 'friends' on Facebook;
- express opinions on the College's behalf, without the express appropriate authority;
- post comments about sensitive College-related topics, or do anything to jeopardise the College's confidential information;
- include the College's logos or other trademarks in any social media posting or in his or her profile on any social media, unless in accordance with the College style guidelines; or
- post any images, photographs, videos, text, etc. via social media accounts without appropriate permission from the rights holders (e.g. copyrighted photos) and without appropriate consent for sharing of personal data, where applicable.

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<sup>1</sup> Crown Prosecution Service. *Social Media - Guidelines on prosecuting cases involving communications sent via social media*. Available online: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/social-media-guidelines-prosecuting-cases-involving-communications-sent-social-media>

## **Best practice**

### **1. Responsible personal use of social media**

*This section is intended as guidance for individuals who may use personal social media accounts.*

- a) Individuals should consider how they might distinguish between their personal and official profiles. It is recommended that, where possible, they
  - i. be transparent about who they are and never impersonate another individual.
  - ii. make it clear in social media postings, or in their personal profile, that they are speaking on their own behalf and are not speaking for the College;
  - iii. write in the first person and use a personal email address (i.e. not a College/role-based address); and
  - iv. 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 anyone to see.
- b) If an individual discloses their affiliation with the College on their profile or in any social media postings, they should state that their views do not represent those of the College.
- c) If an individual is uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they are encouraged to seek advice from the College's Communications Manager.
- d) If an individual sees social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on the College, they should contact the College's Communications Manager.

### **2. Responsible use of social media on behalf of the College**

*This section is intended as guidance for individuals who may use social media accounts directly on behalf of the College.*

- a) The College recognises the value of social media in the professional academic arena and encourages appropriate social media references and links to the College in relation to research, academic works published and other such professional endeavours.
- b) Before using social media for specifically College purposes, individuals should consult the College's Communications Manager.
- c) Any new social media account created for the College must have a role email address attached (@caths.cam.ac.uk) as well as comms@caths.cam.ac.uk as a back-up address. Personal @cam email or non-Cam addresses must not be used to set up College social media accounts.
- d) An individual who is authorised to use social media for College purposes should in no circumstances without prior authorisation:
  - i. request another person to post on their behalf; or
  - ii. share passwords or other means of accessing social media platforms.
- e) "Liking" and sharing relevant posts from other users' social media accounts is permitted, and is considered good practice. It shows that the account is giving back to the community and not just broadcasting its own messages. However, care needs to be taken to ensure such activity is appropriate.
- f) If an individual is uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, liking or sharing, they should refrain from posting it until they have discussed it with the College's Communications Manager.
- g) If an individual sees social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on the College, they should contact the College's Communications Manager.
- h) On termination of an individual's employment or engagement with the College, they will be required to hand over to the College any relevant passwords or other means of accessing social media platforms to which they have had access for College purposes.

### **3. Safeguarding considerations**

- a) The College's [Safeguarding Policy](#) is accompanied by [guidance for those acting on behalf of the College carrying out activities involving children or adults at risk](#).
- b) If a child uses social media to make contact, a member of staff or Fellow should reply only if they are authorised by the College (for example, as Schools Liaison Officer) and using an official route to communicate (for example, a College-owned social media account or @cam.ac.uk/caths.cam.ac.uk email). Staff and Fellows who are not authorised to respond should refer any messages to the Schools Liaison Officer or the Admissions Team who are authorised to respond on the College's behalf.
- c) If an adult at risk uses social media to make contact, a member of staff or Fellow should reply only if they are authorised by the College (for example, as the individual's Tutor) and using an official route to communicate (for example, a @cam.ac.uk/caths.cam.ac.uk email). Staff and Fellows who are not authorised to respond should refer the message to the relevant Head of Department or the Safeguarding Officer who will respond on the College's behalf.

- d) Interacting on social media with another adult not at risk is permitted, although staff and Fellows should be aware that:
- It is possible at any time to move a conversation to an official communication channel (for example, using [@cam.ac.uk/caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:@cam.ac.uk/caths.cam.ac.uk) email). This may be particularly appropriate if you start sending/receiving direct messages about College/University matters via a personal social media profile.
  - The adult's personal circumstances might change at any point and they could become at risk.

#### **4. Getting started on social media – helpful tips and advice for staff and Fellows**

Whether you currently use social media personally (with no reference to your work within the College or the wider University) or you want to start promoting the work you're doing in some way, these guidelines are designed to help you get the most out of the time you spend on social media.

As well as sharing tips on what to post, and where and when to post it, these guidelines will give you the confidence to manage any potential risks associated with using social media.

##### ***a) Why would I want to use social media professionally?***

The list below isn't exhaustive but will give you a good idea of why you might want to use social media:

- An open and informal setting – social media makes it easy for you to have a dialogue with people all over the world who have similar interests and areas of expertise.
- A great way to get information – even if you don't have time to share posts on a daily basis, there are many opportunities to learn from others and read the content they share.
- Promote your work – social media makes it easier for you to share your work and any connected activities such as talks and events.
- A valuable layer of interaction – to events such as conferences and seminars, particularly those that have an event hashtag.

##### ***b) How do I get started?***

If you are keen to use social media but have limited experience, ask yourself these questions before you decide which platform(s) you want to be on:

- Are the people I want to learn from and network with using the social media platform I'd like to join?
- How much time am I able to dedicate to using social media on a regular basis?
- What sort of things would I like to share on the social media platform I'd like to join?
- Am I clear in what I hope to get out of using the social media platform I'd like to join?

If you only have a few minutes a day (or every other day), you could still benefit from having a presence on at least one social media platform. Even if your primary goal is to listen rather than to speak, social media provides a great opportunity to find out what others in your field are doing and to keep up-to-date with the latest news.

##### ***c) The basics***

There are many different social media platforms but the most relevant are Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Setting up profiles on these platforms is very simple; the networks themselves provide full guidance on how to do this. However, below are some things to bear in mind:

- Simplicity and transparency are best when it comes to names and bios – if possible, use your real name (or some variation of). For example: 'Liz Smith', 'LizSmith1', 'Liz\_Smith' or 'Liz\_S\_Smith'. Your bio should include the key things you want your followers to know about you. For example: 'Fellow at @Catz\_Cambridge. Passionate about #Maths' or 'Administrator at @Catz\_Cambridge.'
- Affirm your links with St Catharine's College – but please don't use the College logo or any of our branding on your personal social media profiles. If you need clarification on this, please speak to the Communications Manager ([communications@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:communications@caths.cam.ac.uk)).
- Be enthusiastic and approachable – use a positive tone and don't use social media as an excuse to moan or gossip.
- Use photos – posts with photos are much more likely to receive engagement (likes, comments, retweets etc.) than those without. But remember, don't forget to ask permission from anyone you photograph or film if they can be identified in the image you plan to post.

Please do not set up a new account that is intended to be or could be presumed to be an official College channel (i.e. not for you personally) without first discussing with the Communications Manager ([communications@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:communications@caths.cam.ac.uk)).

#### **d) Which social media platform should I use?**

##### *Facebook*

With more than 2 billion monthly active users, Facebook is still the largest social media platform in the world. It is mainly used for networking with friends and family as well as getting news from organisations and companies that you like.

If your primary aim is to network for work purposes, Facebook probably isn't the right platform to get started with. However, if you already use it for personal reasons, it's worth following [the College account](#) as well as any other groups or pages that might be of interest to you.

##### *Twitter*

As a micro-blogging platform, Twitter is extremely effective when used for networking outside of one's immediate friendship group.

This is a good platform to get started with if you want to network for work purposes. Many academics already use Twitter to great effect, whether that be to share their research, get involved with conversations or simply get more of a feel for what's going on in their area.

[The main College account](#) has an active following and, if you tag us in a post, we will do our utmost to like or retweet your content.

##### *Instagram*

With 1 billion monthly active users, Instagram is an increasingly popular platform and is the most visual of the main social media channels.

It is primarily designed for users to share images and short videos (rather than text and links) so if your work has a visual element or you would prefer to take photos or create videos (rather than writing text), Instagram could work well for you.

The [main College account](#) has an active following and if you tag us in a post we will do our best to like or comment on your content.

##### *LinkedIn*

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with 294 million monthly active users worldwide. It is used by professionals in a wide variety of fields and industries.

You may decide that LinkedIn isn't where you would like to spend a lot of time networking. However, we would strongly recommend having an up-to-date profile nonetheless.

If you do plan to spend a bit of time on LinkedIn, please make sure you follow [the College's account](#).

#### **e) What should I share and when?**

Posting on social media for the first time can feel daunting for some people. To get started, you might like to try one or more of the following:

- If you're on Twitter, use the 'quote retweet' option to share someone else's post that you've enjoyed, so you can add an additional comment so that others can see why you chose to retweet.
- If you've read an interesting article or piece of news, try sharing a link to it and start by just using the article headline as your text.
- Like posts from people you know and share their content (such as St Catharine's). This will help to familiarise you with using the platform.

If you want to share something unique but are unsure whether to do so, ask yourself: would I say this to someone I had just met? If the answer is 'yes', then go ahead and share it.

If you or others at St Catharine's are involved in an activity and the College is supporting the communications around this, please discuss your plans with the Communication Manager ([communications@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:communications@caths.cam.ac.uk)) to avoid breaking any embargos or doing anything that would make our communications less effective. Ideally, any College-funded, non-research activity would be announced first using the College's channels before any individual Fellow or member of staff shares publically.

### **f) Tone of voice**

Being authentic is just as important in an online environment as it is when one is communicating face-to-face.

The best way to learn what sort of language to use is to listen more than you speak to begin with. By posting in a style that is familiar to the people you're talking to, you will have more chance of engaging them.

If in doubt, ask yourself: what would I say if I were face-to-face with this person/these people? We are all familiar with fine-tuning our style of communication to suit the company we're in – and social media is no exception.

### **g) What are the risks?**

It is entirely understandable to be concerned about the risks of using social media; we hear about people's online faux-pas in the news on an almost daily basis. However, there are simple ways to mitigate any risks.

*Do:*

- Listen before you speak online – make sure you understand the culture of the social media platform you're using by following others, and listening and learning from them.
- Apologise when you need to – we all make mistakes. Apologise for any errors or inaccuracies, and make sure you learn from them.
- Familiarise yourself with privacy settings – ensure these are appropriate for both the content you want to share and those with whom you're sharing it.
- Ask for permission to photograph or film someone – and make it clear to them how you plan to use their images.

*Don't:*

- Assume you have privacy – social media platforms are in the public domain and it is not always possible to be sure what is being viewed or shared, even if you have the highest privacy settings available.
- Get drawn into a heated public debate – healthy discussion on social media is desirable; bickering or fighting is not. If you find yourself having a heated conversation with someone on social media, you can do this by asking the person in question to continue the discussion via direct message, email or phone. This will give you space to prepare your response in private without the usual immediacy of public posts, but you should remember that any private messages could be shared publically by the other party (much like any email).
- Comment or state opinions (in anything other than academic terms) about things of a contentious political or religious nature – this will invite argument rather than support an exchange of ideas or learning in line with the College's educational objectives.
- Share links to inappropriate websites – if you are not sure whether a website is appropriate, avoid linking to it as a precaution.
- Be negative – it is only natural that certain issues (educational or otherwise) will irritate you or cause you concern. However, your posts could be seen to represent the College's thinking. This is true even if you include a disclaimer in your bio (on Twitter, for example), which states that the views you share are purely your own.
- Share confidential information – this includes discussing financial performance.
- Share private information – this includes discussing details about individual students or other members of the College community with others.
- Swear – you wouldn't swear at students or colleagues face-to-face and you should not swear online either.
- Share anything that could potentially bring the College into disrepute – or could damage your personal or professional reputation. For example, think carefully before sharing images from events that feature alcoholic drinks.
- Use social media when you're angry or unhappy – it will not make you feel better and the risk of saying something you later regret is too high.

If you have any concerns about something you have said on social media, please get in touch with the Communications Manager ([communications@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:communications@caths.cam.ac.uk)) as quickly as possible. Don't be embarrassed or worried; it's only human to make mistakes.

### **h) How can I grow my professional profile?**

Growing a professional profile can seem like an uphill battle. Here are some handy tips to help you climb that mountain:

- Follow the main College profile on your chosen platform – and tag the College in relevant posts. The Communications Manager may then be able to share your content so that it reaches a greater number of people.
- Follow colleagues and other people in your areas of interest or expertise – chances are at least some of these people will follow you back.

- Where appropriate, get involved in conversations – this will help others to see that you have something of relevance to say.
- Share content that is designed to help, inform or inspire – people are more likely to engage with you and re-share your content if it means something to them, personally.
- Share posts about College events that you're running or attending – for example, talks, subject dinners, music events, and graduation. Where appropriate, you can tag colleagues and other departments.
- Posts that include images are almost always more popular than those that don't – where appropriate, include a relevant image or video in your post.
- Listen first – this will help you post on subjects that are relevant and of interest to those you're trying to engage.
- Be consistent – one of the most effective ways to establish connections with people online is to post content on a consistent basis.
- Be responsive – if someone asks you a question or comments on one of your posts, remember to reply in a timely fashion.
- Share content from people you follow and other reputable sources – this will help to raise your profile.

If you're not sure who to follow on social media or how to grow your online professional network, please get in touch with the Communications Manager ([communications@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:communications@caths.cam.ac.uk)) who may be able to offer further advice.

### ***i) Common problems and what to do***

*Am I allowed to interact with current St Catharine's students or other members of the College community using social media?*

Yes, although you should respect that the College's policies [for staff](#) and [for students](#) apply to all interactions (including on social media).

*Am I allowed to interact with prospective students using social media?*

The College is mindful of our safeguarding responsibilities and the need to avoid any risk of introducing confusion about the status of an application or the chances of admission. We ask staff and Fellows to refrain from any activity that would call into question our credibility and position of trust with prospective students.

In terms of direct contact with individual prospective students under the age of 18, we would suggest that social media is not the most appropriate forum, and this would be best channelled through an official College email account and/or relevant contact in the Admissions team.

This is also likely to be the case for prospective students over the age of 18, who can be directed to a relevant contact in the Admissions team.

*What if I see a post by a student/member of staff/Fellow that makes me concerned about their physical or mental health?*

- If you have a concern about a student, please report to the College Nurse ([sister@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:sister@caths.cam.ac.uk)) and Welfare Officer ([welfare.officer@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:welfare.officer@caths.cam.ac.uk)) in the first instance.
- If the concern relates to a member of staff or Fellow, you can also contact the HR Manager ([hr.manager@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:hr.manager@caths.cam.ac.uk)) or President, respectively.
- If the post suggests that individual is at an immediate risk of harm, you may find a phone call will report the issue more quickly than an email.

*What if I'm approached by a journalist through social media?*

Please let the Communications Manager ([communications@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:communications@caths.cam.ac.uk)) know as soon as possible and avoid responding until the Communications Manager has been able to advise you.

*What if I get 'trolled' online?*

In internet slang, a 'troll' is a person who deliberately wants to create conflict or generate a negative emotional reaction. If you find yourself the victim of trolling or you experience extreme negativity online, please contact the Communications Manager. You can also do the following:

- Keep screenshots of any abusive messages or images.
- Report abuse to the relevant social media platform as soon as it occurs.
- Block users or limit their ability to comment on your posts.

It is also worth remembering that you are under no obligation to respond to negative or abusive comments. Many trolls can be safely ignored and will simply move on to their next target.

*What if I see someone else from the College trolling others?*

The College recognises the University's [Whistleblowing Policy](#) and would look to follow this if such a situation arose.

- If a St Catharine's student is trolling others, please report this to the Dean ([dean@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:dean@caths.cam.ac.uk)) with a screengrab and as much detail as possible.
- If one of our staff is trolling others, please report this to the HR Manager ([hr.manager@caths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:hr.manager@caths.cam.ac.uk)) with a screengrab and as much detail as possible.
- If one of our Fellows is trolling others, please report this to the President with a screengrab and as much detail as possible.