

Social Media Policy and Procedure for Students

Introduction

The following policy aims to offer guidance and direction on student use of social media while studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

This policy is underpinned by the following premises:

Social media fluency can be as much a professional skill as it is a personal activity.	Social media offers many professional and social benefits.
Social media use has personal, professional, and institutional risks.	Because of the open and immediate nature of publishing on social media platforms, their use can impact negatively as well as positively upon staff, students in a personal context, and on the reputation the Conservatoire.
RCS takes freedom of speech/ expression and academic freedom very seriously.	Freedom of expression is a key tenet of creative and cultural production as well as a broader human right.
Freedom of speech, academic freedom, and freedom of expression act in tandem with other legal responsibilities and also RCS's approach to dignity and study at work.	RCS values and encourages freedom of speech/expression and academic freedom, and these freedoms intersect with other laws and considerations. These intersections establish certain limits which, if breached, can constitute unacceptable actions and/or a breach of RCS policies. Any suspected breaches will normally be investigated and, where appropriate, disciplinary action taken.

This policy operates in conjunction with:
Information Security Policy
IT Acceptable Use Policy
Copyright Policy
Online Delivery & Recording Policy

Social Media Policy for Students

1. **Policy statement**

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) acknowledges and encourages students to become fluent in their use of the social media platforms available to them. Personal and professional benefits are associated with social media usage.

But there are also risks associated with social media. In the terms of this policy, the primary risks are defined as the activities and actions which could be considered breaches of acceptable conduct. How misconduct is defined at RCS relates to other laws which interact with freedom of speech/ expression and academic freedom as well is RCS's Dignity at Work and Study Policy (and associated disciplinary regulations).

2. **Scope of the policy**

For the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as any online interactive platform which encourages participation, interaction and exchanges. This includes existing platforms and any new applications that emerge as well as blogs, discussion forums, instant messaging and any website which allows public commenting or posting.

This policy applies to all students and to any personal communications within a social media platform which directly or indirectly reference RCS or any member/s of the RCS community.

This policy applies to social media communications made at any time, whether privately or publicly, and from anywhere, including away from campus. The policy also applies to communications on personal devices, whether to an individual, to a limited group or through an open public channel or platform.

RCS recognises that students have a right to social media use for personal and private purposes. However, in all cases where a private social media post identifies members of the RCS community and/or references RCS directly or indirectly, where such actions are considered to potentially breach established standards within the Dignity at Work and Study Policy, RCS will apply that policy.

The Social Media policy is not intended to have the effect of limiting either freedom of speech/expression or academic freedom. However, this policy acknowledges that these freedoms are themselves subject to legal conditions. Freedom of speech/expression and academic freedom are rights, but they do have limits.

Key to these limits are the principles which underpin all of RCS's regulations:

- The right to privacy and confidentiality and associated principle of consent
- The right not to be harassed/ shamed / bullied /defamed
- The right not to be discriminated against

3. **Using social media as a teaching, learning, and professional tool**

Where social media is used as a teaching learning and content sharing tool through official RCS websites, digital platforms and accounts, all students must read, understand and agree to the terms of use and RCS's terms and conditions relating to the use of social media in this context before accessing and posting content on social media in a teaching, learning and content sharing context.

This includes the creation and publishing of content on departmental sites and platforms that are clearly understood to relate to RCS. Guidelines are available for use by students who support the creation and publishing of content on the dedicated social platforms of RCS departments and programmes. You can find these **here**. Students have a responsibility to ensure they are familiar with and adhere to the guidelines for contributing to these social platforms.

When an RCS social media platform is used as a tool to enhance learning, teaching and/or the student experience (for example as a discussion forum or as a tool for mentoring) students must comply with the requirements of this policy and comply with any additional rules and protocols that relate to that specific use.

4. **Social media in your personal life**

As a student you should be aware of your association with and responsibilities to the Conservatoire, and ensure that your profiles and related content are consistent with:

- our policies, including but not limited to, data protection, copyright & IPR dignity, electronic mail usage and information security
- your student contract with us
- how you would wish to present yourself internally within RCS and externally, including to future employers and agents

You must also be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything which you post online. Therefore, you should avoid posting anything online that:

- you would not wish to be in the public domain; and/or
- you would not be willing to say personally to the face of another individual

You should also be aware that any digital material that you post online could reach a wider audience than you would have expected or intended. Once digital content has been created and shared, you will have limited control over its permanence, forward distribution and audience. RCS may treat it as foreseeable that any information posted by a student on any social media platform will be disseminated further, and therefore it will not be open to a student to claim as a defence to disciplinary action that they did not anticipate that content that otherwise breaches this policy would be revealed to third parties other than the intended recipient.

5. **Expected standards of behaviour**

Students are personally responsible for what they communicate on or through social media and they must adhere to the standards of behaviour set out in this policy and any related policies (see below).

They are also responsible if they share content deemed unacceptable, even if this has not originated from them.

Communications on social media must be in accordance with this policy. Use of social media must not infringe on the rights, or privacy of other students, or staff or

third parties.

Any communications through social media which identify them as a student of the Royal Conservatoire to members of staff, other students, or other individuals are subject to this policy.

Related Policies

All use of social media must comply with our regulations and policies, including:
Information Security Policy
IT Acceptable Use Policy
Copyright Policy
Online Delivery & Recording Policy

6. Institutional Expectations

The Royal Conservatoire has well-established mechanisms for students to raise any dissatisfaction or concerns including the Student Complaints Procedure or the Dignity at Work and Study Policy. Any such concerns or issues must be raised through these procedures, not on social media.

The following non-exhaustive list may, according to circumstances, be of an unacceptable nature and **should never be posted**:

Personal information about another individual without their express permission / formal consent	No personal information, including photographs and videos, should be shared on social media without the consent of the individual to whom it relates. Students should, therefore, never post other students' and/or staff and/or a third party's personal information without their consent. Consideration should be given to sharing aspects of performance and production.
Institutional information that is confidential and/or of a sensitive nature	The following should not be posted on social media: – Details of complaints/ disciplinary and/or legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving RCS – Information about fellow students or staff or personnel matters – Non-public or not yet approved documents or information
Reputationally damaging information	Anything which may bring RCS into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of colleagues, former colleagues, students, former students, staff, former staff, and those connected with the Conservatoire should not be shared via social media

Posting that constitutes a criminal offence	Material, including images, that is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile towards any individual or entity, or amounts to a misuse of private information or breach of confidence constitute criminal activity

7. **Cyber Bullying via social media sites**

The Conservatoire will not accept any form of bullying or harassment by students directed at members of Conservatoire staff, students or other members of the wider RCS community.

The following examples illustrate the types of behaviour, displayed through social media communications, which RCS considers to be forms of cyber bullying:

- intimidating or aggressive behaviour
- offensive or threatening comments or content
- Posting private images of an individual without consent (including, but not limited to, private sexual images of an individual)
- Sharing unwanted images (including sexual images)
- posting comments/photos etc. deliberately mocking an individual with the intent to harass or humiliate them
- maliciously spreading rumours, lies or gossip
- sending messages or posting comments with the intent to trick, force or pressure the receiver into doing something that they would not otherwise be comfortable doing (grooming)

Cyber bullying may also take place via other means of electronic communication such as email, text or instant messaging.

Any student who is experiencing cyber bullying by another student or a member of RCS staff, will have the full support of the conservatoire. Counselling services are available for free to all RCS students https://portal.rcs.ac.uk/counselling/

The Student Alternative Resolution Disciplinary (SARD) Policy outlines the procedure to be followed, if a student feels they are being bullied, harassed or victimised.

Mental Health

Social media can be detrimental to thoughts, emotions and self-esteem. It is important that students strive to have a healthy approach to these platforms and should seek to limit screen time and use.

Headspace offers a number of ways to manage social media use:
https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/negative-effects-of-social-media

Summarised, these include:

- Limiting time on social platforms – smartphones can measure how much time you're spending on them.
- Turn off push notifications from social sites.

- Avoid accessing social sites first thing in the morning or last thing at night.

8. **Intellectual Property**

All students must ensure that they have the appropriate permissions to share any third-party materials, including all images, photographs, text and videos, before uploading them to or linking to them via social media and, where sharing is permitted, should ensure that such materials or shared links are credited appropriately. In particular, students should not share RCS materials, including but not limited to, lecture handouts, slides and examination papers, or performance output on social media unless they have express authorisation to do so.

When using social media to share images of RCS productions or related production activity, permission must be given by the relevant Heads of Programmes and by any students shown in the images. Where any design elements are shown, permission should also be given by the relevant designers. Whilst sharing images of work in progress is normally acceptable as a promotional tool, it is not usual to share images of the full stage or of any key design element prior to opening night.

In addition, all students must check the terms and conditions of a social media account and/or website before uploading material to it; by posting material to social media accounts and/or websites, you may be releasing ownership rights and control of the content. For this reason, you must exercise caution in sharing all information.

9. **Brand**

RCS's name, identity and all associated brand collateral may only be used when authorised and in accordance with RCS's brand guidelines.

10. **Roles and responsibilities**

All students are responsible for:

- ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
- ensuring they are familiar with RCS social policy if contributing to an RCS departmental account. Please see the associated guidelines here
- regularly monitoring, updating and managing content they have posted;
- ensuring that posts made to accounts where the institution is not named do not, for example, threaten, shame, harass or bully a member of the RCS community.