

SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

Attachment/s include:

This document should be read in conjunction with, but not limited to the following other related policies and procedures:

Use of Email and Electronic Facilities by Staff (Including Contractors)

Relevant government legislation impacting on policy content:

Endorsed: February 2023

Revised: May 2022

Introduction to this Policy

Accessing social network sites on School Systems

As outlined in the Use of Email and Electronic Facilities by Staff (Including Contractors) policy, you are not permitted to use social networking sites on School Systems¹ unless you have been specifically authorised to do so by the Head of School (HOS).

If you have been authorised to access Social Media on behalf of the School and /or using School Systems, you should not have any expectations of privacy for any actions performed.

Application

This Policy applies to employees, volunteers and contractors when they participate in social networking sites, whether during work hours or outside of work hours on their own computers or other electronic communication technologies, or on School Systems if they have been authorised to do so.

This Policy covers all current and future social media platforms. These platforms currently include, but are not limited to:

- a) **Social networking sites:** Facebook, MySpace, Foursquare, LinkedIn, Bebo and Friendster;
- b) **Video and photo sharing websites:** Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube;
- c) **Micro-blogging sites:** Twitter;
- d) **Blogs:** including corporate blogs and personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications;
- e) **Forums and discussion boards:** e.g. local discussion boards, Whirlpool, Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups;
- f) **Online encyclopaedias:** e.g. Wikipedia and Sidewiki; and
- g) any other websites that allow individual users or companies to use simple publishing tools, (together called **Social Media**).

¹ See definition of 'School Systems' in the Protocols for the Use of Email and Electronic Facilities

Please take care

The terms and prescribed conduct described in this Policy are not intended to be exhaustive, nor do they anticipate every possible use of Social Media. You are encouraged to act with caution and to take into account the underlying principles of this Policy. If you feel unsure about what to do in particular circumstances, you should contact the IT Officer and/or the HOS.

Consequences of a breach of this Policy

Using Social Media in a way which breaches this Policy, Protocols for the Use of Email and Electronic Facilities or any other school policies, or your obligations as an employee or contractor under the law, may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Disciplinary action may include limitation or removal of access to School Systems, or termination of an employee's employment, a contractor's or a volunteer's engagement with the school.

Use of Social Media as part of your role

If you are required by the school to participate in Social Media sites as part of your role with Blacktown Youth College (BYC), you should ensure that you clearly understand what is required of you.

You should always exercise responsibility and judgment in any material you post on Social Media sites where you are participating as part of your role with the school. Essentially, the rules that apply to you when you are interacting face to face with people as a representative of BYC will apply to your actions on Social Media – including all school policies. Similarly, the normal authorisation and approval process in relation to any content that you are posting will also apply.

You should be polite and respectful of the opinions of others at all times and refrain from posting any comments which harshly criticise or undermine posts made by others. You should be careful of what you say about others and do not post comments which may be viewed as denigrating or insulting including to other schools.

Personal use of Social Media

Use of Social Media

BYC understands that you use various Social Media for personal reasons on your own computers or other electronic communication technologies or on School Systems if you have been authorised to do so.

Generally what you do on your own time is your own business. However, information you provide, and statements you make, on Social Media sites may impact the workplace and have significant consequences. This material may be read by others in the school community or the public at large. Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you 'remove/delete' it later or attempt to make it anonymous.

When using any Social Media you are responsible for your words and actions.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your posts are appropriate. Use your judgment and common sense, and if there is any doubt, do not post.

When using any Social Media you must not:

- a) invite students to join your personal social networking site or accept a students' invitation to join theirs;
- b) communicate with students on social networking sites;
- c) post photos of students or caregivers on social networking sites;
- d) use BYC's logo or create BYC branded accounts which could be interpreted as representing the school;
- e) contribute anything which would bring you or the school into disrepute – for example an offensive blog or photo;
- f) engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace - for example:
 - i. making any adverse, offensive or derogatory statements about other employees or contractors, students, caregivers or School Board; or
 - ii. engaging in unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying of other employees or contractors, students, caregivers or School Board; and
- g) disclose any confidential information about BYC, including information about other employees or contractors, students, caregivers or School Board.

These requirements apply regardless of whether you have restricted access to your personal site to selected persons only.

You should also avoid identifying or discussing co-workers or posting photographs that include co-workers unless you have obtained their permission first.

Expressing your personal views

It can be difficult to draw a line between your personal and professional life when using Social Media. Even when you are talking as an individual, people may perceive you to be talking on behalf of the school. By identifying yourself as a BYC employee, volunteer or contractor, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about the school. Accordingly you need to be careful that all content associated with you does not conflict with BYC's policies and your obligations as an employee, volunteer or contractor.

Just because conduct is outside work or you have not clearly identified yourself as a school employee or contractor, it may nonetheless be in breach of your obligations to the school as an employee, volunteer or contractor, whether on Social Media or otherwise. You should exercise caution and common sense on that basis.

This policy is not designed to infringe upon your personal interaction or online conversations where you are clearly speaking as an individual with no reference to BYC or your position as a school employee, provided you are otherwise complying with the BYC's policies and your obligations as an employee, volunteer or contractor.

Time spent on Social Media

You may access Social Media sites during authorised breaks using your own computers or other electronic communication technologies or on School Systems if you have been authorised to do so. Use of Social Media during work time for personal reasons may result in disciplinary action.

Personal liability

Please bear in mind that information you provide, and statements you make, on Social Media could have significant consequences for you personally, for example:

- a) making statements about an individual may constitute defamation (in which case you may be personally liable under applicable legislation to the person about whom you make the statement);
- b) making statements may constitute unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying (in which case you may be personally liable under applicable legislation);
- c) making statements about BYC, its business, caregivers or students, may constitute a breach of your obligation not to disclose confidential information, and your obligation not to make public statements about or on the school's behalf without express authority; and
- d) using other persons' material, text, photographs, music, logos and trademarks may breach copyright laws.

If you feel unsure about what to do in particular circumstances, you should contact the IT Officer and/or the HOS.

General

This Policy is a direction

This policy sets out the rules which must be complied with when using Social Media. This policy is a direction to you by the school as an employee, volunteer or contractor of the School. You must comply with this policy. If you do not comply with this policy, BYC may take disciplinary action, up to and including termination of your employment or engagement.