Introduction and scope

1.1 The University recognises that social media provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on various topics using a wide variety of platforms (whether web based or mobile based services), such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, Flickr, Tumblr, Snapchat, Google + and LinkedIn as well as blogs, forums, wikis, instant messaging and any website which allows public comments, including YouTube. The use of such tools has become a significant part of life for many people, as a way of keeping in touch with friends and associates and can be used to exchange ideas and thoughts on common interests, both from a personal and employment perspective.

1.2 However, the use of social media by students of the University can pose risks to the University’s confidential information, reputation and overall compliance within the law. To minimise such risks the University expects its students to comply with this policy in relation to the use of social media.

1.3 This policy is intended to apply to all use by students of the University of social media which directly or indirectly represent or refer to the University, its staff, students and partners.

1.4 It is recognised that students may be required to use social media as part of their assessed course of study. Where this is the case, students must comply with any formal policy or guidance provided in connection with their course of study. If there is any inconsistency between this policy and any such course specific social media policy or guidance, then the course specific policy or guidance will take precedence. In the absence of a formal course specific policy or guidance being in place, use of social media for the purpose of study should be conducted in line with the spirit and intent of this policy.

Guidelines relating to use of Social Media

2.1 If a student wishes to have, or already has, a social media presence for personal use (i.e. not for the purpose of academic studies, research or academic networking), which refers to the University or from which the University can be identified, then the student must make sure it is clear that they are speaking on their own behalf, for example by writing in the first person and using a personal e-mail address. If a student is using social media in relation to their academic studies (for example in connection with research or for academic networking), then the student’s University email address may be used for such purposes, having due regard to the spirit of this policy at all times.
2.2 Students are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media. Students should remember that what they publish may be readily available to the public (including the University, prospective future employers, the media and social acquaintances) for a long time. Students should keep this in mind when posting content. Inappropriate posting of content can damage career potential, since potential (and current) employers often screen social media sites when considering applications.

2.3 Any use of social media should be in accordance with the relevant University policies and regulations (including those set out in the Student Handbook) and, in particular, should comply with the University’s Freedom of Speech policy, which can be found on the University’s website.

2.4 Social media should not be used to verbally abuse or intimidate staff or students. Respect should be had at all times for other people’s privacy and feelings. Care should be taken to avoid language which may be deemed as offensive to others. For example, students should not:

2.4.1 say defamatory things about people or organisations;

2.4.2 say anything that is or could be construed as discriminatory;

2.4.3 engage in any criminal activity;

2.4.4 tell lies or mislead people; or

2.4.5 post inappropriate pictures or videos.

2.5 It is important that students respect other people’s right to privacy (including fellow students and members of staff). Permission should be obtained before posting pictures of other people, or another person’s details, on social media.

2.6 Students may have access to confidential information either about the University, its staff and students, or a company or other organisation that the University works with (for example a placement provider, sponsor or a research funding body or collaborative partner). All students must ensure that they do not reveal any such confidential information on social media.

2.6 Anybody is free to talk about the University on social media sites. However, students should be aware that disparaging or untrue remarks which may bring the University, its staff or students into disrepute may constitute misconduct and disciplinary action may be applied. The Students’ Handbook of Regulations contains further details; this policy does not vary the existing student disciplinary procedures. Students should avoid posting any communications which might be misinterpreted in a way that could damage the University’s goodwill and academic reputation, even indirectly. The University’s logo should not be used without permission from the University’s Director of Marketing and Communications.
2.7 If a student is approached by a media contact about content on a site relating to the University of Huddersfield they should contact the University’s Director of Marketing and Communications before taking any action.

2.8 If a student wishes to complain about any inappropriate posting of content, which identifies the University of Huddersfield, they should contact the Head of Registry who will investigate the matter on behalf of the University to ascertain what action, if any, may be appropriate, which may include referring the matter to be dealt with under a different procedure.

2.9 Social media should not be used for accessing or sharing illegal content.

**Compliance with related policies and agreements**

3.1 Social media should never be used in a way that violates any other University policies or obligations relating to students. If a post would violate any of the University’s policies in another forum, it will also violate them in an online or mobile based forum.

3.2 If there is any conflict between this policy and any of the other relevant University policies, then the more restrictive policy shall take precedence.