

Social Media Policy



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1. Introduction

Many trainees will be using social media to share thoughts and experiences. This includes using well known social networking sites, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Google+. It may also cover blogs, forums, wikis, SMS text messaging and any website which allows individuals to store or publish written or pictorial content.

Trainees, school and LETTA staff are expected to understand their responsibilities when using social networks. This is part of the professional aspect of teaching.

2. Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this Social Media Policy and guidelines is:

- to encourage **good practice**
- **to protect** trainees, trainers, partner organisations and, school and LETTA staff
- to **promote effective and innovative use** of social media as part of LETTA activities

Any official or unofficial social networking site/group set up by trainees bearing the LETTA name and/or logo **must be approved by LETTA** and will be monitored by LETTA.

3. Definitions

The term 'social media' is used here to describe social interactions via communication technologies by which personal information or opinions can be accessed on the internet. Examples include: blogs, websites, Web 2.0, SMS text messaging and social networking sites.

4. Policy Principles

4.1 Responsibilities

- 4.1.1 It is the responsibility of trainees to read and act in accordance with the principles of this policy and guidelines and should regularly check with LETTA staff regarding any minor updates to documents.
- 4.1.2 It is the responsibility of trainees to read and act in accordance with the rules and guidelines set out by individual social media, social networking and website hosting companies and providers.
- 4.1.3 LETTA will ensure this policy and guidelines are accessible to staff and trainees and include in induction information. LETTA will periodically review and update the policy and guidelines and any other associated policy and guidelines. Staff and trainees will be notified of any significant changes.
- 4.1.4 LETTA will monitor references to LETTA on social media and the internet.

4.2 Responsibilities of trainees on personal internet presence

4.2.1 Breaches of this policy, Codes of Conduct of Professional Bodies (eg., the Teachers' Standards) can directly affect your future career. Breaches of Codes of Conduct can also lead to the instigation of Cause for Concern Procedures, affect your ability to progress to the next level of study and your suitability to gain professional accreditation.

- 4.2.2 You must not use your site to attack or abuse staff, trainees, trainers or children. You should respect the privacy and the feelings of others. You must not include contact details or pictures etc. of other trainees, members of staff, trainers or children without their prior permission. Remember that if you break the law on your site (for example by posting something defamatory), you will be personally responsible.
- 4.2.3 Trainees must abide by the relevant policies provided by LETTA's partner university.
- 4.2.4 You should not use your site or pages in any way that may compromise your current or future fitness to practice. Any content that you post about yourself or others could be brought to the attention of LETTA, future employers or professional bodies and may be detrimental to your studies and/or future career.
- 4.2.5 You must abide by all anonymity and confidentiality guidelines and rules; as set out by the requirements of your course and the professional standards set out by the partner university and the governing bodies of placement schools. If you think something on your site gives rise to concerns about a conflict of interest and in particular concerns about confidentiality this must be discussed immediately with LETTA Programme Leader and your school-based mentor.
- 4.2.6 Trainees need to exercise caution when considering social interaction or personal engagement with staff, children/young people or parents from a placement setting. Trainees are advised to notify their school-based mentor or the LETTA Programme Leader for clarification.
- 4.2.7 You should not reveal confidential information about LETTA or its staff, trainees, partner organisations/schools. This might include aspects of LETTA policy or details of either internal or private discussions. Consult with the LETTA Programme Leader if you are unclear about what might be confidential.
- 4.2.8 Where social media is utilised as part of a research study or project; all ethical considerations and requirements of LETTA and partner organisations and course of study should be adhered to.
- 4.2.9 Trainee groups must contact LETTA via the LETTA Programme Leader if the LETTA logo is to be used.

- 4.2.10 If a representative from the media or press makes contact about posts on your site which relate to the LETTA and partner organisations, you should discuss it with the LETTA Programme Leader **before responding**.
- 4.2.11 You must avoid bringing the LETTA and partner organisations into disrepute in any way.
- 4.2.12 If someone offers to pay you for site content on your affiliated site; this could constitute a conflict of interest and you must consult the LETTA Programme Leader in the first instance.
- 4.2.13 If you already have a personal social networking site or intend to initiate one; you should not declare, imply or indicate that your content or views are representative of LETTA or partner organisations. If in any doubt, you may want to discuss your site content with the LETTA Programme Leader. You may also want to include a simple and visible disclaimer such as "these are my personal views and not those of LETTA or partner organisations".

4.3 General guidelines for trainees

- 4.3.1 Trainees should take effective precautions when utilising social networking sites to ensure their own personal safety and to protect against identity theft.
- 4.3.2 Any group or trainee wishing to actively engage with prospective trainees in relation to application processes should be forwarded to our partner university's website with regard to the PGCE content, www.shu.ac.uk, to the LETTA website, www.letta.org.uk, and to www.gov.uk and www.ucas.com for further information
- 4.3.3 Trainees need to consider intellectual property rights, copyright and ownership of data when using social media.
- 4.3.4 Individuals should exercise caution when interacting with, and responding to, potentially contentious posts on social media sites.
- 4.3.5 LETTA will continually review the use of social media and may modify its policies should the status of particular social media sites change e.g. if charges are introduced, changes made to the way content is used, terms of use are changed, if a site closes down or a new service begins.

4.4 Encouraged practice for official LETTA use

- **Academic.** LETTA recognises that social media has the potential to support and advance learning opportunities and encourages its use in this way.
- **Collaboration.** Social media can provide opportunities to support collaborative learning and opportunities to communicate. It can also be a very cost effective means to provide and receive information.

- **Alumni.** LETTA recognises the opportunity to communicate with existing trainees and alumni through social media to develop an on-going relationship.
- **Teacher Unions.** LETTA understands that Teacher Unions and Student University Unions will want to use social media to maximise the exposure of its services.
- **Search results.** Search engines like Google and Bing are increasingly indexing and ranking information from social networks. The more presence we have on social media sites, the higher our ratings become in online search results.

4.5 Other potential uses

- LETTA will not refer to social networking sites when assessing trainee applications and job applications unless such sites are specifically highlighted in the application. LETTA will assess all applications only on the information provided.
- LETTA may refer to social networking sites when investigating breaches of discipline, eg., cheating, harassment, anti-social behaviour, safe-guarding.
- LETTA may monitor forums and blogs to gain indirect feedback on LETTA courses. LETTA may post replies on forums or blogs to answer queries or address factual mistakes, but would generally take a cautious approach before becoming involved in contentious issues.
- LETTA reserves the right to take any necessary steps to protect its facilities, staff and trainees from malware (malicious software) including blocking sites where this is an issue.
- If a complaint is received that a trainee or staff member is being bullied or harassed then actions may be taken via appropriate procedures.

5. Risk Management Statement

Failure to comply with this policy could lead to:

- LETTA being brought into disrepute
- Trainees failing to meet the Personal and Professional Conduct (Part 2) Teachers' Standards
- Inappropriate posts online leading to trainees compromising their programme, professional accreditation and employment outcomes and in worse case scenarios trainees facing legal action
- Cyber bullying (trainees, staff, trainers)

6. Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of:

- LETTA to oversee the policy
- The LETTA Steering Board to endorse and support the policy's implementation
- Staff members and partner organisation to be aware of the Social Media Policy.
- Trainees to adhere to the policy and seek necessary permissions and guidance as found in the policy.

7. Contact Details

For further information regarding any of the issues covered by this policy please contact the LETTA Administrator or the LETTA Programme Leader at Bygrove Primary School, E14 6DN.

