

POLICY ON USE OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

MAY 2008

HR DEPARTMENT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The use of online social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Myspace, Bebo etc) has become a very significant part of life for many people. They provide a very positive way to keep in touch with friends and colleagues, and can be used to exchange ideas and thoughts on common interests, both personal and work-related.
- 1.2 There have been occurrences where these services have been used for less positive reasons or used for a substantial length of time during working hours, hence the need for formal guidance.

2 USE OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

- 2.1 If an employee's personal internet presence does not make any reference to the University of Surrey and the University cannot be identified, the content is unlikely to be of concern to the University. If employment at the University is referred to then the information posted would need to comply with the employment conditions outlined below.
- 2.2 If an employee wishes to initiate a social networking site or already has one in place, please use a disclaimer that protects the University e.g. 'These are my personal views and not those of the University of Surrey'.
- 2.3 An individual is free to talk about the University. However instances where the University is brought into disrepute may constitute misconduct or gross misconduct and disciplinary action will be applied. Please refer to the Disciplinary Policy.
- 2.4 An employee should not disclose confidential information relating to his/her employment at the University.
- 2.5 Sites should not be used to verbally abuse staff or students. Privacy and feelings of others should be respected at all times. Employees should obtain the permission of individuals before posting contact details or pictures. Care should be taken to avoid using language which could be deemed as offensive to others.
- 2.6 If information on the site raises a cause for concern with regard to conflict of interest, employees should raise the issue with their line manager.
- 2.7 If approached by a media contact about content on a site relating to the University of Surrey, employees should advise their line manager before taking any action.
- 2.8 Viewing and updating personal sites should not take place during working times, unless in exceptional circumstances, such as where activities form part of a research project and this has been agreed in advance as appropriate by the line manager. Reasonable access is acceptable before/after working hours and during work breaks (although please be advised that if a VDU is used throughout the day, employees are required to have regular breaks).

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- 2.9 Sites should not be used for accessing or sharing illegal content.
- 2.10 Any serious misuse of Social Networking sites, that has a negative impact on the University may be regarded as a disciplinary offence.

The University does not discourage staff and students from using such services. However, all should be aware that the University will take seriously any occasions where the services are used inappropriately. If occasions arise of what might be read to be online bullying or harassment, these will be dealt with in the same way as other such instances.

Information on the University's acceptable use of IT can be found on the IT Services webpage.

This Policy may be read in conjunction with the University Policy For e-mail Use By Staff.