Social Media Guidelines

for Coventry University Staff

# Social Media at University

Introduction

Cloud and social media tools have become a normal part of day-to-day life for many students and staff, but their use in the classroom can raise a range of ethical and legal concerns. With a sound understanding of some basic principles of data protection, however, staff should be able to legally and ethically experiment and innovate with digital tools as part of their teaching.

Information protection and external tools

Ultimate responsibility for information protection compliance tends to fall upon the 'data controller', that is, the person handling personal data. If you share personal data with a third party via a website or tool, without the consent or authority of the individuals they concern, you may have breached information protection legislation. Even if a tool or platform is "approved" by the University as complying with certain data protection requirements, it is ultimately the person controlling the data who is responsible for complying with data protection law.

This means, however, that as long as students remain in control of their personal data and make voluntary, informed decisions on its use, then external services like social media may be used as part of their learning experience.
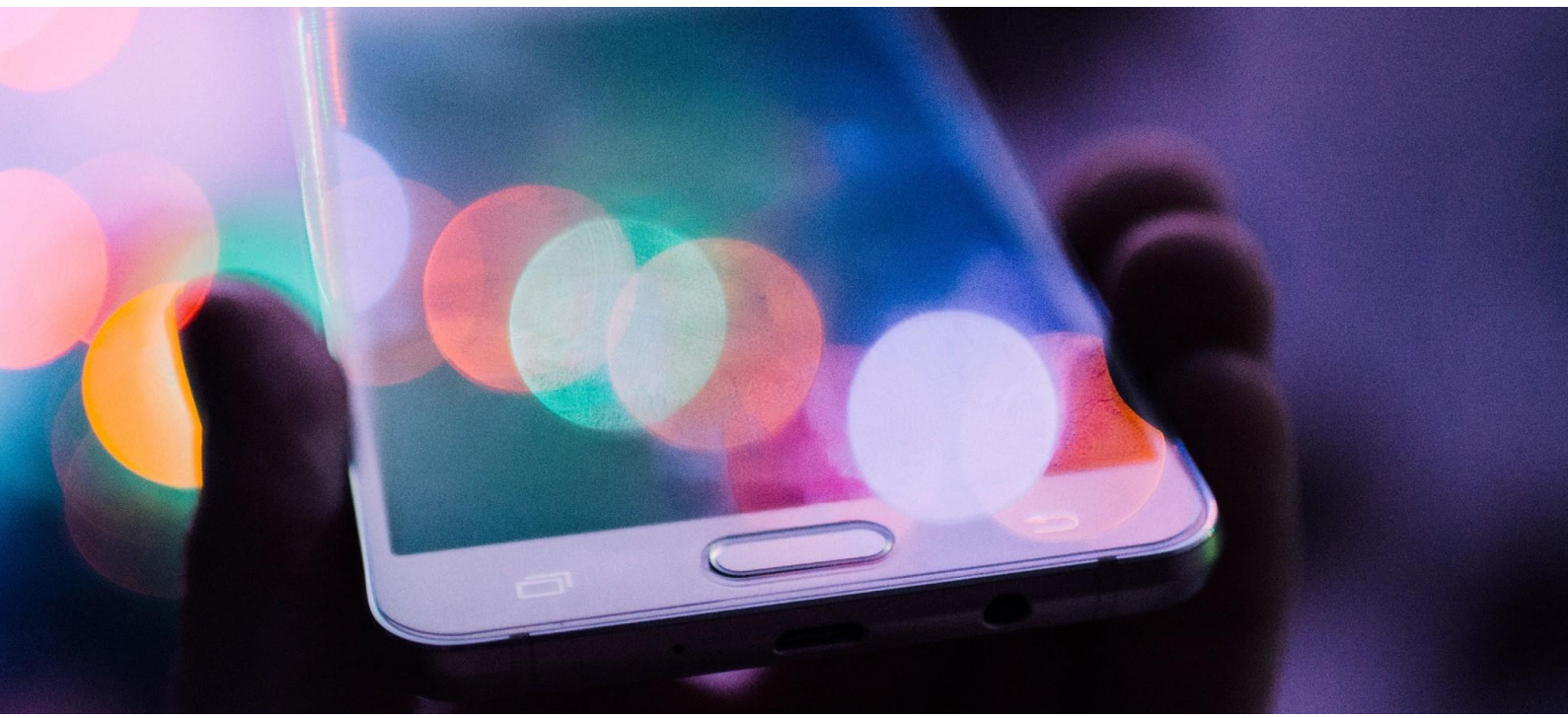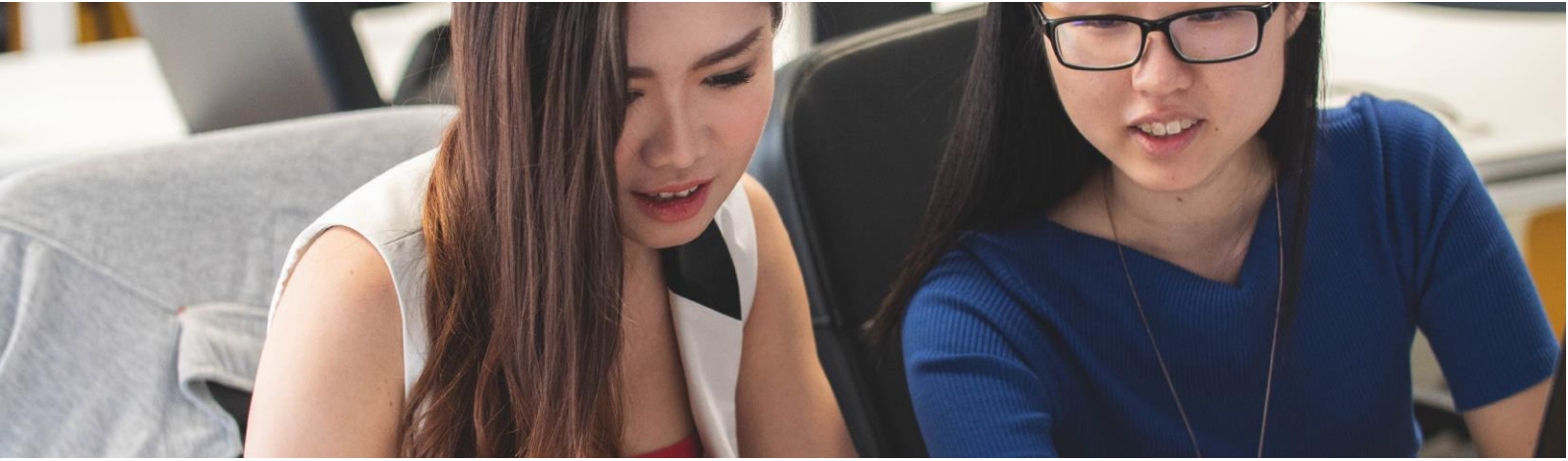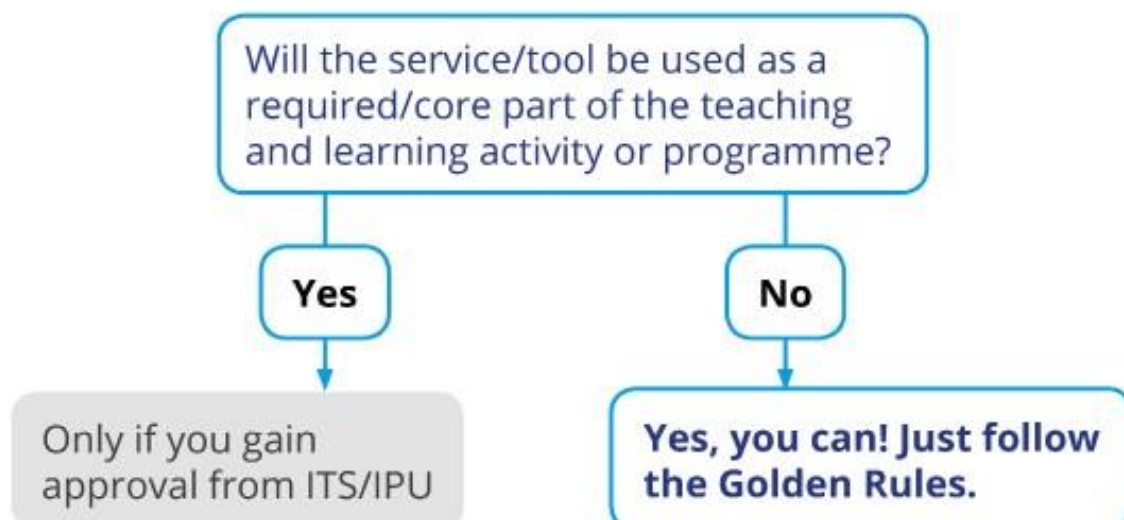
"Social Media" sites can include a range of different services online, which include but are not limited to:

- Blogs (e.g. Medium, WordPress)
- Wikis (e.g. Wikipedia, WikiAnswers)
- Social networking platforms (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)
- Photo-sharing (e.g. Flickr, Instagram)
- Online Forums (e.g. Reddit, Quora)
- Messaging services (e.g. Teams, WeChat)

We have broken down the legislation into a more digestible form, to make it easier for academic staff and students to explore and experiment with social media and online tools.

The simplified process works as follows:

> **Can I use a social media or external online tool for teaching and learning?**

Will the service/tool be used as a required/core part of the teaching and learning activity or programme?

Yes → Only if you gain approval from ITS/IPU

No → Yes, you can! Just follow the Golden Rules.

Are there any risks?

As with any new learning activity, some level of risk assessment should be carried out. Try not to focus on whether a tool is "safe" or not, but rather whether the intended activities present any legal or ethical risks.

It is recommended that you design learning activities with University policies and student welfare in mind, and with particular concern and respect for students' control over their public/private identities.

Where to start

First, you will need to have a basic understanding of data protection, which is covered in the Coventry Essentials modules and there is a helpful guide on the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website. The University Office of Information Security has also developed guidance and continues to add to the useful information on Data Hub.

You should also have read the University's Social Media Policy.

What next?

If you want advice on tool selection, or designing learning activities, you should arrange a consultation with Academic Development or learning technology staff.

If you already have a tool and purpose in mind, there are two routes, formal and informal. These are explained on the following pages, but the focus of this booklet is on the informal route.
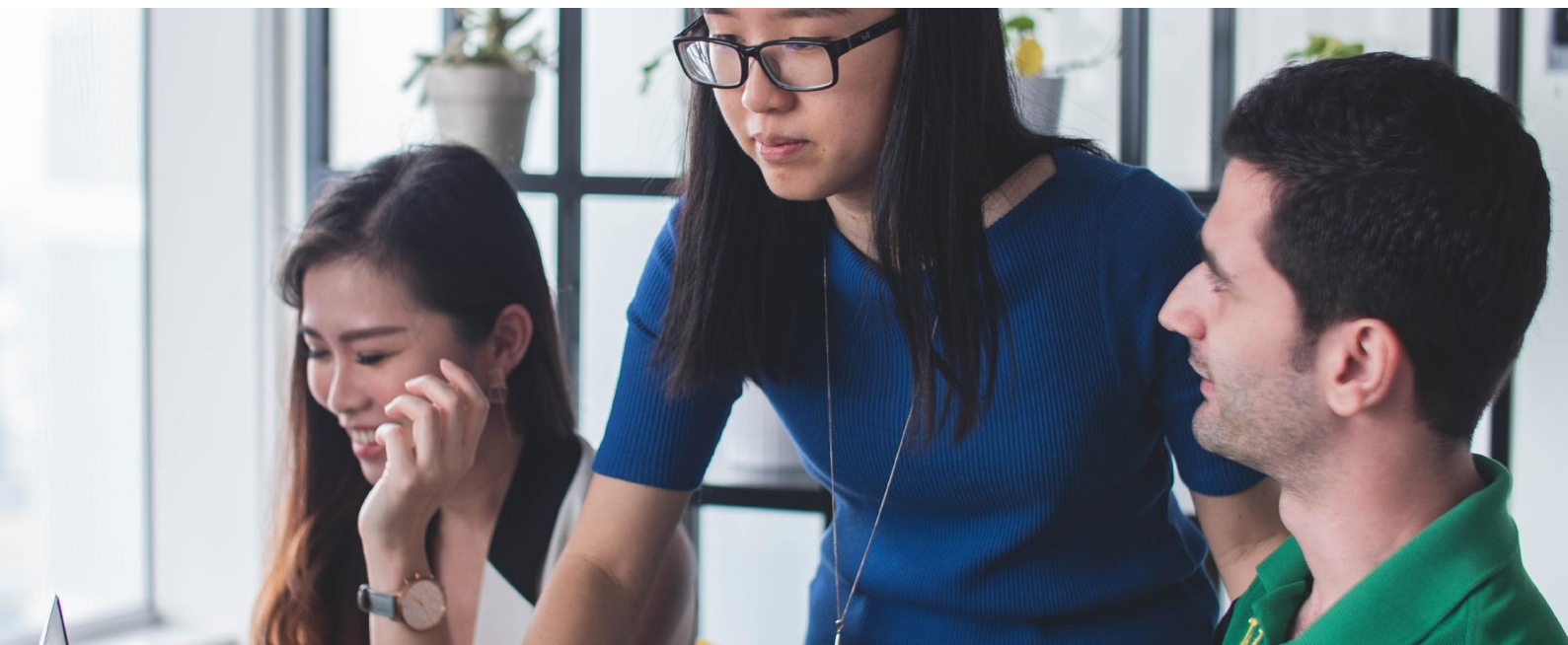
The informal route

> **"** You can use external online tools for teaching and learning, provided that you adhere to the Golden Rules, which require the provision of a Golden Statement at the point of access to the tool.

The Golden Rules are shown on the next page.

Incorporating other policies

It is still your responsibility to ensure that your intended use of the tool is compliant with all other University policies and codes of conduct. Most policies can be interpreted for online activities by identifying equivalents. For example, if a behaviour is deemed unacceptable in a face-to-face setting, the same probably applies to online learning environments.

You can access most policies from the central repositories for staff and students:

- [Staff repository](#)
- [Student repository](#)

The Code of Conduct for Use of IT Services is also particularly relevant.

The formal route

Students cannot be required to share their data with external services as part of their learning, unless this was understood and agreed upon application and enrolment.

Therefore, if you wish to use a tool that is going to be a required or core part of the student learning experience you may need to consult with learning technologists, and or ITS, and you will need to gain approval from the Office of Information Security.

Wherever possible, it is recommended that the informal route is followed to pilot any new tool before seeking approval or making any investments. If you are not sure how to proceed, you should seek advice from your learning technology teams, academic development, or your IT business partner.

Golden Rules

Students are made aware that the tool or service is external to and outside the control of Coventry University. This should be clear on all documentation and apparent if they access the tool via an internal link e.g. in Aula.

Students are clearly told what information is accessible to and used by the University and also by the service provider.

Students sign up to the tool themselves directly and not through the University, thereby knowingly entering into a legal data usage agreement with the external provider.

Students participate voluntarily, without discrimination or pressure, and are not required to do so as part of their course.

The University does not have control over the uses to which the service provider puts the data. This should also be made clear to students.

Each activity or series of activities using an external tool should be prefaced with a Golden Statement, which advises students of their rights and responsibilities around the use of the tool.

What about assessments?

The use of external tools for assessment purposes will be subject to the same policies and regulations as any other type of assessment. The temporal and dynamic aspects of some digital tools may mean that they are not suitable for summative or high-stakes assessments

External tools are likely, however, to be useful in formative assessment tasks, such as reflective blogging with WordPress. It's important that students are encouraged to regularly back up their work and make alternative plans in case of technical issues. Where these lead up to a summative assessment, it is recommended that students are required to prepare something more stable for submission, like a reflective review or presentation, with downloadable documentation, links and screenshots of the online material.

In accordance with the Golden Rules, any use of external tools for assessed work would again need to be optional to students, with an internal alternative tool made available.

What is a Golden Statement?

The Golden Statement is a short text written by teaching staff, advising students that an external tool is going to be used and what their rights and responsibilities are around the tool. It should be presented alongside any link to the external service, in advance of the activity taking place.

Although there will be some tool-specific points, all statements should advise students that they do not have to engage with the external service and an internal, alternative method of participation should be identified.

You can adapt the examples overleaf to suit your needs:

Example #1

Reflective blogging: Golden Statement

Over the course of this module, we will be using WordPress, a free blogging and website creation tool that is provided to you by Coventry University. You will be shown how to create a basic blog, and at the end of each week, you will be asked to write a reflective post about the topics discussed.

Your individual blog will be publicly available to an external audience for viewing and commenting, unless you adjust the settings of your WordPress site to restrict access.

Alternatively:

You may propose your own preferred publishing tool, such as Medium.com, WordPress.com, or if you have one, your own personal web site. You can publish your reflective blog posts on any platform of your choosing as long as the content can be made accessible to your lecturer, group, or module; where applicable.

Be aware that any information you post outside of your university provided WordPress blog will be stored and controlled outside of the University's IT systems. You can link to your diary entries directly to Aula for assessment. Please also keep a

personal backup of your blog posts in case of data loss or access issues with third-party services.

Note: Do not publish any information that you would not want the wider world to see, including private information such as addresses or phone numbers.

Example #2

Twitter debate: Golden Statement

This week we will be exploring a range of topics through a variety of different activities. Throughout the week, you will be encouraged to share and discuss the activities on Twitter, using the hash tag #ourdebate.

Any content you share on Twitter will be publicly available to an external audience for viewing, sharing and commenting.

Twitter is a 3rd party tool with no direct connection to Coventry University. Any information you post to Twitter will be stored and controlled outside of the University's IT systems.

You are required to participate in the activities, but you do not have to take part in the debate using the Twitter platform.

Alternatively: *(Delete as appropriate)*

- You will be able to view the Twitter feed through the Aula module and add contribute to the discussion via the chat.
- You will be able to view the Twitter feed through Microsoft Teams and contribute to the discussion via the chat.

Note: Do not publish any information that you would not want the wider world to see, including private information such as addresses or phone numbers.

Examples #3a and 3b

Video Submission: Golden Statement

Over the course of this module, we will be using a reflective video diary as a form of assessment.

You can use any video recording hardware of your choice, such as a smartphone or tablet, and any video editing software, such as iMovie or Adobe Premiere.

You can upload your reflective video to Microsoft Stream via your university Office 365 account. (Access to your video is restricted to staff and students within the CU Group by default you may wish to further restrict access via your videos settings within MS Stream).

Alternatively:

You can publish your reflective video diary on any platform of your choosing, such as YouTube, Vimeo, Archive.org, as long as the video can be made accessible to your lecturer, group, or module; where applicable.

If you publish content online using an external online tool with no direct connection to Coventry University, any information you publish will be stored and controlled outside of the University's IT systems.

You can link to your diary entries directly to Aula for assessment, which is restricted to staff and students enrolled on this module. Please also keep a personal backup of your video submissions in case of data loss or access issues with third-party services.

Note: Do not publish any information that you would not want the wider world to see, including private information such as addresses or phone numbers.

You are not required to use an external service or platform.

Podcast Assessment Submission: Golden Statement

Over the course of this module, we will be using podcasting as a form of assessment. You can use any audio recording hardware of your choice, such as a smartphone, tablet, or laptop computer, and any audio editing software, such as Adobe Audition or Apple's GarageBand.

Alternatively:
You can publish your podcasts using any platform of your choosing, such as Anchor, SoundCloud, Archive.org, as long as the episode can be made accessible to your lecturer, group, or module; where applicable.

If you publish content online using an external online tool with no direct connection to Coventry University, any information you publish will be stored and controlled outside of the University's IT systems.

You can upload and/or link to your podcast episodes using the HandIn assessment tool within Aula. Please also keep a personal backup of your podcast episodes in case of data loss or access issues with third-party services.

Note: Do not publish any information that you would not want the wider world to see, including private information such as addresses or phone numbers.

You are not required to use an external service or platform.