



COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

PURPOSE

UoNSU is committed to using a range of technology to help us achieve our strategic aims. We recognise that technology enables us to communicate quickly, easily and widely with students, colleagues and stakeholders. We value how it empowers people, allowing us to reach, include and collaborate with others across all aspects of our work. However, the ease, accessibility and speed of these communication methods also brings a range of organisational and individual risks, which we need to be conscious of.

This policy sets out how we intend to manage these risks. It encourages us all to be mindful of the possible issues, including the potential to damage others or UoNSU's reputation and profile. It clarifies our responsibility to exercise good judgement and to be thoughtful in our use of technology and our communication with others.

As an employee you are an ambassador for the UoNSU brand and the tone of voice that you use for specific audience types needs careful consideration. To ensure that we are presenting a consistent brand across all our communications, the messages and tone will be informed by our Values and maintained to guidelines.

POLICY

Introduction

UoNSU issues staff with Information Technology (IT) equipment and electronic devices, including computers and phones, so they can carry out their various roles effectively. The widespread and common use of IT, email, the web and social media brings immense benefits, and we will continue to support and develop its use in communicating with others. However, it also creates potential risks for the organisation and the individual that we each need to be aware of as we go about our work. Some of these risks can have serious legal and reputational consequences.

This policy covers the expectations and codes around appropriate use which are in place to protect UoNSU as an organisation, our staff and our equipment. We expect you to use good judgement and courtesy always, based on an understanding of the issues in this policy, and to behave in accordance with our Values.

Breaches of any part of this policy or the associated regulations will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy. The UoNSU has the right to review an employee's work email, desktop PC and work laptop or mobile in the course of an investigation into possible breaches of policy. In extreme cases, this could result in dismissal.

Code of Practice

Everyone who uses IT equipment must sign the 'Code of Practice for Users of the University Computing Facilities'. HR will provide this to all new staff, agency workers and contractors on their first day of work with UoNSU. When you sign this code, you agree that you've read the information, understand your responsibilities, and will work to the Code of Practice and all of the supporting regulations.

Personal Use of Union Systems and Equipment

Note that limited and proportionate personal use of the telephone and computer systems is allowed. This must not affect your work performance and you're expected to use your judgement about when you do this, being aware of the risks to our service and reputation, particularly where you have a 'student-facing' role. While we understand that staff may want to use their breaks to communicate with others, we also encourage you to use this time to get away from your screen, to move about and feel refreshed.

Please remember that any personal use of the computer or phone system is a privilege not a right. Further guidance is given below where relevant.

Monitoring and Enforcement

Please note that you must not expect any messages you compose, post, send or receive via the UoNSU network to be private, even with personal password protection. You should be aware that UK legislation allows network traffic to be intercepted without consent by IT staff. The reasons for this legislation include the recording evidence of transactions, ensuring regulatory compliance, detecting crime or unauthorised use, and ensuring the efficient operation of communications systems.

Communication Formats and Guidance

Please refer to the guidance covering UoNSU's standard communication formats and templates. This has been produced so that we can present a uniform, high standard of written communications to students and wider stakeholders, supporting our brand and our Values. This guidance can be found at:

http://brand.uonsu.co.uk/wp-login.php?redirect_to=http%3A%2F%2Fbrand.uonsu.co.uk%2F.

Email

Email is used routinely at UoNSU to communicate internally and externally. Please be mindful that any email you send is seen to represent UoNSU, and you should write it in a professional, thoughtful and responsible way.

The following are important to note when communicating by email and managing your email account:

- Be mindful that e-mail is not secure and can be forwarded or copied easily. It can also be viewed accidentally or deliberately by people other than the intended recipient.
- You should take care with the content of e-mail messages, as incorrect or inappropriate statements can potentially lead to claims for discrimination, harassment, defamation, breach of confidentiality or breach of contract. Our standard disclaimer should be attached to any email sent.
- You should not include anything in an email which could compromise or embarrass the recipient, yourself or UoNSU if it found its way into the public domain.
- If you receive a wrongly-delivered e-mail, please return it to the sender.
- You have a responsibility to ensure that copyright and licensing laws are not breached when composing or forwarding e-mails and e-mail attachments, or when downloading information.
- If using personal equipment for work purposes, you are responsible for virus checking. If you have any concerns about email safety or integrity, please contact IT Services.
- You should manage your email account thoughtfully. Old and unneeded emails should be deleted, bearing in mind data storage levels and the requirement to keep particular records or contractual evidence. Note that in certain extreme circumstances, IT Services may need to clear e-mail from the server. Where possible, they will give advance warning of this.

Inappropriate or offensive material

We have a clear intention to maintain a working environment where everyone feels supported and comfortable. Explicit, inappropriate, obscene or offensive material is not acceptable in the workplace, and this applies to email as to any other situation or method of communication.

Staff are reminded that email messages may be disclosed in legal proceedings in exactly the same way as paper documents. Deleting an email from your inbox or archives doesn't mean that it can't be recovered and disclosed. All email messages should be considered as potentially recoverable.

Even if material might not be thought offensive or threatening, such as trivial gossip or jokes, please be aware that people may consider it distracting, annoying or time-wasting. For this reason the forwarding or circulation of information unrelated to work is not encouraged. Note also that the downloading or forwarding of chain letters or similar material is not allowed.

Whilst we work hard to create a comfortable and supportive working environment at UoNSU, you should be aware that incoming e-mails may sometimes contain offensive or explicit material, and that this is beyond our control.

Mobile Phones

Mobile devices are provided for business use only. Any personal usage should be reimbursed directly to your department. Please see the Expenses Policy for further details.

Using your mobile phone in a vehicle

Using a mobile phone while driving is an offence under Road Traffic Regulations unless a proper hands-free adapter is used. Even so, using an adapter is best avoided as it may be distracting. To protect your safety, our policy is therefore to prohibit the use of mobile phones while driving during the course of work. Staff should turn off their mobile phone or switch it to Voicemail while driving, and return any calls only when it is safe to do so.

This policy applies to all staff who drive, whether they use a vehicle regularly during the course of their work or only occasionally.

Social Media

The web provides us with exciting and unparalleled opportunities to communicate widely with others, to participate in interactive discussions and to share information quickly using a variety of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and wikis. The list is growing all the time. However, we need to be aware that these are not private forms of communication - the benefits of a wide audience and instant impact can also be a risk if not carefully managed.

Despite the clear benefits, your use of social media could potentially present risks to UoNSU's confidentiality and reputation, and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations. You should be aware that, in some online communities, you may be seen to be communicating in your UoNSU role and therefore what you say has wider implications. You should ensure that your posts or messages support our Values and don't conflict with your role.

Using social media responsibly

We expect to continually develop our use of social media, and we will support and encourage its use in reaching people, communicating our message and stimulating debate. If you use social media as an authorised part of your role, you are asked to do so thoughtfully and respectfully. You are reminded that you're representing UoNSU, so you should understand and comply with the guidelines around appropriate use.

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. Breaches will be addressed under our Disciplinary Policy.

The following points are important to be aware of:

- Postings should be for legitimate work purposes only.
- You should never post disparaging, defamatory, discriminatory, inappropriate or offensive comments about UoNSU, your colleagues or any of our stakeholders.
- You should be careful about posting comments or views which compromise our status as a charity, particularly the requirement for political neutrality, and the strict rules around support for political causes and the expression of political views which are set out in Charity Law.

- You should take care not to discuss or disclose anything confidential about the Union or relating to our intellectual property. Similarly, you should avoid commenting on other organisations' intellectual property.
- You should take care not to breach our Data Protection policy, for example, disclosing personal information about a colleague or a student.
- Similarly, you should be careful not to breach any Copyright.
- You should make it clear when you're speaking on your own behalf rather than that of UoNSU or in your role as a member of staff.
- You must not comment on sensitive or commercial issues such as our Union's performance or plans, without authorisation.
- If you are uncertain about whether a posting is appropriate, you should speak to your manager first. Similarly, if you come across a posting which reflects poorly on the Union, you should let your manager know.

Personal use of social media at work

We recognise that staff may occasionally wish to use social media for personal activities at work using our computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems. We authorise this occasional use as long as it does not involve unprofessional, unlawful or inappropriate content and doesn't interfere with your work responsibilities or productivity. While using personal social media at work, circulating or posting any commercial, personal, religious or political material or promotion of external organisations unrelated to UoNSU's business is strictly prohibited. As with the personal use of other work equipment or systems, this is a privilege and not a right, and we ask you to use good judgement always.

Awareness of how personal social media could affect work

Many people use social media in their personal lives. When you're posting in your personal capacity, you should be aware that you may have an impact on your work and employment if you are able to be identified as a UoNSU staff member, or if your role is such that you may be seen as representing UoNSU even in your personal life. For example, UoNSU's status as a charity carries serious responsibilities around political independence and great care must be taken around how and what views are expressed and how any campaigns are managed.

To protect both yourself and UoNSU's reputation, all of the points listed above under 'Using social media responsibly' apply whilst you're using it in your personal capacity. If you want to mention something related to your work, you should say that you're giving your personal view rather than that of UoNSU.

If you have any questions or concerns about the potential issues with using social media in your personal life, please speak to your line manager.

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