Social Media Policy

University College of Osteopathy

	Core Documentation Cover Page				
	Social Media Policy				
Version number	**Dates produced and approved (include committee)**	**Reason for production/ revision**	**Author**	**Location(s)**	**Proposed next review date and approval required**
V1.0	Nov 2012 Academic Council	To provide students and staff with a clear policy for the in safe and responsible use of Social Media.	Vice-Principal (Education) HR Officer	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Nov 2013
V2.0	Mar 2017 UCO Management Team	To reflect the Prevent Duty in this policy.	HR Manager	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Mar 2019
V3.0	Aug 2017 PRAG Chair	Administrative Amendments to update institution name change from British School of Osteopathy to University College of Osteopathy.	HR Manager	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Mar 2019
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Equality Impact					
Positive equality impact (i.e. the policy/procedure/guideline significantly reduces inequalities)					
Neutral equality impact (i.e. no significant effect)					X
Negative equality impact (i.e. increasing inequalities)					

If you have any feedback or suggestions for enhancing this policy, please email your comments to: quality@uco.ac.uk

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

CONTENTS

1. SCOPE

1.1   This policy has been developed to provide clear expectations and guidance to students and staff studying and working at the University College of Osteopathy (UCO) in the safe and responsible use of social media in line with the following:

   a) The UCO's Freedom of Speech Policy.

   b) The UCO's ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

   c) The UCO's Disciplinary Procedure for Staff

   d) The UCO's Disciplinary Procedure for Students

   e) The UCO's Code of Conduct Policy for Staff

   f)   The UCO's Code of Conduct Policy for Students

   g) The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015[1] and Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales[2].

1.2   Blogs and online social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn have become popular communication tools over the past several years. These forums offer unique opportunities for people to interact and keep in contact, and have great potential to augment friendships and professional interactions.

1.3   As professionals with a unique social contract and obligation, osteopathic tutors, lecturers and students in particular must be aware of the public nature of these forums and the permanent nature of information posted.

1.4   While these sites offer potential to improve communication with friends and colleagues, they are also a potential forum for lapses of professionalism and professional behaviour. These sites may give the impression of privacy, but postings and other data should be considered in the public realm and freely visible by many people, even under the most stringent of privacy settings.

1.5   The guidance provided below is "best practice guidelines" for staff and students at the UCO.

1.6   All staff and students are expected to follow these guidelines whether participating in social networks personally or professionally, or whether they are using personal or UCO computers.

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[1] Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents/enacted
[2] Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance

1.7 Please note that all Osteopaths should have due regard to the GOsC Code of Practice (2005) and Osteopathic Practice Standards (2012), which have specific guidance relating to professional conduct, when considering posting content of an osteopathic nature online.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 Social networking site: Spaces in the internet where users can create a profile and connect that profile to others (individuals or entities) to create a personal network. Examples include Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Instagram, WhatsApp and Twitter. This list is not exhaustive and may include any online platform or forum for communication.

2.2 Blog: A website, usually in the form of an online journal, maintained by an individual with regular commentary on any number of subjects. Blogs can incorporate text, audio, video clips, and any other types of media.

3. BASIC CORE PRINCIPLES

3.1 When using social media, staff and students are expected to adhere to the following principles:

   a) Be honest about who you are.

   b) Clarify that your opinions are your own.

   c) Respect, humility and professionalism in all communication.

   d) Respect the views of others.

   e) Ensure that you share only public information.

   f) Be aware that what you say is public and permanent.

   g) Be aware that racial, ethnic, sexual, religious, and physical disability slurs shall not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action.Guidelines for Ethical/Professional Behaviour

4. PROFESSIONALISM

4.1 Postings within social network sites are subject to the same professional standards as any other personal interactions. The permanence and public written nature of these postings make them even more subject to scrutiny than most other forms of communication.

4.2 Staff and students may be subject to disciplinary action for comments that are either of an unprofessional nature or violate another's privacy.

4.3   Osteopathic students shall be subject to the UCO's Fitness to Practise and Professional Behaviour Policy if their use of social media breaches this policy.

4.4   Osteopathic staff should have due regard to the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) Code of Practice (2005) and Osteopathic Practice Standards (2012) when using social media.

4.5   Statements made by you within online networks will be treated as if you verbally made the statement in a public place.

4.6   Do not violate copyrighted or trademarked materials. If you post content, photos or other media, you are acknowledging that you own or have the right to use these items.

4.7   In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as UCO member of staff or as a UCO student, you are creating perceptions about the UCO by those who have access to your social network profile or blog. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your position at the UCO and with the UCO's values and professional standards as well as those of the GOsC.

4.8   UCO logos may not be used on any social media site without the approval of the Vice-Chancellor. Any osteopathically oriented blogs should contain the disclaimer: "The posts on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the University College of Osteopathy's positions, strategies, or opinions."

4.9   Use of these social networking sites or blogs can have legal ramifications. Comments made regarding care of patients or that portray you or a colleague in an unprofessional manner can be used in court or other disciplinary proceedings, regardless of any disclaimer.

4.10   Unprofessional postings by others on your page reflect very poorly on you. Please monitor others' postings on your profile and work to ensure that the content would not be viewed as unprofessional. It may be useful to block postings from individuals who post unprofessional content.

4.11   Staff and students are encouraged to alert colleagues to unprofessional or potentially offensive comments made online to avoid future indiscretions and refer them to this document.

4.12   Keep in mind that statements and photos posted within these sites are potentially viewable by future employers and educational institutions, and even if deleted can be recovered under certain circumstances, and even copied and reproduced elsewhere. Be aware too, that images can be downloaded by and forwarded to others. It is possible for potential employers to search for the social network profiles of applicants, and there are examples of people not being offered a job because of findings on social networking sites.

4.13   Relationships online with members of UCO staff and other students are all governed by UCO policy regarding appropriate professional boundaries; the UCO expects all staff to consider whether their online friendships and social media connections are appropriate and to moderate their usage accordingly. If you require further guidance in this area please speak to a member of the HR team.

4.14   Avoid giving specific osteopathic advice.

5. PRIVACY

5.1   Due to continuous changes in these sites it is advisable to closely monitor the privacy settings of your social network accounts to optimise their privacy and security.

5.2   It is advisable that you set your privacy profile so that only those people whom you provide access may see your personal information and photos.

5.3   Avoid sharing identification numbers on your personal profile. These would include address, telephone numbers, national insurance numbers, passport numbers or driver's license numbers, birth date, or any other data that could be used to obtain your personal records. Others may post photos of you, and may "tag" you in each of the photos. It is your responsibility to make sure that these photos are appropriate and are not embarrassing or professionally compromising. It is wise to "untag" yourself from any photos as a general rule, and to refrain from tagging others unless you have explicit permission from them to do so.

5.4   Maintain the privacy of colleagues, osteopaths, and other UCO employees when referring to them in a professional capacity unless they have given their permission for their name or likeness to be used.

5.5   Make sure that you differentiate osteopathic opinions from facts. The world of osteopathy is unknown to many, so readers may take your words at face value. Try to make clear what statements reflect your personal beliefs but know that perception of comments is highly subjective and ensure all due care and attention when commenting online – always consider whether what you are saying is appropriate and professional: if in doubt, don't say it.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

6.1   UCO regulations and policy apply to comments made on social networking sites, and any member of staff or student body who breaks confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action.

6.2   Patient privacy measures taken in any public forum apply to social networking sites as well.

6.3   Online discussions of specific patients should be avoided, even if all identifying information is excluded. It is possible that someone could recognise the patient to which you are referring based upon the context.

6.4   Under no circumstances should photos of patients or photos depicting the body parts of patients be displayed online unless specific written permission to do so has been obtained from the patient. Remember, even if you have permission, such photos may be downloadable and forwarded by others.

7. PATIENT CONTACT

7.1   Interactions with patients within these sites are strongly discouraged. This provides an opportunity for a dual relationship, which can be damaging to the osteopath-patient relationship, and can also carry legal consequences.

7.2   Private patient information obtained on a social networking site should not be entered in the patient's medical record without the patient's knowledge and consent.

8. SOCIAL MEDIA IN CLINICAL SETTINGS

8.1   Be aware of social networking policies in each of the UCO community clinics.

8.2   Refrain from accessing personal social networking sites while in clinical work areas.

9. BREACH OF POLICY

9.1   If you discover inappropriate material posted to a social media site by a UCO student, please inform the Academic Registrar immediately.

9.2   If you discover inappropriate material posted to a social media site by a staff member, please inform the HR Team immediately.

9.3   You should leave any discovered inappropriate material in its original state in order that an investigation into its origin can be conducted.

9.4   Anyone found to have breached this policy shall be subject to the UCO's relevant Disciplinary Procedures and may be reported to the police as appropriate.