GSS – Social Media Policy

Overview

GSS recognises and embraces the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring as a tool for its business and this policy is intended to minimise the risks which could impact on the wellbeing of staff, customers or our learners and the reputation of our Business.

Purpose of Policy

For the purposes of this policy, social media can be defined as any type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum.  This includes apps anonymous or otherwise, online social forums, blogs, video-and image-sharing websites and other similar platforms that could be used to share news, information and successes. This also applies to keeping staff, customers and learners up to date with important developments and promote healthy academic debate about controversial subjects and areas of interest or research.

Whom does this Policy apply to?

This policy relates to all GSS staff who create or contribute to blogs, social networks, apps, forums, virtual worlds, or any other kind of social media. It applies to all use and all forms of social media where there is potential impact on GSS as a business, whether for work-related or personal use, whether during working hours or otherwise, whether social media is accessed using GSS’s IT equipment or facilities or belongs to members of staff or any other third party.

GSS Expectations

When using social media GSS expect:

* GSS staff should only comment on items within their own area of expertise to provide individual perspectives on non-confidential activities
* Employees should never represent themselves or GSS in a false or misleading way. All statements must be true and not misleading; all claims must be substantiated.
* Staff must use common sense and common courtesy. Staff should ask permission to publish or report conversations that are meant to be private or internal to GSS. Any communication must not breach GSS’s privacy, confidentiality or GDPR guidelines and must adhere to all GSS’s policies and procedures around communication and customer data
* GSS will reserve the right to monitor use of social media platforms and take appropriate action to protect against any misuse that may be harmful, in accordance with the law, GDPR, Privacy and confidentiality policies.
* GSS staff should seek guidance before participating in social media when the topic being discussed may be considered sensitive (e.g. a crisis situation, intellectual property, issues which may impact on GSS’s reputation, commercially sensitive material). Social media activity around sensitive topics should be referred to GSS Directors Sonia Benjamin-Leach or Richard Wood.
* If any staff member’s use of social media is considered to be derogatory, discriminatory, bullying, threatening, defamatory, offensive, intimidating, harassing, creating legal liability for GSS or, bringing GSS into disrepute and or breaching any of GSS’s policies we may take action under the staff disciplinary procedure. This may include comments, videos, or photographs, which have been posted on social media sites about GSS’s staff, learners, customers or managers.
* Staff should not engage in illegal activity through social media or engage in any activity that promotes terrorism.

OUTCOMES

GSS’s response to any misuse of social media in a personal capacity will be reasonable and proportionate to the perceived offence; the nature of the postings/comments made and the impact or potential impact on GSS, staff, customers or learners.

* Social networking sites may be referred to when investigating possible misconduct/gross misconduct.
* Staff should be aware of security threats and be on guard for social engineering and phishing attempts.  Social networks can also be used to distribute spam and malware.
* GSS may require employees to remove social media postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of any of GSS’s standards, policies or procedures and failure to comply with such a request may, in itself, result in disciplinary action.

Responsibilities

Where staff utilise social media involving GSS they should be transparent and state that they work for GSS.

If writing about GSS you must use your real name, identify that you work for the GSS, and be clear about your role. We actively discourage staff from posting online anonymously or using pseudonyms. You should never impersonate another individual.

GSS Managers and Directors are responsible for addressing any concerns and/or questions arising out of the use of social media.

Staff are responsible for their words and actions in any online environment and are therefore advised to consider whether any comment, photograph or video they are about to post on a social networking site, is something that they would want colleagues, customers or learners or people outside GSS to read.

Staff are not permitted to write, discuss or use colleagues, customers or learner details or information on any platforms without written consent from those parties and sign off from GSS Directors

Review

This policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect best practice, future amendments to relevant acts, and or changes in legislation, Government procedures or GSS’s policies and procedures.

Any breaches to the above could constitute gross misconduct and where found, individuals could be subject to disciplinary procedures accordingly.

This policy is not exhaustive and is in conjunction with GSS Information and Data Security, General Data Protection Policy and Confidentiality.

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Signed by Sonia Benjamin-Leach

Director

V3 August 2024