



**loetb**

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna  
Laoise agus Uíbh Fhailí  
*Laois and Offaly  
Education and Training Board*

# Social Media Policy

Adopted by the Board of Laois  
and Offaly ETB on  
12 July 2018

## **Introduction**

Social Media is a term commonly given to websites and applications that enable users to interact with one another online through the creation and sharing of content. Creating and sharing content allows users to build networks through increased participation and engagement.

Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) recognise that the widespread availability and use of Social Media brings opportunities to engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we utilise these technologies and services effectively and flexibly, for educational purposes.

However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this use with our reputation and the safety of our staff and students. This policy aims to create a balanced approach to support innovation in learning whilst providing a framework of good practice.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safe and responsible use of social media, as appropriate by both staff and students, within each School/Centre/Office. The policy is intended to provide guidance and direction on issues relating to the use of social media, including, but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Viber, School/Centre/Office websites (including blogs), and also includes the use of such services via mobile telephones.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to all staff in any role in any LOETB School/Centre/Office and refers to the following elements of Social Media usage:

- Account Access
- Account Management
- Acceptable Usage
- Employee Conduct - Professional Use
- Employee Conduct - Personal Use
- Cyberbullying
- Security
- Data Protection
- Legal

- Public Conduct

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The following roles and responsibilities apply in relation to this Policy:

### *Board of Management*

- To review and approve the policy on an annual basis.

### *School/Centre/Management*

- To ensure that staff and students comply with the policy and to liaise with staff and students (as appropriate) in the event of any breach of policy.

### *Staff/Students/External Bodies*

- To adhere to policy statements in this document.
- To report suspected breaches of policy to the Principal/Manager.

## **Other Related Policies and Procedures**

All LOETB Social Media services are subject to LOETB's Policies and Procedures and relevant Department of Education & Skills Circular Letters. Staff should read this Social Media Policy in consultation with the following:

- ICT Acceptable Usage Policy for LOETB
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools
- The Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers
- Grievance Procedures for Staff employed by ETBs
- Bullying Prevention Policy - Complaint Procedure for ETB Staff
- Harassment/Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy - Complaint Procedure for ETB Staff
- School/Centre Health and Safety Statements
- School/Centre Code of Conduct/Behaviour
- LOETB Data Protection Policy
- Code of Practice for dealing with Complaints made by Parent(s), Guardian(s) of a Student or by a Student (who has reached the age of eighteen) currently enrolled in a school/centre, against a Staff Member employed by LOETB.

## **Policy**

### **Account Access**

Collaborative Networking Services will be provided to all LOETB staff and students via emailing and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) facilities.

Staff will be issued with an email account on commencement of employment for the duration of their contract. Students, where relevant, will be issued with an email account for the duration of their studies with LOETB.

In order to create new Social Media accounts that pertain to LOETB or an individual School/Centre/Office of LOETB, written consent must be secured in advance from Senior Management as indicated in Appendix I. The ICT Department of LOETB must be notified of all new accounts.

### **Account Management**

Each School Principal and Centre/Senior Manager is ultimately responsible for the Social Media activity related to their School/Centre and therefore reserves the right to modify Social Media content based on best educational practice and standard.

This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Provide guidelines (e.g. Social Media guidelines for students, parents, and staff) and make reasonable efforts to train staff and students in acceptable use and policies governing online communications.
- Monitor the use of online activities. This may include real-time monitoring of network activity and/or maintaining a log of Internet activity for later review.
- Remove any inappropriate user accounts on the network.
- Amend local procedures and rules as required.

A staff member may be appointed to coordinate and monitor such activity related to their School/Centre/Office. Those who coordinate and monitor Social Media channels associated with LOETB must ensure that they are in a position to respond to comments and posts made on the site in a timely manner. In order to ensure a consistent brand voice and standard it is best practice that each centre/school maintains one public facing Social Media profile and ensure the School or LOETB logo is visible in a prominent place on the profile as required.

Each School/Centre is responsible for establishing and maintaining a Register of all social networking application domain names in use, the names of all Staff Administrators of these accounts, as well as the associated user identifications and passwords currently active within their School/Centre as outlined in Appendix II.

### **Acceptable Usage**

In availing of Social Media Services approved by LOETB, staff must follow regulations and guidelines according to the ICT Acceptable Usage Policy for LOETB.

### **Employee Conduct - Professional Use of Social Media**

- Staff should never post or send abusive, defamatory or distasteful messages or post photographs, videos or other media which could be considered in breach of LOETB policies and procedures.
- Staff should not publish personal identifiable information of LOETB staff or students unless this is in line with the policies of the school/centre/service and LOETB.
- Staff should not send individual emails to students from their personal email accounts or reply to individual emails sent by students from their personal email accounts.
- Staff should note that student names will not be recorded in website photographs unless it is an officially sanctioned photograph by the School Principal or Centre/Service Manager and consent has been secured from the student. In the event that the student is a minor, Parental/Guardian consent is required.
- Staff should never post a comment about LOETB that purports to represent the views of LOETB or an individual School/Centre/Service unless approved by the School Principal/ Centre or Service Manager or the Chief Executive.
- Harassment/Sexual Harassment or Bullying via Social Media will not be tolerated and will be subject to the appropriate sanction as set out in the relevant policy and procedure.
- The inappropriate use of Social Media web sites may lead to disciplinary action.

**Teaching Staff must follow the Guidelines prescribed by the following extract from the Teaching Council Code of Conduct**

“Teachers shall...

- 3.3.6 Communicate effectively with students, colleagues, parents, school management and others in a manner that is professional, collaborative and supportive, and based on trust and respect.
- 3.3.7 Ensure that any communication with students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as e-mail, texting and social networking sites.
- 3.3.8 Ensure that they do not access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format.
- 3.3.9 Ensure that they do not access, download or otherwise have in their possession, at any time or in any place, illegal materials/images in electronic or other format.”

The Teaching/Tutoring Staff of a School/Centre have an important role to play in educating students in the safe and responsible use of Social Media. The School/Centre Social Media Policy should be developed/amended to reflect local operational needs while adhering to the principles of this policy.

**Employee Conduct – Personal Use of Social Media**

The use of Social Media platforms which are purely about personal matters and do not identify the user as an employee of LOETB or discuss the activities of LOETB will normally fall outside the guidance of this policy, however, where members of staff place material on such personal Social Media webpages which would identify the user as an employee of LOETB and discuss the activities of LOETB, this activity will fall within the scope of this policy.

The use of such personal Social Media within the Workplace should fall within the parameters of the LOETB ICT Acceptable Usage Policy. It is important for staff to be aware that the use of Social Media when outside work can become the concern of the

School/Centre/Office and LOETB if the content relates to School/Centre/Office activity. In this instance disciplinary procedures may be invoked.

Staff using Social Media sites for personal use should be conscious of 'keeping private life private'. Any 'friend' or link requests from students must be declined/refused.

## **Cyberbullying**

It is important each School/Centre/Office takes measures to prevent and tackle all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying. This includes bullying of students and staff, whether by students, parents or colleagues. Management, staff, parents and students all have rights and responsibilities in relation to cyberbullying and should work together to create an environment in which students can learn and develop and staff can have fulfilling careers free from harassment and bullying. Staff members who have any concern in this regard should refer to LOETB's Bullying Prevention Policy at <http://www.loetb.ie/hr-policies>.

All School/Centres/Offices should ensure that their anti-bullying policies incorporate and include cyberbullying and that they work with the whole school community to prevent cyberbullying.

LOETB will react in a timely manner to reported incidents and support any member of staff who reports such incidents. Staff who are harassed in this way will receive support and information enabling them to access appropriate personal support. The School/Centres/Office will endeavour to approach Internet Service Providers on their behalf in order to request that the inappropriate material is removed. The Internet Service Provider may only accept a request from the individual concerned. However, the School/Centres/Office may want to take action if the inappropriate material is on a School/Centres/Office website or email address. In the case where it is necessary for the person being bullied to contact the service providers directly, the School/Centres/Office/LOETB may provide the necessary support. This may apply, for example, in cases of identity theft, impersonation or abuse via Social Media.

## **Security**

LOETB is working to develop best practices to ensure the security of data and technical infrastructure in light of the new uses, users, and technologies related to Social Media use. As a result, LOETB IT Administrators shall limit Internet access to

Social Media services/websites according to the LOETB's ICT Acceptable Usage Policy, while allowing authorised users to reach content necessary to accommodate operating and instructional requirements.

LOETB's IT Administrators shall enable technical risk mitigation controls to the extent possible. Such controls may include:

- Filtering and monitoring of all Social Media web site content posted and/or viewed.
- Scanning any and all files exchanged with Social Media web sites.

### **Data Protection**

As a Data Controller LOETB has responsibilities in relation to Data Protection. The collection, use and retention of personal data in the form of subscribers to Social Media pages or the automatic collection of 'cookie data' fall under the data protection rules. Staff should familiarise themselves with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and LOETB's Data Protection Policy. It should be noted that a higher threshold of care must be exercised in relation to the collection, use, and retention of sensitive data and the data of students. All data breaches must be reported in accordance with LOETB's Data Breach Protocol. All policies, protocols and information regarding Data Protection is available to view at [www.loetb.ie/data-protection](http://www.loetb.ie/data-protection).

### **Legal**

LOETB staff are responsible for ensuring that the use of Social Media facilities is lawful and must exercise due caution and diligence to ensure the use of all Social Media services adheres to all applicable laws and regulations. Failure to do so may result in any or all of the following legal consequences;

- Members of staff being personally liable to criminal prosecution.
- Members of staff being personally sued for damages in a civil court.
- LOETB or a School/Centre being sued for damages in a civil court.



## **Public Conduct**

Users and visitors to Social Media sites of LOETB shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between the School/Centre and members of the public.

LOETB Social Media site articles and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed:

- Comments not topically-related to the particular social medium article being commented upon
- Comments in support of, or in opposition to, political campaigns or ballot measures
- Profane language or content
- Sexual content or links to sexual content
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination in violation of the **Equal Status Act 2000-2011** and the **Employment Equality Act 1998-2011** in the following domains:
  - Gender
  - Marital status
  - Family status
  - Sexual orientation
  - Religion
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Race
  - Membership of the Traveller Community

These guidelines must be displayed to users. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available.

## **Access to the Policy**

This policy can be found on the LOETB website ([www.loetb.ie](http://www.loetb.ie)) and School and Centre websites, as appropriate. Members of staff should consult with their School Principal, Centre Manager or Office Manager for further details pertaining to this Policy.

**Implementation and Review**

This policy will be implemented by School Principals and Centre/Service Managers. Staff members will also be responsible for implementation in their own area of work.

This policy will be subject to review annually or where it is necessary to do so due to changes in DES regulations, legislation or other such situations.



## Appendix I

### Request to create a Social Media Account within a School/Centre of LOETB

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Name of Staff Member responsible for managing the account:                    |  |
| Name of School/Centre:  |  |
| Type of Social Media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.)                           |  |
| Username:   |  |
| Password:   |  |
| What is the Educational Purpose of the Social Media Facility?                 |  |
| How will this Social Media Facility be managed?                               |  |
| What email address will be used to create this account?                       |  |
| <b>Authorised Permission has been granted to create this Social Media by:</b> |  |
| Signature:  |  |
| Date:   |  |

**Authorised Permission can only be signed by School Principal or Centre Manager.** No accounts can be opened in the name of LOETB or in the name of an individual School/Centre of LOETB without authorised sign off being secured in advance from Senior Management.

## Appendix II

### Register of Social Media Accounts within a School/Centre/Office of LOETB

**School/Centre/Office Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Contact Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Name of Social Media Account/Profile</b> | <b>Account Username and Password</b> | <b>Email Address used to open account</b> | <b>Date of Account Setup</b> | <b>Staff Administrator(s)</b> | <b>Other Account Users</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
|   |                                      |   |                              |                               |                            |
|   |                                      |   |                              |                               |                            |
|   |                                      |   |                              |                               |                            |
|   |                                      |   |                              |                               |                            |