

Implement a Policy for Student Union Social Media Standards

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What will we do?

1. Members of the Student Union should meet to create and implement a single policy for the whole Student Union for what is appropriate to be posted on social media.
2. The policy should ensure that the posts made on the Student Union's social media pages are in the best interest of all students of Heriot-Watt University, not just those who attend campus, and meet the Student Union's own values.
3. Adopt the Society Standards and Behaviour Policy as policy across the whole Student Union in the interim to keep everyone equal and ensure consistency.

What is the background to this?

1. In December of 2020, the Societies Council passed the 'Society Standards and Behaviour Policy' which regulates what content is suitable to post on their social medias. A recent post from the Union's own social media goes against this policy creating a double standard for what is acceptable to post for the different parts of the Student Union.
2. In January of 2021, a post was put up on the Student Union's social media pages regarding the following of Covid-19 guidelines that features repetitive swearing. While some students have agreed with it as it takes a strong stance against those who are failing to follow the rules, it has been strongly criticized by others as:
 - a. They felt it that it was a "telling off" despite having done nothing wrong
 - b. They felt that in a University environment it was never acceptable to swear at others as we should be able to communicate with each other appropriately rather than simply swearing at those who disagree with us, regardless of how morally justified we feel we are to do so.
 - c. They felt that the swearing in the post detracted from the message that post was trying to convey and instead focused people more on the appropriateness of the post itself.

What beliefs motivate these actions?

1. Everyone at Heriot-Watt is entitled to a basic level of respect and decency both in person and online, that our behaviour online should be no different than in person and that swearing at students through social media goes against.
2. Social media posts should follow all five values of the Student Union (Welcome, Fun, Student Focused, Empowering and Brave) which should always underpin actions taken, not merely when convenient.
3. We are a highly multinational University and offensive/inflammatory language will offend and deter many people, especially those from other cultures where swearing is more frowned upon, from engaging with the Union. We need to be as inclusive as possible to all members of our community, both when interacting face to face and digitally.
4. Posts on social media featuring offensive/inflammatory language can create a poor public image of both the University and the Student Union, something which should be avoided at all times in order to maintain at least the minimum level of professionalism appropriate for an organisation of our standing. As well as to create an open and welcoming image for those who are looking to study at Heriot-Watt.
5. The Student Union is an example to all students in the Heriot-Watt community it should make every effort to follow the guidelines laid down for students in the Heriot-Watt Universities Student Code of Conduct, in order to set a positive example of the behaviour expected.
6. Student behaviour is unlikely to ever be affected for the better by inflammatory/offensive language and that the use of this kind language may result in worse behaviour in students as it

lowers to the Student Union to their level sets a poor example. There are other ways besides the use of inflammatory/offensive language to give a social media post a shock factor.

7. A precedent for posts featuring offensive/inflammatory language has now been set which is not something anyone would wish to see become common place.