



CUTN

Student Social Media Policy



1. Introduction

- 1.1 Central University of Tamil Nadu (CUTN) recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media presents. We actively use social media to disseminate information about academic activities of the University to the general public, success stories and to communicate research and enhance the university's public image online. Therefore, CUTN also actively encourages university students to make effective and appropriate use of social media channels to build a positive public image for the university to benefit the CUTN fraternity in the long run.
- 1.2 Despite the opportunities presented by social media, there are risks. Social media allows individuals to communicate with a potentially huge audience, and sometimes its informality can encourage us to be less cautious than we would be using other more traditional methods of communication and interaction.
- 1.3 This policy is for students and provides information on the appropriate use of social media when **connected, or linked in some way, to their status as a student** of the university, or **when directly or indirectly referencing the university in any way**.
- 1.4 This policy works alongside the following separate institutional policies and regulations:
(To be replaced by CUTN existing policies)
- 1.5 The principles of freedom of expression and academic freedom apply to the use of social media; however, the university requires responsible and legal use including registration in the interest of the University, within the ambit of Govt. of India guidelines from time to time.

2. Scope

- 2.1 For the purpose of this policy, the term 'Social Media' is used to describe channels dedicated to community-based input, interactions, content sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation and wikis are among the different types of social media.
- 2.2 They currently include, but are not limited to, Facebook (and Messenger), Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Allo, Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit, Pinterest, and Google+, Google reviews, Quora.
- 2.3 This policy applies to social media communications made both on public and private forums. While posts added to public forums can be seen by any member of the public from the date of publication, students are asked to remember that posts added to private forums can also be shared publically by others. There have been a number of high-profile cases where students across the country have been disciplined after offensive comments, made on private messaging services such as WhatsApp, were captured and subsequently shared. With this in mind, students should remember that action can be taken by the university if behaviour failing to meet policy guidelines is identified either publically or privately.



3. Students' responsibilities

- 3.1 Students are encouraged to be mindful of how their identity, statements or views appears online and are reminded that future employers and industry contacts may view social media profiles when hiring to get an idea of a candidate's character, personality or employability. Students should therefore be conscious of making posts today that may hinder them, for whatever reason, in the future.
- 3.2 Students may find starting university to be a good time to clean up their existing social media accounts and start to transition to a more professional appearance.
- 3.3 All students must read and act in accordance with the principles of these guidelines, and regularly check the University's Student Regulations webpage (to be newly created for CUTN) for any minor updates to documents.
- 3.4 Students should check the terms and conditions of a social media account and/or website before uploading material to it; by posting material to social media accounts and/or websites, ownership rights and control of the content may be released. For this reason, it is important to exercise caution in sharing all information, especially where the information, expressly or by implication or innuendo, identifies a third party.
- 3.5 Students must be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything posted online. Therefore, students should avoid posting anything that:
 - That is opposed to public domain / public policy in the public domain
 - Contravenes sections 4, 5 and 6 in the foregoing clauses.
- 3.6 Any digital material posted online could reach a wider audience than expected or intended. Once digital content has been created and shared, the University has every right for permanence and audience. Within the Social media policy of the University.

4. Behaviour and conduct on social media

- 4.1 Students are **personally responsible** for what they communicate on or through social media and they must adhere to the standards of behaviour set out in this policy.
- 4.2 Society is increasingly using social media for raising complaints. However, any students wishing to raise a complaint should do so via the established Student Complaints Procedure (through Proctor/DSW/Students Grievance cell). This is the fastest way to get a response and resolution to your problem.
- 4.3 Use of social media must not infringe on the rights, or privacy, of other students or staff and students must not make ill-considered comments or judgements about other students, staff or third parties.



4.4 The following non-exhaustive list is considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be posted:

- Confidential information (which may include research not yet in the public domain, information about fellow students or staff or personal matters, non-public or not yet approved documents or information)
- Details of complaints/potential complaints and/or legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving the University
- Personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission
- Comments posted using fake accounts, made-up names or using another person's name without their consent
- Inappropriate material, including images, that is, or may be perceived to be threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile towards any individual, group or entity
- Any other posting that constitutes, or may constitute, a criminal offence
- Anything which may bring the University into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of colleagues, former colleagues, students, staff and those connected with the University.
- And any other details / information which is the subject matter of Social media policy from time to time.

4.5 Students should be mindful that statements on social media that cause harm to an individual, including to their reputation, or that interfere with an ongoing disciplinary/legal process may create a potential claim against the individual making the statement. Furthermore, this may extend to the sharing of statements made by others.

4.6 Students should also be aware that communications on social media are also subject to legal framework of the Government of India and the University, which aims to prevent interference with legal proceedings regardless of intent to do so.

4.7 An individual, including the complainant, may undermine proceedings or processes by publishing information, including imagery, relating to existing or potential complaints and/or legal proceedings. This may be done in the heat of the moment; however, students should be aware that by doing so they might bring the university into disrepute or compromise the safety of the university community. As such, this conduct may be seen to be of an unacceptable nature, as per paragraph 4.4 above.

4.8 Students must take particular care not to state or imply that their views are those of CUTN when using social media, nor use the University logo at any time, which will be constituted as offense under social media policy of this University.

5. Cyber bullying

5.1 The University will not accept any form of bullying or harassment by or of members of University, students or stakeholders.



5.2 The following non-exhaustive list of examples illustrate the types of behaviour, displayed through social media, which the University considers to be forms of cyber bullying:

- Maliciously, negligently or recklessly spreading rumours, lies or gossip by the way of SMS, Mail etc.,
- Intimidating or aggressive behaviour, as perceived by those viewing the social media
- Offensive or threatening comments or content, as perceived by those viewing the social media, and also propagation through Social media;
- Posting comments/photos etc. deliberately, negligently or recklessly mocking an individual with the potential to harass or humiliate them, as perceived by those viewing the social media. Posting by Morphing / Animation / Photo editing and impersonality by visible contents and through Audio.

5.3 Cyber bullying may also take place via other means of electronic communication such as email, text or instant messaging.

Not only posting content on social media accounts according to the above mentioned guidelines that deem them inappropriate, also liking or forwarding circulating such content will also be considered as support and draw the same kind of disciplinary action.

6. Students use of official university accounts

6.1 Some students may contribute to the university's official social media activities as part of their role, for example taking over the Snapchat or Instagram accounts, logging, writing blogs or running an official Twitter account. Students should be aware that while contributing to the university's social media activities they are representing the university.

6.2 Misuse of official University accounts may lead to suspension and, following a disciplinary committee, may lead to expulsion; students will not be eligible for readmission to the University at any time in the future.

7. Breach of the policy

7.1 If a student is found to have acted in breach of this policy this may lead to disciplinary action being taken against him / her within the frame work of Social Media policy and on any other.

7.2 Any individual suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with any investigation in accordance with the disciplinary procedure. Non-cooperation may lead to further disciplinary action.

7.3 Any individual may be required to remove internet or social media posts that are found by the university to be in breach of the policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in further disciplinary action.

7.4 Any breach of this policy must be reported in line with CUTN Student Complaints Procedure. In the first instance, any breaches must be brought to the attention of the CUTN Registrar, Proctor, DSW of CUTN.

7.5 **Failure to obey instructions of any CUTN disciplinary authority.** Failure to comply with written or oral communications from an authorized CUTN official to appear for a meeting or hearing.

7.6 **Engage in any conduct which is unbecoming of a student of the CUTN.**



8. Monitoring

8.1 The Social Media Policy Committee (proposed) will:

- Ensure this policy, and any changes, is accessible to staff and students
- On occasion, provide guidance for students (for example orientation program) on how to stay safe online when using social media.
- Monitor references to the university on social media and the internet and respond to complaints regarding student conduct on social media
- Recommend disciplinary action where inappropriate behaviour is exhibited that affects students, staff, the University or members of public
- Periodically review and update this policy and publish details of any changes.

9. Undertaking

An Undertaking in the format placed at **Annexure I** is to be obtained from all the Students joining the University stating that they have understood what constitutes violation of SMP and the same may invite disciplinary action from the University.

10. Disciplinary Committee

The formal procedure of a complaint will be heard and adjudicated by the CUTN **Disciplinary Committee** (DC) consisting of the following: -

(a) Nominee of VC	Chairperson
(b) Concerned Deans	Member
(c) Concerned Head of Centre/Department	Member
(d) Registrar	Secretary
(e) DSW	Member
(f) Proctor	Member
(e) Member of SC / ST / OBC / Minority as the case may be, in case the same lacks the representation in the above committee	

11. Procedure to handle complaints

- a) Any Stakeholder of CUTN or the disciplinary committee suo moto can lodge a complaint to the social media policy committee about the perceived breach of SMP by a student. All such complaints will be forwarded to SMPC which will determine the severity of the breach of conduct and discipline and recommended appropriate action to against the offender, to the disciplinary committee.
- b) Where an offence is clearly established on official records, disciplinary committee shall be responsible for taking punitive action and formally communicating the nature of punishments applicable to the student as per the existing orders/policies on the issue.
- c) In case of a formal procedure a DC has to be convened by the VC which shall assemble within 48 hours of issue of orders, hear all parties concerned in the case and submit its report to the VC within 14 days. Wherever DC is not able to submit the report within the stipulated period, an extension may be obtained by the Chairperson, DC from the VC in



writing after providing sufficient reason for such delay. However, such delay will not cross maximum four weeks.

- d) The respondent/s shall be notified of the date of the inquiry by the chairperson, DC through a confidential note/email. The DC shall serve the student with a charge sheet containing specific charges requesting to send the reply in writing within the time period granted. If the respondent/s plead/s not guilty a formal inquiry to be conducted and report thereof submitted.
- e) The DC shall have the power to summon any faculty, staff and student of the CUTN as the case may be to render whatever assistance needed to conduct inquiries on matters pertaining to the case. A student who does not so comply shall be guilty of a punishable offence. The student shall be provided with relevant documents or extracts which have been used to frame charges against him/her.
- f) If the DC finds an offence has been committed, then it shall recommend suitable penalty for the same.
- g) The DC after finalizing its recommendations shall submit its report to the VC giving reasons for such findings and the verdict. The VC shall consider the report of the above Committee and decide on the penalty to be imposed on the student/s. The decision of the VC shall be intimated to the Registrar.
- h) Sufficient opportunity of being heard may be given to the student(s) in case of punishment by the DC, and the VC if necessary.

12. Punishments

12.1 If a student is found responsible for violation(s) of the SMP, disciplinary action will be taken as under: -

12.1 Minor Punishment

12.1.1. **Oral Reprimand.** Advised and cautioned about misconduct orally.

12.1.2. **Written Reprimand.** Advised and cautioned about misconduct in writing.

12.1.3. **Written Warning.** Warning may be imposed during period of stay at CUTN. To be communicated in writing mentioning that further violations of any section of SMP, will result in more severe disciplinary action.

12.2 Major Penalties

12.2.1 **Restrictions/Suspension of Privilege.** Prohibits participation in or attendance at certain events, activities, or class/lab; restricts specific campus student privileges.

12.2.1.1 Hostel Privileges

12.2.1.2 Use of Lab Facilities



12.2.1.3 Use of Library facilities

12.2.1.4 Use of Cafeteria Block

12. 2.1.5 Use of Sports Facilities

12.2.1.6 Membership in Clubs and Other bodies

12.2.1.7 Placement Activity

12.2.1.8 Internship/academic associations with partner institution

12.2.2 Fine for Damage. An appropriate fine to be levied in addition to the compensation for damage caused by the student. Violating any one code of SM conduct against the University will attract a fine of minimum Rs. 5000. In case of multiple violations, the panel will recommend approve time along with other punishments.

12.2.3 Disciplinary Probation. Written notification that further violations of SMP may result in suspension. The terms of disciplinary probation shall be determined on case-to case basis.

12.2.4 Suspension. Student will be withdrawn from all courses carried in that semester and forfeit fees. Student shall be refrained from visiting the university premises unless approved in writing by the Disciplinary Committee. Suspension may involve course drop, semester drop, rustication for a specified period depending on the severity of the offence(s). The student can be reinstated on receipt of a written request from him/her after completion of the suspension period.

12.2.5 Expulsion. Forfeiture of all rights and degrees not actually conferred at the time of the expulsion, forfeiture of right to study and fees. Student can only visit the university premises only if the permission is issued in writing by Disciplinary Committee.

13. Communicating the Punishment

13.1 Minor Punishment. The minor punishments will be communicated by the Head of Department/ Centre and Programme Instructor as the case may be.

13.2 Major Punishment.

- a) The penalty will be communicated in writing to the student by the office of the Registrar, CUTN
- b) Student found guilty of some major offence may not be recommended Academic Council / Executive Council for the award of a degree/diploma/certificate even if all the academic requirements have been satisfactorily completed by the concerned student.
- c) The action will be noted on the student's disciplinary record. (conduct certificate

13.3 Copy of all disciplinary proceeding and final decision and communications shall be forwarded to Office of the Registrar, CUTN for record.



13.4 Discipline records are confidential in accordance with laws of the nation and therefore the contents of the student discipline record may not be released to anyone not associated with campus discipline except upon written approval of the student or court order or order by a competent authority established by law.

13.5 The case of a defaulting student recommended for expulsion or dismissal from the University shall ordinarily be referred to the Academic Council/Executive Council for its final decision.

14. Appellate Authority

A student who feels aggrieved with the punishment can appeal to the Vice Chancellor who will be the appellate authority for all punishments. The student should appeal within two weeks' time with proper justification.

15. In addition to the above, all the laws relating to cybercrimes / IT Department directions, Circulars, Notifications etc., and other penal provisions from time to time will also be applicable.



Annex A – How to use social media

How to use social media

Tips and hints on staying safe and managing your reputation

We all recognise the enormous benefits and opportunities that social media presents and we actively encourage our students to use social media to communicate and keep in touch with latest news and research in their area.

Despite the opportunities, there are risks. Social media allows individuals to communicate with a potentially large audience, and sometimes its informality can encourage us to be less cautious than we would ordinarily be.

These tips are to help you when you are considering posting on social media. They will help you manage your professional reputation and ensure you follow university guidelines and the law.

- **Remember, everything you post online is public.** Once it's out there you lose control of how others might interact with it. Posting anything online (even on closed profiles or private messaging services, like WhatsApp, for example) has the potential to become public, even without your knowledge or consent.
- **Think before you post.** Would you be happy for your family, lecturer or future employer to see it? If not, then it's probably not a good idea to post it. There have been a number of high profile cases where students across the country have been disciplined after offensive comments made on private messaging services, like WhatsApp, were captured and subsequently shared.
- **Consider how the content of your messages may appear to others.** Offensive materials, including text, images and video, have the potential to cause serious upset and severely damage your professional and personal reputation. Consider how others may perceive your content. How could a potential employer view the content? **Employers are increasingly checking the digital footprint of potential staff.** This means looking at old tweets, posts and comments on forums. Will sharing the content result in you falling short of expected standards at university and the law? If so, it could result in the university taking disciplinary action. Don't forget, it can be hard to take something back once it has been shared, copied, or redistributed.
- Read this article from Huffington Post to find out why Your Digital Footprint Matters, including how you can track your online identity.
- **Check your privacy settings.** Protect your personal information and that of others that could be misused. Think about who can see your address, telephone number, date of birth and email address. And, definitely don't share your bank details online. Also remember that while you may be sharing the content privately (on your own private profile or in a private forum) others can share that content publically if it is available. and publish details of any changes.
- **Make sure you familiarise yourself with expectations regarding professionalism and confidentiality on your course,** especially if your course is accredited by a professional body. If you breach the code of conduct of a professional body, it may affect your ability to study and your future career.



- **Be aware of sharing third-party materials.** Do you need permission to share the materials or should you, as a matter of courtesy, contact the party? Make sure you check before posting as infringement of rules could break copyright and/or intellectual property laws.
- **Finally question everything you read online.** Not everything you read might be completely accurate. Who wrote it? Where did it come from? Does the imagery look poor quality? If you think it looks or sounds inaccurate, it's probably best avoided. Writing and distributing inaccurate statements about people and organisations can be unlawful and lead to legal action.