



# **BCS Social Media Policy**

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## About this policy

- 1.1 This policy aims to minimise the risks to BCS through use of social media. This policy applies to the use of all forms of social media, including all social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to the use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect our business in any way.
- 1.2 This policy reminds you that you are personally responsible for what you communicate in social media, and you should be mindful that what you publish could be available to be read at large for a long time (including by the BCS, future employers, and social acquaintances).
- 1.3 Social media means any online platform or medium where users can create, share, or engage with content. This encompasses the now traditional social media platforms such as Facebook, X (previously called Twitter), Instagram, and LinkedIn. Also included are existing and emerging social networks and video-sharing platforms like TikTok and YouTube. Social media also encompasses blogging and microblogging websites, forums, online communities, messaging apps, review sites such as Glassdoor, and any other digital spaces where interactive conversations, discussions, 'liking' or endorsing content, and content-sharing may occur.

## Who does this policy apply to?

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees, officers, consultants, workers, volunteers, members and interns.

## Personal use of social media

- 3.1 Occasional personal use of social media by BCS employees during working hours is permitted so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content, does not interfere with your employment responsibilities or productivity, and complies with this policy.
- 3.2 Remember that content posted to social media (including any comments you might make) are still bound by the same laws that apply to many types of traditional publishing. Common examples that are often reported by the media include cases of slander, copyright infringement, tortious interference, defamation, and abuse of publicity rights.

## Prohibited use

- 4.1 You must avoid making or endorsing any social media communications that could damage our business interests or reputation, even indirectly.
- 4.2 You must not post anything that can reasonably be considered offensive by fellow colleagues or BCS customers, clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders. This includes posts containing discriminatory comments, insults, profanity or obscenity.

4.3 You must not use social media to:

- (a) defame or disparage us, our staff or any third party.
- (b) harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against staff or third parties.
- (c) make false or misleading statements; or
- (d) impersonate colleagues or third parties.

4.4 You must not express opinions on our behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by BCS. Only respond to conversations relating to BCS on social media if it is a requirement of your job role at BCS to do so. You may be required to undergo training to obtain this authorisation.

4.5 You must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as our performance or business objectives, or do anything to jeopardise our trade secrets, confidential information and intellectual property.

4.6 You must not post information related to colleagues or BCS customers, clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders without their permission.

4.7 You may use the BCS logo or other BCS trademarks where professionally appropriate to do so (e.g. on LinkedIn, through the use of Digital Badges).

## **5 Business use of social media**

5.1 BCS has a presence on many social media platforms and each platform is different in both the way the community interacts and exchanges conversation, and what BCS is attempting to achieve within those platforms. Therefore, when employees are using social media in an official BCS capacity they need to be both familiar with the platform and the objectives BCS has within that platform. Some basic guidance has been listed below, but each part of our organisation using social media may have further guidance about their own particular use and approach.

5.2 If your duties require you to speak on behalf of BCS in a social media environment, you will require you to undergo training before you do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to your activities.

5.3 You should report any content you may see on social media which disparages or reflects poorly on BCS or our stakeholders. Reports should be made to the Director of Communications in the first instance.

5.4 If you are contacted for comments about the organisation for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, direct the enquiry to the Director of Communications in the first instance and do not respond without written approval.

5.5 Extra care must be taken of the use of social media during the pre-election period of sensitivity. Further information is available in Schedule 2.

5.6 The use of social media for business purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

## **6 Guidelines for responsible use of social media**

6.1 Unless speaking on behalf of BCS in the context of your role requirement, you should make it clear in social media postings, or in your personal profile, that you are speaking on your own behalf. Write in the first person and use your own personal email address for your account registration.

6.2 Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which are published on the internet for anyone to see.

6.3 If you disclose your affiliation with us on your profile or in any social media postings, you must state that your views do not represent those of BCS (unless you are authorised to speak on our behalf as set out in paragraph 4.4). You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to clients and colleagues.

6.4 If you undertake a voluntary role at BCS and wish to add this role to your LinkedIn profile, you should do so under the 'Volunteer Experience' section rather than the general 'Experience' section, so it is clear that you are not employed by BCS. The exception to this is the role of Trustees and Non-Executive Directors who are registered within their role with the Charity Commission or Companies House, as these are office holder roles.

6.5 You should be aware that there is a considerable amount of case law concerning employers taking disciplinary action against employees as a result of inappropriate posts and comments on social media used in a private capacity. If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting until you have discussed it with your line manager and/or the Director of Communications.

6.6 BCS recognises that you may wish to monitor social media channels for work purposes via a personal account, for example following Linked-in postings of relevant stakeholders. You must ensure that this does not negatively impact time spent on your core activities.

6.7 Member groups are welcome to set up their own member group social media account, following the guidance set out in Schedule 1.

## **7 Recruitment**

7.1 We may use internet searches to perform due diligence on candidates in the course of recruitment. Where we do this, we will act in accordance with our data protection and equal opportunities obligations.

## 8 Breach of this policy

8.1 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. If we suspect you have committed a breach of this policy, you are required to co-operate with our investigation.

8.2 You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with that request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

## 9 Review

9.1 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Director of Brand to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and practices of the organisation. The policy may also be reviewed if legislation changes or if monitoring information suggests that policy or practices should be altered.

## Schedule 1 Member Groups Setting Up a Social Media Account

### 1. Request a new account:

- (e) Member Groups are encouraged to use social media to engage with their membership. When setting up a group on a social media platform please ensure that you have submitted a request to set up a new group to your member group co-ordinator.
- (f) Your coordinator will then review your request against a centrally held list of historical social media accounts ensuring that accounts are not duplicated. Your coordinator will also need to add your login details to a password register along with a list of approved users for the account.
- (g) Think carefully about the time you will be able to commit to using the account and ensure you are able to dedicate enough time to support this activity.
- (h) If an account is found to be in use that is not registered, BCS will submit a request to the appropriate social media platform for the group to be closed on the basis of unauthorised use of the BCS identity.

### 2. Branding

Groups should apply appropriate branding to the social media account. This will include an approved avatar and background image. Groups must also reference in their biography that the account is managed by a branch or specialist group and a BCS contact email for enquiries about the use of the account. When setting up a new group your coordinator will provide you with the relevant brand identity information.

### 3. Managing Your Account Details

Due to the regular change of elected committee members, groups are required to change their login details if an approved social media user leaves the committee or relinquishes their BCS membership. This is to ensure that the access to the account remains secure and that the account is not used inappropriately. The updated details should be shared with your coordinator so that they can update the password register. If a member of staff who has access to the password register leaves BCS will update the secure access to the register.

### 4. Approved Social Media Users

All users of a social media account must register as user of the account with BCS. BCS will manage this information on a central register.

### 5. User Agreements

All users of social media must comply with the terms of use of the relevant social media which usually include provisions to avoid violation of other parties' intellectual property rights, restrictions on spreading worms, viruses and other malicious or harmful code, restrictions on copying, disassembling, reverse engineering codes etc...

## 6. Unwelcome Content

Members are responsible for the content they publish on social media and should refrain from impersonating someone in a misleading or deceptive manner, posting anything which is unlawful, threatening, abusive, bullying, libellous, defamatory, inciting violence, invasive of privacy or publicity rights, obscene, harassing or otherwise objectionable

## 7. GDPR

Following the Court of Justice of the European Union 'Facebook Fan Page judgment' ruling the administrator of a social media account is deemed to be a joint data controller. As such to avoid individual risk BCS must have access to all accounts to fulfil the responsibilities of a data controller.

## 8. Closing a Social Media Account

If a Member Group decides it no longer requires a specific social media account, the group should contact their member group coordinator in order to close the account.

## Schedule 2 Social Media during pre-election period of sensitivity (previously called Purdah)

### 1. What is the Pre-Election Period of Sensitivity?

Pre-Election Period of Sensitivity was previously called Purdah. It is the period of time between the general election being called, and the date of the election – the pre-election period. It is a time where governments, ministers and civil servants are required to exercise caution in making announcements or decisions that might have an effect on the election campaign. The rules around purdah are governed by Convention rather than legislation, although local authorities have statutory guidance on the matter. In 2024, the government has issued [general election guidance](#) that both civil servants and non-departmental public bodies must comply with. Whilst not directly applicable to BCS, where we are engaging with individuals that are civil servants or work for NDPBs (e.g. Research Councils), they must be careful that their activity with BCS does not cause them to act in conflict with their organisations or government guidance.

### 2. Pre-Election Period and BCS

As a charity, BCS may take part in political activity that supports its purpose and is in its best interest (political activity being activities or campaigning to change or influence policies or decisions taken by local/national government and other public bodies). BCS must remain independent and not give its support to a political party. If BCS does engage in political activity, that activity must support the delivery of BCS's purpose, and in deciding whether to do so, the Charities Commission suggests we ensure that BCS:

- acts within the requirements of its Royal Charter
- remains independent of political party bias
- acts honestly and only in BCS's interests
- is sufficiently informed, taking any advice necessary before acting
- takes account only of the relevant factors
- manages any conflicts of interest
- makes a decision that is within a range of decisions that a reasonable body of trustees could make

Any campaigning that is not political activity must also further BCS's purpose, and keep in mind the points raised above.



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