



Ref: MAHE/REG/CIR

Date: April 30, 2022

CIRCULAR

Sub: Social Media Policy (for Students) – Reg.

In anticipation of approval of the Executive Committee, Manipal Academy of Higher Education has approved **Social Media Policy for students**.

The details of the Policy are given in the enclosed annexure for your information, records and to be notified to the student community. This will be with immediate effect.

Sabhatit

Dr. Narayana Sabhatit
Registrar

To:

- ✉ The Heads of all Constituent Units / Hospitals / Centres of Excellence / Teaching and Research Departments / Functional Departments of MAHE, Manipal, Mangaluru, Bengaluru and Jamshedpur Campuses

Copy for necessary action to:

- ✉ Director – PR and Media Communication, MAHE, Manipal

Copy for information to:

- ✉ Pro Chancellor | Vice Chancellor | Pro Vice Chancellors, MAHE, Manipal
- ✉ Director, Student Affairs, MAHE, Manipal
- ✉ Deputy Directors – HR | Legal, MAHE, Manipal
- ✉ EC file

Encl: as above

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY (For Students)

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 The use of social media platforms has become common for students and these communication tools have the potential to create a significant impact on institutions and professional reputations. Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) recognises that social media is a significant part of day-to-day life and numerous benefits and opportunities that social media presents. We actively use social media to disseminate information about academic activities and success stories of MAHE and its Constituent units to the general public and enhance the public image of MAHE and its Constituent units.
- 1.2 Despite the opportunities presented, 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 when we use other more traditional methods of communication and interaction.
- 1.3 This policy is for students, provides information on the appropriate use of social media **when connected, or linked in some way, to their status as a student of MAHE and its Constituent units, or when directly or indirectly referencing MAHE and all / or any of its Constituent Units in any way.**
- 1.4 The policy also outlines the responsibilities of students who use social media allied with MAHE or Students' Unions, Student Clubs, Societies, Groups etc.
- 1.5 Though the principles of freedom of expression / academic freedom apply to the use of social media; the students of MAHE and its Constituent units require responsible and legal use, including registration in the interest of MAHE and its Constituent units, within the ambit of the Govt. of India and other regulators' guidelines from time to time.
- 1.6 Social media channels covered by this policy include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, blogging platforms, WhatsApp, Telegram, online forums, review sites etc.

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.



- 2.3 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 publicly 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 appropriate action can be taken by MAHE and its Constituent units if any stakeholder is identified to have failed in following these guidelines either publicly or privately.
- 2.4 This advisory does not cover social media usage by MAHE staff, which is covered in a separate policy (already enrolled).

3. **Students' responsibilities:**

- 3.1 Students must read and act in accordance with the principles of these guidelines and regularly check MAHE and its Constituent Units' Circulars and SLcM notifications for any minor/major updates to these guidelines.
- 3.2 Students are encouraged to be mindful of how their identity, statements, or views appear 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.
- 3.3 Students should check the terms and conditions of a social media account and/or website regarding the ownership rights and control of the content that may be posted. 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.
- 3.4 Students must be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything posted online. Therefore, students should avoid posting anything that:
- Is opposed to public domain / public policy in the public domain
 - Contravenes sections 4, 5, and 6 in the foregoing clauses.
- 3.5 Any digital material posted online could reach a wider audience than expected or intended. Once digital content has been created and shared, MAHE and its Constituent units have every right for permanence and audience, within the Social media policy of MAHE and its Constituent units.

4. **Behaviour and conduct on social media:**

- 4.1 Students are **personally responsible** for what they communicate on or through social media.





MANIPAL

ACADEMY of HIGHER EDUCATION

(Institution of Eminence Deemed to be University)

- 4.2 To have appropriate and timely response / resolution, the students should avoid raising complaints on social media and instead should do so via the established Student Grievance Procedure (Disciplinary Committee / Department of Student Affairs).
- 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 judgments about other students, staff, or third parties.
- 4.4 The following non-exhaustive list is considered to be of 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 documents or documents/information not yet approved)
 - Details of complaints/potential complaints and/or legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving MAHE and its Constituent units
 - 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 MAHE and its Constituent units into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of colleagues, former colleagues, students, staff and those connected with MAHE and its Constituent units, and
 - Any other details/information which is the subject matter of social media policy from time to time.
- 4.5 Students should be aware that communications on social media are also subject to the legal framework of the Government of India, Regulators, MAHE, and its Constituent units, which aims to prevent interference with legal proceedings.
- 4.6 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 MAHE and its Constituent units into disrepute, or compromise the safety of MAHE and its Constituent units by undermine proceedings or processes. As such, this conduct may be seen as of unacceptable nature, as per clause 4.4 above.
- 4.7 Students must clearly indicate that the views expressed are their own and not that of MAHE or its constituent units. Students should not use the Logo or any other signage of MAHE or its constituent units.



5. Cyber Bullying:

- 5.1 MAHE and its Constituent units will not accept any form of bullying or harassment by or of members of MAHE and its Constituent units, stakeholders or students.
- 5.2 The following non-exhaustive list of examples illustrates the types of behaviour, displayed through social media, which MAHE and its Constituent units consider as cyber bullying:
- Maliciously, negligently or recklessly spreading rumours, lies or gossip by way of SMS, Mail etc.,
 - Intimidating/threatening or aggressive comments/content or behaviour, as perceived by those viewing the 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.
In addition to posting inappropriate content on social media, liking or circulating such content will also be considered as cyber bullying and will draw the same kind of disciplinary action.

6. Students' use of official accounts of MAHE and its Constituent units:

- 6.1 Some students may contribute to MAHE and its Constituent units' official social media activities as part of their role ie: for example, taking over the Snapchat or Instagram accounts, logging, writing blogs or running an official Twitter account etc. Students should be aware that, while contributing to MAHE and its Constituent units' social media activities, they are representing MAHE and its Constituent units.
- 6.2 Students who are involved in the above activity should take permission from the Head of the Institute / Head of the Department / Concerned authorities before publishing / posting material (whatsoever it may be) in the respective Social Media Handles.
- 6.3 Misuse of official accounts of MAHE and its Constituent units may lead to suspension and; following an enquiry by a disciplinary committee, may lead to expulsion. Such students will not be eligible for readmission to MAHE and its Constituent units at any time in the future.

7. Breach of the policy:

- 7.1 If any student is found to have breached this policy, disciplinary action will be taken against him/her within the framework of the Social Media policy.
- 7.2 Student(s)/stakeholder(s) suspected of committing a breach of this policy, is/are expected to cooperate with any investigation; 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 to be in breach of the policy of MAHE and its Constituent units. Failure to comply with such request may result in further disciplinary action.
- 7.4 Any breach of this policy shall be reported in line with MAHE Student Complaints Procedure. In the first instance, any breach shall be brought to the attention of the respective Head of the Institute/MAHE Teaching Department or the Director, Student Affairs, MAHE.
- 7.5 Failure to obey instructions/comply with written or oral communications from an authorized MAHE official/disciplinary authority to appear for a meeting or hearing may lead to disciplinary action.
- 7.6 Engaging in any conduct which is unbecoming of a student of MAHE may also lead to disciplinary action.

8. Monitoring:

- 8.1 The Social Media Policy Committee (proposed) will:
- Ensure that this policy, along with any updates, is accessible to staff and students of MAHE
 - On occasions, will provide guidance for students (for example during orientation program) on how to stay safe online while using social media
 - Monitor references to MAHE and its Constituent units 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, MAHE and its Constituent units or members of the public
 - Periodically review and update this policy and publish details of any changes.

9. The Social Media Disciplinary Committee (SMDC):

The following Social Media Disciplinary Committee will formally hear and adjudicate any complaint of misuse of social media by the students/stakeholders which is contrary to this policy:

Social Media Disciplinary Committee of MAHE comprises of:

Chairperson:

1. Director/Deputy Director Student Affairs, MAHE

Members:

2. Director, PR, Media & Social Media Cell, MAHE
3. Director, IT and DT, MAHE
4. Deputy Registrar (Administration), MAHE
5. Head/Senior Professor of constituent unit /MAHE Teaching Department concerned
6. Legal Representative from MAHE
7. Any other representative as nominated by the Chairperson





MANIPAL

ACADEMY of HIGHER EDUCATION

(Institution of Eminence Deemed to be University)

10. Procedure to handle complaints:

- a) Any stakeholder of MAHE or the disciplinary committee sue moto can lodge a complaint to the Social Media Disciplinary Committee about the perceived breach of Social Media Policy (SMP) by the student(s). The Social Media Disciplinary Committee will determine the severity of the breach of conduct, and recommend appropriate disciplinary action against the offender(s).
- b) Where an offence is clearly established on official records, the social media disciplinary committee shall be responsible for taking punitive action and formally communicating the nature of punishment(s) applicable to the student as per the existing orders/policies on the issue.
- c) In case of a formal procedure, an SMDC has to be convened by the Chairperson, which shall assemble within 48 hours of the issue of orders, hear all parties concerned in the case and submit its report to the Vice Chancellor/Registrar within 14 days from the date of complaint. In case SMDC is not able to submit the report within the stipulated period, an extension may be obtained by the Chairperson, SMDC from the Vice Chancellor/Registrar in writing after providing sufficient reason for such delay. However, such delay should not cross a maximum of four weeks.
- d) The respondent(s) shall be notified of the date of the inquiry by the Chairperson, SMDC through a confidential note/email. The SMDC 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 has to be conducted and a report thereof has to be submitted.
- e) The SMDC shall have the power to summon any faculty, staff, and student of MAHE and its constituent units, as the case may be, to render whatever assistance is needed to conduct inquiries. A student who does not comply shall be deemed to 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 SMDC finds that an offence has been committed, then it shall recommend a suitable penalty for the same.
- g) The SMDC after finalizing its recommendations shall submit its report to the Registrar, MAHE giving reasons for such findings and the verdict. The Registrar shall consider the report of the above Committee and decide on the penalty to be imposed on the student(s).

11. 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 with proper justification.



12. 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.

How to use social media – For Students

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 the 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 the guidelines of MAHE and its Constituent units as well as the law.

- **Remember, everything you post online is public.** Once it's out there you lose control of how others might perceive 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 of MAHE and its Constituent units and the law? If so, it could result in MAHE and its Constituent units taking





disciplinary action. **Don't forget, it can be hard to take something back once it has been shared, copied, or redistributed.**

- **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. Make sure you 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 publicly if it is available.
- **Make sure you familiarise yourself with expectations regarding professionalism and confidentiality about 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 appear to be of 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.

