Solihull Sixth Form College SUMMIT LEARNING TRUST	**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY ADDENDUM** **Staff Communication & Events Guidance** Updated and Approved by SLT March 2021

1 This document has been put together by the Marketing and Admissions teams to assist staff in their communications primarily with prospective students. There is a need for a document like this because of the increasing use of social media (Facebook and Twitter in particular) and increasing use of email to communicate with prospective students.

2 The reason why we feel it is so important that all staff are aware of the policy and guidelines and of what best practice should be is four-fold:

- We want consistency – prospective students should get the same professional experience no matter what subjects they are applying to study

- We want to find the correct balance of information they receive – we should not, for example, be sending prospective students emails every week, as that can be counter-productive and make them feel they are being badgered. It can also mean they get bored of what we send them and routinely delete emails from us, which may mean that when we then send them a really important email they do not read that either.

- Marketing and Admissions staff need to know any and all communications that take place with prospective students. We recognise that different curriculum areas do different things and we do not wish to discourage this. However, both Marketing and Admissions have regular contact with prospective students via social networking and email and if we do not know things that are taking place with prospective students in different curriculum areas, we may at best look unprofessional, and at worse advise them incorrectly.

- By involving Marketing, we can ensure all targeted emails sent to prospective students in particular curriculum areas are colourful and maintain the corporate style, as Marketing has access to email templates.

3 As such, this document will look at the following areas:

- Taster Sessions
- Curriculum Social Media Guide
- Use of the College Logo
- Emergency Communications

4 In all cases, the main message we want to get across is:

[a] Keep Marketing and Admissions informed of any plans you have, to work with or communicate with prospective students.

[b] If sending out any letters or emails to prospective students do so through Marketing and Admissions.

Taster Sessions

5 Taster sessions can be a brilliant way to keep prospective students interested in your subject so they choose to study that subject at this College rather than going to another school or college. However, if you choose to put on Taster sessions, you have to consider a number of factors, not least staff time and resources, as well as General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). You also have to ensure you put on good sessions, as a poor taster session will have the opposite effect and put students off! Here is a do's and don'ts guide to help you:

Do	**Don't**
Prepare students for what they can expect from the course, without simply rehashing the subject leaflets that they may already have seen.	Don't just talk at students – it should not be a lecture.
Make the sessions fun and unique – try to ensure these activities are different to what they will do at Welcome to College Day.	Don't mislead students – if you never use particular teaching methods in lessons, don't use them in these sessions – students will expect them when they actually start.
Make sessions interactive – get them involved so they get to know you and each other. If they start the course already knowing a few fellow students, it will be less intimidating. Encourage students to ask questions – no question is too stupid to ask if they are worried about it.	Don't scare students off with topics that are too advanced. By all means prepare them for the fact that advanced level study is a step up, but don't let them worry they won't be able to cope – you can explain the support on offer too to help mitigate this.
Include a mix of light-hearted activities and useful learning.	Don't make the sessions compulsory – this can also put students off – but be encouraging and make it sound like fun when you are promoting it.
Consider setting students challenges they can complete in groups – light-hearted quizzes, etc – friendly competition can help break the ice.	Don't do anything without consulting with Admissions and Marketing, who will have an overview of what is happening in other subjects – we do not want clashing events!
Find the right length of the session – long enough to be worthwhile, but not too long that it puts people off attending.	
Give careful consideration to when you hold these sessions – soon after the school day would be ideal (e.g. starting at 5.00pm).	
If promoting an event at an Open Day, make sure data is collected in a GDPR compliant way. The Marketing Co-ordinator can assist with this.	Don't have sign up sheets at open days where prospective students/parents can see the details of other students.

6 Getting students to attend Taster Sessions is all about proper promotion and that is where Marketing comes in – please ensure you let the Marketing Co-ordinator know about these sessions, including dates, times and what you plan to do. The Marketing Co-ordinator can then invite the appropriate students and promote it at appropriate times via email and social media. The College's GDPR Guidelines must be adhered to at all times.

Curriculum Social Media Guide

7 The College has an official Facebook account (www.facebook.com/solihullsixthform), a Twitter account (@sfcsapply) and an Instagram account (@sfcsolihull). These are primarily aimed at prospective students and offers advice on the application and enrolment procedures and news from College.

8 Curriculum areas can have their own social media accounts and this can be a very effective tool for teaching and learning, but careful consideration is needed at to which is the most effective medium for this. For example, if the aim is to point students in the direction of other resources Twitter can be a good medium as it allows the user to retweet other trusted content. If the aim is to share visual images and videos, Instagram may be a better option as this is an image-led platform.

9 If there are teams that want to set up a social media account for their curriculum areas, please read this guide first before you take that decision. If you decide to go ahead with it, please let the Marketing Co-ordinator know, so she can help promote it and support you. She can, for example, come up with a version of the College logo for you to use as your account image. If you need advice or tuition on using Twitter, Instagram or any other platform please also get in touch – she can provide training if required. Before you set up a social media account, as yourself a few questions:

- what do I want to get out of it?
- what information will I post on Twitter?
- how much time do I have to devote to it?

10 These are important questions. If your Twitter account ends up being a success it will take up more and more of your time, so you have to consider if this is worth your time. If it does not take up much time, the chances are it is not going to be as successful and you must decide if it is worth doing. It can be a useful way of communicating with students.

To help you decide if this is something your team should be doing, here are some do's and don'ts for staff use of social media:

Do's	**Don'ts**
Produce a schedule of announcements – this ensures you make regular updates, rather than a flurry of updates followed by nothing for three weeks.	Don't just check Twitter occasionally – it has to be something you do regularly. Accounts that are neglected do not get used by students and will be a waste of your time.
Update your students on homework, including deadlines and post reminders, so students can't say they were not updated.	Don't ignore people who ask serious and relevant questions – reply to them – this will make them more likely to use your page and make it more worthwhile doing.
Post links to resources that students will find useful for homework and independent study. Consider adding regular items such as study tips, inspiring quotes, info on HE, etc. Remember Twitter has a 280 characters limit, so long links are a bad idea – see the Marketing Co-ordinator for ways of shortening web links (eg. through use of bit.ly).	Don't follow existing students – you must be careful to keep a teacher-student distance and not get over-familiar with students. Also, following students will clog up your newsfeed with personal information that the students tweet and make it difficult for you to spot the really relevant information that you might want to re-tweet.
Follow other accounts relevant to your field of study – if they post relevant content, retweet it for the students to see.	Don't follow any inappropriate people or organisations – students will be able to see who you follow.

Pose questions on social media – get a discussion going with the students.	Don't use a College social media account for personal use – again, students will be able to see this and it does not allow you to protect your privacy.
Add fun, quirky content (as long as it is relevant) – it doesn't all have to be serious! This could include photos, which Twitter does support. See the Marketing Co-ordinator if you need help with this.	Don't allow yourself to get into an online argument with students – if they tweet you directly with anything inappropriate, cut off the communication immediately and deal with them personally either after class or via Tyber. Poor behaviour online is no different to poor behaviour in class and students must not be allowed to get away with it.
Set up some searches – eg. search for anytime that another user posts your handle (eg. search @sfcsapply), so you can respond if anybody asks a direct question to you.	Don't leave your social media accounts unattended for long periods. If you are not going to check it during holidays etc, make sure you post to your followers to say this – otherwise, they will expect to be able to get hold of you!
Set up other relevant searches – eg. key words such as "economy", "economic", "inflation", "unemployment" for Economics – this can give you useful tweets by others that you can retweet for your students.	Don't get involved in questions or comments made about issues not relevant to your department. For example, if students are moaning about the College being open during a period of snow, point them in the direction of the main College Twitter account (@sfcsapply) or ask them to speak to their academic coach. Do not berate students on a public forum, but speak to them offline to address any behaviour you think was inappropriate.
On Twitter, create lists (I suggest you keep these lists private) – this is a way of grouping other Twitter users by subject area so you can more easily check what they are tweeting, rather than wade through hundreds of tweets. See the Marketing Co-ordinator if you are unsure how to do this.	Beware of offering personal opinions – remember you are representing the College and this is not your own personal social media account.
Keep your eye on the Direct messages facility on these platforms – some students may choose to message you directly so that other students can't see it – make sure you reply to them in a timely fashion.	

Use of College Logo

11 It is suggested that you see the Marketing Co-ordinator for most of your promotional literature needs. However, if you are putting together any teaching resources or documents for prospective students, please ensure there is a professional and consistent approach when it comes to using the College logo.

12 The logo is available via SharePoint or by emailing the Marketing Co-ordinator. Logos are available as JPEG or EPS files (usually JPEG will be most appropriate for staff needs).

13 There are some simple guidelines about the use of the College logo. This is to ensure that there is always consistency in everything we put out and to make sure that what we produce is professional and to a high standard.

[a] The purple logo should be the default version used.
[b] A white version of the logo is appropriate to be used if you are placing it on a coloured background or over a photo, as it will stand out better than the purple version.
[c] A black and white version of the logo is most suitable to be used in the header of documents that are most likely to be printed in black and white (e.g. internal policies, agendas or minutes, etc).
[d] The logo should not be changed to any other colour.
[e] The logo should not be stretched or distorted in any way. This can easily happen if you are trying to fit the logo into a particular space. If you have difficulty, please contact the Marketing Co-ordinator and is she happy to assist.
[f] An appropriately sized image should be used – if the logo is just part of a header on a document do not use a large image which will significantly increase the size of the file you are saving. The Marketing Co-ordinator can provide smaller versions of the logo upon request.

Here are examples of correct and incorrect use of the logo:

CORRECT

INCORRECT

INCORRECT

If you are unsure what you are doing, please see the Marketing Co-ordinator or email her at marketing@solihullsfc.ac.uk and she will assist you.

Emergency Communications

14 The College has an Incident Management Plan, which includes what we will do in the event of all manner of emergencies. This also includes communicating with key stakeholders in an emergency situation. This encompasses communicating with the press and other media (radio and TV) and communicating with other people (students, parents, etc) via social media. These plans are in place to ensure that things do not get out of hand in the event of an emergency.

15 This information provides very brief details of what we will do in an emergency situation, but the main points all staff should be aware of are:

[a] Do NOT speak to the press or other media (radio & TV) in an emergency situation at all – not even passing comments that you think are off the record.
[b] Do NOT post messages on social networking sites regarding the emergency.
[c] Refer all media queries to the Marketing Co-ordinator and Principalship.
[d] Refer all student/parent queries to Main Reception, the Contact page of the College website or official College social media accounts.

Media Response

16 The only communications with the media will be via the Principal, Vice Principal or Chair of the Local Governing Body and will be issued after being approved by Principalship and the Marketing Co-ordinator. No staff must comment at all.

17 If appropriate, interviews with TV and radio may take place and when new information comes to light new statements and/or press releases will be issued. Where no new information is available, the media will simply be referred to our most recent statement.

Social Media Response

19 Press releases and statements will be fed through to those staff who are manning the College's social media channels. These statements are the only messages that should be posted online. Where students or parents are asking questions, these staff will simply be re-iterating the messages from the statements and limit any unconfirmed rumours. No speculation that is unconfirmed will be engaged in, under any circumstances.

20 Several members of staff have been trained to undertake this role and only those staff should post on the College's social media channels. No other member of staff should post on any social media platform relating to the emergency situation.