



The Church of Scotland

Faith Nurture Forum – Initial Ministerial Education (IME) Student Policy

Social Media

1. Introduction

The Faith Nurture Forum of the Church of Scotland (Faith Nurture Forum) recognises that there are a number of benefits to social media, both for the organisation and individuals. Many students will already be using social media in their personal lives. When students are not at a place of study or placement they of course may choose to create or participate in a social media space or any other form of online publishing or discussion. However, students must bear in mind the need to behave appropriately and are expected to consider the consequences of sharing information with others. Students should approach online worlds in the same way they do physical one – by using sound judgement and common sense.

The Church of Scotland, including all Councils and Presbyteries, engage with social media and activities are overseen by the Communications Team. No accounts on behalf of Faith Nurture Forum should be created or maintained without approval by the Faith Nurture Forum Secretary.

2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out the acceptable use of social networking by IME students in relation to all aspects of training. The policy applies to engagement with social networking sites carried out in a student's own time, whilst studying, or elsewhere, and from their own PCs or other devices. It also applies to participation in other approved study/work-related online communities or forums.

3. Definition of social media

For the purposes of this policy, social media is any online platform or app that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes social forums such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video and image-sharing websites such as YouTube.

Students should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Students should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use.

4. Use of social media

Faith Nurture Forum encourages students to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media as part of their study and work. It is an important part of how the Faith Nurture Forum communicates with others.

Students may contribute and be asked to contribute to the Church of Scotland's social media activities, for example by writing for blogs, managing a Facebook account, or running an official Twitter account. In doing so the student is seen to be speaking for or representing the Church of Scotland.

Students must be aware at all times that, while contributing to the Church of Scotland / Faith Nurture Forum's social media activities, they are representing Faith Nurture Forum and should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of professional communication in the public sphere. These safeguards include:

- making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the Church of Scotland / Faith Nurture Forum;
- obtaining appropriate permission before embarking on a public campaign using social media; and
- getting a colleague to check the content before it is published.

Faith Nurture Forum recognises that many students make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of Faith Nurture Forum/ the Church of Scotland, students must be aware that they can damage the reputation of Faith Nurture Forum if they are recognised as being one of our students and they do not adhere to this policy.

Students are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media at all times. Students should remember that what they publish might be available to be read by the general public (including members of the Church, future employers and social acquaintances) for a long time. This should be kept in mind before any content is posted.

Students must not post statements which could be construed as disparaging or defamatory about: the Church of Scotland; other Students; Church Of Scotland Central Services

Students should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Church's reputation.

Issues around confidentiality must be carefully considered. Information made available to a small group can be republished to a wider audience. Students should take care when forwarding or "re-tweeting" information to understand in what context that information was sent to them, and whether it was intended for re-publication. Once information is committed to social media a large degree of control is lost. Students should be aware that anonymity cannot be guaranteed, even when posting under a username, and should always assume that comments may be traced back to them. Students must exercise appropriate discretion.

In personal communications Students should make it clear that they are speaking on their own behalf and not on behalf of the Church, for example by writing in the first person and using a personal e-mail address. They must also state that their views do not represent those of the Church, for example by stating "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Faith Nurture Forum, or the Church of Scotland."

Students must also ensure that their profile and any content they post is consistent with their calling and is also true and accurate.

Students are allowed to say that they are training for ministry. Faith Nurture Forum recognise that it is natural for students sometimes to want to discuss their work on social media however, the student's online profile (for example, the name of a blog or a Twitter name) must not contain the name 'Church of Scotland' or 'Faith Nurture Forum'.

Any communications that students make through social media must not:

- bring Faith Nurture Forum, Presbyteries or Churches, or the Church of Scotland, into disrepute, for example by:
 - criticising or arguing with individuals in an inconsiderate or abusive manner;
 - making defamatory comments about individuals or groups; or
 - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;
- breach confidentiality, for example by:
 - disclosing confidential information about an individual, the Church of Scotland or Faith Nurture Forum; or
 - discussing the Church of Scotland, Faith Nurture Forum's internal workings or its future plans;
 - posting anything related to colleagues or other associates (in the context of their working relationship) without their written permission
- breach copyright, for example by:
 - using someone else's images or written content without permission;
 - failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something; or
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
 - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
 - using social media to bully another individual; or
 - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive, or links to such content.

5. Excessive use of social media whilst on placement

Students should not spend an excessive amount of time whilst actively participating in study on site or on placement engaged in personal/non-training related social media. This is likely to have a detrimental effect on students' productivity. They should ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their other duties.

6. Monitoring use of social media during placement/study on site

Faith Nurture Forum reserves the right to monitor students' social media usage if there are suspicions that the student has acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy. Any monitoring carried out will be only as necessary and proportionate. Monitoring is in Faith Nurture Forum's legitimate interests and is to ensure that this policy on use of social media is being complied with.

Monitoring may consist of checking the social media sites that a student has visited, the duration of such visits and the content that the student has contributed on such sites.

Monitoring will normally be conducted by the Church of Scotland's IT Department, supported by Faith Nurture Forum staff where necessary. The information obtained through monitoring may be shared internally, however, information would normally be shared in this way only if the Faith Nurture Forum has reasonable grounds to believe that there has been a breach of the rules set out in this policy.

The information gathered through monitoring will be retained only long enough for any breach of this policy to come to light and for any investigation to be conducted. Data will be securely destroyed in line with IT Policy.

Information obtained through monitoring will not be disclosed to third parties, unless the Faith Nurture Forum is under a duty to report matters to a regulatory authority or to a law enforcement agency.

Students have a number of rights in relation to their data, including the right to make a subject access request and the right to have data rectified or erased in some circumstances. You can find further details of these rights and how to exercise them in the Faith Nurture Forum's IME Student General Data Protection Regulations Policy.

7. Disciplinary action over social media use

All students are required to adhere to this policy. Students should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the Church of Scotland/Faith Nurture Forum, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to being asked to leave the IME programme.

8. Monitoring and Review

The impact of this policy will be monitored and the policy is subject to amendments as necessary. The policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum.

Date First Published:	September 2018
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Approved by:	E&S Committee