SOCIAL NETWORKING AND SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

INTRODUCTION

Social media provides an opportunity to engage and interact with our various audiences and promote staff and student expertise.

Villanova College supports its employees' participation in social media online applications such as social networking sites, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video and audio sharing sites and message boards that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content.

Rationale

These guidelines are intended for staff of Villanova College regarding the use of social networking and social media platforms whilst they remain employed by the College.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide direction on the acceptable and appropriate use of social media by volunteers and all staff employed by Villanova College (hereby collectively referred to as 'the College Community'). The intent of this document is to assist members of the College Community to choose appropriate online learning platforms and to maintain ethical and professional standards in their use of social media.

These guidelines aim to provide guidance to the College Community in the use of social media with a view to reducing the instances of:

- Harassment, bullying and/or discrimination
- Inappropriate/offensive comments
- Inappropriate use of confidential information and intellectual property

Villanova College is well aware of how online social media platforms such as (but not limited to) Blogs, Wikis, Social Networks etc. are transforming the way we interact and learn. Online collaboration enables people to share knowledge and ideas regardless of rank, title or experience. The intention of these guidelines is not to dissuade the College Community taking part in online conversations and collaboration, but instead to empower all members to make appropriate and legal decisions so as to reduce the potential of negative impact on College members and the College's standing in our community.

Definitions

The terms 'social media' and 'social networking' relate to and covers all current and future means of electronic communication and networking platforms which currently include (but are not limited to):

- Social Networking Websites and Applications such as Facebook, MySpace, Foursquare, Snapchat, Tinder, Pinterest, Tap Talk, Vine, WhatsApp and LinkedIn.
- Video and Image Sharing Websites and Apps such as Flickr, Instagram, YouTube and Vimeo.
- Micro-Blogging Websites and Applications such as Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr.
- Blogging Websites and Applications such as Blogger, Weebly, Wordpress and Blogster.

- Forums and Discussion Boards hosted on any website or through any Application.

- Online Encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia and Sidewiki.

- Gaming Websites and Applications.

- Vod and podcasting

- Email and instant messaging such as Facebook Messenger, Skype, iMessage etc.

- Any other Websites or Applications which allow individual users to use simple publishing tools of any description.

Guidelines

These guidelines have been designed based on the following guiding principles, reflecting those which underpin all our actions as members of the College Community.

- Online behaviour should at all times demonstrate an Augustinian respect for the dignity of each person.

- The Child Protection protocols of Villanova College, in accordance with State and Commonwealth legislation must always be observed.

- Staff and student online interaction must occur only in an educational context.

- Staff and students must behave in a moral, ethical and compassionate manner when interacting electronically.

- Negative or derogatory comments or similar regarding any member of the College Community or wider community should never be made or discussed.

- Confidential information regarding members of the College or College Community should at all times remain confidential.

Educational (work-related) Use of Social Media

Accessing and Contributing to Social Network Sites on College Systems and Devices

Whilst on College property, using the College network or internet provided by the College system on a College or personal device, social media sites and platforms should only be accessed or contributed to if they are solely related to an educational or professional context.

In the case of teachers and members of staff employed at the College, an

'Educational Context' may relate to Professional Learning and Development Networks and Groups as well as Professional Development taking place in an online forum.

Members of staff must:

- Use appropriate online learning communities with their students in order to achieve educational outcomes. When using such online community activities, consideration must always be given to the age and development level of students.

- Ensure that they prepare students to act in accordance with the guiding principles before using online community activities for learning.

- Obtain express permission from the Principal or his delegate before posting online any commentary, school information, school or staff photographs or other identifying images which could be interpreted as representing the College.

- Obtain express permission from the Principal or his delegate before using the College logo, trademarks, official photographs or any other intellectual property of proprietary materials in any postings to social media.

- Parental/carer permission must be obtained for students to register with online learning communities.

- Respect students' rights to privacy in academic work, records and results when posting online.

Personal Use of Social Media

Whilst outside of College property and outside of normal College hours and using internet not provided by the College, members of the College Community are free to use social media platforms as prescribed by current legislation.

Furthermore, given that information provided or statements made may impact the College and have larger consequences, members of the College Community are reminded that they are at all times representing the College in anything they say or do and as such failing to adhere to these principles may result in disciplinary action being taken.

During personal use of social media **members of staff** must:

- Not invite current students to join in their personal network or accept students' invitations to join theirs.

- Use professional discretion before accepting ex-students or parents of current students as friends via social media.

- Not discuss students or co-workers or publicly criticise College policies or personnel on social media.

- Not post any images or video of students or parents on social media website

- Give a high level of consideration to the appropriateness of posting personal comments online that may encroach on work issues. All comments of a private nature should not identify Villanova College or be able to link an employee to Villanova College.

- Obtain express permission from the Principal or his delegate before posting online any commentary, school information, school or staff photographs or other identifying images which could be interpreted as representing the College

- Not contribute to or withhold information about anything which could bring the College or members of the College Community into disrepute

- Not engage in any conduct which would not be acceptable in the workplace

- Not disclose any confidential information about the College or College Community

- Exercise caution and restraint with regards to language they use, contacts they make and groups they join

- Engage appropriate privacy settings on all social media accounts thus preventing users who are not friends, followers or contacts from accessing personal information, photographs or other posts

Staff/Student Relationships

Online relationships (other than purely in an educational context) between current students and members of staff should not take place online.

Students and members of staff must operate in an appropriate capacity; therefore, being social with students in private social network spaces introduces a dynamic that may place both parties at risk; not necessarily because the relationship is inappropriate but because the relationship could be perceived in that way. Therefore, any private communication between these parties creates a high-risk situation for all and is unacceptable.

Expressing Personal Views

It can be difficult to draw a line between personal and school life when using Social Media. Even when talking as an individual, people may perceive others to be talking on behalf of the College. By identifying oneself as a College employee or student, users are creating perceptions about their expertise or experience and about the College. Accordingly, members of the College community need to be careful that all content associated with them does not conflict with College policies and their obligations as an employee or student.

Just because conduct is outside the College or users have not clearly identified themselves as a College employee or student, it may nonetheless be in breach of your obligations to the College as an employee or contractor, whether on social media or otherwise. All users should exercise caution and common sense on that basis. Should a legitimate need arise for expressing opinions using social media, the following disclaimer should be used *"The views expressed on this site are my own and not those of Villanova College."*

These guidelines are not designed to infringe upon personal interaction or online conversations whilst speaking as an individual with no reference to the College, provided you are otherwise complying with the College's policies.

Personal Liability

In addition to the expectations and directions of the College and the impact of social media users' posts and comments on the College and wider community, users should be aware that information they provide and statements they make may have significant consequences socially and legally on them directly. Legal and disciplinary actions may be taken by parties outside of the College and this may, in turn reflect poorly on the College through association.

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Making statements about an individual may constitute defamation (in which case you may be personally liable under applicable legislation to the person about whom you make the statement) or unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying (in which case you may be personally liable under applicable legislation).

- Using other persons' material, text, photographs, music, logos and trademarks may breach copyright laws.

Reasonable Care

The terms and prescribed conduct in these guidelines are not intended to be exhaustive, nor do they anticipate every possible use of social media.

Members of the College Community are at all times encouraged to act with caution during their use of social media. Staff who are unsure what to do in particular circumstances should contact the Principal or his delegate.

Compliance

Depending on the circumstances, non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of employment or contractual obligations, misconduct, sexual harassment, discrimination, or some other contravention of the law.

Those who fail to comply with this policy may face disciplinary action and, in serious cases, termination of their employment or engagement.

Additional Guidelines for Staff

The following guidelines are designed as an additional set of recommendations and suggestions to help guide appropriate behaviour regarding social media.

- Be polite: Never use inappropriate language while posting online.
- Never post negative comments about others, especially members of the College community including students and staff members.
- Be accurate: Make sure you have all the facts before posting anything online.
- Always verify information with a reliable source first. Cite and link to these sources whenever possible.
- Be respectful: Remain constructive and respectful whenever posting online.
- Avoid discussing negative experiences or disagreements, especially soon after these have occurred. Take the time to evaluate the best course of action – often it will not involve posting online.
- Consider your audience: Use privacy settings to restrict personal information on otherwise public sites. Choose profile photos and avatars carefully and be thoughtful about the types of photos you upload.
- Be clear: Some readers may not be familiar with abbreviations and codes and thus may interpret them incorrectly. Avoid abbreviations and re-read any statements you wish to make before publishing.
- Be secure: Ensure any social network accounts you have are secure and not accessible by others using appropriate passwords or encryption. In addition, smartphones with social network account access should have passcodes or passwords set up.
- Stay private: Use appropriate privacy settings on all accounts so that only your friends, contacts or followers can access your photographs and other posts.

Before You…

THINK

T = Is it True?

H = Is it Helpful?

I = Is it Inspiring?

N = Is it Necessary?

K = Is it Kind?