

BECTU SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF PRACTICE

1. This Code of Practice on Social Media is intended to help representatives and members to understand their responsibilities when using digital/social media to support BECTU's activities, and that breaches of the Code could lead to referral to the NEC under Rule 25 and possible disciplinary action.
2. The term social media is used to describe a type of interactive on-line media that allows parties to communicate electronically and/or instantly with each other and/or to share data in public or with select recipients. This covers the use of the internet and whatever device is used to gain access (eg computers, laptops, smart phones, mobiles, tablets etc), and the distribution of information by emails, blogs, tweets, SMS messages etc.

This also includes the following:

 - a) forums and comment spaces on websites
 - b) social networking websites and discussion boards such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Yahoo and Google Groups;
 - c) blogs and video - and image - sharing websites such as YouTube, Flickr, Instagram and personal blogs;
 - d) Podcasts; message boards and messenger apps such as Skype, Whatsapp and Snapchat
3. There are many more examples of digital/social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Members should follow this Code in relation to any digital/social media that they use in the course of BECTU activities.
4. Representatives and members should be aware that while they are contributing to BECTU's social media activities, or acting in a union capacity, that they are representing BECTU, and the laws of defamation, copyright, data protection and decency apply. BECTU or individual members of staff could be held liable for members' communications while they are carrying out union business or using union provided equipment.
5. Information on social media platforms could be produced as evidence in litigation.
6. Trade unions must adhere to certain legal requirements. Copies of these legal requirements are available on the BECTU website or upon request to the Administrative Officer. Complaints about BECTU can be made to the Certification Officer.
7. Members should note that no service accessed via the internet should be considered private and confidential. When using social media members should also take the time to ensure they are satisfied that their account privacy settings are set at an appropriate level. Where postings are discovered and/or disclosed by a third party these can be taken into account in matters of members conduct.
8. Members who are provided with devices by BECTU (eg laptops, smart phones, mobiles, tablets etc) for union business use may access social media for personal use on those devices but only in their own time and in accordance with the guidance set out in this policy.

9. All branches, or individuals, who set up social media accounts whose primary purpose is to support BECTU and its activities are requested to register the account (service provider, eg Facebook, name of the accounts and name(s) of the responsible administrator(s) with BECTU's Communications Officer.
10. The following are general rules of conduct which should be adhered to in relation to all social media use (including but not limited to internet, texting, and email) any breaches of the following could lead to disciplinary action. This also applies to members using equipment owned or leased by BECTU.
 - a) bringing BECTU, its officers, Staff, or members, or any individuals within these groups into disrepute, for example by
 - (i) Making derogatory or defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; and/or
 - (ii) Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;
 - b) breach confidentiality, for example by:
 - (i) Revealing information owned by BECTU; and/or
 - (ii) giving away confidential information about BECTU, its members or its employees or other organisation (such as another trade union);
 - (iii) Discussing BECTU's internal workings or its future plans that have not been made public);
 - c) breach copyright, for example by:
 - (i) Using someone else's images or written content without permission;
 - (ii) Failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something;
 - (iii) obtain reproduced works from sources that knowingly breach copyright law;
 - d) do anything that could be considered offensive and/or discriminatory, to any individual, staff member, officer, or BECTU member, for example by:
 - (i) posting information on the internet or making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
 - (ii) Posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content;
 - e) Using social media to bully/harass any individual, staff member, officer or BECTU member will be dealt with by way of the appropriate disciplinary procedures.
 - f) Users may not use the Internet for any of the following while using BECTU equipment:
 - (i) accessing or distributing pornography; and/or
 - (ii) engaging in on-line gambling; and/or

- (iii) taking part in on-line chain letters or chat-lines; and/or
 - (iv) advertising or selling any item or service unrelated to BECTU's legitimate activities; and/or
 - (v) downloading or distributing material in breach of people's privacy rights; and/or
 - (vi) engaging in on-line dating; and/or
 - (vii) creating web-pages or websites using BECTU's name without the permission of BECTU; and/or
 - (viii) accessing, downloading, sending, receiving or viewing any materials that they have reason to suspect are unlawful.
- g) The above list is not exhaustive and there may be other forms of misuse which would be deemed to be inappropriate and for which disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with BECTU's procedures.
11. Access to and use of emails for union work applies to members sending or receiving e-mail on computer equipment (including laptops/smart phones/mobiles) owned or leased by BECTU or used for purposes related to BECTU's activities. It applies whether e-mail is used internally or externally. The expression 'email' includes sending faxes from screen via a modem.
 12. BECTU's e-mail system exists for the purposes of the trade union's business and communications. It is not to be used frivolously or unnecessarily.
 13. E-mail messages are not disposable or trivial; even if deleted from a computer system they may be recoverable. The legal status of an e-mail is the same as any written document, and a Court or Tribunal can order e-mails to be produced as evidence. E-mails can also create binding contracts.
 14. Users must respect the privacy of each others' e-mails, just as they would a letter in an addressed envelope. Users must not knowingly and misleadingly impersonate other users either to send or receive e-mail. To do so is a breach of this Code and could result in disciplinary action.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

15. Any user receiving a text/email that is unacceptable for any reason should not respond but should immediately bring the matter to the attention of a senior official of BECTU.
16. BECTU will not take action over complaints from members or non-member that arise from external social media sites which are not owned or controlled by BECTU, and are therefore outside BECTU's jurisdiction.
17. All members are required to adhere to this Code in relation to social media use (including the use of the internet, texting, emailing etc) and should note that any breaches of this Code may lead to a referral to the NEC under Rule 25, and where it appears to the National Executive Committee that any member is or may be guilty then the allegation shall be referred to the Disciplinary Committee established under Rule 26 for consideration in accordance with the procedures set out in the Standing Orders for Disciplinary Hearings (Appendix A to these rules).

