

Version number:	Status:	Owner:	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:
2.0	Approved	Paul Vincent			1 August 2024

Online Behaviour and Social Media Policy

Updated: July 2023

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the college's expectations of its students and employees in regards to their social conduct in online spaces provided by the college for the pursuit of college studies and duties.

For the purpose of this policy, online etiquette refers to a set of customs and legal requirements relating to polite and acceptable conduct which individuals agree to abide by when communicating through online (internet-based) platforms as a student of the college and/or with students and employees of the college.

Scope

- This policy applies to all college employees, students and any other contracted workers for the OCA.
- Content produced by students or employees of the college is covered by this policy when the intention is to share the content with other individuals or groups.
- The policy applies to all forms of discourse in all online spaces and through any communications technologies provided or enlisted by the college, including text- voice- and video-based communications. Examples of college-provided or enlisted/endorsed platforms include:
 - OCA Learn - the college's Learning Platform
 - Google Workspace - the platform hosting your college Email account; Google Drive storage; Groups, Meet (video conferencing) and Chat applications.
 - OCA Spaces - the college's Blog/Learning Log platform
 - Panopto - the college's Audio/Visual content platform
 - Padlet - a private version of the Padlet collaboration application
 - Zoom - the college's instance of the Zoom video conferencing application

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- This policy applies to you if you use social media in relation to your OCA studies or as a member of the OCA, including the OCA's official and unofficial channels, and public or closed / private social media networks. Examples of Social Networks/Media include but are not limited to:
 - social networking websites such as Facebook and Discord
 - video and photo sharing websites such as Flickr, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube
 - messaging sites such as WhatsApp, Messenger and SnapChat
 - micro-blogging sites such as Twitter
 - networking sites whether personal or professional such as LinkedIn
 - forums and comment spaces on information-based websites, e.g. online newspapers and news blogs which incorporate comments
 - weblogs, including corporate and personal blogs
 - forums and discussion boards such as Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups
 - online wikis that allow collaborative information sharing such as Wikipedia.

Values

1. **Mutual dignity and respect:** OCA expects all employees and students to treat each other with dignity and respect at all times, especially when opinions or perspectives differ. The college does not tolerate any threatening behaviour; intimidation; harassment; or abuse relating to personal characteristics or circumstances; discrimination; inflammatory or derogatory comments or bullying. Please see the college's [Offensive Content Policy](#) for full details
2. **Freedom of Expression:** as a creative arts institution, OCA is a place where the exploration of challenging ideas is expected, but only where such speech and expressions do not go beyond the articulation of points of view, are within the law, and do not infringe upon the college's safeguarding responsibilities towards, and expectations of, its employees and students.
3. **Knowledge creation and sharing:** OCA promotes, through the use of online communications tools, the sharing of ideas and social creation of knowledge.

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Robust debate is encouraged, though not at the expense of the first principle of mutual dignity and respect.

4. **Privacy, confidentiality and security:** The college requires that all employees and students be mindful of each others' rights to privacy and confidentiality when engaging in online discourse. The college provides secure systems to guard against malicious breaches of personal data and does not tolerate the unlawful sharing of personal data by individuals in any setting.

Changes

Since the last version of the policy, the following changes have been made:

- Title changed from Online Etiquette Policy to Online Behaviour and Social Media Policy
- Updated formatting in line with the new college policy template.
- Incorporated version control and changes information.
- Updated to incorporate aspects relating to data privacy.
- Incorporated references to Data Privacy and Data Breach reporting processes.
- Incorporated more detail on reporting processes.
- Included Principles and Definitions relating to online etiquette.
- Incorporated non-compliance measures.
- Incorporated more detail on specific areas of online etiquette
- Incorporated public Social Media contexts

Related Standards, Policies and Processes

- [Academic Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy](#)
- [Freedom of Speech Code of Practice](#)
- [Prevent Duty Policy](#)
- [Student Accessibility Policy](#)
- [Intellectual Property Policy](#)

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- [Student Computing Policy](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- [Wellbeing Policy](#)
- [Offensive Content Policy](#)
- [Data Breach Policy](#)

Online Etiquette Policy

1. General guidelines

- 1.1. Treat others with respect. If you wouldn't say it to them face to face or want it said to you, don't say it online.
- 1.2. Be inclusive; don't talk over others in video calls, and allow time and space for others to contribute.
- 1.3. Avoid the use of slang or text speak which can be difficult for some to interpret due to generational or cultural differences.
- 1.4. Don't write words in all capitals; it can be interpreted as shouting.
- 1.5. Avoid using underlining in text-based communications.
- 1.6. Avoid the use of sarcasm and be careful with humour in case it is misinterpreted; use of emojis can help to convey the intention of your message.
- 1.7. Don't include personal or sensitive information about yourself or others in online discussions. This applies to both private college spaces and external platforms and spaces. When taking part in video calls, ensure you have no sensitive or personal information on display in the background, or on your screen if sharing your screen during a video-based session.

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- 1.8. If you are involved in an ongoing complaints process with the college, please refrain from referencing the complaint in online discussion spaces until an outcome has been arrived at.

2. Critiques and debates

- 2.1. Stay on topic, and keep discussions around that topic in the same thread if using a forum, rather than beginning new threads.
- 2.2. Avoid repetition, try to not simply agree or disagree with others' statements - include your reasoning so as to add to the discussion in a constructive way.

3. Video calls

- 3.1. Ensure you're in a quiet and well-lit environment before joining or starting the session.
- 3.2. Try to use head/ear-phones to reduce the chance for audio feedback to occur.
- 3.3. Test your equipment before the session by either using built-in test tools (available in Zoom, Google Meet and MS Teams) or by starting a session of your own as a test.
- 3.4. When the host/lecturer is talking or presenting, keep your own microphone on mute to avoid inadvertently disrupting the session.
- 3.5. When you have a question during a presentation, use the 'raise hand' tool when you have a question (or just physically raise your hand if you can't locate it), rather than cutting in. Alternatively enter your question into the text chat area.

4. Citations, copyright and privacy

- 4.1. When citing or quoting others' words, ensure that the original meaning remains intact. Misquoting can cause offence or distress and in extreme situations can lead to formal complaints.

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- 4.2. Ensure you have permission to use any work you post which is not solely your own. Always check the copyright of the work.
- 4.3. Always try to include the source of any citations; others may find the wider context useful and you may wish to refer back to it at a later date yourself.
- 4.4. Individuals are required to exercise discretion over any references to OCA employees, other students or themselves in forums, blogs or social networking sites, whether internal or external to the OCA. In particular, individuals must not make inflammatory or provocative comments or give unbalanced accounts of incidents or interactions. Any individual who has concerns about the conduct and/or behaviours of an OCA student, should raise these as soon as possible with OCA so they can be investigated. As per the college's [Student Code of Conduct policy](#), in the first instance, concerns should be put in writing to studentadvice@oca.ac.uk.
- 4.5. Students may cite references to their tutor reports online, but must not misrepresent tutor opinions. Students may only post complete tutor reports online with the advance permission of their tutor. When a complete tutor report is posted online, it must be the full text without any student edits. When citing references, or publishing reports in full, students should not name their tutors. When making reference to reports, students should state 'my tutor says' or similar. If publishing a report in full, students should remove the tutor's name.
- 4.6. When communicating or sharing content with others via any media, always pay due regard to individuals' rights to data privacy as per the college's [Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy](#). No employee or student should share the personal information (e.g. names; email addresses; locations or any other personally identifiable data) of any other individual in a public (non-OCA managed or provided) space.
- 4.7. When communicating or sharing content with others via any media within an OCA-provided or managed space, individuals' rights to data privacy must always be considered.

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- 4.8. As per the college's [Data Breach policy](#), if any student or employee of the college suspects a data breach has occurred, they must immediately report the incident to the college as per the processes set out in that policy.
- 4.9. Coursework and Assessment work may only be shared with others if that sharing is in accordance with expectations detailed in the College's [Academic Misconduct policy](#).

5. Email communications

- 5.1. When sending email to more than just one individual, always ensure that all the recipients need to receive the email. Always keep recipient lists to the bare minimum.
- 5.2. When replying to an email you have received that had multiple additional recipients, always check whether you need to 'reply to all' or if you should just be replying to the originator of the email.
- 5.3. Add additional recipients to the CC field if those recipients are only being informed and don't necessarily need to reply. When sending to more than ten individuals, ensure you add additional recipients to the BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) field rather than the To field to avoid the message being labelled as spam.
- 5.4. Employees should exercise caution when sending communications to individuals, or groups of individuals outside of their own team that require significant work to be undertaken, without first consulting the relevant line manager to determine their capacity.
- 5.5. As in any other online space, communicate via email as you would face to face and avoid making derogatory or insulting comments about individuals in your messages.
- 5.6. Always use an appropriately courteous sign-off and signature in your emails.

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6. Conducting sensitive research

- 6.1. All students initiating or participating in online discussions through OCA's online environments, including the OCA Learn VLE, Google Groups, Google Meet, their OCA Google email account or any other online space relating to the college which contain material in breach of the [Terrorism Act 2000](#) or the government's [Prevent duty guidance - GOV.UK](#) will have their OCA accounts blocked once a breach has been identified as having occurred. Once the content and circumstances of an alleged breach have been investigated by a member of the OCA senior management team, and with the agreement of the Principal, OCA will report the incident to the police if believed to be illegal.
- 6.2. If a student has any concerns about the behaviour of another student, or employee, either in their conduct on forums or in their choice of research topic, they should first raise these concerns with their tutor or line manager. If there is concern regarding an employee, in their behaviour or working practices, these should be discussed in the first instance with OCA's Prevent Lead: prevent@oca.ac.uk.
- 6.3. All students' college-provided accounts are monitored by OCA. In the event that OCA has concerns about a student based on posts and other content created that express extremist views or views that suggest that the student may be at risk of radicalisation, OCA will take the steps outlined in its [Prevent Duty policy](#). If OCA believes there is a case for seeking advice from the police under the Prevent duty, students will be asked voluntarily to agree for information to be handed to the police. This is distinct from OCA having an obligation to hand over the information it holds about a student, including personal data and online content accessed, shared or created by the student, that is part of a police investigation.
- 6.4. Students who are knowingly researching areas relating to extremism and terrorism within the context of their studies agree to complete the OCA's [Research Declaration Form](#). Students must only use their OCA accounts throughout the research process, as a precautionary measure, in the event that this data is requested of the OCA by the

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police. If such a request were to be made, the declaration form would also be shared.

- 6.5. Students who come across any extremist, hate or terrorism-related material online should report the offending source via the gov.uk website
<https://www.gov.uk/terrorism-national-emergency/reporting-suspected-terrorism>
- 6.6. Any student who receives emails and social media communications about terrorism or extremism, including web links and attached documents through any of OCA's online facilities agrees to immediately notify OCA and hand over access to their OCA accounts to allow any evidence to be obtained and handed over to the police.
- 6.7. OCA reserves the right to have access to all student blogs hosted on the college's systems for safeguarding and assessment purposes. This is to enable OCA's obligation to check for plagiarism, misuse of copyright images, offensive comments or the expressing of opinions which may indicate that they are being drawn into terrorism or religious or political extremism.

7. Use of Social Media

- 7.1. When using social media, you must remember that Open College of the Arts regulations and policies apply to behaviour online in the same way as they would in a physical space. Of particular relevance are the [Student Code of Conduct](#), [Wellbeing Policy](#), [Offensive Content Policy](#) and [Academic Misconduct Policy](#). Whether online or face-to-face you should treat people with respect and expect others to do the same. Types of unacceptable behaviour include (but are not limited to):
 - Cyberbullying
 - Trolling
 - Harassment
 - Hate speech
 - Collusion or cheating on assignments
 - Posting or reposting abuse

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- Posting or reposting offensive or defamatory images or using offensive or defamatory language
- Posting or re-posting discriminatory material
- Posting or reposting anything that may bring The Open College of the Arts into disrepute or threaten the safety of employees (including former employees) and students or anyone connected with the College.

- 7.2. This policy applies to any aspect of online behaviour that is in any way linked to The Open College of the Arts (for example, in a private group connected to your study, making reference to the Open College of the Arts or your study in any personal social media account, or responding to one of the Open College of the Arts official accounts).
- 7.3. Students behaving in a way that contravenes this policy will be dealt with under the [Student Code of Conduct policy](#). Sanctions range from an informal caution which may need to be disclosed in any fitness to practice disclosure request, through the withholding of marks or qualification up to expulsion or exclusion from the College for serious or repeated offences.
- 7.4. This policy is not intended to prevent you from using social media to talk about your experiences or to express critical views appropriately. You should not, however, assume that points raised on social media will be addressed by The Open College of the Arts. You should therefore consider whether your concerns would be better dealt with through the Complaints Procedure.
- 7.5. The information posted on social media channels may not be reliable or accurate. If you are unsure about something relating to your studies or The Open College of the Arts in general, consult official sources of information such as student policies, your Department Space forum, tutor, Programme Leader or the Student Services team.
- 7.6. There is no compulsion for any Open College of the Arts student, or any Open College of the Arts employee, to engage on social media. Do not feel obliged to engage or connect with any other individual (whoever they are) in that way. Similarly, do not push or pressurise

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other students, or Open College of the Arts employees, to engage or connect with you on social media.

- 7.7. You must familiarise yourself with, and adhere to, the policies and codes of conduct for the social media platforms you use.
- 7.8. You should also be aware that posting offensive comments on a public site can damage your reputation. These may be seen by potential contacts and employers and could call your judgement and character into question.

8. Posting to social media sites

- 8.1. When posting to social media sites you must be aware that there is a person behind each account, don't say anything online that you wouldn't say in person, or anything that you would be unhappy being said to you.
- 8.2. Open College of the Arts hosted forums exist as a place for free and open academic discussion (within the bounds of the [Student Code of Conduct policy](#)) in a secure site. Posts or opinions from a forum must not be shared outside the college in a way that identifies either a named or identifiable individual or a link with The Open College of the Arts.
- 8.3. You must not comment about a named individual – whether a fellow student or a tutor not involved in the conversation – who may be part of a social media group or could see a re-posted comment. In particular:
 - do not post critical remarks about other students or employees of Open College of the Arts
 - do not criticise anyone for their connection to The Open College of the Arts
- 8.4. Module materials including assessment questions, or anything provided by a tutor must not be shared without permission and where permission is given, you must credit the source.
- 8.5. Recordings or extracts of recordings of online tutorials must not be shared on social media.

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- 8.6. Answers to assessment questions and feedback must not be shared on social media under any circumstances – this could be contrary to the [Academic Misconduct Policy](#).
- 8.7. Data protection, privacy and copyright legislation must be observed. Do not share material belonging to or created by anyone without due acknowledgement of ownership or origin.
- Do not share personal information without the explicit consent of the person concerned
 - Do not share confidential information relating to The Open College of the Arts or other organisations such as research results, any financial information not in the public domain or information about litigation or possible litigation involving The Open College of the Arts.

9. Keeping yourself safe online

- 9.1. You should be aware of the risks online. In particular you should guard yourself against anyone stealing your identity and oversharing either your personal information or your views.
- Check your privacy settings and consider how much you are sharing
 - Be very cautious about sharing personal information (such as date or place of birth) that could be used to steal your identity – ensure you know who you are sharing such things with
 - Never share your log in information or passwords
- 9.2. Remember that anything you post can live on in the cyber world, even if you delete it, so don't post something you wouldn't want to be associated with in a year, two years or even 20 years time.
- 9.3. It is possible that prospective employers could do a social media search for you, so don't post or repost anything that could call into question your fitness to practice or your professionalism. The types of posts you 'like' and the groups or organisations you follow could also cause your judgement to be questioned in future.

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10. Joining and using a social media site

- 10.1. When you join a social media site or group, be aware what information you are sharing with other members (for example, joining a WhatsApp group entails sharing your mobile phone number). This could potentially be shared outside the group by other members. If you have any questions about what information will be visible to others, check with the social media site's policies and your settings before joining.
- 10.2. Unlike module forums, these private sites and groups are not moderated by The Open College of the Arts, so members are responsible for managing their own behaviours. The group administrators and moderators are responsible for setting the group rules, which must not contradict this policy.

11. Reporting infringements of this policy

11.1. What to do if you have a concern such as bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct or discrimination

- 11.1.1. If you have any concerns regarding the online etiquette of any individual within the OCA community, whether this has occurred on college-managed or publicly provided services (e.g. Social Media platforms), in all such cases please contact the Learner Support team (learnersupport@oca.ac.uk) who will handle or refer the case accordingly.
- 11.1.2. Employees who encounter harassment or bullying must report this to their Line Manager or any other appropriate representative to raise the issue and seek support.

11.2. What to do if you suspect a Data Breach may have occurred in relation to yourself or other individuals

- 11.2.1. Please refer to the college's [Data Breach Policy](#) for details of how to report suspected Data Breaches, whether they relate to yourself or any other individual.

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11.3. What to do if you have concerns about, or are made aware of any form of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism, copyright breach or any other form of academic malpractice

- 11.3.1. If you have concerns about a fellow student, please refer to the [Academic Misconduct policy](#) for details of the reporting process.
- 11.3.2. If you are an employee of the college, please refer the matter to your Programme Leader and the Director of Curriculum and Quality to investigate the matter

Implementing the Policy

Compliance Measurement

The college will verify compliance to this policy through various methods, including but not limited to, reporting tools, internal and external audits, and feedback to the college.

Where individuals encounter policy violations within non-OCA-managed platforms, such violations should, in the first instance, be put in writing to Student Services (studentadvice@oca.ac.uk) as per the [Student Code of Conduct policy](#). Concerns may be raised with OCA anonymously if preferred.

Employees should report any suspected policy violation to their Line Manager or another member of Senior Management in addition to following protocols established through associated policies.

Exceptions

Any exception to the policy must be approved by the Learner Support team in consultation with the TEL team in advance.

Non-Compliance

Any student found to have violated this policy may face repercussions, up to and including termination of enrolment as defined in the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

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Support for the policy

In addition to the guidance provided in this document, a 'Getting Started with Netiquette' video is provided as part of student induction.

Control of the policy

This policy was authored by the Head of Technology and Innovation in consultation with the Senior Management Team and given approval by the Senior Management Team in May 2022.

Reviewing the policy

The next review date for this policy is August 2023. If you would like to raise any issues around this policy then please contact paulvincent@oca.ac.uk.