

Code of Practice for Electronic Publishing

This document was originally prepared by the University of Aberdeen *Information Systems Committee (ISC)* and ratified by the University Court at their meeting on 19th March 1996. The document was last revised in July 2018.

1. Introduction

1.1 This code of practice governs the use of University information technology (IT) facilities for publishing information in electronic format by staff and students of the University of Aberdeen.

Within the context of this document the following definitions apply:

Publishing means storing or transmitting information in electronic format, such that someone else may be able to access it or use it; and such that the publisher or the source of the information may be traced back to the University of Aberdeen.

This includes the use of information systems such as:

- Websites, bulletin boards, newsgroups and chat forums;
- Email, instant messaging, mailing lists and discussion groups;
- Social media¹, journal websites and blogs.

Information may include, for example, words, graphics, visual images, video, sound clips, and computer programs.

University IT facilities includes all IT and networking facilities provided by the University, including mobile, departmental and proxy services, as well as central facilities.

University purposes refers to use by staff in connection with their University duties, and by students in connection with their educational activity.

1.2 Failure to observe this code of practice may result in the University withdrawing access to IT services and/or taking further disciplinary action.

2. Code of Practice

2.1 University IT facilities may be used solely for University purposes, except where other use has been specifically authorised by the University (see [Conditions for Using IT Facilities](#)).

2.2 The University respects the freedom of staff to publish in electronic (as well as any other) format material which advances academic activity, or furthers the public interest. The University therefore does not exercise direct editorial control over such material. However, it reserves the right to remove or deny access to any material which infringes the criteria laid out in 2.3 to 2.5 below.

2.3 All material must comply with official University statements of policy concerning discrimination, harassment and equalities legislation.

2.4 Users must comply with the *Acceptable Use Policy* of the Joint Academic Network (JANET) [<https://community.jisc.ac.uk/library/acceptable-use-policy>]. Publications must

¹ See the University's [Social Media Policy](#)

not be offensive, defamatory, indecent or illegal, nor should they publicise access to or provide links to such material. Further advice on legislation relevant to electronic publishing is given in Section 4.

2.5 Published material should not bring discredit or harm to the University or its members, or bring the University into disrepute. Personal opinions must be acknowledged as such, and should not be represented as those of the University.

2.6 Appropriate care should be taken in the presentation, content and management of information being published electronically. This includes:

- care in writing, proofing and layout;
- where applicable, adherence to University presentational, stylistic and corporate guidelines, as appropriate (see www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/corporate-guidelines-toolkits-238.php);
- attribution of the source of the information (normally including author, contact address and date);
- removal of out-of-date information;
- adherence to relevant data protection legislation²
- restricting access to sensitive information.

2.7 Editorial changes to material in electronic format should only be made with the permission of the owner of the material.

2.8 Materials published electronically should adhere to the University's *Privacy*³ and *Social Media*⁴ policies. In particular it is the responsibility of staff to ensure that any cookies used in web publications abide by University policy and all relevant data protection regulations as noted above.

3. Responsibility

3.1 Heads of School/section are responsible for ensuring that any information published on behalf of their section complies with this Code of Practice.

3.2 Staff and students who publish information on behalf of a group should obtain appropriate permission from their head of section, or his/her delegated nominee.

3.3 Those who publish general University information (such as descriptive or historical details or maps) or who make use of the University's crest or any other element of its corporate identity must obtain permission from the Director of Marketing & Student Recruitment.

3.4 Staff and students who publish information on behalf of a University society, club or association must have the approval of the appropriate officials of the society.

3.5 Individuals are responsible and accountable for all information which they publish via the University network. Such information must adhere to this Code of Practice.

3.6 Anyone who registers an address for an electronic information system (such as a departmental web server or a personal home page) in an external index must not make it appear that their address is the principal access point for all University of Aberdeen facilities. The home page of any externally registered web server, run using University of

² <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/data-protection-6958.php>

³ www.abdn.ac.uk/site-information/privacy.php

⁴ <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-governance-and-compliance/SocialMediaPolicy.pdf>

Aberdeen facilities, must contain a link to the University of Aberdeen home page ([see Note 1](#)).

3.7 Information published on the University web servers can be accessed world-wide and therefore copied very easily. It is possible to limit access to information to particular groups of users ([see Note 2](#)). Publishers are responsible for deciding whether the information they publish should have restricted access.

4. Legal Framework

4.1 Legislation

Various aspects of UK legislation apply to staff and students who publish information electronically. It should be noted that ostensibly respectable academic information may risk infringing legislation, for example if transcripts of research material were deemed to represent excessive violence; similarly, material not defamatory in the UK may be seen as such in other countries. For these and other examples, see below. Distinctions are possible based on whether one is dealing with general legal provisions or with specific Acts.

4.2 General Legality

Defamation

Facts concerning individuals or organisations must be accurate and verifiable and views or opinions must not portray their subjects in any way which could damage their reputation. It should be noted that material which would not be deemed defamatory in the UK may be seen as such in other countries.

Pornography

The display of pornographic material, or publicising access to such material, is not allowed, irrespective of the legality of material in the country of origin.

Protection of Minors

Various legislation exists which is intended to protect minors from certain types of information, such as pornography or material which is considered excessively violent. Care must be taken to restrict access to any such material.

Advertising

It is not expected that web or other electronic information services within the University should normally be used for commercial advertisements. Any advertisements placed, however, must comply with the University's [Policy on the use of University web pages for commercial advertising](#) and also the *Code of Practice for Advertisers*, issued by the Advertising Standards Authority, which requires that all advertisements should be 'legal, decent, truthful and honest'.

Incitement

Publications which may incite others to commit criminal acts - or even to contemplate them - are thereby themselves likely to be illegal.

4.3 Specific Legislation

Computer Misuse and similar legislation

It is likely that any material which encourages or enables others to gain unauthorised access to a computer system would be found illegal under statutory provisions.

Copyright, Designs and Patents, Trade Marks

Users should be aware of potential copyright problems (a) if they publish their own material and are thereafter unable properly to police it, and (b) if they infringe another's copyright by republishing material. Various Acts require that the permission of the owner of intellectual property must be sought before any use of it is made whatsoever. It should be noted that the University logos and titles are the property of the University and they may be used only for official University documents.

Data Protection

Legislation provides protection of data which are stored in a computer or other electronic information system relating to any living person. The permission of each data subject should be sought and obtained before any information, including photographs, relating to them is stored in the system. The University's Data Protection Officer can provide full details of the University's registration under the relevant Acts ([see Note 3](#)).

Equalities

Any material which discriminates against any person on the grounds of age; disability; sex; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; sexual orientation; religion or belief; pregnancy and maternity, or encourages such discrimination, contravenes the Equality Act 2010.

Official Secrets

Research or consultancy for governmental bodies may be covered by these acts.

Race Relations and other discrimination. Public Order

Any material that either discriminates or encourages discrimination on racial or ethnic grounds, contravenes parliamentary legislation. Incitement to race hatred or to breach of public order is an offence.

Notes

1. The University home page - www.abdn.ac.uk
2. Contact IT Services (servicedesk@abdn.ac.uk) for further information on restricting access to information.
3. The University's Data Protection Officer can be contacted by email at dpa@abdn.ac.uk. Please see www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/data-protection-6958.php

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Subject/Description	This code of practice governs the use of University information technology (IT) facilities for publishing information in electronic format by staff and students of the University of Aberdeen.
Equality Impact Assessment	-
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