

# Social Media Policy

## Purpose:

This document has been created to provide guidelines for the use of social media both in and out of the workplace and minimise the risk to RUSI. For the purpose of this document, social media is defined as any platform where users can create, share and exchange ideas with online communities.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time.

For some quick practical guidelines please see RUSI's Personal Guidelines here: [Social Media at RUSI - Personal Guidelines](#).

## Scope

- This document applies to all your social media activity, for both business purposes as well as personal use, and includes (but not limited to) posting, sharing, liking, and commenting.
- This policy also applies to online blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, and messaging based apps, such as WhatsApp. Social media can be accessed in various ways, including from a desktop or laptop computer, tablet or smartphone. This policy applies to the use of all such devices.
- Occasional personal use of social media during working hours is permitted so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content, does not interfere with your employment responsibilities or productivity, and complies with this policy and the law.
- This policy applies to all social media platforms used by staff, consultants, freelancers and Associate Fellows as well as volunteers (including trustees) in a professional and personal capacity. Before engaging in social media activity, you must read this policy, which contains guidance that will help you adhere to our standards.

## Policy elements:

### Personal Use:

- Make sure that you disclose your affiliation with RUSI on your account and make it clear that you are using the platform in a personal capacity and speaking on your own behalf. Please include a caveat that “*Views expressed here are entirely my own*”, or words to that effect are included in your bio.
- Please note that even if your ‘handle’ or account name on social media bears no connection to the Institute, your professional affiliation engages the Institute’s reputation and may attract the attention of both journalists and the Charity

Commissioners. You should ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to clients, funders and colleagues.

- Exercise good judgement when entering any debates or offering opinions. Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which are published on the internet for anyone to see.
- If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or post you want to make, refrain from posting until you have discussed it with your line manager, Point of Contact or RUSI Sponsor.
- Ensure that you are not in breach of intellectual property and data protection laws.
- If you wish to keep the content that you share private, you should adjust your personal settings accordingly. However, your social footprint is never fully private, and others may screenshot your posts and share them.
- If you are worried that you are experiencing any negative attention, please discuss it with the Communications Team.

## Prohibited Use

- You must avoid making any social media communications that could damage our business interests or reputation, even indirectly. If, in RUSI's reasonable opinion, your posts or communications could damage its business interests or reputation you may be subject to the Policy Breaches outlined below.
- Do not promote, engage in, or solicit any illegal activities.
- Do not make or distribute any offensive, false, libelous, slanderous, or defamatory content that may harm RUSI's reputation, colleagues, Trustees, volunteers, members, or donors<sup>1</sup>.
- Do not harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against colleagues, Trustees, volunteers, members, donors, or any third parties.
- You must not express opinions on RUSI's behalf, unless expressly authorised to do so by your manager, Point of Contact if a consultant, or Sponsor if you are an Associate Fellow.
- Do not disclose of any confidential or proprietary information about RUSI, funders, your privileged networks or your fellow employees.
- Do not comment about sensitive RUSI-related topics, such as our performance, or do anything to jeopardise our trade secrets, confidential information, and intellectual property.

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<sup>1</sup> Although simplistic, be aware that the UK Safer Internet Centre defines harmful content as "anything online which causes a person distress or harm"

- You must not include our logos or other trademarks in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media unless you have approval from the Communications team.
- Make sure you do not fall foul of the law by commenting on ongoing investigations or court trials.
- Do not communicate anything that is inconsistent with RUSI's purpose or not in its best interests.
- Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Director of Communications.
- If you see any social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on RUSI, you should contact the Director of Communications.

## Representing RUSI vs. representing your work for RUSI

Social media posts *about* RUSI – i.e. about the Institute as a whole, rather than your individual work or expertise, should not be made without consulting the Communications Director or SMT.

## Point of contact for social media and authority to post on RUSI's social media accounts

- The Communications Team is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of RUSI's social media channels. If you have questions about any aspect of these channels, please speak to the Communications Director. No other staff member or contractor is permitted to post content on RUSI's official channels without the permission of the Communications Director.

## Using RUSI's social media channels — appropriate conduct

### **Know our social media guardians**

The Communications Team is responsible for setting up and managing RUSI's social media channels. The Communications Team has overall ownership of these accounts and only those authorised to do so by the Communications Director will have access to these accounts.

The Communications Team will uphold best practices for channel security with secure passwords that regularly change. Never give out the passwords for our channels without express permission from the Communications Director.

### **Be an ambassador for our brand**

Staff and contractors must ensure they reflect RUSI's values in what they post and use our tone of voice. Please note only the Communications Team is permitted to respond to comments on our social media posts on behalf of the organisation. All posts and comments should be

attributed to the charity and not an individual. In special cases it may be appropriate for a staff member or contractor to make an individual comment as themselves, but this should be under the supervision, and with the approval, of the Communications Team.

### **Always pause and think before posting**

When posting from RUSI's social media accounts, you must respond to comments in the voice of our charity and not allow your own personal opinions to influence responses. Staff and contractors must not reveal their personal opinions via our accounts by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'reposting' as RUSI, unless it is clear that you are doing so as an individual staff member or contractor as part of an approach agreed with the Communications Team (e.g. as part of a 'takeover' of the charity's account). If you are in doubt about RUSI's position on a particular issue, please speak to the Communications Director.

### **Ensure brand consistency**

Staff or contractors must not create or manage any other social media channels, groups or pages on behalf of RUSI without express permission from the Communications Team and training. This is to ensure brand consistency for users and the appropriate safeguarding and monitoring processes are in place.

### **Remember the bigger picture and focus on the benefit**

Staff and contractors must make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for RUSI to further our charitable purposes (either directly or indirectly, by engaging stakeholders and building our brand using our strategy). All content must accurately reflect RUSI's Mission and Values: Mission and Values | Royal United Services Institute .

### **Bring value to our audience(s)**

Those responsible for the management of our social media accounts should answer questions as swiftly as possible to help and engage with our service users and supporters.

### **Seek permission to share**

If staff or contractors outside of the Communications Team wish to contribute content for social media, whether non-paid for or paid for advertising, they should obtain guidance and permission from the Communications Team.

### **Obtain consent**

Staff and consultants must not post content about funders, clients or partners without express permission. If staff or consultants are sharing information about funders, clients or third-party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from RUSI. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff and contractors must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.

### **Put safety first**

It can be challenging working on social media and there may be times where staff or contractors could be subject to unpleasant or abusive comments directed at the charity, our work or people. We encourage everyone who is on social media on behalf of RUSI to be aware of our safeguarding and wellbeing policies and consult with Human Resources where necessary.

It is also vital that RUSI does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials in pursuit of social media engagement.

### **Stick to the law**

Staff and contractors must not encourage people to break the law to supply material for social media, such as using unauthorised video footage. All relevant rights for usage must be obtained before publishing material.

### **Remain politically neutral**

RUSI is not associated with any political organisation or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We can express views where appropriate on policies that impact our work and funders, but it is essential that RUSI remains, and is seen to be, politically neutral.

We cannot endorse a political party or candidate. We must carefully manage the risk that we are perceived to have any party-political bias and should carefully consider any posts which might be perceived as such, for example, posts which talk about individual politicians or parties rather than policies.

### **Check facts and be honest**

Staff and contractors should not automatically assume that material that's shared or included in any post is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification – for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it. But think first about how to manage any risk to the charity and its brand in doing so by consulting with the Communications Team to craft the response.

### **Seek advice for complaints**

If a complaint is made on RUSI's social media channels, staff and contractors should seek advice from the Communications Director before responding. If they are not available, then staff and contractors should speak to the Associate Director, Strategic Research.

### **Know what to do in a crisis**

Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis situation because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the charity's reputation.

The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity or our people. The Communications Team regularly monitors our social media spaces for mentions of RUSI so we can catch any issues or problems early. If there is an issue that could develop or has already developed into a crisis situation, please contact the Communications Team as soon as is feasible.

If any staff or contractors outside of the Communications Team becomes aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on RUSI's social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Communications Director immediately. It is the responsibility of all staff and contractors to report complaints or comments that could escalate into a crisis or have serious implications for the charity. Only the Communications Team is permitted to amend or delete content in a crisis.

### **Timings, schedules and rotas**

The Communications Team responds to comments Monday-Friday, 9am-5.30pm.

### **Use AI appropriately**

AI can be a valuable tool that can support our communications activities. However, staff and contractors must ensure AI created content adheres to our [AI policy](#).

### **Handover ownership if your role changes**

You must hand over ownership of the group/page/account you manage to another appropriate staff member (or contractor) if you change roles or if you leave RUSI.

## **Cyber Security:**

- Please use personal email addresses for all your social media accounts.
- Please ensure that your social media accounts have a strong password and consider changing these passwords as often as is feasible.
- Please exercise good judgement and do not click on any suspicious links.
- Where platforms allow it, please protect your information by ensuring that two factor authentication is on.
- Please report any suspicious activity or security breaches of your account to the Communications Team, who will advise you further.

## **Policy Breaches**

- Use of social media that breaches the law<sup>2</sup> may be reported to the police or other relevant authorities.

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<sup>2</sup> [Social Media and other Electronic Communications | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)



- Use of social media that contravenes this policy or RUSI's internal policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, termination of a consultant's contract or Associate Fellow's status.
- You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider constitutes a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action, or termination as set out above.

Version 1 May 2025, RUSI Communications Team.