



Social media policies for students, faculty and staff for social media platforms

Implementing a comprehensive social media policy for students, faculty, and staff is essential to promote a positive online presence and uphold the institution's reputation. This policy mandates responsible online behaviour and ensures strict legal and ethical standards adherence. By clearly distinguishing between personal and official use, this document aims to ensure that all individuals understand that their online conduct directly impacts their professional relationships and the institution as a whole.

Common principles for all users

- **Respect and courtesy:** All members of the Institute's community are required to maintain a respectful tone in their online communications, strictly avoiding offensive or derogatory comments based on race, gender, religion, or disability.
- **Reputation management:** Users must remember that their online actions can reflect on BITS Pilani's reputation. Content that maligns or defames the institution, its employees, or policies is strictly prohibited and will lead to disciplinary action.
- **Creation of official accounts.** Do not create "official" pages or groups on social media (including on Instagram, WhatsApp or LinkedIn) on behalf of the Institute or using BITS PILANI / BITS, without prior approval from the Institute's administration/management.
- **Confidentiality:** Sharing confidential information related to the Institute, its staff, or other stakeholders without prior written consent is strictly prohibited and may constitute a breach of trust and legal obligations. **Legal responsibility:** Users shall be held personally liable for their online communications. All posts must strictly adhere to applicable laws, including but not limited to the Information Technology Act, 2000, and laws pertaining to defamation, harassment, and copyright. Non-compliance will result in severe penalties as per law and disciplinary action under the Institute's policy.
- **Privacy:** Individuals must respect the privacy rights of others. Disclosure of personal details or images of other students or staff without their express written permission is strictly prohibited under this policy and may attract legal consequences under privacy laws.
- **Grievances:** Social media platforms are not appropriate forums for airing personal or professional grievances. Users are directed to utilise the official institute channels and grievance redressal mechanisms established for resolving such issues.



Guidelines for students

In addition to the common principles, these guidelines specifically address the roles and responsibilities of students.

- **Mindful posting:** Students are mandated to be mindful of the public and permanent nature of all information shared online. Be aware that future employers frequently review social media profiles during recruitment processes. All students are required to sign an undertaking on social media use at the time of admission, acknowledging their understanding and compliance with this policy.
- **No unauthorised representation:** Students are strictly prohibited from claiming to represent or speak on behalf of the Institute without explicit prior written permission from the designated authority. When posting in a personal capacity, students must clearly use disclaimers stating that their views are personal and do not reflect the BITS Pilani's official stance.
- **Addressing issues internally:** For issues concerning campus life, faculty, or regulations, students must utilise the designated internal grievance redressal forums. Posting such matters on social media is prohibited as it can exacerbate the situation, undermine official resolution processes, and aggravate the situation.
- **Academic integrity:** Policies remind students that all content shared online is subject to Indian Copyright Law and other applicable intellectual property laws. Posting or distributing copyrighted material belonging to others, including but not limited to text, images, or music, without explicit permission from the copyright holder is strictly prohibited and may result in legal action.
- **Consequences:** Misuse of social media, including but not limited to cyberbullying, harassment, or any form of online misconduct, can result in disciplinary action, including fines, suspension, or expulsion.



Guidelines for faculty and staff

Policies for institute's employees include maintaining professional decorum while also recognising personal use.

- **Professional conduct:** Employees are expected to maintain their professional reputation and avoid social media activity that could harm the Institute's image.
- **Distinguishing official vs. personal capacity:** Staff members must differentiate between their personal social media accounts and official communication. If discussing work on a personal account, they should clarify that their views are their own and not representative of BITS Pilani.
- **Confidential information:** Staff must not use Institute IT resources to communicate anything they wish to keep private. They are strictly prohibited from disclosing confidential Institute information.
- **Official accounts:** Do not manage official BITS Pilani Institutional accounts/pages/groups on social media or otherwise on the web through personal or decoy accounts. Hand over official account credentials during role changes or at the time of separation from BITS Pilani to the authorised Institute personnel.
- **Reporting violations:** Staff are responsible for reporting any online activity that poses a risk to the institution or its members.

Enforcement and monitoring

The institute can enforce these policies through several measures:

- **Mandatory undertakings:** New students may be required to sign an agreement acknowledging the social media policy.
- **Disciplinary committees:** An internal disciplinary committee hears and adjudicates formal complaints of policy breaches.
- **Monitoring and removal:** BITS Pilani reserves the right to monitor online references and request the removal of content from personal or official accounts that violates the policy or harms the institution's reputation.
- **Legal action:** Violations that break Indian laws may lead to serious legal action and internal disciplinary measures.



Consequences of Non-Compliance

1. Scope: This Policy is mandatory for all users covered by it, including students, faculty, staff, and any other persons using Institute-managed social media assets or representing the Institute in any capacity.
2. Determination of breach: Any alleged breach of this Policy will be reviewed by the competent authority designated under the applicable Institute rules, following fair process and based on facts and evidence.
3. Action framework:
 - a. Faculty and staff. Where a violation is established, action will be taken in accordance with the applicable service rules, employment contract, codes of conduct, and other Institute policies, which may include advisory/counselling, written warning, withholding of privileges, suspension, or termination of employment/engagement, as warranted.
 - b. Students. Where a violation is established, action will be taken under the Institute's Rules & Guidelines for Students, including the Student Disciplinary Rules, which may include counselling, warning, fines, withdrawal of privileges, suspension or expulsion, as warranted.
4. Institutional and technical measures: Irrespective of (3) above, the Institute may, where appropriate, restrict or withdraw access to Institute-managed digital platforms, official social media accounts, or communication privileges; require removal or takedown of offending content; and issue corrective communications.
5. Contractual and third-party remedies: For non-employees (vendors, interns, visiting collaborators, etc.), contractual remedies may be invoked, including termination for cause, indemnity claims, and recovery of losses as contractually permitted.
6. Legal remedies: Where conduct violates applicable law (including defamation, harassment, data protection/privacy breaches, intellectual property infringement, or other unlawful activity), the Institute may initiate or cooperate in civil and/or criminal proceedings and may engage with social media platforms and law-enforcement agencies, as appropriate.
7. Reservation of rights: The Institute reserves the right to determine the appropriate course of action in each case, consistent with applicable rules, contracts, and law. Nothing in this clause limits any rights or remedies otherwise available to the Institute.