



Social Media

Community & Moderation Guidelines



SOUTH ESSEX
COLLEGES GROUP

Purpose

South Essex Colleges Group uses social media to communicate, engage and share information with prospective and current students, parents and carers, staff, employers, alumni and our wider communities.

We welcome comments, questions, feedback and constructive discussion on our official social media channels, including views that may be critical of the College.

These guidelines explain how we manage and moderate contributions to our social media channels and are intended to help maintain a safe, respectful, and constructive online community. They support the College's safeguarding, equality, data protection and communications responsibilities.

The College supports lawful freedom of expression and open discussion. Moderation will be applied only where necessary to protect individuals, safeguard learners, comply with legal obligations or maintain a safe and respectful online environment.

Our Approach to Moderation

Our social media channels are generally reactively moderated. This means comments may appear immediately and are reviewed by the College where necessary. We aim to apply these guidelines fairly, consistently, and proportionately.

The College will not normally hide, remove or restrict content simply because it:

- expresses criticism of the College;
- disagrees with a College decision, policy or action;
- raises a legitimate concern or complaint;
- represents a different opinion;
- contains negative but constructive feedback; or
- respectfully challenges the College or its decisions.

Moderation decisions will be based on the nature, impact and risks associated with content rather than whether a contribution is supportive or critical of the College.

We reserve the right to take proportionate action where content breaches these guidelines or creates safeguarding, legal, reputational or security risks.

Content We May Moderate

We may hide, remove, restrict, report or otherwise take action where content:

- contains abusive, threatening, intimidating, harassing or offensive language;
- constitutes bullying, victimisation or targeted harassment of an individual or group;
- discriminates against, demeans or incites hatred towards individuals or groups based on characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010;
- contains obscene, sexually explicit or seriously offensive material;
- contains personal, confidential or sensitive information about another person without appropriate authority;
- identifies children, young people or vulnerable individuals in a way that could create a safeguarding risk;
- appears defamatory, fraudulent or otherwise unlawful;
- encourages, promotes or facilitates illegal activity;
- infringes copyright, intellectual property or other legal rights;
- constitutes spam, repetitive posting, automated posting or unsolicited commercial promotion;
- impersonates another person, organisation or College representative;
- deliberately disrupts discussion, repeatedly provokes other users or attempts to undermine constructive participation;
- is wholly unrelated to the subject being discussed;
- breaches the terms, community standards or policies of the relevant social media platform;
- contains demonstrably false or misleading information that could cause harm to individuals, public safety, safeguarding arrangements or the College community;
- presents any other significant safeguarding, legal, security or operational risk.
- contains misleading or harmful AI-generated content, including impersonation, misrepresentation, fabricated information or false representation of College activity.



How We May Respond

Depending on the circumstances, the College may:

Media enquiries received through social media may be redirected to the College's Communications Team to ensure accurate and coordinated responses. Issues presenting significant reputational risk may be escalated to the Communications Team and senior management for review

Leave Content Visible

Where it represents legitimate opinion, criticism, discussion or debate.

Respond Publicly

Where clarification, correction, or factual information would benefit a wider audience.

Move the Conversation to a Private Channel

Where an individual's circumstances, complaint or personal information require confidential discussion.

Hide, Delete or Restrict Content

Where content breaches these guidelines.

Report Content to the Platform

Where content breaches platform rules or presents safeguarding, safety or legal concerns.

Restrict or Block Accounts

Where there is a serious breach or repeated breaches of these guidelines.

Escalate Internally or Externally

Where content raises safeguarding, welfare, security, legal or other serious concerns requiring formal intervention.

The College reserves the right to determine the most appropriate response based on the circumstances of each case.



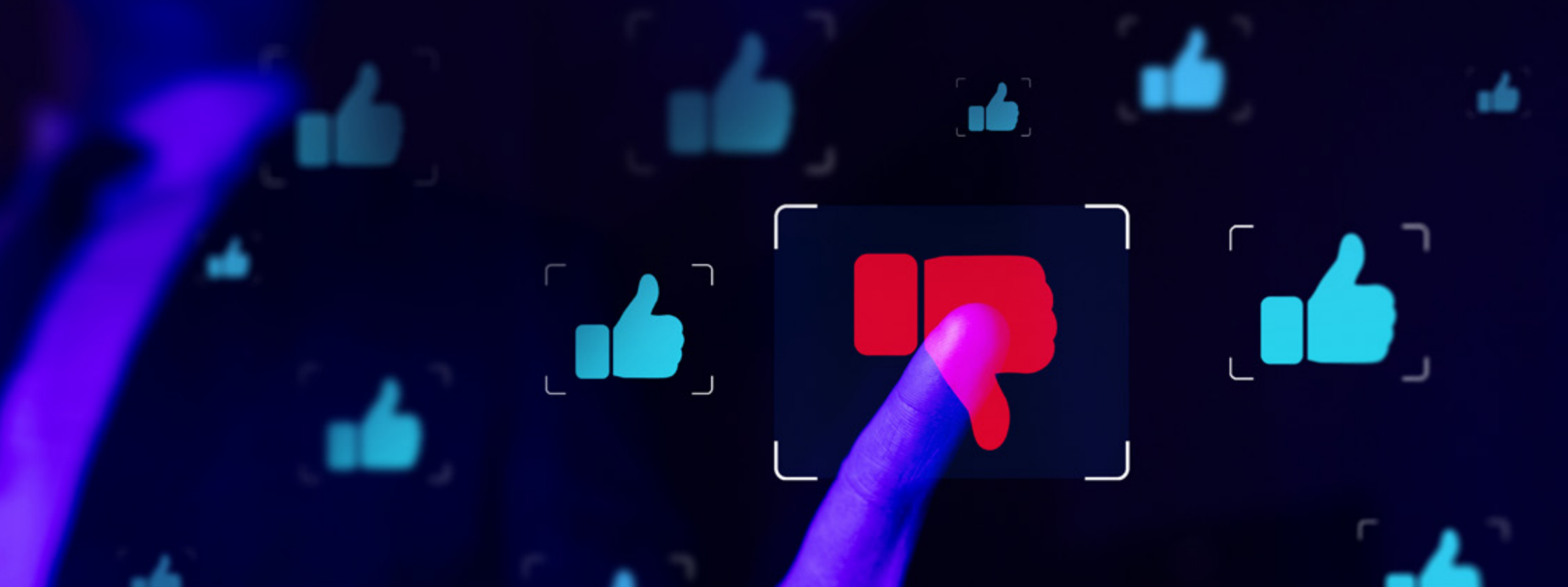
Safeguarding

South Essex Colleges Group takes its safeguarding responsibilities seriously.

Any social media interaction that raises a safeguarding concern will be referred to the appropriate safeguarding team and managed in accordance with the College's safeguarding procedures.

Where there is an immediate risk of harm, the College may contact emergency services, statutory agencies or other appropriate authorities.

Urgent safeguarding concerns should be reported through the College's established safeguarding channels and not solely through social media.



Personal Information and Privacy

Please do not publish personal, confidential or sensitive information about yourself or others on College social media channels.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- addresses;
- telephone numbers;
- personal email addresses;
- student identification details;
- medical information;
- safeguarding information; and
- details relating to individual personal circumstances.

Where an individual needs to discuss a personal matter, we may ask them to contact the College through a private communication channel.

The College will process personal information in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and College policies.

Complaints

Social media is not always the most appropriate channel for investigating or resolving individual complaints.

Where a comment constitutes a formal complaint, raises a matter requiring investigation, or requires access to personal information, we may direct the individual to the College's established complaints procedure.

Moving a matter into the appropriate complaints process does not automatically mean that legitimate criticism will be removed from social media.

Record Keeping and Evidence

The College may retain copies of comments, messages, screenshots, account information or related content where reasonably necessary to:

- investigate complaints;
- support safeguarding processes;
- comply with legal or regulatory obligations;
- protect students, staff and stakeholders; or
- preserve evidence relating to suspected misconduct or unlawful activity.

Any retained information will be managed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and College policies.

Moderation Queries and Reviews

If an individual believes content has been removed, restricted or moderated in error, they may contact the College using published communications channels and request that the decision is reviewed.

The College will consider such requests fairly and proportionately.

The outcome of any review will be final. The College retains discretion regarding moderation decisions where necessary to protect the safety, rights and interests of individuals and the wider College community.



Moderation Hours and Response Expectations

Official College social media accounts are monitored primarily during normal College working hours.

Although we aim to identify inappropriate content promptly, content may remain publicly visible before it can be reviewed.

The College cannot guarantee a response to every comment, message or mention. Response times may vary depending on the nature of the enquiry and operational priorities.

Urgent matters should be directed through the appropriate College services and not solely through social media channels.

Platform Rules

Users of our social media channels must also comply with the terms of use, community standards and policies of the relevant social media platform.

The College may take action under these guidelines regardless of whether a platform also takes enforcement action.

Our Discretion

South Essex Colleges Group reserves the right to determine whether content breaches these guidelines and to take proportionate action where necessary.

Decisions will be based on the content, context, impact and associated risks rather than whether a contribution is supportive or critical of the College.



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Policy Owner - Director of Marketing, Admissions & Careers

Approval Authority - Executive

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Review Date - September 2027

Next Scheduled Review - September 2027, or earlier following a significant regulatory, safeguarding, platform or organisational change

Related Policies

Safeguarding Policy | Data Protection Policy | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy | Complaints Policy | Staff Social Media Policy (if applicable) | IT Acceptable Use Policy