**Online Platforms and Social Media Use Guidance**

Social Media is a great way for your student group/society to increase your methods of connecting, from communicating between your members to sharing a post to celebrate what you’ve achieved; it can be utilised in many ways.

Although it can be great, there’s a few things to consider before you decide which platforms to use. As a society/student you represent Sheffield Hallam Students’ Union and must behave as a positive ambassador and in a way that adheres to our core values (both in person and online). Please remember activity online is visible to a much wider audience and in many cases permanent.

All student groups’ social media platforms should be linked through your society’s webpage for it to be recognised as your official platform. Any external page or site you have should also be visible via your society webpage on the Sheffield Hallam Students’ Union website.

Sheffield Hallam Students’ Union does not maintain or manage any social platforms associated with a group/society. SHSU does recognise that social media is constantly changing and updating and are happy to discuss which platform may be best for your society should you need this support.

*Please note that this is our guidance for using social media specifically as a student group/student. Each Social media platform will have its own rules and regulations for behaviour when using the platform and SHSU will not be able to support you as an individual should you choose not to follow those.*

# **Public/Open Platforms**

*Public/open platforms refer to a student group page which is open and visible to the public, and not just for member communications. These pages are a great way to share group activities and increase memberships, but these platforms are often harder to control who sees your posts.*

These platforms are likely to have one log in for the account. Therefore, please ensure this platform is linked to your current student group/society email address and that the log in details are only shared with the committee and passed over during your handover period. The password should be changed regularly and when the account is passed from one committee to another.

## **Instagram**

Instagram is a great tool to share photos and videos of your group’s activity. Whether it’s promoting your event or sharing photos from your Give it a Go, it’s currently one of the most popular platforms used. There is an option to have a private platform on Instagram should you wish to control who can see the content.

## **Facebook Page**

A Facebook page is an open platform for people to follow activity through posts. Content can only be created by individuals with admin rights and can be interacted with by any person who likes the page. These posts may be visible to third parties when they interact with your activity.

**Other public platforms**

Other public platforms than those listed above do exist (TikTok, Twitter, etc.). These all have different uses and may work for different groups/societies. We would advise you to familiarise yourself with the terms of conditions of any public platforms.

# **Private/Closed Platforms**

*Private/closed platform refers to all student groups/society pages or groups that are restricted from the public and require either approval or an invitation to join.*

This section aims to provide guidance on four of the most common platforms used by student groups/societies at Sheffield Hallam Students’ Union. Highlighted below are some of the key things to consider when using these platforms.

## **WhatsApp**

WhatsApp is a text-based platform that allows members to communicate without requiring a specific social platform. It is linked to phone numbers, therefore doesn’t require other social media log ins, but does require students to download the WhatsApp app.

Although widely used there are a few considerations before using WhatsApp:

### Collecting personal data

WhatsApp requires you to have an account linked to your phone number, it provides a full list of the group chat participants and their contact numbers to everyone else in the chat. This is unavoidable but can be limited by keeping the chat private and exclusive to members. All members must consent to being added into the WhatsApp chat and new WhatsApp chats should be made each year to ensure this data is not being shared with non-members.

Non-members should not have access to student groups/society WhatsApp chats.

### Permissions: Who can post?

You are able to limit who can post in WhatsApp chats. We recommend that the only people who have admin permissions within the chat are the student leaders/committee members. If the chat is set to prevent general members from posting, all members must be treated fairly, and no one should be given specific permissions closed to the rest of the members.

If the group/society do not limit who can post in their WhatsApp group, then the student leaders/committee are responsible for ensuring any behaviour/language that doesn’t adhere to the Sheffield Hallam Students’ Union’s code of conduct is dealt with in a timely and efficient manner (see appendix 1).

The Student Groups’ team is here to support all societies and would encourage you to discuss any incidents with the team as soon as possible so we can advise you on the next steps.

## **Discord**

Discord is an increasingly popular platform, particularly in the gaming community. By allowing a server to create channels for messaging, voice and video chats and including several bot developments to enhance the server experience, Discord is a one platform package for many Student Groups.

As with any online platform, student groups/societies can encounter issues with utilising Discord. This section aims to highlight these potential issues and suggest ways to mitigate them.

### Member behaviour in Server chats, channels, and calls

Discord allows for rules to be in place for the Server and we encourage student groups/societies to implement these to serve as a reminder for members regarding expectations. These rules must align with the Sheffield Hallam Students’ Union’s [Articles of Governance](https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/pageassets/aboutus/SHSU-Articles-of-Governance-FINAL-Sept-2021.pdf) and Societies Code of Conduct (appendix 2) (also see guidance on setting rules and boundaries online below).

### Gamer tags and anonymous accounts

Discord is a favourite among gaming groups/societies, it is therefore not uncommon for server members to use their gamer tag or another name on their account, particularly if they engage in other activities such as live streaming on Twitch. While this is not an issue, when a server members conduct is in violation of the server rules or Sheffield Hallam Students’ Union code of conduct it is not always easy to determine who that account belongs to.

Part of how this is mitigated is to have clear expectations of your server members conduct to help prevent issues occurring in the first place. However, when events do occur, having a clear process such as time outs/bans from posting that is determined and agreed by the group/society (and enforced by the lead/Committee) can help your server to maintain a safe environment. Employing other mitigating measures below will also help to lower the risk of an issue occurring.

If you’re unsure on the best measures for your society or want us to check your plans before you implement, please discuss with the Student Groups’ team.

### Public links – Who can join?

Having a link to your server on your group/society webpage or advertised on your social platforms may allow strangers to join with unpleasant intentions. So, how can you ensure your server is exclusive to your members?

Where your server is exclusive to members, there are verification software’s available to ensure anyone joining is a current student at Sheffield Hallam University.

Our recommendation for this type of software is [Koala Bot](https://koalabot.uk/), an addon designed, developed, and maintained by Gaming Societies across the UK, with specific design features for student groups/societies. Koala Bot has much functionality to keep your Server running efficiently with support available through their support server. The Verify process will ensure each member of the Server has a valid SHU email address before being allowed access to the server and is an example of how you can keep your server secure for members.

## **Facebook – Messenger**

Facebook messenger is a similar platform to WhatsApp, but instead of being linked to your phone number it is linked to your profile on the Facebook platform.

### Who has access to the chat?

As with WhatsApp, the main thing to consider in Facebook groups is who has access to the chat. All members must consent to being added into the Facebook Messenger Chat and new chats should be made each year to ensure profile data is not being shared with non-members.

Non-members should not have access to society Facebook Messenger chats.

## **Facebook - Group**

*This is in reference to a closed Facebook group rather than a public facing page.*

### Who has access to the group?

By setting the group to private, it will prevent members of the public from joining the page and viewing its content. Admin permissions can be added including approval steps for new members. You can also include a membership question, such as what the transaction number from your membership purchase is. Your student leader/committee can access the transaction list through their dashboard, enabling you to verify the person has purchased a membership to your group/society before allowing them access to the group.

Setting up new pages annually can be labour intensive depending on the size of your group/society and you may not always be aware of active memberships. Encouraging those who are no longer members or students at Hallam to leave the page can reduce the size of this task, but you may find Alumni who are interested in keeping up to date with your activities (these should also not have administration permissions). In these cases, a public page may be a better option, but this will affect the types of posts you can share.

# **Setting Rules and Boundaries Online**

All groups/societies that choose to utilise online platforms and social media within their activity should do so by adhering to platform rules and regulations, but also Sheffield Hallam Students’ Unions code of conduct. This applies to all members of the group/society, including leaders/committee members.

Most closed platforms allow the space to include rules that members must agree to regarding behaviour. Your group/society can include your own and making sure that they are in line with the Code of Conduct will ensure everyone is aware of the expectations.

These rules must be aligned with Sheffield Hallam Students’ Unions Code of Conduct, if in doubt please check with the Students Group team. Any student that feels rules are not being adhered to or are not being followed is entitled to raise this in an informal/formal complaint setting (see appendix 1). Leaders/committees should not use admin privileges on social media to reprimand members nor have the authority to revoke memberships via social media. When incidents occur, in the first instance the Committee should refer to the Social Media Code of Conduct to determine whether a breach has occurred, then seek advice from the Student Groups team as appropriate.

The group/society should have a process to manage incidents within the Server such as temporary time outs and the members should also feel able to approach the leader/Committee without fear of reprisal. Where a breach has occurred, the student/group should follow the relevant complaints process.

# Appendix 1: Support and complaints procedure for online activity

Any student/group that believes online behaviour breaks the code of conduct may raise with the University/Students’ Union via the following methods:

Report and Support: If a student feels they have been affected by an incident of sexual violence, harassment, abuse or hate crime they can log it and seek support from the University [here](https://reportandsupport.shu.ac.uk/). This can be done anonymously and can be used for in person and online incidents.

Student Group/Society Complaints Process: If a student wishes to raise a complaint about their experiences, they are within their rights to do so. The informal complaints process requires the student to make an appointment with a member of the Student Groups team to discuss the matter further. The team will then advise how to proceed which may include mediation or advice to follow the formal route.

A formal complaint requires the complaint to be registered, and you can do this [here.](https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/contact/) Any formal complaints are progressed by our Officer and Executive Team who will investigate the complaint thoroughly before making a decision.

Sheffield Hallam Students’ Union do not tolerate sexism, bullying, or harassment of any kind. If an incident occurs, we urge you to discuss your options with our team and access the support available through the university wellbeing pages. **The Students’ Union will ask for context to any complaints so please ensure you keep/ are able to access evidence of any incidents.**

Please note the Students’ Union can only investigate claims which are contrary to our code of conduct and personal complaints against other members. We cannot investigate claims relating to violations of general platform use (unless regarding personalised group/society rules set).

# Appendix 2: Societies Code of Conduct

*This Code of Conduct can also be found within the society constitution template*

All members of SHSU Societies must agree to abide by the following code of conduct. Transgressions against this code may be referred to either the Society Committee or SHSU staff for the purposes of conflict resolution, disciplinary action, or termination of membership.

17.1 Members will conduct themselves in a manner of mutual respect and

understanding for all members of the University community

17.2 Members will conduct themselves in a manner that shall not offend

others and shall not use foul and abusive language, either orally, in

writing, or by expression

17.3 Members will be a positive ambassador for the society and the

Students' Union by acting professionally when representing the Society or Students’ Union

17.4 Members will be committed to equal opportunities. No member of the Society shall be excluded from activity or democratic process based on their gender, age, sexual orientation, race, nationality, or any other protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

17.5 Members will, within reasonable expectations, look out for the health and safety of each other when undertaking society activity. Committee members are responsible for risk assessing activities and submitting health and safety documentation to the Students’ Union within the designated time frame.

All members of the Society are held accountable to the University code of conduct and the rules detailed within this supersede any additional regulations attributed to the Society.