

Breach of Social media guidelines & disciplinary actions thereof

Introduction

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM) recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media presents. The Institute actively uses social media to disseminate information about academic activities of the Institute to the general public, success stories and to communicate research and enhance the Institute's image online. IITM also actively encourages students to make effective and appropriate use of social media to build a positive public image for the Institute. Despite the opportunities presented by social media, there are risks. Social media allows individuals to communicate with a potentially huge audience, and sometimes its informality can encourage us to be less cautious than we would be using other more traditional methods of communication and interaction.

What is social media

Social Media in recent times has become synonymous with Social Networking sites. However, very broadly social media can be defined as any web or mobile based platform that enables an individual or agency to communicate interactively and enables exchange of user generated content. Social media includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Virtual worlds/social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, blogs, wikis, audio/video file sharing, Twitter)
- b. Video and photo sharing websites (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Flickr)
- c. Blogging sites (e.g., Institute blogs, personal blogs or blogs hosted by media publications, Twitter)
- d. Forums, discussion boards (e.g., Yahoo Groups, Google+, Google Groups), news article comments and online encyclopaedias" (e.g., Wikipedia)
- e. Other, similar technologies

Guidelines:

Please refer to the **Social Media Guidelines** document available at the websites dost.iitm.ac.in & ccw.iitm.ac.in

Breach of social media guidelines

- a. If a student is found to have breached the social media guidelines, then the students would be liable for disciplinary action within the framework of Social Media guidelines or any other rules and regulations of the Institute in vogue.
- b. Any individual suspected of committing a breach of the social media guidelines shall be required to cooperate with any investigation in accordance

with the disciplinary procedure. Non-cooperation may lead to further disciplinary action.

- c. Any individual may be required to remove internet or social media posts that are found by the Institute to be in breach of the social media guidelines. Failure to comply with such a request may result in further disciplinary action.
- d. Failure to obey instructions of any Institute disciplinary authority or to comply with written or oral communications from an authorized Institute official to appear for a meeting or hearing, would also tantamount to breach of social media guidelines and it would make the student liable for further disciplinary action.
- e. Engage in any conduct which is unbecoming of a student of the Institute would make the student liable for disciplinary action.

Procedure for Registering Social Media related Complaints

- a. Any stakeholder of the Institute can lodge a complaint with the Dean (Students), if there is any breach of code of conduct while using social media by the students.
- b. Any reference to the Student Disciplinary Committee (SDC) about indiscretion committed by students while using social media can be taken up by the SDC by treating it as a complaint.
- c. The SDC may consider issues suo moto, if necessary and shall hold an enquiry only if there is verifiable evidence of wrong doing against the student involved, otherwise the complaint shall be treated as closed.

Schedule of penalties

In order to obviate any indiscretion by the students while using the social media, some of the various kinds of breaches and penalties proposed to be imposed are tabulated hereunder. The following list is not exhaustive. The list may be modified from time to time.

| S. No. | Nature of breach | Disciplinary Actions |
|---------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Posting comments/photos etc. deliberately, negligently or recklessly mocking an individual with the potential to harass or humiliate them, as perceived by those viewing the social media. | Appendix I |

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| 2. | Posting content online giving the impression that he/she is speaking on behalf of the Institute or the Department without proper permission from the competent authorities. | Appendix I |
| 3. | Unauthorized recording of audio or video conversations with students, faculty and staff, and posting them online. | Appendix I |
| 4. | Posting inappropriate material, including images /morphed images (includes by animation, photo editing etc.), that is, or may be perceived to be threatening, harassing, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, discriminatory, or hostile towards any individual, group or entity or any other posting that constitutes, or may constitute, a criminal offence. | Cyber laws as are applicable in the Indian Territory will be applicable to the contents posted online. |
| 5. | Posting confidential information (which may include research not yet in the public domain, information about fellow students or staff or personal matters, non-public or not yet approved documents or information like complaints /potential complaints, legal proceedings /potential legal proceedings etc.). | Appendix I |
| 6. | Posting any (IITM owned) content online for any type of financial consideration/personal benefits directly or indirectly. | Appendix I |
| 7. | Comments posted using fake accounts, made-up names or using another person's name without their consent. (Related to the IIT Madras community/system) | Appendix I |

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| 8. | Anything which may bring the Institute into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of fellow students, alumni, faculty, staff and all others connected with the Institute. | Appendix I |
| 9. | Misuse of official Institute accounts. | Appendix I |
| 10. | Maliciously, negligently or recklessly spreading rumours, lies or gossip by the way of SMS, Mail etc. (IITM Related) | Appendix I |

Note:

- i. Cyber bullying includes, but not limited to the activities mentioned above.
- ii. Not only posting content on social media, forwarding or circulating such content will also result in the same kind of disciplinary action.


 13/5/2022
 Deputy Registrar (Students)


 Chairperson

Appendix I: Possible Disciplinary Actions

The following is a representative list of corrective actions that may be taken depending upon the nature and severity of the social media guidelines breach. The list is not exhaustive and may be modified from time to time.

Minor

- i. **Oral Reprimand.** Advised and cautioned about misconduct orally.
- ii. **Written Reprimand.** Advised and cautioned about misconduct in writing.
- iii. **Written Warning.** A written warning to be issued mentioning that any further violations of the guidelines would render the student(s) liable for a more stringent punishment.


Major

a. Hostel and Campus Life

- i. **Restrictions/Suspension of Privilege.** Prohibits participation in or attendance at certain events, activities, or class/lab; restricts specific campus student privileges as mentioned hereunder.
 - Hostel Privileges
 - Use of Lab Facilities
 - Use of Library facilities
 - Use of Sports Facilities
 - Membership in Clubs and Other bodies
 - Placement Activity
 - Internship/academic associations with partner institution
 - Holding Position of Responsibility (PoR)
- ii. **Fine.** Any violation of the guidelines would attract a minimum fine of Rs.5000 in addition to the imposition of appropriate disciplinary action. In case of multiple violations, the SDC can decide on the total fine leviable in addition to the imposition of appropriate punishment.
- iii. The complaint may be referred to other authorities including but not limited to CCASH, Cybercrime branch or other relevant agencies.
- iv.

b. Academic and Research

- i. **Restrictions/Suspension of Privilege.** Prohibits participation in or attendance at certain events, activities, or class/lab; restricts specific campus student privileges as mentioned hereunder.

- Use of Lab Facilities
 - Use of Library facilities
 - Internship/academic associations with partner institution
- ii. **Debarment from sitting in the examination.** The student may be barred from sitting in the examination.
- iii. **Disciplinary Probation.** A written communication would be sent to the erring student(s) informing him/them any further violations during disciplinary probation may result in suspension. The terms of disciplinary probation shall be determined on case-to-case basis.
- iv. **Suspension.** Student will be withdrawn from all courses carried in that semester and forfeit fees. Student shall be refrained from visiting the Institute premises unless approved in writing by the Disciplinary Committee. Suspension may involve course drop, semester drop, rustication for a specified period depending on the severity of the offence(s). The student can be reinstated on receipt of a written request from him/her after completion of the suspension period.
- v. **Expulsion.** Forfeiture of all rights and degrees not actually conferred at the time of the expulsion, forfeiture of right to study and fees. Student can visit the Institute premises only if the permission is issued in writing by Disciplinary Committee.
- vi. **Withholding award of degree.** Withholding Award of degree /diploma / certificate even if all the academic requirements have been satisfactorily completed by the erring student.
- vii. The complaint may be referred to other authorities including but not limited to CCASH, Senate Sub-Committee on Student Discipline and Welfare, Cybercrime branch or other relevant agencies. 


13/5/2022
Deputy Registrar (Students)


Chairperson