ONLINE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Introduction

1.   The University of Suffolk recognises the benefits and opportunities which new technologies offer to teaching and learning. We provide internet access to all students and staff and encourage the use of technologies in order to enhance skills, promote achievement and enable lifelong learning. However, the accessibility and global nature of the internet and different technologies available mean that we are also aware of potential risks and challenges associated with such use. Our approach is to implement appropriate safeguards within the University while supporting staff and students to identify and manage risks independently and with confidence. We believe this can be achieved through a combination of security measures, training, guidance and implementation of our policies. In furtherance of our duty to safeguard students, we will do all that we can to make our students and staff stay e-safe and to satisfy our wider duty of care.

2.   This Online Behaviour Policy should be read alongside other relevant policies including Data Protection and Data Security Policy, Dignity at Study Policy, Fitness to Study Procedure, General Regulations (Students), IT Services Policies, Safeguarding Policy, Social Media Guide, Student Complaints Procedure, and Student Discipline Procedure.

3.   The policy is informed by the Universities UK guidance 'Tackling Online Harassment and Promoting Online Welfare' and the related case studies.

Scope

4.   The Policy applies to all students and staff of the University of Suffolk, including students studying with the University's academic partners. The Online Behaviour Policy applies to all use of the internet and forms of electronic communication such as email, online learning environment (including MySuffolk and Brightspace), mobile phones, messaging platforms and social media.

5.   Students studying with academic partners may also be subject to local or institution specific policies.

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Guidance and Training

16.   With the unlimited nature of internet access, it is impossible for the University to eliminate all risks for staff and students. It is our view, therefore, that the University should support staff and students to understand online risks through the provision of guidance and training. This will provide individuals with skills to be able to identify risks independently and manage them effectively.

a) For students:

Online behaviour and safety guidance will form part of the Induction programme for new and returning students and will be updated through the curriculum, supported by the guidance on MySuffolk. During their studies, students will be encouraged to question the validity and reliability of materials researched, viewed or downloaded in order to enhance their ethical digital literacy skills. They will also be encouraged to respect the copyright of other parties and to cite references properly.

b) For staff:

New staff will take part in online safety training as part of their induction. Existing staff will be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the policies and guidance, and to participate in the corporate development programme. Staff should be aware of relevant legislation, the university's duty of care to students, and know routes for reporting incidents and disclosures.

Incidents and Response

17.   If a student wishes to report an incident, they can do so to their Personal Tutor, Course Leader, Student Services or equivalent support service at a Partner institution, or to the Students' Union Advice Service. However, any member of staff at the University of Suffolk or a Partner institution should be responsive to any disclosure made.

18.   Where a member of staff wishes to report an incident, they must contact their line manager where possible or refer to the University's Whistleblowing policy. Staff employed by Partner institutions should refer to local policies for guidance in the first instance.

19.   Where an incident is reported to the University, the matter will be dealt with in line with the University's policies and procedures as detailed in Paragraph 2 above. The University will act to prevent, as far as reasonably possible, any harm or further harm occurring. Sanctions may be put in place, external agencies may be involved or the matter may be resolved internally depending on the seriousness of the incident.