

Use of social media: guidance for RICS members

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The use of social media (such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, forums, podcasts or blogs) has become an integral part of the personal and professional lives of many.

Professionally, social media networks are now an important resource for many to share information, develop business opportunities and network with fellow professionals. Such platforms can be an effective tool to advertise and promote professional services, provide reviews of services, as well as legitimately warning others about failures in services.

Most members act professionally in their use of social media. However, RICS members, like all professionals, are representative of their professional community and some concerns have been raised about whether the content of some posts crosses a line that could undermine public trust in the profession.

The standards expected of members do not change because they are communicating through social media rather than face-to-face or other traditional media.

RICS' *Rules of Conduct* are intended to safeguard the high standards of professional behaviour expected of RICS members and, in so doing, protect the interests of members and the profession as a whole.

This guidance highlights when RICS is likely to investigate concerns about social media posts.

RICS is more likely to start investigations into social media posts that:

- are discriminatory
- are dishonest
- are abusive or threatening, or likely to cause significant harm, distress or offence to a person
- bully, harass or victimise a person or people
- show a pattern of frequent or a large number of concerning communications
- ignore previous advice or warnings about concerns.

RICS is unlikely to start investigations about social media posts that:

- are critical of an organisation or its policies and performance, rather than individuals
- use professional and respectful language
- are removed if a member receives a request to do so.

If concerns are raised with RICS and it is felt that the post(s) in question may damage public confidence or trust in the profession, there are a number of steps that RICS can take, including:

RICS may take disciplinary action in the most serious cases in order to protect the public and the reputation of the profession.

Irresponsible use of social media has the potential to cause serious offence and reputational damage. In extreme cases, showing approval for discriminatory posts on social media or sharing such posts created by another might result in the need for an RICS investigation to safeguard the reputation of the profession.

There may be occasions when social media posts made by members in their personal capacity fall within the remit of Regulation, particularly if extreme or highly offensive views are expressed such as may cause reputational damage to the profession.

This document is guidance only and may be updated.

Delivering confidence

We are RICS. Everything we do is designed to effect positive change in the built and natural environments. Through our respected global standards, leading professional progression and our trusted data and insight, we promote and enforce the highest professional standards in the development and management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our work with others provides a foundation for confident markets, pioneers better places to live and work and is a force for positive social impact.

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