UKFIET (The Education and Development Forum)

Online Publications and Social Media Policy

UKFIET is the United Kingdom Forum for International Education and Training, also known as The Education and Development Forum.

UKFIET is committed to promoting and strengthening international education and development for all, regardless of gender, race, nationality and other differences. It pursues this objective through:

- Sharing educational ideas, knowledge and expertise between members and across the wider community, in the UK and internationally, through conferences, seminars and other meetings;
- Encouraging the development of teaching, training, research and publication;
- Serving as a resource to policy makers in government, multi-lateral and non-government organisations, and in other institutions; and
- Making representations on issues of common interest,

as stated in the Operational Guidelines (revised September 2023).

UKFIET is a non-profit organisation registered as a limited company in England No. 5725610 with Registered Charity No. 1116614. It is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Our website address is: https://www.ukfiet.org. UKFIET has a Board of Trustees which oversees its portfolio of activities and an Executive Committee which manages the delivery of the portfolio in accordance with its Operational Guidelines.

Relevance of Online Publications and Social Media

Online publications and communications via newsletters, blogs and social media provide a powerful tool for UKFIET to achieve its purposes. 'Social media' describes web-based applications and tools that enable users to generate and share content (such as words, images, and videos), and network with one another by sharing information, knowledge, opinions, and common interests. UKFIET has social media accounts with X (formerly known as Twitter), LinkedIn, Facebook and YouTube.

Together, online publications and social media offer a valuable means of sharing educational ideas, disseminating research, amplifying the voices of members and mobilising knowledge throughout UKFIET's members and followers worldwide. The global reach of online publications and social media is particularly important given the international nature of UKFIET's objectives to access, engage, inform, and learn from education stakeholders in diverse countries. Online publications and social media can also play a key role in raising broader awareness of issues affecting international education, and thereby help to attract further support, resources and investment for both global and national systems, programmes and initiatives.

Risks of Online Publications and Social Media

In line with its purposes, UKFIET works to promote constructive, critical and thought-provoking discourse on issues relating to international education and the role of education in international development. It seeks to protect and respect freedom of speech and avoid censorship, but must nevertheless attend to the following risks in its online publications and social media:

- Posting content that is or could be harmful to any individual or group of people;
- Breaching relevant UK laws or rules, for example, around obscene content or political activity;
- Blurring the lines between an individual's personal opinions and professional responsibilities.

Although many of its members work with children, young people and vulnerable groups, UKFIET does not work directly with such populations, nor are its communications targeted towards such audiences.

The fast pace and international reach of online publications and social media present both strengths and potential additional risks where inadequate measures are in place. This policy therefore offers guidance for UKFIET, its officers and members to use online publications and social media effectively for the promotion of its purposes. The policy further sets out important considerations for interacting in social media spaces to help UKFIET expand its reach and audiences while protecting its interests and reputation and avoiding any legal issues.

Guiding Principles for Online Publications and Social Media

UKFIET aims to manage its online publications and social media to accord with the values of respect, tolerance and equity. An appropriate approach is taken in handling each online publication and social media item depending on the type of communication and content involved. Examples of potential items include: a blog post written on an issue of educational interest specifically for the UKFIET website; a blog published elsewhere that UKFIET retweets or cross-posts on its website; a tweet from the official UKFIET account; and comments or responses to a blog or tweet that appears on the UKFIET platform.

A determining factor in how the communication should be managed, and any risks mitigated, will depend on the degree of control UKFIET has over its publication. In some cases, UKFIET will have the opportunity to influence or determine the particular content; in others, UKFIET will need to decide whether its disclaimer provides adequate protection, and it can support the publication. The disclaimer goes on all externally generated content and the current wording is '*Views expressed in outputs hosted on the UKFIET website are those of the contributors. They do not necessarily represent the views of UKFIET as an organisation, the UKFIET Trustees, Executive Committee or the wider UKFIET membership*'.

Content on the UKFIET website and social media platforms

The key guiding principles for online publications and social media are that UKFIET will not post or share content which is:

- **Harmful,** that is, likely to cause distress or harm to an individual or a group of people (such as abuse, harassment or threats);
- **Inconsistent** or incompatible with UKFIET's purposes and objectives;
- **Not in UKFIET's best interests**, taking into account the potential benefits and risks; or
- **In breach of the law**, which may relate to copyright infringement, UK General Data Protection Regulation rules, defamation and libel laws, or communications which might comprise hate speech or criminal offences, or be malicious, threatening, indecent or grossly offensive.

UKFIET will also consider the value its online publications and social media content can add to its audiences, for example by answering questions, informing, and engaging them. All content should align with UKFIET's purposes and be subject to editing, including questions of clarification and suggestions for wording to ensure it is clear in meaning, as well as free of typos, misspellings and grammatical errors.

Blogs and other externally generated online publications provide an important mechanism for UKFIET to achieve its organisational goals. They enable members of the community to share important ideas, research and knowledge that may provide a valuable resource for policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders working with education systems. UKFIET manages the risks associated with such content by:

- Sharing guidance for members of the UKFIET community who may wish to publish blogs on its website;
- Operating an agreed, transparent and standardised process for the review, acceptance and publication of blogs and other member communications;
- Including disclaimers indicating that the author or contributor is responsible for the content and that the views contained therein do not necessarily represent those of UKFIET or its member organisations; and
- Approving or moderating any comments on the UKFIET website, for example to blogs or other pieces, before they go into the public domain.

UKFIET issues guidance for prospective blog authors to ensure the calibre of content posted on its website. Such guidelines include practical information concerning word-count, style and the use of images, evidence and neutral (for example, non-gendered) language. UKFIET also considers the following broader criteria before posting pieces on its website:

- **Quality**, namely the quality of the overall contribution to the UKFIET Forum and to the broader field of international education and development, recognising that some authors may be writing in a language other than their mother tongue and therefore require some additional support before publication;

- **Clarity**, to ensure that the publication and its messages can be understood by a wide and international audience (UKFIET to provide suggestions for clarifying meaning and expanding on points where we think the wording can be improved and made clearer);
- **Relevance** of the content to issues concerning international education and development, and the furtherance of UKFIET's purposes to promote and strengthen education for all;
- **Originality** to spark new ideas, debates and approaches in the field;
- **Representation** such that the content represents, or acknowledges, the interests of different stakeholders in international education and development without excluding particular groups, and ideally giving voice to under-represented populations;
- **Balance**, whereby the content takes into account multiple perspectives, and avoids the furtherance of individual self-interest or institutional self-promotion.

In addition to generating new content, UKFIET will also use the principles and criteria described above in moderating any comments on its website, and in decisions on what to 'like' and reshare on social media.

Personal Use of Social Media

UKFIET trustees, officers, members of the Executive Committee and freelance staff have the right to exercise their freedom of expression using social media, within the terms of the law. This may involve taking political stances to support a specific cause, party or candidate. However, they should be aware that content posted in their individual capacity may be associated with UKFIET, with possible adverse consequences.

Trustees are neither required nor expected to monitor personal social media accounts but if they become aware of content posted or shared by someone associated with UKFIET which is having or might have a negative effect on the organisation, they should consider taking action to protect UKFIET's interests. The likelihood of an adverse effect and appropriate response may depend on who is involved, including their role and length of tenure within UKFIET. UKFIET's trustees, officers, members of the Executive Committee and freelance staff reduce and mitigate such risks through the following measures:

- Exercising caution with their privacy online, including sharing personal information;
- Being polite, self-aware and respectful of others and their opinions, especially during passionate online discussions or heated virtual debates; and/or
- Including an explicit statement on their personal social media accounts that their views are their own and do not represent UKFIET's position.

UKFIET Trustees, officers, members of the Executive Committee and freelance staff should be aware that, in addition to their directly posted content, views may be taken on how they express their opinions indirectly by sharing, 'liking', or 'retweeting' other content.

Responsibility for Online Publications and Social Media

The Board of Trustees is responsible for setting the policy applicable to UKFIET's online publications and social media use. The Executive Committee makes decisions to enact such policy, including through ensuring there are appropriate processes in place, working primarily

with the Engagement Fellow who is responsible for managing UKFIET's online publications and social media on a day-to-day basis. The Engagement Fellow will also liaise with the Chair of the Executive Committee, the Chair of Trustees, and the Board of Trustees for additional guidance on more sensitive issues and content, where required.

Inappropriate online publications or social media content could harm UKFIET's reputation, operations and support base. The open nature of social media in particular means that complaints may be public and can escalate quickly. In the event that a breach of policy occurs, or UKFIET posts or shares content that risks significantly damaging its reputation, or it receives a significant number of complaints or negative attention, UKFIET will:

- Delete, remove or revise the relevant content, if possible and appropriate;
- Take suitable corrective action which could involve blocking or banning a user, investigating how the breach took place and/or making a public statement (taking into account the relative benefits and risks of issuing such a statement);
- Manage any conflicts of interest, for example, where the breach involves a trustee (who should not take part in any related decision-making); and
- Consider whether to report the incident to the relevant authorities, which may comprise the Charity Commission if the breach has caused significant harm to UKFIET or its beneficiaries, or the police in the case of illegal content.

In such situations, the Engagement Fellow will work with the Executive Committee, the Chair of Trustees, and the Board of Trustees (as appropriate) to resolve the breach. Written records of the decision-making process should be retained in case UKFIET is required to show that proper consideration was given to assess the different risks involved.

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