



Social Media Guidelines

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the University's Social Media Policy.
- 1.2. The University recognises Academic Freedom, whereby staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom; to put forward new ideas, and to state controversial or unpopular opinions, without sanction.
- 1.3. The University of Aberdeen aims to connect & engage strategically with social media audiences in order to build relationships with individuals.
- 1.4. The University's social media environment will be collaborative, supportive and creative. There will be an overarching governance structure which empowers local practitioners to achieve objectives that complement institutional goals.
- 1.5. The University recognises that effective use of social media can bring significant and measurable benefits to the institution. These include opportunities to promote the institution's success stories, develop national and international reach, improve student engagement and attract high quality staff and students.
- 1.6. Along with these benefits it should be recognised that there are also risks involved, including the risk of reputational damage arising from misuse by staff, students or third parties, threats to the security of sensitive or confidential information, exposure to malware and a negative impact on productivity.
- 1.7. There are dedicated staff members available to assist with social media; first contact should be the University's Digital Marketing Team within the Directorate of External Relations (DoER) who can provide guidance and support.
- 1.8. The Digital Marketing Team can be contacted on socialmedia@abdn.ac.uk.

2.0 Guidelines Purpose & Scope

- 2.1. These guidelines, in conjunction with the Social Media Policy, aim to provide guidance to institutional users of social media which will ensure the benefits of social media are maximised and the risk to reputational damage is minimised.
- 2.2. For the purposes of these Guidelines and the University's Social Media Policy, social media is defined as "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking" (hereafter "platforms"). If you are unsure whether a particular platform within the scope of the policy and these guidelines, please contact the Digital Marketing Team.

3.0 Our Principles

- 3.1. By way of guidance, all social media users across the University should adhere to the same principles.
- 3.2. The University recognises that its use of social media platforms is public and as such seeks to:
 - 3.2.1. **Be Transparent** – We will always be open in (and mindful of) the fact that we are speaking on behalf of the University and will always be clear in our purpose and agenda. Speaking honestly is vital to us.
 - 3.2.2. **Be Authentic** – We will always seek to be “human” to our communities, providing the same service that we would expect to deliver “face-to-face” and allow our stakeholders to understand our values and culture.
 - 3.2.3. **Be Conversational** – In seeking to be “human” on our social platforms we will seek to create relationships by talking and listening to our stakeholders.
 - 3.2.4. **Be Respectful** – All our interactions on social media platforms will be respectful and constructive. We will avoid any content or language that can be read (even unintentionally) as demeaning or insulting to any groups or individuals. Any contentious conversations should be moved to private communications as soon as possible.
 - 3.2.5. **Acknowledge mistakes** – Mistakes will happen. We will acknowledge if there has been an error and be clear on how we plan to rectify it and how it will affect our stakeholders.
 - 3.2.6. **Post the best** - We will only post high-quality material. If content is not of sufficient quality, it should not be posted. If content is withheld from the corporate pages due to quality, feedback will be provided by the Digital Marketing Team.
 - 3.2.7. **Tailor messages** – We understand our audience is varied, as are the devices with which they access social media, and the platforms they choose to use. It is therefore vital to provide messages that will have maximum effect, in a way that will resonate with them and to acknowledge that not every post is right for every platform.

3.3. User/Follower Comments

- 3.3.1. We accept feedback and comments on our social media channels. We intend to be courteous and professional in our postings and ask that users do the same.
- 3.3.2. We maintain specific positions on our shared information, but we will not remove comments shared by those who have different viewpoints if they are presented in a civilized manner. We would rather engage such users in discussion.

- 3.3.3. Comments posted to our social media channels will be moderated but should be permitted provided they don't contain content that is abusive, uses offensive language, is off-topic or is obviously spam. Comments failing to meet this standard will be deleted.
- 3.3.4. Users repeatedly posting inappropriate comments may be restricted in their ability to post or banned completely from posting.
- 3.3.5. Staff should not post any form of 'official response' to a post unless authorised to do so by the University. Equally, staff should never commit the University to a resolution, unless authorised to do so by the University.

4.0 Corporate Accounts

- 4.1. As per the Social Media Policy, a corporate University of Aberdeen social media account (within this definition we include pages and groups) is defined as any account representing a School/institute/research group/team/service or similar in a corporate context and shall be deemed to be under the authority, and ownership, of the Director of External Relations (DoER), as exercised through their nominated representative.
- 4.2. Authority to authorise the creation of any new corporate social media account, which seeks to represent an aspect of the University's business, is given solely to the DoER or their nominated representative and will be setup according to the procedures outlined in Appendix 1.
- 4.3. Students may assist with managing corporate accounts but cannot have sole responsibility and should be briefed and supervised appropriately by the main account contact, as defined in Appendix 1.
- 4.4. All users having access to a corporate account must observe their obligations regarding the following policies, guidelines and statements, all of which are available from the Policy Zone. Any relevant training is also to be undertaken.
 - Equality and Diversity Policy
 - Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace
 - Conditions for using Information Technology Facilities
 - Code of Practice for Electronic Publishing
 - Web Privacy Statement
 - Accessibility and Inclusion in Education (TBC)
 - Digital Accessibility (TBC)
- 4.5. Any corporate accounts established subsequent to the enactment of the Social Media Policy and these Guidelines must follow the approval process outlined in this document or risk suspension and possible deletion.

- 4.6. All corporate accounts must use the full-colour university crest on a white background as their profile image/avatar. The image should be proportioned to avoid any obscuring of the crest by the platform design layout. No other profile image/avatar may be used without permission of the Digital Marketing Team.
- 4.7. All staff who post to corporate accounts are responsible for ensuring that they comply with institutional accessibility guidelines.
- 4.8. It is important that any social media account operated in the institution's name is active and engaging with its audience. Failure to do so can be damaging to University's reputation and brand. If a corporate account has not had original content posted on it for a period of 8 weeks, it shall be deemed to be dormant.
- 4.9. Dormant accounts shall be suspended for a period of not less than 1 month during which the DoER, or their representative, will authorise an assessment to be carried out concerning whether the account should be terminated or reactivated.
- 4.10. In order to be reactivated account contacts must:
 - Demonstrate the account has a unique audience and message not currently being met by other existing accounts.
 - Demonstrate that the use of the account will help towards achieving the University's strategic objectives.
 - Have a 3-month content plan in place.
 - Have a strategy for sustainable growth in terms of audience engagement, growth and post reach milestones.

5.0 Contact Details & Feedback

- 5.1. All institutional social media accounts must ensure that the relevant contact details for the area being represented by the account are easily obtainable, either on the account itself, or through limited steps to a platform external to the account.
- 5.2. The formal feedback process for reporting content, comments or other issues on our feeds should be easily accessible to all users, either on the account itself, or limited steps to a platform external to the account.

6.0 Security

- 6.1. Staff should be aware of security issues that can arise from using social networks.
- 6.2. Corporate accounts must be protected by strong passwords that are changed regularly and shared only with authorised users. Passwords should meet, or exceed, the minimum requirements laid down by IT Services.

- 6.3. Staff should not use personal social media accounts to administer content on University pages/feeds. If access is required, a 'work account' should be set up using a work email address. Passwords for such accounts must be secure and meet, or exceed, the minimum requirements laid down by IT Services.
- 6.4. Staff must not use a piece of software, app or service, other than those provided by the native platforms, to engage with any corporate social media account without receiving approval from the Digital Marketing Team in consultation with IT Services.

7.0 Copyright, Data Protection & Inappropriate Content

- 7.1. Users should be aware of copyright and data protection issues that can arise from using social networks, ensuring they do not share or link to data in any way that could breach the University's data protection policy¹.
- 7.2. Staff must not create or transmit material that might be defamatory or incur liability for the University; or post messages, status updates, or links to material in breach of existing legislation or University policy.
- 7.3. In addition, staff must not:
 - Send offensive or harassing material to others via social media.
 - Send or post messages or material that could damage the University of Aberdeen's image or reputation.
 - Interact with The University of Aberdeen's partners or competitors in any ways which could be interpreted as being offensive, disrespectful or rude.
 - Post, upload, forward or link to spam, junk email or chain emails and messages.
- 7.4. The University of Aberdeen respects and operates within copyright laws. Users may not use social media to publish or share any copyrighted software, media or materials owned by third parties, unless permitted to do so by that third party. Users are encouraged to maintain their own records to ensure permission can be proven if ever challenged.
- 7.5. If staff wish to share content published on another website, they are free to do so by embedding a link in a post provided the links do not direct users to obvious copyright breaches such as illegal copies of music, films, games, books or other software.

¹ https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-governance-and-compliance/data_protection_policy_April_2015.pdf

8.0 Staff Use of Personal Social Media Accounts

- 8.1. Please refer to the Social Media Policy for full details of use of personal social media
- 8.2. If a 'personal' social media account has been set up using a University staff email address, for example to enable access to a corporate social media page or group, the account must not be used to post content on the 'personal' account's own feed, or used to reply to posts on pages/in groups other than the pages/groups it has been authorised to manage. When posting to a page/group the user should post under the name of the page/group and not the 'personal' account's name, unless authorised to do so.
- 8.3. If a member of staff identifies themselves on their personal social media account as being employed by the University, either directly by noting it in the account details or indirectly through the content posted/commented on, it is requested that a disclaimer is included in the public profile of the account stating that the views expressed are the staff member's own and do not reflect the views of the University of Aberdeen. Usually adding the words "My own views" in the section of the biography which will be visible from the main feed should suffice.
- 8.4. Staff may not post material, publicly or privately, which discusses students in an identifiable manner, without the specific and informed consent of the student. Reposting material released through the Directorate of External Relations is acceptable, as is reposting material a student has made public themselves, although consideration should be given to the nature and context of the original post when deciding to repost, specifically whether additional sharing will result in embarrassment or distress to the student.
- 8.5. Transparency is key for us. When posting about a matter relating to the University, staff should ensure other users are aware of their relationship with the institution. Under no circumstances should a pseudo identity be used to represent the University.

9.0 Confidentiality

- 9.1. Users must not share or link to any content or information owned by the University that could be considered confidential or commercially sensitive. This might include institutional level student data, details of supplier contracts, internal briefing videos, or information about future strategy or marketing campaigns.
- 9.2. Users must not share or link to any content or information owned by another University, company or person that could be considered confidential or commercially sensitive. For example, if another University's recruitment strategy was leaked online, employees of the University of Aberdeen should not mention or link to it on social media.

10.0 Review

- 10.1. The Social Media policy and these accompanying guidelines shall be reviewed and updated by External Relations in partnership with IT Services and the Policy Review Group as and when required. A formal review including the above parties shall take place annually.

11.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Setting Up New Accounts

Before approval can be given for a new social media account, a plan for the use of the account must be developed, prepared in consultation with the relevant Marketing Manager/Officer, and sent to the Digital Marketing Team. The plan must include:

1. A justification for why no existing social media account can meet the requirements of the proposed new account.
2. A list of the main users, including the primary contact, and their responsibilities, including authorisation to post.
3. A description of the content approval workflow being employed.
4. A content plan covering the first 3 months of the account's operation, including a proposed publishing schedule and confirmation of how content will be sourced and the ongoing frequency of posting via the account.
5. How the use of the account will help towards achieving the University's strategic objectives.
6. A strategy for sustainable growth in terms of audience engagement, growth and post reach milestones.

Following approval for a new social media account to be set up, the procedures outlined below should be followed:

1. A unique email alias (tied to socialmedia@abdn.ac.uk) will be created by the Digital Marketing Team to be used by the new account. This protects the University going forward as they are not tied into any individual user's email addresses and will usually take the form of "socmedia-XXXX@abdn.ac.uk".
2. In consultation with the team, project or service being represented by the account, the Digital Marketing Team will register the account with a handle adhering to the naming convention outlines in Appendix 2.
3. A profile image/avatar of the full-colour University Crest on a white background will be uploaded to the account by the Digital Marketing Team. This should not be changed without further consultation.
4. Following account setup and verification, all other user accounts can be added and, throughout the account's lifespan, the Digital Marketing Team must have full administrative access.

Appendix 2: Naming Convention for Corporate Accounts

1. Within their profiles/biographies, all accounts should state the University's name in full as University of Aberdeen. Abbreviations should not be employed.
2. The name displayed publicly on accounts shall be presented as: University of Aberdeen [[insert School/Service title]] (e.g. University of Aberdeen School of Engineering)
3. Account handles should make use of the following convention where possible: Abdn[[Title]] (e.g. AbdnEngineering), although it is noted that on occasion a slightly different handle may be justifiably employed following a discussion with Digital Marketing.
4. Where possible, a common handle should be employed across platforms.

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Audience	The policy applies to all members of the University Court; all members of staff employed by the University; to contractors (including students on temporary contracts) and volunteers, and to individuals with honorary staff status given access to University IT facilities
Related	Social Media Policy
Subject / Description	This policy sets out the principles, scope and responsibilities for the governance of social media within the University. The policy aims to ensure a collaborative, supportive and creative social media environment for the University, whilst mitigating security, data protection, reputational and other risks.
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