Social Media – Safe practice for students

Social Media applications allow online interaction and exchange of user-generated content via web and mobile devices, eg **Twitter**, **TikTok**, **Instagram**, **LinkedIn**, **YouTube**, **Facebook**, **Flickr**, and many more.

There are many benefits to Social Media. The rapid growth of applications and speed at which you can share information with a large audience via **status**, **tweet**, **blog**, **video** or **photograph** mean Social Media has effectively become social publishing to a potentially world-wide audience. As a result, it is now even more important to think before you post; what you post online could have real-life consequences.

Privacy, personal information and reputation

Most Social Media applications have a user Profile associated with your account. First and foremost, it is important that you protect your personal information from potential misuse by others (eg identity theft).

Who can access your personal information?

– Limit what others can see about you by setting privacy levels on your Social Media accounts.
– Choose your 'friends' carefully; you have no control over what 'friends of friends' may share.

What can others find out about you?

– Protect your personal information such as address, telephone number and email.
– Avoid publishing your schedules, especially announcing when you will be away from home.
– Lists or photos of expensive possessions may also tempt thieves.

What does your profile say about you?

– Embarrassing online pictures and comments may resurface years later to haunt you (eg candidate research by future employers).
– A well-managed digital identity can have positive benefits and act as a "living CV".

Social Media and the law

As Social Media develops, so do the potential legal issues surrounding your published material. Consider:

Copyright and intellectual property

– Do you have permission to share the content you are about to post? Does it belong to someone else?
– Have you read the Social Media application's policies? How will they treat *your* intellectual property?

Data protection, confidentiality and injunctions

– Are you allowed to share that information? Are there legal reasons why you should not?

Defamation and libel

– Does your content affect others? Be careful not to make statements that may imply or create a negative impression of other people, groups, races, religions and so on.

Trademarks and patents

– Are your images or logos similar to those owned by anyone else? Do you have permission to use them?
– Does your content reveal anything that it should not? (Products in development, etc.)

⚠️ Be aware that this is not an exhaustive list. Always think before you publish.

Social Media Etiquette – tips

Consider the following when using Social Media applications:

Think before you publish

Post in haste, repent at leisure. Search engines can uncover content years after it was published.

Would you say it face to face?

If you wouldn't be happy saying it in person, don't write it online.

Respect others

Consider other people's feelings and privacy. Will they mind you sharing that comment/photograph/video?

Use a disclaimer

Bloggers in particular may wish to include a simple disclaimer such as "the views expressed are mine alone".

Ask first

Ask for permission to use content belonging to someone else.

Moderate comments

Check that you are happy with the comments and content posted by others if it relates to your profile.

Respect shared space

Save Social Media conversations for your own time/space, especially if you are using a shared PC.

Correct mistakes

If you do make a mistake, be up front and correct it as quickly as possible.

Posting in real-time

Before live-tweeting or live-blogging from an event, check that it's okay with the organiser or event policy.

Make positive contributions

Thoughtful, relevant comments will be valued more than irrelevant, repetitive promotion of your own agenda.

Be wary of flaming

Avoid provocative language; it can be hard to judge tone in the written word.

Future-proof your digital identity

Do the photos and comments you publish today represent the way you'd like to be seen in the future?

Further information and help

Most Social Media applications have built-in help facilities, eg Facebook Safety Centre.

The University does not provide user support for Social Media, however if you have any questions regarding etiquette or safe practice you can contact the Service Desk: servicedesk@abdn.ac.uk or log a call via our Support Portal at myit.abdn.ac.uk.