EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY SPORTS UNION

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Updated April 2020

Contents

1. Overview

Social media has permeated most areas of our life online since the mid-2000s. It empowers every web user to engage, get involved, have their say, with little or no technical knowledge. This has been an incredibly liberating experience for the majority, opening up a wealth of interaction and opportunities.

But with these opportunities come risks; both to the individual and to any organisation they represent.

Here at the University of Edinburgh Sports Union, we positively encourage you to engage, collaborate and innovate, using the wealth of social media opportunities that continues to grow on an almost daily basis. However and wherever you do this, we want you to be aware of your actions and engagements – their potential impact on both yourself and the university you represent.

This guide will help you steer a safe and responsible path.

Please read the sections that relate to your social media activity - you may be the owner inviting interaction, or you may just be contributing – and keep it to hand for future reference. This paper gives an overview of the main points to bear in mind when using social media for professional purposes. Much of the guidance relates to legal obligations you have as a University

The use of social media includes posting direct content or comments

- Facebook
- Google+
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Personal blogs
- YouTube
- News and opinion articles
- Discussion boards

However, we recognise that the number of social media channels and the way in which people interact with them is constantly growing and changing. Please consider this guidance for any online content that you create.

Below are some quick dos and don'ts for producing social media content. Section 2 then gives more detailed guidance on how you as an individual should approach creating social media content about the University or related issues.

Section 3 provides guidance for any club that wants to create of evaluate its own social media page, although a lot of the guidance given in section 2 applies here, too.

1.1 Guidance for general use

DO ✅	Be aware of **how your comments may** reflect upon the University, the Sports Union or your Sports Club
	Remember **Data Protection and Freedom of Information** legislation and requirements
	Always **credit the source** when using links
AVOID ❌	Do not post **potentially discriminatory or bullying material**
	Do not post any **commercially confidential or sensitive information.**
	Don't **use your personal page/profile as the first point of publication** for any official reports or announcements.

A good rule of thumb for anyone posting anything on social media is to **THINK** before you post:

T   is it TRUE?
H   is it HONEST?
I   is it INSPIRATIONAL?
N   is it NECESSARY?
K   is it KIND?

Words and images posted on social media are permanent, accessible by anyone and are linked to you, be kind.

1.2 Guidance for hosting a channel

DO ✅	Always **obtain approval** for any new social media channel
	Always **appoint a main contact** person for your channel
	Make sure you **offer an equal level of service** for members of our audiences who find social networks inaccessible
	Regularly moderate comments, and agree a mechanism for handling these
	Take care with **branding** and use **appropriate** URLs and usernames
	Link to official sites
	Be **transparent about who is contributing**
	Publish **regularly with relevant content**
	Always **check the Terms & Conditions** of any provider
	People may submit a **Freedom of Information request** through social media channels and we are legally required to respond

1.3 Good practice

DO ✅	Stay **relevant and interesting** to the expected audience
	Be respectful to all parties
	Engage with stakeholders and link or refer to others' relevant content
	Ensure that any **negative comments or criticisms are balanced**
	Consult the Sports Union about any **difficult or sensitive topics**
	Follow the **principles of writing for the web**

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY SPORTS UNION

2. Personal Participation in Social Media

2.1 Introduction

This guidance is to help you think about how you as an individual blog, microblog or otherwise produce social media comments about the University, projects, services or technologies associated with the University, or your professional colleagues and contacts. This mixture of personal and professional identities can be complex and raise unexpected issues.

The guidance in this section, particularly regarding tone and appropriate content, also applies to Section 3 Building an official page or profile.

The University doesn't provide guidance on how you communicate on a personal basis about any other topic.

2.2 Personal Responsibility

Clubs are constituted to Edinburgh University Sports Union and are under The University of Edinburgh banner and as such **you have a responsibility not to bring the organisation into disrepute**. Maintaining the reputation of the University, its projects, services and clubs plays a crucial part in ensuring the continuing success of the organisation.

Comments, particularly those with a strongly negative or unprofessional tone, can have serious unintended consequences. It is therefore important to remember that what you say about your Club, even in personal social media profiles, can reflect upon the University.

Please exercise discretion over whether or not the space you are posting to (whether your own or as a guest post on another person or organisation's blog or social media) is an appropriate space for discussion of Club-related matters. If in doubt, you can always ask the Sports Union for advice.

Please do not comment about University matters in any social media space which could be construed as offensive or illegal.

2.3 Disclaimer

If you are commenting on University related matter please remember that you are voicing your own personal opinion and ensure that (where possible) you include a statement which indicates that:

"The views expressed here are the author's own and do not represent the views of The University of Edinburgh"

If you post on a fairly regular basis about the University, University projects and services, or particular areas of interest that reflect on your Club at the University, consider adding the disclaimer to a fixed element on your channel, for instance in the bio.

2.4 What Material can be Posted

It is usually appropriate to mention and **refer your readers to published or public material**. Adding your own comments and discussion of this type of public information is acceptable but you should always be respectful in tone and it should be clear that your views are your own.

You must not post any commercially confidential information, this may include:

- Indications of forthcoming developments or funding bids
- Data or software code
- Information about colleagues or personnel matters
- Unresolved grievances
- Non-public or not-yet-approved documents or minutes, news or information.

If you are in any doubt about whether it is appropriate to post a comment about something please speak to the Sports Union for clarification.

Your personal social media profile **should not be the first point of publication for any official reports or announcement**s. Official materials should always appear first on an official University space – usually the University website, the Club website or the appropriate official social media channel.

If you are sharing links to already-public works like publications, websites, annual reports, project blogs etc, **please ensure that you credit them appropriately**. Please also include a link back to the University website (and/or the project/service site) in your posting so that your readers can find out more.

If you are in any way unsure about whether an item is public or publishable **refer to the Sports Union** for advice before you post or comment about it.

2.5 Comments about The University on Club Social Media

It is up to you if/how you moderate comments on your own website or social media channels. However, we suggest that with the Sports Union President, **you agree a mechanism for handling any questions or notable comments** about the University or the University's projects or services.

Notable comments might include those that are:

- Excessively critical in tone
- Queries or comments that may require a support response or indicate an issue (e.g. unexpected downtime, broken links, bugs) with a service or project.
- Very positive or supportive in tone and would benefit a wider audience such as your colleagues or project/service funders. These comments may also help inform the planning of outreach or promotional activities.

Where these comments occur (particularly queries and reports of bugs or downtime) it may be appropriate to reply privately or publicly with the email address and/or phone number of the Sports Union or Club email account. It may also be appropriate to indicate that the relevant contact point should be the first point of call for questions or urgent support issues.

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY SPORTS UNION

A flowchart is supplied in **Section 6** to help deal with comments.

2.6 Personal Comments Made on Other Social Media Channels

If you are commenting on other project, service, or personal/professional channels or profiles in a personal capacity please be aware of how your comments may reflect upon the University, the Sports Union or the Sports Club with which you are associated.

Whilst an open discussion of ideas is encouraged, you should also remember that your personal identity might well be associated with your professional role in many social media contexts.

As with posting to your own social media pages:

- You must not post any **commercially confidential** information
- You should **refer any notable** posts or queries to the Club or Sports Union

2.7 Legal considerations

Check the **Terms & Conditions** and/or **Usage Policy** of any service to which you subscribe for your own use and for that of your Club.

Be mindful of your responsibilities under Data Protection legislation - **do not disclose other people's personal information without prior permission.** Also, be aware that any posts you make in a professional capacity (even private posts) are subject to data protection and freedom of information and may need to be disclosed.

University policies apply: see www.ed.ac.uk for all policies

3. Building an Official Page/Profile

3.1 Introduction

This guidance is to help you set up and run an official social media page.

If you are writing about the University, University Club, Sports Union or your work on a personal social media page, please also see section 2 *Personal participation in social media* guidelines above.

Blogs, microblogs and other social media tools offer greater flexibility in terms of content, tone and timeliness compared with more formal websites and newsletters. They are a less formal and more discursive way to communicate between club committee, members and stakeholders. However, **these pages are public records and are subject to data protection and freedom of information requirements,** so you always need to bear in mind that you are representing the University when you post and interact in these spaces.

3.2 Set-up

Approval
- Consult with the Sports Union and obtain their **approval for any new social media profile.**
- The Sports Union should subsequently be provided with login and password details to ensure continuity of access/posting.
- Speak to the **Media Officer** (via eusu.media@ed.ac.uk) who can give you advice to help you get started.

Contact
- Appoint a member of the Club to be the **main contact point** for your profile
- This person will be responsible for maintaining a common editorial line and regularly moderating comments.

Branding and identity

- Use usernames and URLs which are consistent
- Use Sports Union and club colours, logos and partner logo
- Follow guidance on the use of the University of Edinburgh crest: http://bit.ly/bzLxwI
- Ask the Media Officer for advice when creating appropriately branded images, logos and backgrounds
- Ensure that users are aware that your profile is hosted by a third party and not directly by the University. For example, ensure that:
    - The page retains the branding of the third party provider
    - Use of the service is optional
    - Users sign up to use the service directly with the service provider, and not through the University

Profile

It is important to ensure the social media identity relates back to the appropriate club or team.

- Be transparent about who is contributing to your social media profile, including real names and committee roles whenever possible
- If several people are, it may be appropriate to list all of those involved
- Ensure that any associated user profiles feature:
  - The name and role of the contributor
  - Suitable images
  - Links to the Club's pages and Sports Union pages

3.3 Posting

Tone and authenticity

- Be appropriate and professional in presentation and tone
- Use any necessary disclaimers (for example, if your page does not necessarily represent the views of all Club Members)
- Include a labelled link to the Club & Sports Union website.
- Ensure that you include the following text (linked to the Sports Union website) somewhere on all of your social media pages:
  - *"Edinburgh University Sports Union is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, with registration number SC009248."*

Frequency

- By setting up a social media profile you are committing to maintain it by publishing and updating regularly
- See Section 3.5 below, *Updating Your Social Media,* for more information and advice on content and presentation
- If a social media profile is not being updated regularly, ,, the best course of action may be to:
  - Formally cease updating it and publish a final post that indicates it will no longer be active and updated.
  - Take a copy of your posts for archiving and, in some cases, subsequently remove the profile.

3.4 Accessibility

When communicating via social media networks, we need to be prepared to offer a similar level of service to members of our audiences who find these technologies inaccessible, when they request it. This might include:

- Summarising online dialogue via email and facilitating contributions
- Providing subtitles or transcripts to video or audio footage
- Providing alternative text for images

Social media use isn't a substitute for having all core content on a professional, accessible website. Using social media as your only means of communication means you risk cutting off a section of your target audience.

Commitment to accessibility of information and services applies in the realm of social media, just as it does in all other areas of the University and Sports Union activity.

3.5 Updating Social Media

DO ✅	**Stay relevant and interesting to the expected audience** • Postings about broader issues may be relevant, but postings about other projects may be of less interest to the audience. • Your audience may become quite identifiable and specialist, making it easier to judge the topics of interest. • Remember that your social media page/s may also be read by people who are not service users or project partners.
DO ✅	**Be respectful to all parties** • In terms of legislatively protected areas of equality, diversity, respect and fairness (e.g. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation). • In terms of good netiquette and professional appropriateness (e.g. no aggressiveness, rudeness, politics).
DO ✅	**Engage with stakeholders and link to others' relevant content** • Links to images, slides, etc. should be appropriately credited. • Ensure resources used are cleared (e.g. under Creative Commons). • Make reasonable efforts to ensure content used or linked is responsibly created (e.g. not the result of copying, piracy, etc). • Ensure your own postings do not breach rights/copyright.
DO ✅	**Ensure that any negative comments or criticism you post are…** • Balanced and measured in content and tone. • Within the scope of the social media page.
DO ✅	**Consult the Sports Union about any difficult or sensitive topics** • This may include prospective developments, modifications to services, and changes in personnel. • Your supervisor/manager should be able to clarify what can be shared, help with wording, and could suggest a suitable caveat.
DO ✅	**Follow the principles of "writing for the web"** • Make your writing "scannable" by using meaningful titles, and putting important keywords at the beginning of sentences. • Break up large blocks of text and write succinctly. • An informal style does not mean editing is unnecessary. • The University offers *Writing for the Web* courses (register in MyEd).

SU EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY SPORTS UNION

DO ✅	**Monitor the activity around your social media page/s** • Keep track of your own activity (number of posts etc.). • Use tracking or analytics to gauge readership. • Keep track of RSS subscriptions, followers or other useful measures.
AVOID ❌	**Publish anything which may be commercially sensitive** • Includes minutes that have not been agreed, potential partnerships, bids in progress, funding situations. • Seek advice over any item where the publication status is unclear.

3.6 Comments

When you have a new comment on your blog you should work through the Comment Moderation Flow Chart (section 6) which will help you decide the best action to take. If any comment falls outside this guidance please raise this with the Sports Union.

- Have a mechanism for users to report inappropriate or spam comments.
- Publish your takedown policy.
- If available, comment moderation should be used regularly to limit the potential for spam or abuse.
- If moderation is not available (e.g. Twitter) then you should monitor and 'garden' (remove spam, respond as needed) regularly.
- Ensure there is a secondary contact, so comments can be moderated or gardened when the primary contact is unavailable.

As a broad guide, any comments received should be published (or removed/reported as spam) as soon as possible. You may also want to respond to what has been said, in which case you should always respond in a professional and measured tone that reflects the University's communications practice. **Remember that you are representing the University in your response.**

When responding to comments whether on your pages, or postings on others' pages, bear in mind:

- **Transparency** – Disclose your connection with the University of Edinburgh and/or with your project/service/team.
- **Sourcing** – Cite any relevant sources using URLs, references, videos, images, etc.
- **Timeliness** – Make sure you reply quickly to the original comment (inside 48 hours if possible and quicker if the comment is particularly time sensitive). For microblogs you will want to monitor responses or comments at least once every day. Take time to create a good response but, if needed or appropriate, you can always add a further follow up comment afterwards (e.g. if you are dealing with a comment about a service downtime or bug).
- **Don't stifle discussion** – It is appropriate to publish both positive and negative comments and, if you feel that additional information or correction is needed you can and should add this publicly. The more transparent your blog can be, the more trusted it will be.
- **Be fair** – It is not always possible to judge tone from textual comments so please ensure you do not make your commentators look bad or lose face, even if you are correcting a criticism

or misconception. Anger is not a professional response to criticism. Try drafting your response then leaving it a few minutes. Then read over it again and you may wish to ask your supervisor/manager or a colleague to check it before posting publicly.

- **Measure** – Keep a record of comments (whether received or posted by you) so that they can be noted for relevant metrics and learned from. Some comments may also help highlight particular strengths, weaknesses or opportunities for your project, research service, or area of work.

3.7 Freedom of Information Requests

Any recorded request for information is a freedom of information (FOI) request. Some enquirers may use social media to submit a request, for example, they might use Twitter, or the comments section of a blog.

If your social media page receives a request for information, remember:

- **Contact the Sports Union immediately**, let them know if you want to refuse any part of the request, are unsure about any aspect of the request, or if it does not relate to your area of work.
- You have a maximum of 20 working days to answer the request.
- If the request concerns your area of work and the information can be released, avoid complications by following the procedures.

The request handling procedures and list of FOI practitioners are published on the Records Management Section website, www.ed.ac.uk/records-management

3.8 Exit Strategy

If the service (club/team) that the social media page represents ceases to operate, it is important that this is clear. Change headlining information to clearly reflect that the club no longer operates, and direct people to an alternative contact.

Disable comments if possible. If you cannot disable comments, make sure you continue to keep an eye on the page or notify the Sports Union so they may keep an eye – disused social media pages can become breeding grounds for spam and 'troll' comments.

Use the University retention scheduling advice on the Records Management Section website, www.ed.ac.uk/records-management, to decide how long you need to keep the information published via your social media page. Arrange to implement that decision, for example by taking a copy to store off-line for the specified period or by deleting the page after the specified period.

Remember that extant information continues to be subject to data protection and FOI requirements.

4. Flowchart for Dealing with Comments

Is the comment negative in its content?

- Yes
- No

Is the tone acceptable?

- No
- Yes

Is the comment accurate?

- Yes
- No

Who is the comment from?

- An unhappy member
- A competitor
- Other
- A troll

Is the content useful or relevant?

- No
- Yes

Consult the SU as to whether the comment should be published. Have they confirmed it can be published?

- No
- Yes

Consult the SU as to whether the comment should be published. Have they confirmed it can be published?

- No
- Yes

Monitor Only

Do not publish and if relevant, mark as spam. But monitor & alert colleagues if appropriate.

Publish

Publish the comment making any essential modifications e.g. remove swearing

Follow up/private response

Ensure the concerns raised are followed up.

If possible, email the commenter thanking them for their input and providing a suitable response.

Public response

Publish the comment and respond publicly clarifying facts or adding information.

Make any essential modifications, e.g. remove swearing

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