



**LONDON
METROPOLITAN
UNIVERSITY**

Social Media Guidelines

Approved by the Information Security & Policies Committee on July 2015
Owned and maintained by the Social Media Group

1. Purpose

Social media use and understanding is no longer optional in higher education. Its use has been adopted not just by students, but by University staff for activities such as marketing, community relations, internal communications, coursework and alumni engagement.

This document serves to give non-mandatory advice on the effective use of social media and how users can better protect themselves online. It is a companion document to the University's [Social Media Policy](#), which outlines mandatory requirements on the use of social media that are enforceable through relevant University departments.

2. What is social media?

Social media is the broad term for describing a range of tools which embrace a collection of online communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media.

Typical examples of social media are:

- **Facebook** is a website which allows users, who sign-up for free profiles, to connect with friends, work colleagues or people they don't know online. It allows users to share pictures, music, videos and articles, as well as their own thoughts and opinions with how ever many people they like. It is by far the largest social network, with over 1.28 billion active users at the end of Q2 2014.
- **Twitter** is a free microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices, and is especially popular with the news/PR industry. At the end of Q2 2014, it had 255 million active users.
- **LinkedIn** is a social networking website designed for business professionals. It allows you to share work-related information with other users and keep an online list of professional contacts. Over 300 million active users were recorded at the end of Q2 2014.
- **Google+** is now the second largest social network with just over 343 million active users at the end of Q2 2014. Keep in mind that a Google+ account is mandatory whenever a person creates a new Gmail account which is boosting the account ownership numbers. But no other social network has Google's web assets leverage.
- **Pinterest** is an online pinboard for sharing and categorizing images found online. Pinterest requires brief descriptions but the main focus of the site is visual. Clicking on an image will take you to the original source, for example, if you click on a picture of a pair of shoes, you might be taken to a site where you can purchase them. As of Q2 2014 there were 30 million active users.

Social media networks were a novelty five years ago, but their importance today is no longer questioned. Organisations have realised the power of social media and accepted that it has to form part of their marketing and PR mix. Businesses that use social media as part of a planned strategic approach are two times more likely to anticipate revenue growth than ad hoc users.

3. *Why use social media?*

When assimilated into an integrated strategy social media can be leveraged to:

- Enhance the University's profile.
- Improve our audience reach and influence.
- Enable greater access to University information.
- Monitor conversations about the University's brand and communicate when appropriate.
- Increase word-of-mouth promotion.
- Grow customer loyalty and trust.
- Achieve more effective and timely communications through the speed of delivery and response that social media enables.
- Communicate an 'innovative' brand message through engagement with new and inventive tools.
- Enhance 'international engagement' marketing activity with relatively low financial and resource outlay, to support recruitment of international students.

4. *How has the University been engaging with social media?*

London Metropolitan University has been using social media to strengthen its brand and connection with stakeholders. The University's main accounts currently connect with social media users via Facebook (since 2007), Twitter (since 2009), YouTube/Google+ (since 2007), and Instagram (2013). The University's network of social media accounts has hundreds of thousands of followers who have subscribed to keep up with conversations being shared, and these numbers continue to grow.

Used responsibly, social media provides an effective way to listen to our stakeholders and share information and perspectives.

5. *Creating a social media presence*

It is important that we all understand how social media tools can help the University achieve its business objectives. Accordingly, we need to be empowered to contribute effectively to this

collaborative activity on the web when it supports the University. Please note, you must consult and adhere to the [University's Social Media Policy](#) before posting to social media platforms.

Given the reach of the internet, it's important that when engaging with social media, you follow some basic procedures that ensure consistency and correct representation of the University. These guidelines apply to London Metropolitan employees when they blog or participate in social media for work, but they should also be considered as personal blog activities may give the appearance of speaking for the University.

6. *Best practice for using social media*

If you are creating content, in the first instance please check to see if an existing London Metropolitan University channel fits your editorial purpose before creating your own site. These can be found at the University Social Media Directory at <https://intranet.londonmet.ac.uk/iss/social-media/social-media-policy.cfm>. If you then think you require a social media presence please consider the following:

- **Audience** - Who is your audience? Consideration should be given to which social platform would best serve your audience to achieve your objective, the type of account (a person, page, group, etc.), and whether it needs to be publicly available or private.
- **Timeliness and frequency** - The publisher of information on any website is responsible for its maintenance. Content that is published but not maintained will reflect negatively on the University. It is recommended that new and engaging content is posted daily, and year round (not just in busy University business periods). Part of the value of social media is that the conversation can occur in real time. Make sure you are willing to spend time refreshing content, responding to questions and updating information regularly, and correcting information when appropriate. What commitment are you willing to make to the account? Do you have the resources you need to keep it refreshed and relevant? For how long? Set a target and a review point and bear in mind that accounts, with the relevant signposting, can be set up to achieve a specific goal over a fixed period of time and then closed. How will you measure success? What is your exit strategy?
- **Professional/personal identity and responsibility** - It is an individual's responsibility to decide if content is representing the University or personal opinion. Personal opinion or comment should not carry corporate branding, nor be published as a representation of official University information. Any personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the University's reputation must not be entered into. Please consult the [University's Social Media Policy](#) for more information.

- **Separation of professional and personal identities** - Individuals are encouraged, where possible, to separate work related social media accounts and identities (linked to a work email) from personal ones that have no connection with their work identity.
- **Personal account use affecting work** - Users should be aware that a comment made with a personal social media account or identity can create an issue at work, and may still be a breach of University Policy. Please see the [University's Social Media Policy](#) for more information.
- **Negative posts** - If you come across a negative post or see third parties seeking to encourage negative comments about the University, avoid responding yourself and forward the post to your Line Manager and ISS at iss.communications@londonmet.ac.uk. The University may deal with negative posts by correcting any factual inaccuracies and getting experts in the related area to respond. Complaints may instead be dealt with privately via direct message or email. If the comment is a personal opinion and factually correct, the University may not respond. Freedom of speech is an important element of social media which the University supports.
- **Compromised accounts** - If you notice University affiliated accounts which appear compromised, appear to be spam, or look like they are in control of someone outside of the University, please contact ISS at iss.communications@londonmet.ac.uk.
- **Etiquette** - Before your first contribution on any social media site, it is a good idea to observe the activity on the site for a while to get a feel for the style of contributions, the nature of the content and any 'unwritten' rules that other contributors might follow. Following these guidelines will help ensure your account is not banned, and safeguard your personal privacy. Please read and understand the specific channel's terms of use, which typically stipulate their guidelines for sharing, privacy, security, safety, and respecting the rights of others.
- **Respect** – Be natural and yourself, but be respectful. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory - such as politics and religion. Use your best judgment and be sure to make it clear that the views and opinions expressed on personal sites are yours alone and do not represent the official views of the University.
- **Help with University affiliated social media sites** – The University offers a social media management platform using Hootsuite, through which posts are made. From one dashboard you'll schedule tweets and posts, monitor conversations, etc. It is an essential tool for managing social networks and allows you to efficiently track conversations and measure your campaign results. When you need to prove your social ROI you will be able to quickly create and customize ready-to-present analytics reports. Any queries relating to

the establishment of a University social media site should be emailed to ISS at iss.communications@londonmet.ac.uk.

When posting content, only post content that:

- Is grammatically correct (beginning with a capital letter and ending with a full stop) and neatly presented.
- Is relevant to your target audience(s) and with wording that makes it clear who the content is for (for example if you are posting about an event only for current students, it should say so).
- Is current (not a post to an outdated news item for no reason).
- Contains all the information the audience needs to respond or react, or links to somewhere they can find it.

The following rules and style guidelines are especially important to accounts affiliated with the University:

- Our social media voice is friendly and down to earth. We can be playful and creative, and we show thanks and support as often as we can. We are knowledgeable about, and proud of, our courses, facilities and London location. We endeavour to help and respond to those who engage with us.
- If in doubt, don't post: social media is the most public of forums. Once something is in the public domain it can't be taken back (even if you do delete a post there are ways it can be retrieved).
- If a Twitter mention or Facebook comment is negative, seek to move the conversation away from the public domain in your response.
- Remove spam or spam-like posts from Facebook walls or in Facebook comment sections (by clicking the > next to page the 'Posts to Page' section, the down arrow next to the post and then 'Hide from page').
- Remember that if you open a tweet with a Twitter handle (eg @LondonMetUni), the tweet only appears in the home feed of people who follow you and the account you are mentioning. Unless you are engaging the other account in conversation, either rearrange the wording of your post so that the @ isn't at the beginning (preferable), or open it with a full stop (eg .@LondonMetUni).
- Remember, to direct message (DM) a Twitter user (or for them to DM you) you must follow each other.
- All posts should be grammatically correct: write in full sentences, start sentences with a capital letter and end with appropriate punctuation. Avoid abbreviations except where there is an established convention ('w/' (with), 'RT' (retweet), '&' are all acceptable on Twitter). This doesn't mean you can't be creative and fun!

- If you have access to a Facebook account and ‘Like’ a post from that account in your personal newsfeed, it will display as the account liking its own post. This should be avoided.
- We don’t use ‘I’ but do use ‘we’.
- Remember, hashtags can be used as part of a sentence, they don’t only come at the end.
- When we @ mention another user on Twitter that is a location or building we include the word ‘at’ beforehand.
- If a post is only appropriate for a specific group (eg an internal event for current students), we make this clear. For example, posts can be prefaced with ‘Current students:’ or ‘Thinking of studying at London Met?’.
- Take care when using Hootsuite to schedule Twitter posts. It doesn’t display an alert if you go over the character limit, but just curtails your post with an ellipsis (...).
- Make it clear when the account will be monitored in the profile wording. Eg: ‘The official London Metropolitan University Facebook page, keeping you up to date with university and London life. Account monitored 9am-5pm, Mon-Fri.’ You should also make it clear who the account is for (current students or prospective students) and what sort of content users can expect the account to post.
- Bear in mind that research has show that shorter tweets (under 100 characters) get more engagement.

7. *Additional support*

Each social network provides a support area for information such as getting started, managing your account, privacy settings and security, guidelines for use, sharing and connecting, reporting problems, integrating the network with your web presence, and much more. Please consult the appropriate help centre of the channel you are using, such as the following:

- [Facebook Help Centre](#)
- [Twitter Help Centre](#)
- [LinkedIn Help Centre](#)
- [Google Help](#) (Google +, YouTube, Hangouts)
- [Pinterest Help Centre](#)
- [Hootsuite Help Desk](#)

Students seeking guidance on the recommended use of social media for their personal accounts can find help on the [Clued Up! - Digital Skills for the 21st Century Student](#) website, and the Student Services page on [Using social media to develop your career](#).

Student Societies registered with the Students' Union must also comply with University policy and social media guidelines mentioned in the code of conduct in the society information packs found on the [Register a Society page](#).

For further information please see the [University's Social Media Policy](#). For additional guidance please contact ISS at iss.communications@londonmet.ac.uk.