



Dublin City University

Social Media – Good Practice Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

At Dublin City University (DCU), we recognise that social media have become increasingly important and influential communication channels that involve the expression of both personal and professional opinions, the sharing of links, images and other information, often with accompanying endorsements, meaning that the lines between the expression of an individual's personal or professional views and those of Dublin City University as an institution can become blurred. Also, the same laws, professional expectations and guidelines for interacting with staff, students, alumni, donors, the media and any other University constituents apply online as in the real world.

However, the fact that the content of such media is generated by the users poses a unique set of legal and reputational risks to the University and DCU has in place a Social Media Policy and has developed these Social Media Good Practice Guidelines to help clarify how best to use these new evolving tools to the professional benefit of the University, its staff and students.

GOOD PRACTICES

Users posting material to any social networking site and individuals external to the University posting material to social media sites within the dcu.ie domain should:

1. Be respectful

Be aware that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the person making the post and/or the University from both a reputational and legal point of view.

2. Think twice before posting

Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Consider what might happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect on both the person making the post and the University. Be acutely aware of the immediacy of the medium. Once a comment is posted, it cannot be removed, so think carefully before you post!

3. Realise the importance of accuracy

Check all facts, and ensure that there are no grammatical, spelling or other errors before posting on social media. This is especially important if posting on behalf of Dublin City University in any capacity.

4. On personal sites

Identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a DCU faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the University, by including the following Disclaimer:

The views expressed in the posts and comments on this (blog/site/account/insert relevant media) do not reflect Dublin City University or any other third party mentioned or referred to on the (blog/site/account/insert relevant media). They should be understood as the personal opinions of the author only.

5. Social Media Sites: Terms of Service

Become familiar with the terms of service and policies of sites and networks in which you participate. When a new account is set up on any social media platform such as Facebook, Twitter etc., the account holder is required to accept a range of terms and conditions. The onus is on any such account holder to ensure that in his/her day-to-day communication on and use of that platform those terms and conditions are adhered to at all times.

6. Interacting with Students

When interacting online with students, staff are required to maintain the principles of respect, dignity, prudence, professionalism, concern for and protection of privacy, and safety in all interactions. There are numerous DCU-specific channels available for staff to communicate with students and class groups including email and the Moodle virtual learning environment.

7. Protect your Identity

Users should take effective precautions when utilising social networking sites to ensure their own personal safety and to protect against identity theft.

8. Notify the University

To ensure all institutional social media sites are in keeping with the overall tone of voice and brand values of other DCU sites and their content, Users who have or would like to establish a unit/school/faculty or DCU-branded student social media page should contact DCU's Communications and Marketing Office in the first instance.

ADDITIONAL RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH USING SOCIAL MEDIA

The following are some of the risks associated with the use of Social Media. If you use any form of Social Media to communicate on behalf of DCU, you should familiarise yourself with these risks:

1. Defamation

The law of defamation allows persons who consider that their reputation has been, or may be harmed by statements made by others, to take legal action or to prevent the making of those statements. Defamation law can apply to any comments or opinions posted on social media sites.

2. Limited control over information

You should consider how information on social media channels is used and by whom. The speed at which information can be circulated, and the proliferation of that information, is

something over which you as an individual or the University will have little control.

3. Limitations on the right to be forgotten

There is currently a debate about whether or not information is ever deleted from social media sites. Information published on social media is not always easily removable, particularly when this information comes from a third party.

Also, the potential for copying information on the internet makes it difficult to permanently delete your information. Users should also be aware that Internet Archive facilities, e.g. WayBack Machine, are available which allows users to search for web pages that are no longer online. Therefore, it may not be possible to 'delete' all records that were originally posted on a social media site from the internet. Think carefully about whether you are happy for your information to be made available not just now but in the future e.g. in the context of future job applications etc.

4. Disclosure

Although much of the information on social media sites will be public, some of it will not be (either as a result of privacy settings or because it is only available to selected users). You should consider that information on social media sites could be produced as evidence in legal proceedings.

INSTITUTIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

If you post on behalf of a school, faculty, unit or student/student group of DCU, please consider the following:

What is your communication objective?

The purpose of using such communication channels on behalf of DCU is to support the University's mission, goals, programmes, etc., including University news, information, content and directives within the context of the Universities overall communication strategy.

Do you have a plan?

DCU units/schools/faculties should consider their messages, audiences, and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. It is important for example to determine who will manage the community and respond to followers, in addition to how much time you have to devote to social media actively posting up-to-date information is crucial in this space. In some instances a social media presence might not be ideal, and your needs might be better served by other communication channels e.g. Moodle, main University website.

Have you linked back to the University?

Whenever possible, link back to the DCU website. Ideally, posts should be very brief, redirecting a visitor to content that resides within the DCU Web environment.


Have you acknowledged who you are?

If you are representing DCU when posting on a social media platform, acknowledge this.

Protect DCU's institutional voice

Posts on social media sites should protect the University's institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. No individual DCU unit/school/faculty should construe its social media site as representing the views of the University as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, selecting a profile picture or icon, and selecting content to post. For example, for a particular school, faculty or unit the naming convention used should be DCU School/Faculty/Unit name, and care should be taken to post a variety of events across campus to give a good overall picture of university life etc.

DCU's Communications and Marketing Office will advise you with such social media planning and will maintain a register of all relevant DCU associated sites and the site owners/administrators who have responsibility for them.

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Approved by:	Date:	
DCU Executive	03/09/2013	