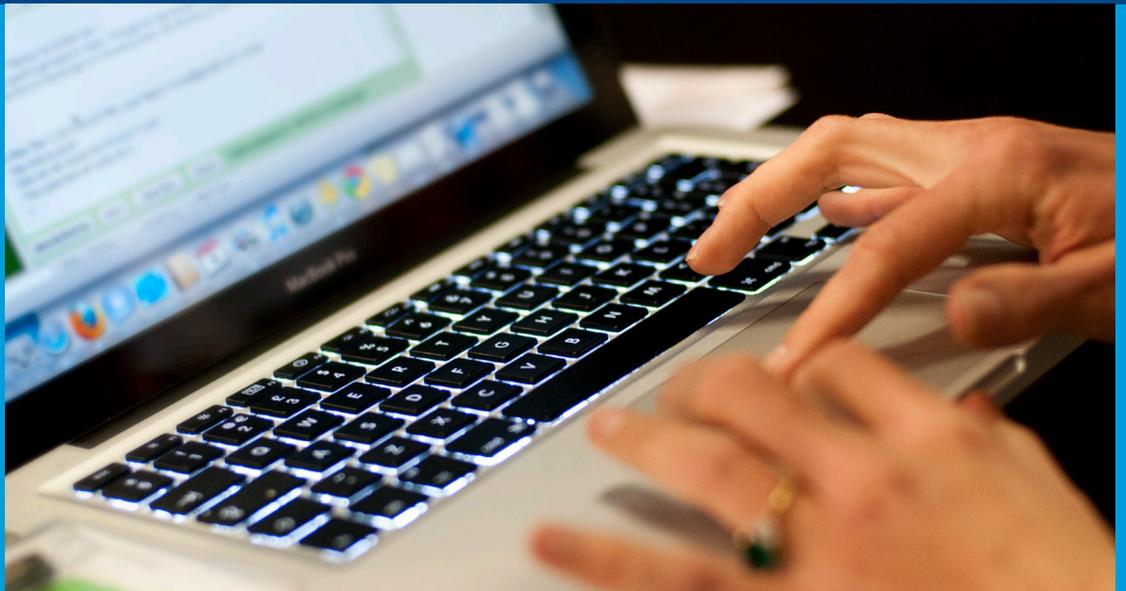


Social Media Toolkit: a practical guide to achieving benefits and managing risks



Foreword

This Toolkit stems from growing interest in the use of social media within the UCISA community. With institutional stakeholders looking increasingly to their information services departments for support in this area, our members sought a reference guide to help them answer a range of questions on related topics. More than that, however, they were seeking practical, contextual examples of use that would inspire others within their institution to take advantage of the affordances of a set of tools that offer new forms of engagement and ways to enhance many aspects of everyday business practice. We would like to thank the numerous UCISA colleagues, and others within the wider higher education community, who have contributed to the production of this Toolkit by providing examples and reviewing content. We hope the examples given here will encourage many more of you to try new approaches to supporting core university functions via social media tools.

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Executive summary

This Toolkit provides a general overview of social media, supported by specific guidance for particular types of user and scenario.

Why should we be interested?

Social media is a general term for a range of internet-based applications that allow people to create, co-create, share and interact with information. The scale of use of these tools is phenomenal with the most popular applications having many millions of active users worldwide.

Use of such tools by higher education providers is already common and is increasing. The cultural trend implied by use of such tools is a significantly different and more *social* relationship between higher education providers and their stakeholders. Effective use of such channels can nonetheless benefit from a strategic approach.

There is much good practice around but many universities have not yet been able to pick up on these pockets of good practice and embed them into more strategic approaches that align with their particular mission. Having been, to a certain extent, swept along by a global trend, the time is right for the higher education sector to be both more visionary in its approach and more tactical in the use of particular tools and to determine what kind of metrics or other evidence will help evaluate whether or not this type of engagement is delivering the desired benefits.

What are the benefits?

There is strong evidence that the effective use of social media is delivering considerable benefits across all aspects of university activities. To take but a few of the examples we explore in this Toolkit:

- Students are making contact with their peers through university networks before arriving on campus, and in some cases even prior to application, aiding recruitment and retention.
- Researchers are engaging in action research and communicating about their research using such tools.
- Students are using the tools to develop and demonstrate their competence in skills required for the world of work.
- Universities are using the tools to reach, interact, and work collaboratively with a range of audiences and using such public engagement to show the value of their activities in relation to the wider economy and society.
- Social tools are changing the nature of internal communications between university services and their customers.
- Social media tools are being used effectively to enhance learning and teaching practice: in this Toolkit we look at examples of their use to support peer review, peer support, collaborative working and enhancing learning in large group settings.
- Social networks offer another channel to engage with university alumni.

What are the risks?

As with any tool, social media can be misused and higher education institutions should seek to educate users about good practice and ensure they take steps to prevent any illegal action on the part of staff or students for which they might be held legally responsible. We suggest that the legal issues in relation to social media are not significantly different to the issues already faced by institutions and that much good practice and guidance already exists.

At first sight the range of legal issues that need to be considered when using social media is quite daunting. In practice however there is nothing significantly new about any of this: all of the relevant legislation has been in place for some time and HEIs already have well established procedures for ensuring compliance in matters such as copyright, data protection and defamation.

Matters relating to academic freedom and freedom of speech are particularly prevalent and contentious in relation to the use of social media. Situations where online behaviours go beyond the bounds of normal acceptability to the extent that they are illegal and/or constitute harassment of others are in some ways easier to deal with than grey areas where the right to express certain opinions using certain social media channels is more contentious. We look at some examples and suggest the simple guidance that standards of behaviour on social media channels should be no different to those pertaining to other aspects of university life.

Who needs to read this?

Effective and appropriate use of social media tools requires a willingness to innovate and experiment and effective collaboration across many different functional areas of the institution including: senior management; marketing; IT; learning and teaching; legal and student support. We offer sections with specific guidance for different types of user.

For **users from professional services** we look at how to gain an understanding of your institutional readiness to embrace social media, to analyse where you are at the moment and to develop a plan for moving forward that includes both staff development and measurement of outcomes. We suggest a focus on how your use of social media supports your core principles and values rather than on defining a detailed set of rules about what can and cannot be done.

For **individual staff** we look at issues of digital presence and identity that occur when you are using social media to deliver learning and teaching or other services, or to enhance your own professional practice. We look at how to find an approach that suits your personal style whilst maintaining appropriate professional standards.

For **staff involved in supporting students** we look at how to support students in creating the kind of digital identity they are happy to carry with them into their future lives, how to support them in staying safe online and using social media as an example to introduce concepts relating to academic integrity and reflecting on the development of transferable skills.

1 Purpose of this Toolkit

Universities and other higher education providers are increasingly making use of social media in a variety of ways, and this Toolkit is mainly a practical guide for those charged with *doing something* with social media. However, making the most of the potential benefits and managing the risks also requires a strategic approach, so the Toolkit is also aimed in part at institutional senior management teams to help them understand the role social networking can and should play in an institution's overall approach to information and communications management. Effective and appropriate use of these tools requires a willingness to innovate and experiment and effective collaboration across many different functional areas of the institution, including: senior management; marketing; IT; learning and teaching; legal and student support. We aim to provide a general overview supported by specific guidance for particular types of user and scenario.

Guidance and examples of good practice are already available but there is no comprehensive resource tailored to the needs of the HE community. This Toolkit will help those who are starting to formulate their strategy and policy, and those who are already using social media and wish to review their strategy, policy and practice. The Toolkit is specifically concerned with the higher education context and how this differs from the use of such tools in other types of organisations. It is a guide for those who use social media in the course of their professional life, rather than a more general guide to using the plethora of social media tools available. Similarly, although we look in general terms at the use of these tools to enhance learning and teaching practice (and point to a range of useful resources), it is not specifically a guide to using social media for learning and teaching purposes.

2 Social media: what is it?



THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

- we identify a set of tools that are transforming the way people interact with one another and create and share knowledge;
- we look at the scale of take-up of these tools and highlight the speed at which information can travel through these networks;
- we consider how use of these tools is changing;
- we look at some emerging technologies and how they may change the user experience.

Social media is a general term for a range of internet-based applications that allow people to create, co-create, share and interact with information. This is also often known as social networking.

The phenomenon is also associated with terms such as: Web 2.0; social web; user-generated web; read-write web and interactive web. None of these terms have any specific meaning beyond a general recognition that, for the average user, the nature of the internet has changed from its early use as a source of static, published content, to a more interactive and social space. As long ago as 2006, the creator of the world wide web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, dismissed the idea of a change from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 as meaningless hype¹, stating that this is how the web was meant to be all along. However the fact remains that the range of tools now available has significantly changed user experience and expectations.

2.1 Types of tools

The range of social media tools currently available is extensive, to the point of becoming bewildering, and it changes rapidly. Any attempt to categorise the tools will inevitably be challenged due to the rapidly changing market and the considerable degree of overlap in functionality between tools. However, we offer this as a rough guide to some of the main types of tools that have application in the higher education context. It should be noted that the lines between these categories are blurred, with many tools having aspects of more than one of these categories – indeed to some extent it depends on how the user chooses to apply them.

Social networking tools

Used for connecting and conversing with other individuals (and organisations): sharing news, status updates, images and other media. Users build up a personal network and decide how much information to share with other users.

¹ <http://arstechnica.com/business/2006/09/7650/>

Reflective tools

Used for sharing personal views on topics of interest. This might take the form of fairly extensive pieces of writing and analysis on blogs – bloggers become known for their expertise/interest in a particular area and gain a following. There are also applications which support much briefer exchanges, often known as *microblogging*. A popular example is Twitter in which users have a maximum of 140 characters per message to share information, opinions and links to further information. The use of a type of metadata, known as *hashtags*, permits searching on topics of interest e.g. #WorldCup, #ucisa, #news.

Content creation and sharing tools

Used for sharing and collaborating on the creation of content (which may be in a variety of formats). Instagram, which is used to share photos as well as short video clips, is one example.

Gaming tools and virtual worlds

In this category we are including multi-user games where players interact with others in real time. In many cases the creative process involved in designing and developing aspects of the virtual environment are as significant as the game-playing element.

Communication tools

This is possibly one of the most contentious categories due to its overlap with many of the others, but there is a significant group of tools whose main purpose is communication, whether this is online conferencing or more basic forms of instant messaging (as well as chat rooms offering asynchronous conversation). It is worth singling out these tools due to the fact that many younger people tend to use these forms of communication in preference to email. One example is WhatsApp², a messaging service that is popular because, unlike text messaging, it has minimal cost. Another is the instant messaging service Snapchat – this sends a picture message and the sender has the option to decide how long the recipient can see it for (from 1-10 seconds) before it disappears.

Consumer tools

Websites that offer price comparisons and the ability to rate products and services have long been a feature of the consumer environment. We are now seeing developments in higher education that go beyond the familiar league tables and official comparison sites (such as Which? University³ and Unistats⁴), to more participative sites where students can exchange opinions on institutions' courses and teachers. The UniPod site, run by Oxford Brookes University, combines the two approaches, mixing its own selection of resources about going to university with an Ask a Student⁵ facility. Overall this group of tools is an example of developments where the risks are probably more evident than the benefits and, as an example, the site Pick-A-Prof.com rebranded to MyEdu⁶ following criticism that it helped students make decisions based on a track record of lenient grading.

2.2 Social media trends

The sheer scale of the social media phenomenon means it cannot be ignored. The spread and speed of adoption of some of the most popular tools is staggering. Facebook, launched in February 2004, was originally restricted to Harvard students, then gradually expanded to other Ivy League universities and beyond. Registration was opened to the public in September 2006, with 100 million users⁷ in August 2008 rising to 1.49 billion active users in June 2015⁸; if Facebook were a country it would be the second largest in the world⁹.

Other popular tools have equally significant user numbers, e.g. Twitter (launched in July 2006) claimed 316 million active users in June 2015 and the business-oriented social network, LinkedIn (launched in May 2003), claimed 380 million members in July 2015¹⁰. In the context of this guide any debate about what constitutes active use, and the

2 www.whatsapp.com/

3 <http://university.which.co.uk/>

4 <https://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>

5 <http://unipodadvice.com/ask-a-student/>

6 www.myedu.com

7 www.facebook.com/notes/facebook/our-first-100-million/28111272130

8 <http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>

9 www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/mediatechnologyandtelecoms/digital-media/10987473/Facebook-in-a-minute-80000-status-updates.html

10 <http://investors.linkedin.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=924963>

existence of fake accounts, for example, is entirely swamped by the weight of the numbers.

Equally impressive is the speed at which information (or indeed misinformation) can spread via social networks: an analysis of social media in the 12 hours following the death of Osama Bin Laden in 2011 found almost 40,000 blog posts, a similar number of news articles, and 2.2 million tweets on the subject¹¹. Social media is also credited with playing a role in shaping political debate and mobilising activists during a series of revolutions that has come to be known as the *Arab Spring*¹². The phenomenon of popular social media posts or YouTube videos being passed on very quickly is often known as *going viral*.

Despite a strong upward trend in user numbers of social media tools generally, users can be fickle. From 2005 to 2008 the world's most visited social network was MySpace, although in the UK it was overtaken by Bebo in 2007 (with Facebook in third place). MySpace peaked at around 76 million users then underwent a radical overhaul following a decline in popularity and now has around 50 million users¹³. Bebo no longer brands itself as a social network, concentrating instead on other social applications.

Different tools also exhibit different user profiles. There are many user profile analyses available because, of course, this information is extremely useful to marketers. As an example a comparison of profiles of the US users of different social networks compiled in 2010¹⁴ and 2012¹⁵ showed, unsurprisingly, greater volatility in the sites attracting a younger audience. In 2010, 44% of Bebo's users were aged 17 or younger and the company had closed the social network side of its business by the time of the 2012 analysis. The gender balance varies between tools and there can be other distinctions especially around youth subcultures.

Some networks are more likely than others to exhibit a particular age profile. Facebook was initially perceived as a young person's domain but by 2010 61% of users were aged over 35 and in 2012 65% were aged over 35. The decline of Facebook is frequently overstated in the media, although there are strong indications that younger users are moving to alternatives (not least Instagram, which is owned by Facebook) and figures such as a 29% drop in US teenage users at the start of 2013 are cited. One reason behind this change is the perception that Facebook has become the place where young people keep in touch with older relatives rather than a place to communicate with their peers.



“For this group [16-18 year olds] Facebook is not just falling, it is basically dead, finished, kaput, over. It is about the least cool thing you could be associated with on the planet.” (Miller 2013a¹⁶)

The message here for institutions is that in order to interact effectively through the use of social media you need to understand how the social media channels you adopt are perceived by your target audience(s). There is also a need to monitor the quantity and quality of interactions taking place to inform regular reviews, accepting that fashions change. In the same way that some young people move to channels their parents have never heard of so they cannot check up on them, you need to consider what type of interactions your students will feel it appropriate to have with a learning provider via social channels. The HE student and staff population is a very diverse community and it would be overly simplistic to stereotype attitudes to social media based on factors such as demographics. The use of service design approaches and consideration of a range of *personas* may help elucidate more meaningful user requirements.

Another important factor to bear in mind is the type of cultural trends implied by the use of social media. The key word is *social* and this represents a significantly different type of communication to previous modes of information exchange between higher education providers and their stakeholders. It has implications for the tone of communications, the speed with which stakeholders might expect a response from you and the extent to which participants in the network will express opinions as well as exchanging factual information. In opting to use social media as part of your official channels of communication you will need to ensure you can both manage and meet user expectations.

There are many good examples of engagement highlighted in this Toolkit but we are equally well aware of some universities *jumping on the bandwagon* without really thinking through the implications of some of the tools. A good

11 <http://blog.sysomos.com/2011/05/02/how-fast-the-news-spreads-through-social-media/>

12 See for example Stepanova, E. (2011) *The Role of Information Communication Technologies in the 'Arab Spring': implications beyond the region.* PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 159: www.ponarseurasia.com/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/pepm_159.pdf

13 <http://blogs.wsj.com/cmo/2015/01/14/myspace-still-reaches-50-million-people-each-month/>

14 <http://royal.pingdom.com/2010/02/16/study-ages-of-social-network-users/>

15 <http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/08/21/report-social-network-demographics-in-2012/>

16 Miller, D. (2013a) *What will we learn from the fall of Facebook? Global Social Media Impact Study project blog:* <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/social-networking/2013/11/24/what-will-we-learn-from-the-fall-of-facebook/>

example of this is the use of the virtual world Second Life¹⁷. In existence since 2003, this 3D immersive environment has a high entry threshold in terms of hardware specification and user orientation. It remains popular, with 36 million *residents* reported in 2013¹⁸, although it receives nothing like the publicity hype it once did. At the peak of the hype many universities invested resources in buying their own *islands* and creating virtual campuses. However, without members of the university community present in the space and facilitating activities, these sites lacked the social element and visitors simply wandered round empty spaces and did not return.

With current tools it is very easy to innovate and experiment, but it is worth investing a little time in understanding the spirit of each tool's user community. Much authentic engagement will evolve quite naturally and organically, and you may indeed take the community in new directions, but managing a corporate presence does require a certain degree of planned effort and dedicated staff time.

Looking ahead, the emergence of augmented reality and wearable technologies (e.g. the Apple watch¹⁹) is likely to offer opportunities for new types of social engagement. It is early days for these developments but there are already indications of moves in this direction e.g. the possibility of a second life for Second Life, with users having a more intuitive and immersive experience through the use of the Oculus Rift²⁰ headset. In education, uses of augmented reality²¹ (AR) are largely in relation to learning and teaching but institutions are starting to look at broader uses – see for example Kendall College's augmented reality prospectus²². The University of Exeter has an application that allows students to use the camera on their smartphones to deliver an augmented reality view of the campus²³, including integration with social media tools such as related Wikipedia articles or tweets.

17 For some good examples of the use of Second Life in education see Peachey (2007) *Education in Second Life*. *Communications Journal of Computer Society of India*: www.open.ac.uk/opencetl/files/opencetl/file/ecms/web-content/Peachey-A-2007-Education-in-Second-Life-CSI-Communications-Journal-of-Computer-Society-of-India-31-12.pdf and the University of Oxford First World War Poetry Digital Archive www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/secondlife

18 <http://www.lindenlab.com/releases/infographic-10-years-of-second-life>

19 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apple_Watch

20 <http://community.secondlife.com/t5/Featured-News/Using-the-Oculus-Rift-with-Second-Life/ba-p/2728824>

21 www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013/feb/11/augmented-reality-teaching-tool-trend

22 www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Mm8AIP3p9E&feature=youtu.be

23 www.exeter.ac.uk/students/life/layar/

3 Delivering benefits



THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

- There is strong evidence that the effective use of social media is delivering considerable benefits across all aspects of university activities. The occasional *faux pas* is much more likely to make headlines than the many successes; so this section demonstrates how social media has been successfully utilised across a range of different functional areas.

3.1 Recruitment and transition to HE

There are many success stories of using social media to help with student recruitment, converting applications into actual enrolments and supporting students through their transition into higher education. If you are considering using these tools for recruitment and outreach activities it should however be noted that there are particular duty of care issues relating to the fact that recruitment activities may involve engagement with under 18 year olds, and you must bear this in mind when designing any interventions.

Bangor University: has adapted a particular feature of social media – *social searching* – to help student recruitment²⁴. It is an approach widely used by advertisers whereby searches are filtered through your own personal networks and preferences rather than relying on the pot luck of a search engine. This is why sites often ask users to rate particular items because you are much more likely to buy a product recommended by a friend. Bangor initiated a publicity campaign aimed at friends of people who were already fans on its Facebook site and specifically targeted international students. During the campaign, Bangor University's International Page likes increased by 10% (2,657). This response is believed to be around three times the expected industry standard for online advertising. The aim was of course to convert this already engaged group from likes to applications and this translated into 204 enquiries from eligible students through Facebook.

Buckinghamshire New University: has developed the Startonline programme as a means of providing social, practical and academic support for new students during the month leading up to arrival at university and induction²⁵. The University chose to create a bespoke social networking platform using Ning because of difficulties giving pre-enrolment students access to the VLE and privacy concerns around the use of students' existing online profiles on sites such as Facebook. The site is used to provide:

- non-subject-specific academic activities – critical thinking, logical reasoning, writing skills;
- social networking tools – profiles, *friending*, messaging and chat;
- practical information, ranging from student services to local entertainment.

²⁴ <http://blog.netnatives.com/2013/09/24/how-bangor-university-convert-facebook-fans-into-applications/>

²⁵ See Knight and Rochon (2013) *Compendium of effective practice in higher education. Volume 2. The Higher Education Academy: www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/retention/Compendium_volume_two*

The site complements on-campus pre-entry activities and is particularly useful for international students and others who are unable to travel to campus. The elements of supporting social integration and the management of practicalities have been considerably more successful than trying to engage students with the generic learning materials. This reflects student priorities during this period and over 60% of discussions in the environment relate to finding others who are either studying on the same course or living in or near the same accommodation. Students who make initial contact via the site often go on to become *friends* on Facebook or other networks. There is evidence that disabled students find the site a useful source of information and that staff and students appreciate the opportunity to make contact with one another even though the actual learning resources are little used. The site is archived following the pre-induction month.

The University of Brighton: initially piloted pre-induction support using a closed Facebook group only for broadcast media students²⁶. Membership of the group was controlled by an administrator and participating staff set up new profiles that contained only academic information so students had no access to their personal details. Existing students served as ambassadors who were best suited to answering many of the practical questions. Formative steps towards academic engagement were taken by staff posting some learning resources. The group was also used by students to form flat-share groups and to arrange to meet at a house-hunting event. The group was used as the main tool for signposting induction week activities as students still did not have access to the VLE or University email accounts, and the Student Union societies used it to make contact with the new students. The group was felt to be particularly successful at demystifying university and preventing the feelings of bewilderment experienced by some non-traditional students in their first semester. The tone of the group was informal but text speak was avoided to make communications more accessible to students who did not have English as their first language.

When teaching began, students continued to use the site for peer support and staff used it as an informal means of dissemination. A number of students who were repeatedly absent and did not respond to emails from the course leader, or letters from student services, were contacted via the private messaging facility on Facebook and subsequently re-engaged. The students who were contacted in this way reportedly felt the messages appeared more caring when they came through Facebook.

Northumbria University: used Facebook to initiate a process of peer mentoring in its business school²⁷. New students were assigned a second-year mentor who was employed and trained. The mentors were supported by academics but this was largely invisible to the new students. Questions about matters such as reading lists prompted second-year students to sell on used textbooks. Starting the process of introducing academic, social and professional services early helped reduce some of the information overload felt by students at induction. Cultural differences in the use of social media tools were noted. International students did tend to have Facebook accounts but these were less well used than those of UK students. Use of the group by international students tended to peak around six weeks into the course, which reflects the cultural shock many international students experience at around this point. There was one example in 2010 of a student posting on Facebook expressing doubts about his choice and considering leaving – he received a number of balanced responses from other students and ultimately decided to stay. Following the pilot the University has continued to use Facebook in various ways for student support and is considering the possibility of other tools to support Chinese students.

Seton Hall University: used analysis of social media activity to improve student recruitment²⁸. Recognising that decision making begins around 36 months before students enter university, they broke the process down into phases: social media analysis was most useful in gaining an understanding of how prospective students were thinking, who they were talking to and how they felt about the institution during a traditional blind spot period between initial contact with the university and actual enrolment. In 2013 they set up a *Class of 2014* Facebook group for potential students and found that the peer-to-peer interactions were having an impact on the decision making process. The University feels it is able to correlate specific Facebook activities with the likelihood of completing certain milestones in the recruitment process, such as filling in an application. Prospective students were becoming more engaged not just because of what the University was doing but because of their connections with one another. Whereas previously they had to arrive on campus to get a feel for University life, they were now beginning to create the atmosphere for themselves. By leveraging its social media intelligence, and adjusting marketing campaigns accordingly, Seton Hall increased its candidate conversion rate by 18.2 percent over the previous year.

3.2 Research

The collaborative and interdisciplinary nature of much research means that social media tools are well suited to supporting scholarly communities. There are indeed social networking sites aimed specifically at academics.

²⁶ See McDonnell (2013) www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/retention/Compendium_volume_two

²⁷ See Smalles (2012) www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/what-works-student-retention/Compendium_Effective_Practice

²⁸ Seton Hall is a small, private Catholic university close to New York www.shu.edu/

Academia.edu²⁹ was launched in September 2008 and now has more than 25 million registered users. The platform can be used to share papers, monitor their impact and follow research in a particular field. ResearchGate³⁰ is another such site.

Social media can be useful to researchers in many ways:

- dialogue with supervisors;
- dialogue with peers;
- developing a professional profile;
- exchanging and collaborating on work in progress;
- reflection;
- resource discovery – finding out about ideas and research;
- engaging with the community at large;
- undertaking research i.e. surveys, recruiting participants, experiments in virtual worlds.



“The social web is built around information discovery, networking and collaboration, precisely the skills required of a modern researcher.” (Cope and Jones 2011³¹)

Vitae³² is a Cambridge-based organisation, supported by the Research Councils UK (RCUK) and the higher education funding bodies, that is dedicated to realising the potential of researchers worldwide. It has produced a very useful handbook³³ on the use of social media in research for early career researchers and their supervisors. The handbook includes some example personas of researchers and their use of social media and a useful mapping of tools based on the type of activity you are carrying out. Research for the handbook did however reveal that the use of social tools by many researchers is inhibited by their supervisors’ reluctance to apply new technologies.

The Vitae handbook also contains a discussion of the ethics of using social media to carry out research because, as it states:

“Traditional methods for protecting privacy of the participants such as by hiding or anonymising data are no longer sufficient, in social media spaces which are public, searchable, and traceable.” (Minocha and Petre 2012³⁴).

Issues include whether materials (such as Twitter feeds) which are in the public domain can be used by researchers in the absence of informed consent, and what happens if researchers use tweets or posts which are subsequently deleted by the authors or if the authors subsequently change their privacy settings. Questions of research ethics were raised in July 2014 when it was revealed that Facebook, in collaboration with a number of universities, had manipulated the news feeds of almost 700,000 users as part of a study on emotion³⁵ and was, as a result, facing investigation by the UK Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO).

For all the benefits, there are risks to researchers using social media that are distinct from the risks to other users. One of these is intellectual property rights (IPR) – we look at this further in Section 9, Legal issues – but researchers need to take care that they do not breach copyright on printed publications by posting them to a bibliographic reference management system such as Mendeley³⁶ or Zotero³⁷. Researchers also need to take care that their own IPR is not compromised if their research gets into the public domain at an early stage e.g. via blogging about the work.

Research for the World Bank (McKenzie and Özler, 2011³⁸) found that, in the field of economics, blogging can have a huge impact on the dissemination of research papers. Compared to typical abstract views and downloads for this type of paper – a mention in one blog post in Freakonomics³⁹ is equivalent to three years’ worth of abstract views!

29 www.academia.edu/

30 www.researchgate.net/

31 Cope, J. and Jones, G. (2011) *Connecting Researchers at the University of Bath. Ariadne Issue 67*: www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue67/cope-jones

32 www.vitae.ac.uk/about-us

33 *Handbook of social media for researchers and supervisors: digital technologies for research dialogues. The Open University and Vitae*: www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/reports/innovate-open-university-social-media-handbook-vitae-2012.pdf/view

34 Minocha, S. and Petre, M. (2012) *Handbook of social media for researchers and supervisors: digital technologies for research dialogues. The Open University and Vitae*: www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/reports/innovate-open-university-social-media-handbook-vitae-2012.pdf/view

35 www.bbc.com/news/technology-28102550

36 www.mendeley.com/

37 www.zotero.org

38 McKenzie, D. and Özler, B. (2011) *The impact of economics blogs. World Bank*: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/impacitevaluations/files/impacitevaluations/dispatchsection2.pdf>

39 <http://freakonomics.com/>

The rapidity with which items of interest spread via social media⁴⁰ can, however, lead to particular items of research being picked up on and misreported in the press. UCL lecturer Daniel Miller found that when he blogged about his research with a small group of schoolchildren under the provocative title *What will we learn from the fall of Facebook?*^{41,42} during a period when journalists were short of news it was soon picked up and sensationalised.

This can of course work both ways: Prof Jon Butterworth, Head of Physics and Astronomy at UCL, used Twitter to correct an article about his research resulting in the article being removed from the BBC website within 30 minutes⁴⁴.



“Most important was the way items spread easily through the viral impact of digital media. Phrases such as ‘dead and buried’ shifted from a description of Facebook losing its cool for English schoolchildren, to the supposed fate of Facebook as a whole. I soon began to get emails from financial analysts, because in our world there are many people who couldn’t care less about academic research but care hugely about share prices.” (Miller 2013c⁴³)

Additional resources

- For another useful guide written by researchers for researchers see Cann *et al* (2011)⁴⁵.
- The University of St Andrews has guidance on research involving social media⁴⁶.
- Brian Kelly (2013): *Using social media to enhance your research activities*⁴⁷.
- See also the Research Information Network site⁴⁸.

3.3 Supporting employability

Future employability is a key issue influencing decisions of prospective students and their families and universities are similarly concerned with ensuring that their graduates develop the skills they need in the world of work. Employers are increasingly looking for graduates who exhibit a high degree of digital literacies and the ability to demonstrate the capacity for effective use of the tools of the day is an important part of this:

“In relation to technology use it appears that the whole area of digital literacies and supporting learners to develop and maintain their virtual identities is of far greater value to employers than training students to use specific tools. The concept of ‘digital influence’ is becoming of increasing importance in differentiating between potential employees. People who can make use of online tools to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and who can leverage social media to gain recognition as innovators, thought-leaders and influencers are highly employable.” (Ferrell 2013⁴⁹)

It is important that the design of the curriculum, and assessment practice, allows students to undertake learning in ways that simulate authentic, work-related tasks and the use of social media tools for exchanging ideas, peer reviewing and collaborating can help with this.

The AHRC Social Media Knowledge Exchange (SMKE): is a collaborative project that aims to give postgraduate students and early career researchers in the Arts and Humanities opportunities for knowledge exchange with social media practitioners in academia, museums, archives, libraries, and the voluntary sector⁵⁰. The site includes

40 See Terras (2012) <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/04/19/blog-tweeting-papers-worth-it/>

41 Miller, D. (2013a) *What will we learn from the fall of Facebook?* Global Social Media Impact Study project blog: <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/social-networking/2013/11/24/what-will-we-learn-from-the-fall-of-facebook/>

42 Miller, D. (2013b) *Facebook’s so uncool, but it’s morphing into a different beast.* The Conversation: <http://theconversation.com/facebooks-so-uncool-but-its-morphing-into-a-different-beast-21548>

43 Miller, D. (2013c) *Scholarship, integrity and going viral.* Global Social Media Impact Study blog: <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/social-networking/2013/12/30/scholarship-integrity-and-going-viral/>

44 From presentation given at UCL workshop March 2013

<http://web.archive.org/web/20130329035738/http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/news/what-is-the-role-of-social-media-in-academia>

45 Cann, A., Dimitriou, K. and Hooley, T. (2011) *Social media: a guide for researchers.* Research Information Network: www.rin.ac.uk/our-work/communicating-and-disseminating-research/social-media-guide-researchers

46 www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/guidelinespolicies/researchinvolvingsocialmedia/

47 Kelly, B. (2013) *Using social media to enhance your research activities.* In: *Social Media in Social Research 2013 Conference, 2013-06-24 – 2013-06-24, London* <http://opus.bath.ac.uk/35624/>

48 www.rin.ac.uk/

49 Ferrell, G. (2013) *Enhancing student employability through technology-supported assessment and feedback.* Jisc briefing paper: www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/enhancing-student-employability-through-technology-supported-assessment-and-feedback

50 <http://smke.org/about/>

collaborative research on areas as diverse as public archaeology and assessing the credibility of reports of alleged human rights violations via social media.

The University of West London: found that, although its students made extensive use of social networks for careers information, they did not fully appreciate the value of social media in developing their own networks of professional contacts or presenting themselves in a way that would benefit their future employment prospects (despite the fact that the research also showed that employers were using social networks for recruitment purposes). The Centre for Employability and Employer Engagement therefore, through a combination of workshops and employer input, introduced a programme to help students make best use of social media in order to create better professional profiles on social networks⁵¹.

Additional resources

- Princeton University has some good advice for students on its Careers Service website about how to use social media to build networks that will be useful to them in their professional lives and about protecting reputation and creating a personal brand⁵².

3.4 Public engagement

As higher education is increasingly expected to show the value of its activities in relation to the wider economy and society, public engagement takes a progressively important role, with social media providing an immensely useful set of tools for this purpose.

The University of Oxford: has won a UCISA award⁵³ for its effective use of social media for public engagement. Its Engage⁵⁴ website was set up to show the academic community how online and digital technologies can play an important role in engagement activities, enabling them to reach, interact, and work collaboratively with a range of audiences. Guidance materials are complemented by a range of inspiring case studies, two of which are summarised here:

Professor Marcus du Sautoy has engaged the public in solving mathematics problems⁵⁵. His BBC TV series, *The Code*, grew a large following of individuals using social media to collaborate to solve puzzles by setting up their own *Crack the code* wiki and Facebook group. Professor du Sautoy also used online crowdsourcing techniques as part of a follow-up series called *Numbers*.

Scott Billings used social media to maintain a public presence for the University of Oxford's Museum of Natural History whilst it was shut for the whole of 2013 for repairs⁵⁶. Starting with the difficult but important question of whether anyone really wanted to see social media from the Museum (later framed as the question "Does anyone really want a digital Dodo?") his team secured buy-in from other staff and adopted a step-by-step approach to building an online presence. A blog and Twitter account gained an active following and online activities were integrated with real-world events e.g. activities in a van used for outreach and a mobile app to complement a town trail and competition.

University of Exeter: lecturer Ceri Lewis is featured in a case study⁵⁷ by RCUK in the *Pathway to Impact* series for her work in public engagement using Twitter. Dr. Lewis, a marine biologist, regularly tweets about her daily life as a scientist. She also writes blog entries and records podcasts whenever she has anything particularly interesting to say, such as for example, when she goes on an expedition to the Arctic. She says: "I want to break down the image that some people have of scientists. We really are just normal people, doing normal jobs and by giving people an insight into my daily life, I hope I go some way to changing our image and perhaps inspire people to become scientists." Dr. Lewis also makes her data available for schools to use in lessons.

The University of the West of Scotland: was one of a number of educational partners in the Citizen Relay Olympic Torch project⁵⁸ in Scotland in 2012. This was a participatory project which used social media and the involvement of ordinary people to report on local stories about the creative ways that Scotland's citizens were interacting with the Olympic Games based on the progress of the Olympic torch as it made its way through Scotland.

51 www.agcas.org.uk/articles/507-University-of-West-London-embraces-social-media

52 <http://careerservices.princeton.edu/undergraduate-students/making-connections/networking-techniques/social-media/online-reputation-management>

53 *The UCISA 2012 Amber Miro Award* www.ucisa.ac.uk/bestpractice/awards/amma/2012

54 <http://blogs.it.ox.ac.uk/engage/>

55 See Paddock, A. (2012) *Improving public understanding of science: social media and digital technologies*. University of Oxford: <http://blogs.it.ox.ac.uk/ltg-casestudies/2012/10/20/improving-public-understanding-of-science-social-media-and-digital-technologies/>

56 See Masterman, L. (2013) *A digital dodo? Building a social media presence for the Museum of Natural History*. University of Oxford: <http://blogs.it.ox.ac.uk/ltg-casestudies/2013/09/13/a-digital-dodo-building-a-social-media-presence-for-the-museum-of-natural-history/>

57 www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/brief/impactcase/pe/Lewis/

58 www.citizenrelay.net/category/general/

3.5 Improving internal communications

The University of Sheffield: had already embraced the use of social media within its IT department and was using Twitter to improve its internal engagement and visibility when it took the bold step of using this channel to provide communications around a disruptive technical infrastructure upgrade in 2012⁵⁹. The aim was to move away from a culture of secrecy around maintenance work and keep the community informed at every step. Previously, communications had typically consisted of one announcement to make people aware of the timing and impact of maintenance then a follow-up announcement when the work was complete. This allowed others to rearrange their work around the maintenance period leaving the IT team in peace. Users asking for updates were dismissed in a similar way to children on a long car journey persistently asking “are we there yet?”

The upgrade did not go as planned. There was a risk in exposing these setbacks but the transparency about the process gained widespread support. Services that should have been restored by 9am were not operational until the afternoon. Instead of complaining, university colleagues sent messages of support for all the work that had gone in and for how the communications had been managed. Bob Booth, CiCS communication manager notes: “Social media is no longer an extension of our conventional comms channel but is an integral part of how we communicate with our customers”.



“Hundreds of tweets of support came from CiCS colleagues, University partners and followers at other institutions. This had ceased to be an inconvenience imposed by the IT department and had become a team event that we were all part of. The sys admins were not seen as failing, instead they were modern day heroes who had worked through the night and who would not stop until their work was done.” (University of Sheffield 2012⁶⁰)

Manchester Metropolitan University⁶¹, the University of Liverpool⁶² and the University of Lincoln⁶³ are three further examples of institutions whose IT departments converse with users via Twitter as part of their delivery of IT support.

There are many other examples of the effective use of social media for information exchange during emergencies and severe weather conditions. This was certainly the case for the University of West London Guru, discussed in Section 5, Choosing the right tools.

3.6 Enhancing learning and teaching practice

Social media tools have the potential to enhance learning, although early uses mirrored traditional media i.e. consumption by watching, reading or listening. More transformative uses make fuller use of the social aspects of the tools e.g. the use of blogs to engage with people and information outside the class; Flickr⁶⁴ groups for peer review of created images; Google+⁶⁵ and Facebook groups for closed and semi-closed peer sharing spaces; Twitter for #edchat⁶⁶ type conversations or back channel dialogue at events.

Pearson Learning Solutions has produced a series of annual reports looking at the use of social media in learning and teaching since 2009. The 2013 report (Seaman and Tinti-Kane 2013⁶⁷), based on a survey of c.8000 academic staff in the US, identified that staff use different tools in their professional practice to those used in their personal lives. Blogs and wikis were found to be the tools most commonly used in learning and teaching whereas Facebook predominated for personal use. Podcasts, the second most-used type of social media for teaching, were used at much the same rate for teaching as for personal or professional purposes. Previous surveys had shown marked disciplinary differences in the use of social media with humanities and arts, professions and applied sciences, and social sciences using social media for teaching purposes at higher rates than those in natural sciences or mathematics and computer science. This difference however narrowed considerably in 2013 with natural sciences, mathematics and computer science showing the greatest degree of growth.

59 *Embracing social media. University of Sheffield UCISA Amber Miro award entry:* www.ucisa.ac.uk/bestpractice/awards/amma/Controls/Rich%20Text%20Editor/~/_media/Files/members/awards/amma/2012_AMMAentries/sheffield.ashx

60 *University of Sheffield. Ibid.* www.ucisa.ac.uk/bestpractice/awards/amma/Controls/Rich%20Text%20Editor/~/_media/Files/members/awards/amma/2012_AMMAentries/sheffield.ashx.

61 http://twitter.com/MMU_IT

62 <http://twitter.com/liverpoolcsd>

63 http://twitter.com/unilincoln_ict

64 <https://www.flickr.com/>

65 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google%2B>

66 *University of Southern California (Rossier School of Education), The Essential #Edchat Resource Guide:* <http://rossieronline.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/edchat-resource-guide5.pdf>

67 *Seaman, J. and Tinti-Kane, H. (2013) Social media for teaching and learning. Pearson:*

www.pearsonlearningsolutions.com/assets/downloads/reports/social-media-for-teaching-and-learning-2013-report.pdf#view=FitH,0

The 2013 report also notes a change over time in how the social media sites are being used. In 2010 social media channels were being adopted but used in the same way as traditional media. The 2013 results indicated that staff are now more likely to ask students to create content for blogs and wikis than they are to ask them merely to read or comment on them. The report noted that podcasts still seem to be used in quite a traditional way and students are more likely to be asked to listen to a podcast than to comment on it (see however the University of Hertfordshire case study below). Podcasts are also more likely to be used for individual assignments whereas blogs and wikis are also used for group work. The main barriers to greater take-up of social media in learning and teaching appear to be unchanged over a number of years and relate to concerns about the academic integrity of student work and concerns about various aspects of staff and student privacy, including a reluctance to allow people outside the class to view or comment on course related content.

Nottingham Trent University (NTU): has used blogging to overcome a common problem for students on placement – a sense of isolation and separation from the rest of their cohort that often leads to a high rate of withdrawals⁶⁸. NTU used the approach to support trainee teachers but the problem is also a significant one for nursing students. Initially the focus of the closed blog was simply to create a support community and for students to use it as a reflective journal without specific learning objectives. The approach was so successful in the first year that in following years the community was formed pre-enrolment and the blog was also used to practice reflective writing and to get peer-to-peer feedback. Three years into the initiative the course had not had a single dropout and newly qualified teachers from the previous cohort were being used as mentors for the new arrivals via the blog. The main issue to be dealt with was data protection and privacy as students often named pupils and mentors even though they were told not to do so.

The University of Leeds: used blogs, wikis and social bookmarking to support web-based research in history in order to help students develop a range of transferable skills and practice the types of collaborative working that would be useful to them in the world of work in ways that could not be achieved through traditional essays and exams⁶⁹. The approach was project-based, with students conducting a piece of historical research, using social bookmarking to store and share the resources they collected, reflecting on issues and progress in a blog and presenting their findings in a wiki. The students were assessed on the quality of their blog post and the quality of their responses to other people, engaging in discussion and making links as well as their bibliographic work and final presentation. The switch from being an individual learner to being part of the learning community was an important one for the students and they found writing for a structured wiki format forced them to think in a different way to simply writing a linear essay. The wiki was publicly available and this obliged the students to think about copyright and intellectual property in ways they had not previously as well as finding it gratifying to have their work on public display⁷⁰.

The University of Leicester: piloted the use of Twitter to create informal support networks amongst undergraduates in biological sciences and MA level museum studies students⁷¹. The students were very enthusiastic and accessed Twitter in a number of different ways, indicating that it was the service itself rather than any associated device that was attractive to them. The undergraduate network was very peer-centred, with staff not playing a central role and activity rising just prior to assessment deadlines or when revising for exams. The postgraduate network was less active and more tutor-centred. The tutor-student interaction however centred around administrative details and peaked when there was a fall of snow during a field trip. The researchers concluded that the use of social media in learning and teaching practice appears to be viewed by students in a very different way to personal use. They found that students thought carefully about wording their tweets before they posted them and that there was no evidence of inappropriate language or behaviour although few of the students felt under any pressure to keep their tweets purely academic and none of them objected to academic staff being part of their network.

The University of Hertfordshire: used podcasting and wikis to enhance learning on a BSc physiotherapy programme⁷². The wiki allowed students to start to build and organise knowledge in an effective way following on from their search and evaluation of information, and the students self-assessed and peer-reviewed the podcasts using a pre-defined rubric. By making a judgment on their peers and by evaluating their own performance, the students had an opportunity to reflect on their learning and experience. Creating a podcast also help them identify the need to be able to use different terminology when communicating with patients and professional colleagues.

The University of Southampton: has used Twitter and Storify⁷³ to enhance learning in large group lectures⁷⁴. A maths tutor originally offered students the opportunity to tweet questions during lectures, realising that not all students are comfortable asking questions in a large group. He later expanded the experiment by using Storify to provide a

68 See Minocha, S. (2009) *A Study on the Effective Use of Social Software by Further and Higher Education in the UK to Support Student Learning and Engagement*. www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/projects/effective-use-of-social-software-in-education-casestudies.pdf

69 www.sddu.leeds.ac.uk/casestudies/casestudy.php?ID=81&topics=31&search=yes

70 https://wiki.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/HIST2530_Web_Research_for_Historians

71 http://jolt.merlot.org/vol7no1/cann_0311.htm

72 See Minocha, S. (2009) *Ibid*. www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/projects/effective-use-of-social-software-in-education-casestudies.pdf

73 <https://storify.com>

74 www.cite.soton.ac.uk/activity-areas/fbksoton14/using-twitter-and-storify-in-large-lectures-jim-anderson/

permanent record and to expand on the answers given in lectures e.g. by adding images and videos. This combines the benefit of being able to answer questions at the right time during the flow of the lecture, whilst also being able to offer extended answers later and point to connected resources that encourage students to think around the topic without digressing and interrupting the flow of a particular lesson. When students email questions, especially around exam time, these are anonymised and the response posted to Storify so that all students benefit. An average of eight hits per student shows that learners do engage with the Storify resources. The lecturer chose the tools because they are quick and easy to use without worrying whether Storify was the optimal tool to support dialogue.

3.7 Alumni relations

University alumni can be generous sponsors and donors but more than that they represent a significant body of expertise and knowledge that can benefit the institution and its current students, as well as being a network of potential champions for the institution. Social media offers the opportunity for the university to make this value proposition much more two-way and allow alumni to leverage the institutional network, in an environment where people tend to change jobs much more frequently than in the past and where personal contacts can make all the difference to businesses trying to win new contracts in an increasingly competitive environment.

Use of tools such as LinkedIn and Twitter to help alumni jobseekers appears to be more advanced in the US than in the UK. (LinkedIn makes supporting such groups very easy by providing a specific alumni tool). Robert Gordon University however has a toolkit in its Moodle learning platform which provides students with guidance on how to use LinkedIn for job searches and on staying connected and the University rates highly in various rankings for employability.

The use of social media seems to be far more focused on making and maintaining connections than direct fundraising. A 2009 survey of 562 (mainly US) institutions found that fewer than 2% of institutions were carrying out fundraising via social media⁷⁵. Emory University, Atlanta, however began targeting fundraising early and in 2007 initiated the Blue Pig campaign⁷⁶ giving undergraduates a blue piggybank to encourage them to donate to the University. From 2009 the blue pig was given a personality via a Facebook page and Twitter account. Staged events such as a “pig-napping” were used to raise funds and the rate of undergraduate giving increased significantly⁷⁷. At one point, Facebook closed down the page, due to it having too many updates. The accounts no longer appear to be active but this example is nonetheless interesting because of its creative linking of social media activities with physical artefacts and events.

⁷⁵ www.rlweiner.com/case/case_online_fundraising_survey_2009.pdf

⁷⁶ http://college.emory.edu/home/news/quadrangle/2011spring/pages25_28.html#3

⁷⁷ www.mstoner.com/blog/strategy/the_blue_pig_campaign_ftf_facebook_twitter_more_annual_fund_increases/

4 Social media strategy and policy



THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

- we look at whether institutions actually need a social media strategy and what purpose such a strategy might serve;
- we review the range of current social media policies and suggest a good practice approach to creating and maintaining such a policy;
- we provide some good examples of guidance.

Research into UK university social media policies conducted between October 2011 and May 2012 only identified 14 such documents that were publicly available⁷⁸. More recent searches reveal over twice as many social media policy documents and many more examples of guidance. Given that some such documents may be on institutional intranets, or named in a way that makes them less easy to find, the impression is that a significant number of higher education providers are seeing the need to formalise their institutional approach to the use of social media.

4.1 Strategy

Most of the institutional documents publicly available are labelled policies or guidelines. This begs the question, “does an institution need a social media strategy?” The Institute of Education (IOE)⁷⁹, which is now part of UCL, notes that social media is just one element of many communication channels and should therefore form part of the corporate communication strategy. However it goes on to say that the newness, distinctiveness and potential of social media may demand a strategy not least to help with accelerating uptake and effecting the required culture change. It also states: “Additionally, social media strategies are a useful way of generating policies and guidelines to shield universities from the reputation risks associated with social media free-for-alls.” Given that the Institute was one of the few institutions to actually term its approach a strategy⁸⁰ (and to have a clear action plan for implementing it), the fact that there were both positive and negative drivers behind the approach is interesting.



“There is a slower movement towards institutions exploiting and leading strategically with their use of Web 2.0 for institutional purposes. ... and much of the drive is coming from bottom up. ... The potential transformation of the practices themselves is yet barely understood or encountered.” (Armstrong and Franklin 2008⁸¹)

78 McNeill, T. (2012) “Don’t affect the share price”: social media policy in higher education as reputation management. *Research in Learning Technology Supplement: ALT-C 2012 Conference Proceedings*: www.researchinlearningtechnology.net/index.php/rlt/article/view/19194/

79 [www.ioe.ac.uk/about/documents/About_Policies/Social_media_strategy_\(v2.2\).pdf](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/about/documents/About_Policies/Social_media_strategy_(v2.2).pdf)

80 The then University of Wales, Newport also had a strategy as long ago as 2006 www.ukoln.ac.uk/web-focus/events/workshops/webmaster-2006/talks/webb/

81 Armstrong, J. and Franklin, T. (2008) *A review of current and developing international practice in the use of social networking (Web 2.0) in higher education*: www.franklin-consulting.co.uk/LinkedDocuments/the%20Use%20of%20social%20networking%20in%20HE.pdf

It is difficult to escape the view that the need to manage risk, as opposed to an emphasis on benefits and opportunities, has been the key driver for institutions until recently. Armstrong and Franklin came to this conclusion in 2008:

“The use of Web 2.0 for both social and professional purposes has created uncertainties for HEIs. This is reflected in institutions’ current sharing of regulatory behaviour codes for use of Web 2.0 for staff and students. These appear to be coming into place before institutional policies or strategies for effective development and use of Web 2.0 for learning, teaching and other areas.”⁸²

In Section 6, How are we doing so far?, we see some evidence that the sense of not wanting to be left behind but at the same time being cautious about managing risk, has led to a situation where universities are still not entirely clear about what they should be aiming to achieve through the use of social media. It is perhaps telling that there seem to be many more HE level courses on developing a social media strategy than there are university social media strategies!

Also notable is the paucity of obvious links between social media strategy and policy and overarching information strategies. There are some exceptions: the University of Stirling’s *Information Strategy 2009-13*⁸³ made reference to exploiting web 2.0 as well as other related issues such as the implications of changing formats of information; consumer-led developments and changing information ownership. The strategy for 2013-16⁸⁴ states:

“We will enable our students and staff to use richer means of communication, particularly new social media, collaborative working tools and electronic conferencing”, and

“Academic discourse is increasingly being enabled and delivered by information systems and technology. We will strive to help students and staff improve their digital and media literacy and information management capabilities.”

The current University of Greenwich *Information Strategy* (dated 2009)⁸⁵ similarly recognises the importance of social networking and puts emphasis on digital literacies:

“The growth of the use of the internet for information content and communications is changing the pattern of teaching, of academic publishing, of ideas of copyright, and indeed what constitutes valid knowledge. Students are increasingly making use of social networking tools outside the University to communicate with one another, work together in self defined groups that do not necessarily fit the groupings that the University uses to define its communities ...

... We need to develop methods of raising awareness of new methods of using electronic resources and helping staff to evaluate their use for their own purposes.”

The message here for strategic decision makers is the need to recognise that transformative changes are taking place in the core activities of universities and to understand how new, and possibly unfamiliar, tools can play a role in helping each university fulfil its particular mission. There is a possible role for educational developers in supporting such change.

⁸² Armstrong, J and Franklin T. (2008) *Ibid.* <http://www.franklin-consulting.co.uk/LinkedDocuments/the%20use%20of%20social%20networking%20in%20HE.pdf>

⁸³ www.foi.stir.ac.uk/documents/information-strategy.pdf

⁸⁴ www.stir.ac.uk/media/schools/is/documents/policy/InformationStrategy2013.pdf

⁸⁵ www2.gre.ac.uk/about/policy

**GOOD PRACTICE TIPS**

- **Fit with mission** – discuss the role that social media could play in underpinning your institutional values and supporting your particular mission.
- **Understanding the strategic context** – where does social media sit in your institutional strategic context: you may not need a separate strategy but is the use of social media aligned with your other strategies? Have information and communications strategies been updated to take account of these new forms of communication or do you need a separate (possibly short-term) strategy and action plan to make the most of the opportunities?
- **Benefits realisation** – review the sections of this Toolkit on delivering benefits and guidance for corporate users to see whether you are making the most of the available opportunities.
- **Compliance** – review your approach against the Jisc checklist reproduced below.

Social Media for Staff Legal Checklist

Please Note: This guidance is for information only and is not intended to replace legal advice when faced with a risk decision.

This is a short reference guide for universities, colleges and learning providers to consider in relation to social media use by staff. The aim of the checklist is to ensure risks are recognised and managed appropriately, while clarifying for staff what the boundaries are.

1. The institution has a clear strategy which reflects its approach to risk.....
2. A named individual is responsible for the social media policy and his/her contact information is publicly available.....
3. Consultations are carried out with staff, learners and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. Social Media Group) to determine use and ensure buy-in from all parties.....
4. A social media policy makes staff aware of their responsibilities, and defines social media broadly to include new technologies and mobile devices.....
5. The policy refers to, and is consistent with, relevant updated policies e.g. e-Safety Policy, Acceptable Use Policy, Disciplinary Policy, Communications Policy, e-Security Policy, Monitoring Policy etc.
6. The policy clarifies where 'professional' ends and 'private' begins, and makes clear what constitutes 'unacceptable use'.....
7. Staff are aware what is required prior to posting relevant content e.g. an appropriate disclaimer or appropriate authorisation.....
8. Procedures to address a policy breach are consistent with the Disciplinary policy and proportionate sanctions are in place.....
9. There is a planned programme of dissemination, and training links closely with established e-safety practice
10. There are opportunities for regular review of the institution's practice and policies in line with emerging technologies and web-based resources e.g. via the Social Media Group.....
11. Staff are informed of relevant updates, and have access to further sources of information, guidance and support..

Source: ©Jisc Legal used under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported Licence www.jisclegal.ac.uk/ManageContent/ViewDetail/ID/3447/Social-Media-Checklist-10-February-2014.aspx

February 2014

4.2 Policy

Many universities have social media policies and they vary considerably in their approach – possibly as a consequence of the fact that different universities have given different central departments responsibility for this area. Unsurprisingly, most policies stem from departments responsible for marketing, communications and external relations; however, a significant number have been developed by human resources departments; other departmental homes for such policies include information services.

McNeill (2012)⁸⁶ notes this phenomenon and expresses concern that HR departments are deemed to have the expertise to devise such policies; going on to say:

“However HR departments are generally the originating source for disciplinary policies and, as such, tend to contextualise social media use in terms of potential misconduct. There’s a stress in the policies emanating from HR departments, therefore, on compliance and on managerial structures.”

This does appear to be true but to frame this purely in terms of a debate around *academic freedom* would be overly simplistic. Universities employ a wide-ranging body of staff many of whom have legitimate reasons to use social media in support of their professional practice. In other cases, however, staff may spend an excessive amount of work time on social media activity that is not work-related, post on social media about *throwing a sickie* in order to have a day off, or (where staff have pastoral care responsibilities) exhibit behaviours that would seem incompatible with the care of young people. Feigning illness is an example where the employer can clearly challenge the behaviour rather than the use of social media; other examples where the employee is expressing views with which the institution would not wish to be associated may be less clear cut.

The role of policy as an enabler versus a means to deal with misconduct therefore needs to be carefully thought through. It is worth considering whether your institution ought to indicate the level of social media activity you might expect a particular job role to entail – a spectrum might range from neutral (not expected to participate on behalf of the business) through to encouraged (not a requirement but can be beneficial and guidance available) to expected (a normal part of the role).

Smithers (2012)⁸⁷ makes the case that HEIs need social media policies that reflect their goals of knowledge creation and dissemination and suggests that an overcautious emphasis on reputation management is actually leading to missed opportunities. He believes that better use of social media for inter-institutional collaboration would actually lead to increased research and teaching opportunities. He also references a situation where a Learning Management System (LMS) vendor noted that one university client would not be deploying the social media components available in the new release of the system because this contravened their social media policy and suggests this is an example where an ill-conceived reputation management strategy is actually having an adverse impact on pedagogy.

The message here for policy-makers is the need to ensure that policies act as enablers to delivering the benefits of social media as well as effectively managing the risks. It may be a good idea to frame the policy to be as much about institutional values as about rules.

The following guidance applies whether you have an existing policy or are developing one for the first time.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Offer guidance for all stakeholders** – establish whether you have a need for a specific social media policy. If you decide this is not a policy matter ensure that you do at least offer clear guidance to staff and students (for the rest of this section the term *policy* refers equally to any other form of guidance materials).
- **Responsiveness** – recognise that this is a fast-moving area and ensure that the policy is reviewed regularly.
- **Ownership** – involve a range of stakeholders in drawing up/reviewing the policy in order to gain buy-in and help determine what is reasonable in different contexts (bearing in mind that different departments may have different cultures within a single university).

⁸⁶ McNeill, T. (2012) “Don’t affect the share price”: social media policy in higher education as reputation management. *Research in Learning Technology Supplement: ALT-C 2012 Conference Proceedings*: www.researchinlearningtechnology.net/index.php/rlt/article/view/19194/

⁸⁷ Smithers, M. (2012) *Universities and social media: Academics need to be bold in our use of social media and not outsource digital dissemination to widget gurus*. LSE Impact Blog: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/10/03/smithers-universities-social-media/>

- **A value-driven approach** – focus the policy around your institutional values and the behaviours you wish to promote.
- **Identify requirements according to role** – indicate to staff the level of social media activity you might expect their particular job role to entail.
- **Offer clarity on the following issues** (this Toolkit offers guidance to help you in taking decisions on most of these areas, you may choose to have separate staff and student policies):
 - any prior approval needed to set up any social media channels for institutional purposes;
 - any requirements with regard to institutional branding;
 - any related policies that users need to be aware of e.g. IT acceptable use policy;
 - related policy/guidance on areas such as IT Security and esafety;
 - staff/student disciplinary procedures to be invoked should the policy be breached;
 - social media channels that fall within the scope of the policy;
 - any disclaimers needed by staff/students who identify a relationship with the institution in social media channels that fall outside the scope of the policy;
 - the procedure for reporting inappropriate content on institution-related social media channels;
 - the procedure for dealing with inappropriate content on institution-related social media channels;
 - any specific requirements in relation to engaging with younger or vulnerable learners.
- **Appropriate communication** – communicate the policy and offer additional guidance and training where needed. As the UCISA *Model regulations* state: “If you want the regulations to go beyond laying out what is and is not acceptable, and actually influence the behaviour of users, then you should embed them in some form of educational process. Simply making them available and drawing users’ attention to them (even by click to accept) is unlikely to make much difference in practice”.⁸⁸

Additional resources

- Jisc has produced an excellent policy template⁸⁹ for developing a staff social media policy that covers a range of different approaches.
- The Information Commissioner’s Office has a very brief social media policy⁹⁰ that is heavily focused on objectives and principles.

4.3 Examples of institutional guidance/ exemplars

It is possibly a reflection of the bottom up growth of social media use in universities that, whilst there might be a lack of clarity about strategy and considerable diversity in policy, there are many excellent examples of practical guidance.

- The University of Kent has a very useful website⁹¹ with contextualised information for staff and students; it is notable that Kent appears to have been an early adopter of these channels⁹².

⁸⁸ UCISA (2014a) *Model regulations for the use of institutional IT facilities and systems*: www.ucisa.ac.uk/modelregs

⁸⁹ <http://jiscleg.al/smediapolicy>

⁹⁰ <https://ico.org.uk/media/about-the-ico/policies-and-procedures/1895/ico-social-media-policy.pdf>

⁹¹ www.kent.ac.uk/socialmedia/index.html

⁹² “On 7th November 2007 Facebook announced that organisations could create pages on Facebook, which had previously been restricted to individuals. Two days later a blog post gave details of institutional presence on Facebook by the early adopters in the UK HE sector. These were, in alphabetical order, Aston, Cardiff, Kent and the University of Central Lancashire.” Kelly, B. (2008) *Web 2.0 in Higher Education in the United Kingdom*. In Armstrong, J. and Franklin, T. (2008) *A review of current and developing international practice in the use of social networking (Web 2.0) in higher education*: www.franklin-consulting.co.uk/LinkedDocuments/the%20use%20of%20social%20networking%20in%20HE.pdf

- The University of Cumbria social media website⁹³ also has contextualised information for staff and students.
- Queen's University Belfast is an example where Information Services⁹⁴ is the source of this information; it has an attractive website bringing together social media policies with other acceptable use policies.
- The University of Southampton brings together advice on using social media, managing digital identity, esafety and using social tools for study and to improve employability in a digital literacies toolkit⁹⁵ for students.
- The University of Oxford runs a Social Media Service⁹⁶ out of its IT department to support staff in using social media for all aspects of university business.
- Robert Gordon University won a gold award in the 2013 HEIST awards for education marketing for its RightClick⁹⁷ campaign aimed at promoting responsible social networking.

There are also some very good examples of guidance for using particular tools:

- The LSE Twitter guide⁹⁸ is widely used and has a strong focus on its use in learning and teaching.
- The University of Leicester has produced a Twitter guide⁹⁹ with a much more corporate focus.
- The Open University has opted to develop position papers¹⁰⁰ on certain tools that combine review of and guidance on current activity with thoughts about future direction.

93 www.cumbria.ac.uk/AboutUs/News/SocialMediaGuidance/WhatsSocialMedia.aspx

94 www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/SocialMedia/

95 www.elanguages.ac.uk/digital_literacies.php

96 <http://help.it.ox.ac.uk/internal/sld/SocialMedia>

97 www.rgu.ac.uk/rightclick

98 <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/09/29/twitter-guide/>

99 www2.le.ac.uk/offices/cap/marcomms/communications/social/handbook/twitter/twitter-best-practise

100 www.open.ac.uk/about/web-standards/standards/editorial-standards/social-media-guidelines

5 Choosing the right tools



THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

- we review the choice of social media tools as part of the overall information flow within the institution;
- we look at achieving the right balance between institutionally familiar tools and tools that are popular with students;
- we suggest some approaches to help you ensure you are meeting the needs of your wider user population and not being diverted by short term trends or minority demands.

There is a vast array of tools available, and the number increases every day, so selecting the best tool for a particular purpose is far from easy. At an institutional level the selection of tools for communication and collaboration needs to be thought through in terms of your overall information strategy and information flows. The *ad hoc* addition of tools in an organic fashion can lead to confusion on the part of staff and students about which tools to use for which purposes. Currently there is a lot of thought being given to reputation management but less evidence of effort being put into looking at how information flows via social networks support all aspects of the student lifecycle.

The University of West London considered a holistic approach to student support when it devised its award-winning¹⁰¹ West London Guru¹⁰². It aimed to deliver a conversational approach to customer service and providing expert advice. The aim was to empower students and the Guru was intended to be a friendly expert who was there to facilitate discussions not to control them. West London Guru listens and responds to conversations and builds relationships between students, presenting them with a credible voice from the University. It goes beyond a typical corporate presence and is a low-cost way of filling an important information gap. A range of student *social media ambassadors* mean that the Guru is available for almost 24 hours a day, seven days a week. West London Guru is described as a personality not a channel. The Guru is an engaging and important link to current and prospective students, a means of support to central departments at peak times, a means of early identification of issues affecting students and a means of fostering a sense of community. It is an example of having a clear focus and using a limited range of tools (mainly Facebook and Twitter) well.

¹⁰¹ UWL won Best Social Media Strategy at the Institute of Internal Communications awards 2011

¹⁰² www.slideshare.net/CIPRPaul/west-london-guru-how-the-university-of-west-london-wised-up-to-student-engagement-through-social-media-nicola-miller-head-of-communications-university-of-west-london

An analysis by Russell (2012)¹⁰³ looks at what tools UK universities are using and how many different social media channels each university uses. Any such analysis will of course date very quickly but is worth referencing here as the raw data has been made available.

In Section 2, Social media: what is it?, we identified that there is a strong element of fashion in relation to the tools e.g. evidence that the 16-18 group are leaving Facebook behind. This has been noted in a few studies including one by researchers at UCL as part of the Global Social Media Impact Study¹⁰⁴ (nine anthropologists in eight countries researching use and consequences of social media):

“What appears to be the most seminal moment in a young person’s decision to leave Facebook was surely that dreaded day your mum sends you a friend request. You just cannot be young and free if you know your parents can access your every indiscretion. The desire for the new, also drives each new generation to find their own media and this is playing out now in social media. It is nothing new that young people care about style and status in relation to their peers, and Facebook is simply not cool anymore.” (Miller 2013b¹⁰⁵).

The difficulty at an institutional level is therefore getting the right balance between tools that are readily available to you (and possibly already familiar to your staff) and tools that your students prefer to use, bearing in mind that you may have a diverse student population and a set of younger users whose habits and preferences change quite frequently. As an example, WhatsApp¹⁰⁶ is a messaging service that is popular with young users because, unlike text messaging, it has minimal cost. It would appear difficult and risky for a university to move away from its reliance on email in order to use such a tool but on the other hand institutions are finding that many students simply do not use email any longer. It may be time to take a look at how the most urgent messages are delivered; there is some evidence from the schools sector¹⁰⁷ of learners responding much faster to messages sent via Facebook groups than to email. The University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) has been using Twitter to get urgent news to students and staff since 2011¹⁰⁸.



“I stress over and over the importance of putting the ‘why’ before the ‘how’ and not the other way around (as the volume of unengaging Facebook pages with no clear target audience set up by universities demonstrates).” (Playle 2011¹⁰⁹)

Many of the most popular social media tools are free at the point of use (the value proposition for the providers being in advertising and the vast amounts of data they can harvest and sell on to others), but the ability to customise and adapt the tools can sometimes come at a cost. It is also unsafe to assume that a tool that starts out as free will always remain so. One example of this is the social network Ning¹¹⁰, which gained considerable popularity with the academic community because it offered the ability to customise the platform to your desired look and feel, manage security permissions and was free of advertising. The platform launched in 2005 and in 2010 informed users that it would no longer be providing a free service and would only be available with three levels of chargeable service.

Most social media tools aim to attract the widest possible user base so are very conscious both of usability and the need to be accessible on a variety of end-user devices. Institutions nonetheless have an obligation to consider the accessibility features of each of the tools to ensure they are suitable for users with disabilities. There are however some examples of tools which, although widely used, have both hardware and skills requirements that can represent a considerable barrier to new users. An example of this, discussed in Section 2, Social media: what is it?, is the virtual world Second Life.

Universities also need to consider the international dimension of their activities, as social networks and other tools that are popular in Europe may be little used or even banned in some key target overseas markets such as China and other parts of Asia¹¹¹. Universities should also note the popularity of tools such as WeChat in China (438 million active users, of which there are 70 million outside of China)¹¹².

103 Russell, C. (2012) *Social media in UK universities today*: <http://craig-russell.co.uk/2012/05/26/social-media-in-uk-universities-today.html#U71-3emKBHY>

104 www.ucl.ac.uk/global-social-media

105 Miller, D. (2013b) *Facebook’s so uncool, but it’s morphing into a different beast*. *The Conversation*: <http://theconversation.com/facebooks-so-uncool-but-its-morphing-into-a-different-beast-21548>

106 www.whatsapp.com/

107 Britland, M. (2012) *Social media for schools: a guide to Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest*. *The Guardian*: www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2012/jul/26/social-media-teacher-guide

108 www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9kx28vcvGE&feature=youtu.be

109 *How can a university best use social media for internal communications?* *The Guardian*: www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2011/jun/01/universities-social-media-internal-communications

110 www.ning.com

111 *Investintech has produced an interactive map of which countries have banned which social media tools and why* www.investintech.com/articles/theworldsocialnetworkingbanrace/

112 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WeChat>

Alongside the question of which tools to use is how exactly the institution-related elements should be managed. It may be reinventing the wheel for institutions to try to develop their own platforms and compete with the features and functionality of the most popular tools, but should institutions be creating some kind of *walled gardens*, particularly for learning and teaching purposes, to protect privacy and give participants a sense of being in an institutionally-managed space with clear boundaries?

Finally, many institutional learning platforms are increasingly integrating social media and institutions therefore need to think about whether it is reasonable to ask students to access institutional learning spaces or resources using a social media ID.

Institutions may also wish to consider the use of tools to help manage scheduling of posts across social media channels^{113, 114} and to provide statistics on their reach via different channels.

The choice of tool should ultimately be driven by fitness for purpose, taking into account a range of factors.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **View social media as part of service delivery** – think about your stakeholders and their needs and preferences. A service design approach and the use of individual user stories or personas can help to ensure your approach is not driven by the needs of a vocal minority. See Baranova *et al* (2010)¹¹⁵ for a useful guide to using this approach in higher education.
- **Look at the fit with IT infrastructure** – consider the possible tools in relation to their compatibility with your other infrastructure. If your institution is involved with the UCISA Enterprise Architecture Community of Practice¹¹⁶ you may already have a roadmap against which to measure fit.
- **Solve real world problems** – for example, consider whether social media tools might address issues due to students not reading email?
- **Be inclusive** – ensure that the tools you use are accessible to the widest possible range of potential users. The Web2Access site¹¹⁷ has useful information on the types of test that should be applied to social media sites in order to meet the needs of users with particular disabilities and you also need to think about whether the tool can be accessed in the range of countries where your target audience might reside.
- **Look at total cost of ownership** – consider the total cost of the various options available, bearing in mind that tools free at the point of use may require chargeable customisation and that some tools may have cost implications in terms of the guidance and/or training needed.

Additional resources

- The University of Leicester has produced a useful *Social Media Framework* worksheet¹¹⁸ that helps define objectives, audiences, messages, goals and means of evaluation as an aid to choosing appropriate communication channels.

¹¹³ <https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/>

¹¹⁴ <https://hootsuite.com/>

¹¹⁵ Baranova, P., Morrison, S. and Mutton, J. (2010) *Service design in higher and further education: a briefing paper*: http://wiki.cetis.ac.uk/images/8/82/Service_Design.pdf

¹¹⁶ www.ucisa.ac.uk/bestpractice/cop/ea

¹¹⁷ Web2Access was originally a Jisc project and was later supported by the University of Southampton www.web2access.org.uk/

¹¹⁸ <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/cap/marcomms/communications/social/handbook/overview/creating-the-conditions-for-engagement>

6 How are we doing so far?



THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

- we propose that higher education institutions to date have been operating without a clear business case for the use of social media;
- we use some league tables to illustrate the difficulty in knowing what to measure;
- we suggest some approaches to help you build on existing good practice and to determine meaningful metrics.

To a certain extent the HE sector has taken a bit of a *suck it and see* approach to the adoption of social media to date, recognising the strength of the global trend towards use of these tools without necessarily identifying a clear business case closer to home. The fact that we are talking about end user tools that many people are familiar with in their day to day lives means it has been possible for early adopters to undertake developments in a bottom up way. Much of the progress to date has therefore been due to a combination of the work of a few enthusiasts and a general sense that the institution should not get left behind rather than a clear idea of the benefits and a focused strategy. Things are beginning to change and institutions are now taking more unified approaches, although there is a sense that the driver for this is more to do with managing risk than benefits realisation. The outcome of this is that we still seem to be a long way from having effective metrics to judge whether or not university use of social networking is actually helping achieve strategic goals.



“The role of a university is knowledge creation and dissemination. It seems unfathomable to me that a modern progressive university would not look at social media and say here is the most fabulous set of tools for helping us carry out some of our core tasks.”(Smithers 2012¹¹⁹)

That is not to say there have not already been various attempts to create university social media league tables. The outcomes have however, even by league table standards, lacked real meaning and have, in some cases, been downright contradictory. As an example, in two studies of universities’ use of social media, both published in 2012, one (Sociagility, 2012¹²⁰) describes the University of Sheffield as:

“... the most receptive and responsive social media environment out of leading American and UK institutions”^{121, 122}.

119 Smithers, M. (2012) *Universities and social media: Academics need to be bold in our use of social media and not outsource digital dissemination to widget gurus*. LSE Impact Blog: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/10/03/smithers-universities-social-media/>

120 Sociagility (2012) <http://monitor.icef.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Sociagility-Transatlantic-University-Divide.pdf>

121 www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/nr/social-media-sociagility-transatlantic-university-guide-1.174508

122 <http://mashable.com/2012/03/30/universities-social-media-savvy/>

Whilst the other (LSE 2012¹²³) says:

“By contrast, there are some other well-known and sizeable universities who seem to be having difficulty getting their social media visibility off the ground at all, most notably Sheffield”¹²⁴

Another university social media league table published by Unipod in 2013¹²⁵ extols the benefits of engagement with social media and states:

“With over four billion videos viewed a day on YouTube and 60 hours of video uploaded every minute, it is surprising to see that seven UK universities do not have any social media links on their university homepage. Indeed two of them had no social media links on their website whatsoever, suggesting a critical lack of social media engagement.”

The Unipod league table itself however, as shown by the comments on the web page, has again come in for criticism over its methodology and use of raw numbers without considering what types of people these viewers are (or indeed whether they are human at all) and what actually constitutes meaningful engagement.

Whilst it is relatively easy to dismiss some of the crude comparisons, it is not clear that our institutions are yet developing effective means of evaluating their activity for themselves. The lack of a clear business case and specific objectives for what universities are trying to achieve through social media may be part of the problem. Raw numbers of students and potential students viewing the channels are interesting but do not really tell us about the value of the engagement.

Joint research by Communications Management and the online community, The Student Room, looked at universities' use of social media in relation to student recruitment, and concluded that potential students did not find the channels particularly trustworthy and nor did they find the information they needed.

“We found that although 65% of students use social media channels several times a day, students rated universities' social media presence as less influential and less trustworthy than more traditional sources such as prospectuses or open days.”

Students showed a willingness to engage with universities through social media but tended not to look there for information because universities did not make sufficient or appropriate use of these channels.

“They do not talk about the things we need to know’.”¹²⁶

The researchers in the study also concluded that the fundamental problem was a lack of clarity about what universities were trying to achieve and who the communications were aimed at:

“This suggests that many universities are using social media to try and engage with too many stakeholder groups at once, and consequently not being tailored enough about the updates they are sending out. The danger of using social media channels to push out any and all university messages... [is] the risk of engaging with no one successfully.” (Shaw 2013¹²⁷)

A study by a social media analytics company looking at the use of Twitter by what it deemed the 10 top ranked UK universities, found that none of their corporate accounts sent out more than 3-4 tweets per day, that the accounts were used purely for broadcasting rather than engagement and that they were possibly missing opportunities to engage with significant numbers of overseas followers¹²⁸.

123 LSE (2012) How visible are UK universities in social media terms? <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/02/03/university-social-media-visibility/>

124 <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/02/03/university-social-media-visibility/>

125 www.theunipod.com/making-your-choice/university-rankings/social-media-rankings/theunipod-social-media-rankings-2013

126 Shaw, J. (2013) University recruitment: one fifth of students say social media doesn't work. *The Guardian*: www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013/apr/17/university-student-recruitment-social-media

127 Shaw J. (2013) *Ibid.* <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013/apr/17/university-student-recruitment-social-media>

128 *British Universities Fail To Take Advantage of Social Media, Says Report. The Chronicle of Higher Education*: <http://chronicle.com/article/British-Universities-Fail-To/146157/>

Similar issues are addressed, although from a different perspective, by Smithers (2012)¹²⁹ who feels that very often university social media policies are being developed by people with backgrounds in other industries, who have been brought in for this purpose, and who do not really understand how scholarly communities operate. The policies are therefore developed without enough vision for what could be achieved and are taking protectionist and damage-limitation approaches, restricting the opportunities to innovate and collaborate.

There are numerous examples of embracing social media with great success in other sectors. An article on the top 10 social media success stories of 2012¹³⁰ includes Barack Obama's astute approach to understanding the demographic of his target audience and their use of social media; Mercedes-Benz allowing viewers to decide the outcome of advertisements; and a charity creating the world's shortest recipe book via 140 character recipes on Twitter. The key to all of these success stories is understanding the target audience and using the tools creatively.

In Section 3, Delivering benefits, we look at a considerable number of examples where universities are achieving tangible benefits through the effective use of social media. It is evidence that there is much good practice around but many universities have not yet been able to pick up on these pockets of good practice and embed them into more strategic approaches that fit closely with their particular mission. Having been, to a certain extent, swept along by a global trend, the time is right for those developing and/or reviewing strategies and policies to be both more visionary in their approach and more tactical in their use of particular tools and to determine what kind of metrics or other evidence will help them evaluate whether or not they are delivering the desired benefits.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Be benefits driven** – focus on the benefits you expect your use of social media to deliver and be both specific and realistic about what you expect to achieve^{131,132}.
- **Be user-focused** – talk to your stakeholders about how you can better use social media to deliver benefits to them.
- **Measure progress** – think about what types of engagement via social media will show you are making progress towards delivering benefits.
- **Make use of analytical tools** – find a tool that can deliver social media analytics that are meaningful to you.
- **Measure what really matters** – think about what metrics are real indicators of success: these are more likely to relate to student recruitment, retention and achievement, research collaborations or fundraising from alumni than anything that can be derived from social media analytics alone.
- **Cut out dead wood** – be prepared to focus on the tools and approaches that are working for you and to discontinue activities that are not achieving appropriate returns.
- **Innovate and evaluate** – bearing the above in mind, be creative – do not be afraid to innovate or experiment – just be clear how and when you will evaluate the outcomes.

¹²⁹ Smithers, M. (2012) *Universities and social media: Academics need to be bold in our use of social media and not outsource digital dissemination to widget gurus*. LSE Impact Blog: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/10/03/smithers-universities-social-media/>

¹³⁰ <http://socialmediastrategiessummit.com/blog/the-top-10-social-media-success-stories-of-2012-what-we-can-learn-from-them/>

¹³¹ *There is guidance on managing and measuring benefits in Jisc (2014) Programme management guide*: www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/programme-management/managing-benefits

¹³² See also Tanner, S. (2012) *Balanced Value Impact Model (BVI Model)* www.kdcs.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/impact.html

7 Managing your digital presence



THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

- we look at what is different about the concept of identity in the virtual world;
- we explain that students in particular (but employees as well) can have difficulty in identifying the long-term consequences of their digital actions;
- we suggest that a digital presence is a resource to be managed and offer some good practice tips to help you do this.

Having a social media presence involves creating and managing a digital identity. This is about far more than the mechanics of creating a user ID and password: it is about defining your online persona. Few people would engage in any face to face social interaction without giving some thought as to whether their appearance, tone or language was appropriate to the social situation, and the same should go for online interactions. The issues are slightly different depending on whether you are creating an individual or corporate identity but basically it boils down to your purpose in having a social media presence and how you want to be perceived by those you engage with – laced with a good dose of common sense and respect for others.

A fundamental difference between face to face and online interactions is, however, that online you get to choose exactly how you portray yourself and what you decide to share with others. In a meeting other people will immediately register (and quite probably pass judgement upon) characteristics such as your height, weight, gender, hairstyle, or clothing and it would be considered most unusual not to reveal your name. In an online setting the ground rules can be very different: you choose whether to be known by your real name or a pseudonym and whether to be recognised by a photograph or some other form of *avatar*. This freedom can be liberating for people who may face conscious or unconscious discrimination in their everyday lives, for example due to a physical disability, but there are also risks in not being entirely sure whether someone you are interacting with is who they claim to be and in people hiding behind anonymous identities for nefarious purposes¹³³. Organisations can also suffer from being confused with fake accounts (either spoofs or with more malicious intent) that have similar names to their own.

Corporate accounts will generally always use the institution name (or a recognised abbreviation thereof) and logo, although they may set up a range of accounts for different purposes. Individuals on the other hand, whether they are using social media for professional advancement or purely social purposes, have considerably greater freedom to decide what best serves their purpose (although institutional policy may dictate whether an individual who was clearly representing their department or research project could operate under a pseudonym).

¹³³ See Seife, C (2014) for examples of a range of reasons why people make up false identities on the internet www.wired.com/2014/07/virtual-unreality-the-online-sockpuppets-that-trick-us-all/?mbid=social_twitter

Do not assume that using a pseudonym guarantees anonymity. There is an example of a UK academic who has a widely-read blog, and presence on a number of other social media sites, under a pseudonym. His posts clearly reflect political views, as well as academic interests and have generated a lot of media attention resulting in the individual having had his name identified in the media on more than one occasion.

The BBC guide to *netiquette*¹³⁴ (internet etiquette) offers succinct common sense advice for using social networks and there are similar examples aimed specifically at students¹³⁵. It may seem obvious that behaviours which are unacceptable in face to face situations are equally unacceptable online, yet people often exhibit fewer inhibitions about their online behaviour. We discuss this further in Section 10, When it goes wrong, but with ever younger people having access to publication media, the issue is often basic immaturity and a lack of understanding about the consequences of how they portray themselves.

In a world of instant communications, many people see social media interactions as being quite ephemeral without realising the implications of the digital footprint they are building up.

The increasing use of information from social networking sites in recruitment and selection decisions is a case in point. Research for Jisc (Ferrell 2013¹³⁶) found that the concept of *digital influence* is increasingly important to employers seeking to find people who are recognised as innovators, thought-leaders and influencers. The employment relations service ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) undertook some research into the use of social media for staff recruitment (Broughton *et al* 2013¹³⁷) and found that 55% of respondents did not have a policy covering the use of social media for recruitment, although there was recognition that the practice of checking up on candidates' online profiles does occur in an unregulated fashion. One suggestion by Monmouthshire County Council, who did not see the need for a specific policy, was for interviewers to look at a candidate's online profile with them during an interview.

We have found no explicit evidence that the UK higher education sector is using social media in selection decisions relating to the recruitment of staff¹³⁸, researchers, or indeed students, although anecdotal evidence and surveys from the US¹³⁹ would suggest that this is likely to be happening in practice^{140,141}. There is however evidence of social media being used in student disciplinary procedures.

Research into the use of social media in learning and teaching contexts has often revealed that students feel there is a boundary between their personal lives and their contact with their college or university that is reflected in them preferring to use different tools for different types of content. These boundaries are however somewhat intangible in the sense that student indignation or disbelief that institutional authorities or future employers would check up on their online activity (some mistakenly believe that this is illegal) does not translate into managing their profile settings to ensure that this cannot occur.

Peluchette and Karl (2009)¹⁴² undertook research into student perceptions of their own image (*Examining Students' Intended Image on Facebook: "What Were They Thinking?!"*). This followed a 2007 study in which they looked at 200 student Facebook profiles and found considerable evidence of postings that would be inappropriate in a professional context (involving alcohol, sexual activity, profanity and derogatory comments about others). The researchers' conclusion was that the students' desire to be viewed in a particular way by their peers outweighed their perception of future risk from such postings and that many students who were aware of the availability of privacy settings nonetheless left material open in order to extend their network.

134 www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/guides/about-netiquette

135 <http://blogs.lsc.edu/expectations/netiquette-guidelines/>

136 Ferrell, G. (2013) *Enhancing student employability through technology-supported assessment and feedback*. Jisc briefing paper: www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/enhancing-student-employability-through-technology-supported-assessment-and-feedback

137 Broughton, A., Foley, B., Ledermaier, S. and Cox, A. (2013) *The use of social media in the recruitment process*. ACAS Research Paper 03/13: www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/0/b/The-use-of-social-media-in-the-recruitment-process.pdf

138 The University of York social media policy, owned by its HR Department, specifically prohibits this: www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/resources/policy/social-media-guidelines.htm

139 e.g. www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2011/10/10/college-admissions-officials-turn-to-facebook-to-research-students

140 See Lory, B. (2010) for an interesting article on the related ethical issues www.career.umn.edu/pdf/NACE_Facebook_Article_September_2010.pdf

141 This article on teenage use of the Internet has an interesting example of a Los Angeles boy whose college admissions form included an impressive and heartfelt essay on his desire to get away from gangs yet his MySpace page reflected gang affiliations as a matter of 'survival' in his context. Blair, E. (2014) www.npr.org/2014/02/25/282359480/social-media-researcher-gets-how-teenagers-use-the-internet

142 Peluchette, J. and Karl, K. (2009) *Examining Students' Intended Image on Facebook: "What Were They Thinking?!"* *Journal of Education for Business*, 2009, 85(1), p. 30: www.uwax.edu/faculty/brooks/bus230/handouts/facebook%20article.pdf

“It appears that many students make a conscious attempt to portray a particular image, and those who post problematic information do so to impress a particular audience, their peers.” Peluchette and Karl (2009)¹⁴³

Some useful guidance from Cornell University includes a section on *invincibility* when it suggests that students need to think not only about appearing cool now but about who they want to be in five or ten years’ time. It also highlights just how painful and tortuous the process of getting inappropriate posts removed from social networks can be:

“What might seem fun or spontaneous at 18, given caching technologies, might prove to be a liability to an on-going sense of your identity over the longer course of history. Have fun and make productive use of these new, exciting technologies, but remember that technology does not absolve one of responsibility. Behind every device, behind every new program, behind every technology is a law, a social norm, a business practice that warrants thoughtful consideration.” (Tracy Mitrano, Director of IT Policy and Computer Policy & Law Program, Cornell University¹⁴⁴)

The issues are not confined to young people: a report for ACAS (Broughton *et al* 2011¹⁴⁵) cited a 2010 survey which found that 58% of employees questioned would change what they wrote on their social media profiles if they knew that their employer was viewing them. This indicates that many people do not think through the potential consequences of what they post on social networks when the remarks are transferred into a different context.

Institutions should therefore encourage staff and students to review and think about their digital presence. Whilst on the one hand, this might seem to be a personal issue, there are benefits for the institution in knowing that its students present themselves in the best light to potential employers and similarly in staff presenting themselves well to potential students, potential research partners, the media seeking experts in particular topics or event planners seeking speakers. The hints and tips below thus apply in varying measure to students, early career researchers and to more established staff.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **See yourself as others see you** – conduct an audit of your own digital footprint by Internet searching and take the opportunity to delete items that, with hindsight, seem ill-advised (but bear in mind that they could well have been replicated elsewhere).
- **Define your boundaries** – establish private and professional boundaries. You can do this in various ways:
 - by checking and amending your privacy settings in each tool;
 - by having different identities in different tools or even in the same tool for different purposes;
 - by using the most appropriate tool for each purpose. For example, for professional use a range of different circles in Google+ might be more appropriate than your Facebook account.
- **Choose design over default** – do not just accept that you create a digital footprint by default. Design your own digital roadmap by thinking about what kind of connections and publicity can help you in furthering your research interests and your future career.

¹⁴³ Peluchette, J. and Karl, K. (2009) *Examining Students’ Intended Image on Facebook: “What Were They Thinking?!”* *Journal of Education for Business*, 2009, 85(1), p. 30: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08832320903217606

¹⁴⁴ Mitrano, T. (2006) *Thoughts on Facebook*. Cornell University: http://studentaffairs.com/ejournal/Winter_2007/ThoughtsonFacebook.htm

¹⁴⁵ Broughton, A., Higgins, T., Hicks, B. and Cox, A. (2011) *Workplaces and Social Networking: the Implications for Employment Relations*. ACAS Research Paper 11/11: www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/d/6/1111_Workplaces_and_Social_Networking.pdf

- **Provide key information** – remember that the best way to control what others see about you online is by providing high-quality information yourself. Think about the kind of things you might want people to find easily:
 - your CV (but being cautious of risks of identity theft – see section 10, When it goes wrong);
 - examples of your work;
 - research abstracts;
 - a speaker profile to help event planners find you;
 - mentions of your work in the news;
 - presentations you have given (either slides only or with accompanying recording).
- **Use the right medium for the message** – think about the best way to present these types of information via social media. You might want to think about:
 - using keywords and hashtags;
 - breaking your achievements into bite-sized chunks and finding stories in your research data;
 - using visual tools and infographics to get your message across.
- **Be social** – build networks through reciprocity. Share and comment on other people’s work and show your expertise through giving constructive advice and useful suggestions.
- **Follow UCISA (2014a) identity guidance**¹⁴⁶ – *“Do not allow anyone else to use your IT credentials, do not disguise your online identity and do not attempt to obtain or use anyone else’s”*.

Social media platforms also have rules on identity, for example: *“Facebook is a community where people use their authentic identities. We require people to provide the name they use in real life; that way, you always know who you’re connecting with. This helps keep our community safe”*¹⁴⁷.

Additional resources

Institutions should think about supporting both students and staff in the management of digital identity as part of a wider digital literacies agenda. There are many examples of good practice in this area including:

- Cardiff University which has an institution wide digital and information literacies strategy¹⁴⁸;
- Cardiff University Think Digital website¹⁴⁹ – a set of well-presented guidance and support materials;
- University of Southampton digital literacies toolkit¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁶ UCISA Model regulations for the use of institutional IT facilities and systems: www.ucisa.ac.uk/modelregs

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/help/112146705538576>

¹⁴⁸ <http://digidol.cardiff.ac.uk/files/2013/05/Strategy-for-Digital-and-Information-Literacies-2012-2014-3.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ <http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/thinkdigital/>

¹⁵⁰ www.elanguages.ac.uk/digital_literacies.php

8 The right to have your say



THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

- we look at how social media is opening up a new debate around HEIs' traditional role in promoting freedom of speech and academic freedom;
- we look at examples of universities dealing with criticism and/or controversy;
- we look at the extent to which social media channels can ever be controlled.

It is unsurprising that, given the nature and values of the higher education environment¹⁵¹, matters relating to academic freedom and freedom of speech are particularly prevalent and contentious in relation to the use of social media. From an institutional perspective the issues relate to the extent to which the institution might be held legally responsible for the virtual actions of its staff and students and the extent to which such actions reflect on the image of the institution. In Sections 9, Legal issues, and 10, When it goes wrong, we look at situations where online behaviours go beyond the bounds of normal acceptability to the extent where they are illegal and/or constitute harassment of others. There are however many more grey areas, where the right to express certain opinions using certain social media channels is more contentious.

Keele University came in for a lot of publicity in 2007 for allegedly attempting to silence student criticism on Facebook¹⁵². Following the creation of a Facebook group that was formed as a focus for derogatory comments about a particular lecturer, the University issued a written warning to some individuals and followed this up with a more general email to all students. This provoked a backlash of responses suggesting the University was trying to impose a blanket ban on negative comment and that, for instance, commentary on the Vice Chancellor's pay rise was being treated in the same way as defamatory comments about individual lecturers. The matter does not however appear to have done any lasting harm to the institution's relations with its students as later the same year, Keele students won a competition entitled *The battle for the UK's favourite university*, hosted by O2 via Facebook.

Student publicity can indeed have its upside. The University of Lincoln only discovered that media production student, Tom Ridgewell, had made a series of "TV adverts" about the University and posted them on YouTube when other people started blogging about them and talking about them at open days. The adverts, featuring zombies, dinosaurs and blazing lecture theatres, were far from typical University marketing material. They were branded as "banned adverts"¹⁵³: Tom admits they had not actually been banned but said that if he had asked for permission from the University before uploading them to YouTube he probably would not have received it. Tom was later commissioned to

¹⁵¹ *The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 and the Education Reform Act 1988 give universities a legally defined role to secure freedom of speech and promote academic freedom.*

¹⁵² www.theregister.co.uk/2007/05/22/keele_facebook

¹⁵³ <http://newslite.tv/2011/03/22/student-produces-alternative-u.html>

carry out work for the marketing department:

“The public response has been fantastic. The amount of people claiming that Lincoln is now their number one choice just makes me want to lead a conga line through the university’s marketing department.”

A 2011 article in the Guardian¹⁵⁴ looked at the issue of institutional reputation in the face of student comment. In it, the recently appointed digital and online communications manager for the University of Warwick said their communications team checked what was being said about the University on social media once or twice a day but would generally only respond where there was a request for information and would only respond to comments on certain networks:

“If they are on the Student Room we assume they want to bitch about us behind our backs. If it is on a much more public space like Twitter or Facebook, someone like us can see it and respond.”¹⁵⁵

A research project in Australia (Rowe 2014¹⁵⁶) tried to address the fact that universities were struggling to balance freedom of speech and the right to express an opinion with reasonable expectations of responsible and respectful behaviour by students, as well as the protection of staff and students. It found that dealing with inappropriate posts could be time-consuming and costly and that the situation was legally and ethically complex. For example, when an inappropriate post is made from a student account and the account owner claims somebody else “must have got hold of my password”, or when an offensive post is made anonymously but another identifiable student *likes* the comment – is it appropriate and fair to take action against the second student when the original perpetrator is unidentifiable?

Universities UK (2011)¹⁵⁷ cites the example of a university student who was a member of the British National Party (BNP) displaying racist and offensive posts by others on his MySpace page. The police looked into the matter but found the posts not actionable under the law. The student also displayed his university affiliation so the university felt associated with the offending material. The university invoked its equality and student disciplinary policies to get the material removed.

“The material was not clearly illegal so although we did not have support from the police it was important for local and internal relations to act but also important not to overreact because the student did not actually write the material.”

The Australian research project worked with staff and students to develop a categorisation model for posts of varying degrees of offensiveness and the appropriate action to be taken. An adaptation of this is included in Section 9, Legal issues. A distinction was made between comments made on official social media sites belonging to a university and other sites. Students feel very strongly that it is not the place of the university to monitor and respond to comments made outside its official social media channels and resent the intrusion into their privacy. Staff generally agree (although less vehemently so than the students in the Australian survey). Active monitoring of non-university student-run sites could create the impression that all such sites are monitored and that the university will deal with any inappropriate behaviour. This is potentially very dangerous ground for a university if any illegal or particularly damaging comments are not picked up and dealt with (see the discussion on duty of care in Section 10, When it goes wrong). There is also the potential that actively monitoring and reacting to comments on unofficial sites could undermine the value and effectiveness of formal feedback mechanisms. Interestingly, students expressed the view that negative comments about an institution on social networks are often made for all manner of reasons, including attention seeking from peers, and do not necessarily constitute feedback a student would actually like the university to act on.

154 Swain, H. (2011) *Social media presents challenge to universities*. The Guardian:

www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jun/20/universities-social-media-reputation

155 Swain, H. (2011) *Ibid.* www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jun/20/universities-social-media-reputation

156 Rowe, J. (2014) *Student use of social media: when should the university intervene?* *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* Volume 36, Issue 3, 2014: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01587919.2014.899054#U9O3v-kcRHY

157 Universities UK (2011) *Freedom of speech on campus: rights and responsibilities in UK universities*:

www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/FreedomOfSpeechOnCampus.aspx#U9UvrekRHY

Imperial College recruits a team of official student bloggers to write regularly about their experiences at the university¹⁵⁸. They are not paid but there are occasional prizes for the most frequent bloggers. The bloggers receive regular emails from fellow students and prospective students who are keen to put their queries to a real student. The blogs are not moderated and the students do not feel restricted in what they can write.

“They can and do say negative things about us. When they do, it’s useful feedback. It can also make the blogs more authentic – something that is particularly important to the social media generation.”
(Pamela Agar, Head of Digital Media, Imperial College)

“I think there’s possibly a line that you cannot cross, but you would have to be pretty determined to cross it. If I honestly felt negative about Imperial, I would write about it.” (Chris Fonseca, student blogger, Imperial College)

Academic blogging, and other forms of commentary via social media, is one of the more contentious areas. Debates about academic freedom are nothing new, but potentially controversial opinions that were previously restricted to a limited journal readership now have a much wider audience and frequently receive considerable media attention, as do comments made by academics about universities.

One of the most publicised cases concerned a former lecturer at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), Eric Ringmar, who in 2006 posted to his blog a speech given at an open day in which he warned prospective students that academics tended to have their minds on research not teaching and that actual teaching would be done by PhD students. This prompted an oral warning under institutional disciplinary procedures and counter allegations of bullying for exercising the right to freedom of speech. The comments on a Guardian article¹⁵⁹ on the matter indicate the divergence of opinion about Ringmar’s actual comments and the University’s response to them.

Whilst it may seem clear that an academic speaking at a University open day is acting in a professional capacity, there are other situations where it may be less clear which hat an individual is wearing when critiquing policy decisions as highlighted below:

“I am, for primarily professional purposes, a regular user of social media. However, when I use social media am I representing myself or my institution? My initial answer is, of course, myself. However, is it really possible to blog or to tweet, for example, in a wholly individual capacity that does not invoke in any way one’s institutional affiliation? When I post an uncomplimentary tweet about current HE policy (see Figure 1), I do so as an individual academic expressing a personal opinion to those who follow me.



Figure 1. Tweet articulating personal opinion

However, might my tweet be perceived to be representing an institutional or possibly departmental viewpoint? In using social media to articulate a position hostile to a government policy that I may later have to help implement, am I not undermining the work of my department or institution? It is an ambiguous area that, as I will argue, clearly defined social media policies seek to address.” (McNeill 2012)¹⁶⁰

McNeill cites the above example as a good reason why universities are increasingly feeling the need to develop social media policies, but nevertheless goes on to say that the need to manage the risks posed through the use of decentralised communications media outside the institution’s control is leading, in many cases, to an overly

158 Swain, H (2011) *Ibid.* www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jun/20/universities-social-media-reputation

159 <http://www.theguardian.com/education/mortarboard/2006/may/04/ablogtoofarathelse>

160 McNeill, T. (2012) “Don’t affect the share price”: social media policy in higher education as reputation management. *Research in Learning Technology Supplement: ALT-C 2012 Conference Proceedings*: www.researchinlearningtechnology.net/index.php/rlt/article/view/19194/

managerial approach.

“[university] social media policy appears to be less informed by an awareness of the implications for learning made possible by new forms of digital culture and is more informed by the discourse of marketization and “new managerialism”. Although many of the social media policies are appropriate for the purposes of corporate communication, they are, at best, problematic when applied to the messier business of learning, teaching and assessment. At worst, some of the social media policies analysed place serious constraints on academic autonomy and the possibilities for innovation, openness and sharing.” (McNeill 2012, Ibid)

It is a moot point to what extent institutions can ever really hope to control the use of social media by staff and students. Indeed, attempts to do so may simply drive criticism underground to other channels or behind the screen of anonymity. In the case of Eric Ringmar and the LSE, mentioned above, the matter did not die down quickly – Ringmar went on to write a book on the topic¹⁶¹ and to campaign on the issues as highlighted in this blog post in 2008:

“Instead of taking down and destroying our blogs we should blog more sneakily, employing well established guerrilla tactics. We should duck, dive and dodge. Blog dirty, blog anonymously, change items around or claim they never existed; write in code, write in Bahasa Indonesia. Kick your boss once again on the shins, harder this time, and then run like hell. If they come looking for you, hide inconspicuously among ordinary internet users.” (Ringmar 2008)¹⁶²

In an article entitled *Academics behaving badly? Universities and online reputations*, Mewburn (2012)¹⁶³ cites a number of cases in the US and Australia where academic staff have been fired as a result of activity on social media. She also notes that many of these cases had unintended consequences and generated considerably more publicity than they may have originally merited. Her message to universities being:

“While I have sympathy with what the universities are trying to achieve in their policies, I wonder if much of this effort is misplaced. If you want to control your reputation on the internet, it’s far better to concentrate on learning how to react well to public criticism. If universities wish to attract the best minds, they should work on creating the appearance of being tolerant workplaces which encourage vigorous discussion and the exchange of ideas – even if they don’t always agree with them.

There’s a lesson here for academics too. Nothing – not even a funny poem between friends – is private when just about everyone carries a publishing platform in their pocket. Expect to be tweeted when you give a lecture; don’t put anything in an email that you wouldn’t be happy to appear on a webpage, or have read aloud to the Vice-Chancellor. And next time you feel like having a whinge about the university, or a colleague, pick up the phone and make a coffee date. It’s safer.”

There is evidently a need to clarify where *professional* ends and *private* begins, and to be clear about what constitutes inappropriate behaviour (we look further at this topic in Section 10, When it goes wrong) but it is equally clear that promoting and supporting examples of good practice is as important as defining what will not be tolerated.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Define your context** – relate your approach to social media to your existing position in an institution that has a legal responsibility to promote freedom of speech and academic freedom.
- **Be value-driven** – emphasise your institutional values in guidance for staff and students.

¹⁶¹ Ringmar, E. (2007) *A Blogger’s Manifesto: Free Speech and Censorship in the Age of the Internet*, Anthem Press, London.

¹⁶² Ringmar, E. (2008) *Guerilla bloggers and the Old Elite Huffington Post*: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/erik-ringmar/guerrilla-bloggers-and-th_b_86705.html

¹⁶³ Mewburn, I. (2012) *Academics behaving badly? Universities and online reputations. The Conversation*: <http://theconversation.com/academics-behaving-badly-universities-and-online-reputations-9827>

- **Keep it simple** – if you choose to have a policy, do not make it complicated – a simple policy of advising people not to say or do anything online that they would not do offline can suffice as guidance, as for example in these quotes from UCISA (2014a) *Model Regulations*¹⁶⁴:

“Real world standards of behaviour apply online and on social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Blogger and Twitter.”

“You must not cause needless offence, concern or annoyance to others.”

“The way you behave when using IT should be no different to how you would behave under other circumstances. Abusive, inconsiderate or discriminatory behaviour is unacceptable.”

- **Decide how much you need to know** – establish the extent to which your institution should monitor related but unofficial channels as well as its official social media channels and be aware of the risks in monitoring unofficial channels i.e. amplifying issues that might have gone relatively unnoticed and being seen to assume some liability for the actions of users in the spaces.
- **Stay positive** – accept that you cannot control social media use and focus instead on presenting a positive image of the institution through your official channels and being seen as a supporter of legitimate debate.
- **Promote formal feedback** – inform users about your formal feedback mechanisms and channels and actively encourage their use.
- **Intervene when you need to** – use the guidance in Section 10, When it goes wrong, to evaluate and deal with inappropriate behaviour.

9 Legal issues



THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

- we suggest that HEIs are already in a good position to address the basic legal issues that arise from the use of social media;
- we look at some examples where unfamiliar issues may arise and suggest good practice approaches.

At first sight the range of legal issues that need to be considered when using social media is quite daunting. In practice however there is nothing significantly new about any of this: all of the relevant legislation has been in place for some time and HEIs already have well established procedures for ensuring compliance in other areas of their activity. The basic need is therefore to undertake a review of your policies and guidance to ensure that they take account of the use of social media and include relevant examples to help clarify the issues for staff and students. Simply having policies and guidelines is not enough, however – in order for them to be effective you must communicate them well to all of your users.

Useful sources of guidance include:

- **The UCISA (2014a) *Model regulations for the use of institutional IT facilities and systems***¹⁶⁵. This is a toolkit which can be adapted for use in any institution and which has been updated to reflect the increased use of social media. If you have a set of regulations based on this model, a procedure for investigating and dealing with possible breaches and staff and student disciplinary procedures to handle actual breaches, you will be well on your way to meeting all of your legal obligations;
- **The Jisc Legal advisory service**¹⁶⁶ – their *Facing up to Facebook* guide¹⁶⁷ gives a good overview of social media issues generally;
- **Web2Rights**¹⁶⁸ which offers a series of flowcharts to help you decide what issues are relevant to your activities along with guidance materials and templates that can be adapted for your own use.

Given that you cannot possibly foresee all of the ways in which data can be linked and *mashed up* via a variety of social media tools it is good practice to ensure that your institutional website, which signposts your official social media channels, contains a disclaimer relating to others linking to your material.

¹⁶⁵ www.ucisa.ac.uk/modelregs

¹⁶⁶ www.jisclegal.ac.uk/

¹⁶⁷ www.jisclegal.ac.uk/ManageContent/ViewDetail/ID/2114.aspx

¹⁶⁸ www.web2rights.com/web2rightsdotorg/index.html

For institutions:

Disclaimer Template

Links within our site may lead to other sites. These are provided for convenience only. We do not sponsor, endorse or otherwise approve of any information or statements appearing in those sites. [Name of owner] is not responsible for the availability of, or the content located on or through, any such external site.

While every effort and care is taken in preparing the content of this site, [name of owner] disclaims all warranties, express or implied, as to the accuracy of the information in any of the content. It also (to the extent permitted by law) shall not be liable for any losses or damages arising from the use of, or reliance on, the information on our website. It is also not liable for any losses or damages arising from the use of, or reliance on sites linked to this site, or the internet generally.

Source: ©HEFCE, 2009. This paper is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 2.0 UK: England & Wales Licence Version 1.0 The contents of this paper are for information purposes and guidance only. They do not constitute legal advice www.web2rights.com/web2rightsdotorg/documents.html

For a shorter, less formal example from an institutional site, see the University of Essex¹⁶⁹.

For personal users:

Personal users should also consider adding brief disclaimers and signposts within their own sites and social media platforms. For example your Twitter profile might indicate that you are tweeting in a personal capacity, or the *about* section of your blog might indicate that you are seeking only to represent your own views.

9.1 Accessibility

When using social media, institutions should be mindful of the benefits of ensuring accessibility for all users as well as their obligations under legislation: specifically the *Equality Act 2010*. The institution can be deemed to be providing services to its users through the use of social media whether this be general information, specific enquiry services or use in learning and teaching, so there is a need to ensure that use of these technologies does not discriminate against the disabled. The Web2Access site¹⁷⁰ has useful information on the types of test that should be applied to social media sites including a list of tests mapped against specific disabilities.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Apply recognised standards** – test any social media sites in use to see how well they comply with recognised accessibility standards.
- **Offer alternative formats** – provide services in other ways where the social media option is not fully accessible.
- **Stay up to date** – keep a watching brief on Jisc's work^{171, 172} in this area to keep abreast of developments.

¹⁶⁹ www.essex.ac.uk/site/disclaimer.aspx

¹⁷⁰ Web2Access was originally a Jisc project and was later supported by the University of Southampton www.web2access.org.uk/

¹⁷¹ www.jisc.ac.uk/website/legacy/techdis

¹⁷² Archived JiscTechDis content (resources for accessibility and inclusion) <http://web.archive.org/web/20150418105918/http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/>

9.2 Copyright and IPR

HEIs are generally very well aware of their responsibilities relating to copyright and intellectual property rights (IPR) and the acceptable use policy from Jisc Technologies (formerly Janet) has always required connected organisations to deal effectively with reports of copyright breach by their users. This section therefore merely serves to highlight a few tips to avoid issues that can arise due to the ease of capturing and sharing information on social media. The main point is to reiterate that copyright and IPR do exist in the virtual world: the laws are basically the same just easier to infringe and to detect! In some cases, the issues can be quite complex e.g. a single piece of multimedia content may actually consist of a number of different *layers* with different ownership and there may be multiple contributors to content on blogs and wikis. It can often be quite difficult to determine who owns content and in which country's jurisdiction the content was generated. There is also a lack of clarity of what may be permitted under exceptions to copyright e.g. in the field of data and text mining because of a lack of suitable case law.

Our advice is simply to apply common sense and existing good practice. When using content produced by staff you need to think about whether or not the content was produced as part of the duties of employment, and when using content produced as part of an inter-institutional project you need to think about having a consortium agreement that defines how that content can be used. You may also wish to use the student-generated content on social media, either as learning resources or to showcase other aspects of the student experience, and you should ensure that you have the appropriate consent to do so. Note also that whilst reproduction by a student as part of their learning may fall within a copyright exemption, reproduction of the same material by the institution as part of their marketing may not.

An important legal concept to consider in reusing third party material in social media is that of *implied licence*. An implied licence arises when the actions of the author would reasonably lead to the belief that a licence is being offered e.g. in writing a letter to a newspaper there is an implied licence to publish this in the letters page. Similarly, contributing to a blog or wiki can create an implied licence for the material to be further disseminated although it does not necessarily mean that the material could be reproduced under any circumstances. The key question to ask is "If I were the rights owner, would I be likely to object if my materials were being reproduced in this way?" Situations are not always clear cut as problems can arise when material is incorporated into social media by a third party rather than added voluntarily by the rights owner, or where there are multiple contributions by international contributors subject to different copyright laws (see Section 9, Legal issues).

There appears to be an increasing tendency in the internet age to ignore copyright and therefore it is important that your institution's approach to promoting academic integrity makes it clear to students that similar rules apply when using *other people's stuff* for whatever purpose on social media. We discuss this further in Section 9, Legal issues. Conversely, where you are happy to make your materials available on a Creative Commons basis you should state this clearly.

Finally, when using externally hosted social media sites you should be aware that the terms of service may give the hosts substantial rights to use your intellectual property. See the examples below.

Facebook

*"For content that is covered by intellectual property rights, like photos and videos (IP content), you specifically give us the following permission, subject to your privacy and application settings: you grant us a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP content that you post on or in connection with Facebook (IP License). This IP License ends when you delete your IP content or your account unless your content has been shared with others, and they have not deleted it."*¹⁷³

Instagram

*"...you hereby grant to Instagram a non-exclusive, fully paid and royalty-free, transferable, sub-licensable, worldwide licence to use the Content that you post on or through the service, subject to the Service's Privacy Policy..."*¹⁷⁴

The similarities in the above examples are interesting not least because Instagram was taken over by Facebook in 2012 and proposed changes to its terms caused an outcry when it appeared that Instagram was reserving the right to sell users' photographs. It appears that this was a misconception¹⁷⁵, nevertheless Instagram was obliged to amend the proposed changes although some analysts maintain that the new tighter wording is actually more detrimental to users than the maligned changes¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷³ <https://www.facebook.com/privacy/explanation>

¹⁷⁴ <https://instagram.com/about/legal/terms/>

¹⁷⁵ www.theverge.com/2012/12/18/3780158/instagrams-new-terms-of-service-what-they-really-mean

¹⁷⁶ <http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2012/12/18/why-the-web-is-freaking-out-over-instagram-s-new-terms-of-service/>



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Keep guidance up to date** – ensure that copyright guidance and acceptable use policies for staff cover use of social media.
- **Keep contracts up to date** – ensure that you have clear agreements in contracts with staff and partners about reuse of social media generated content.
- **Treat student outputs with respect** – ensure that you obtain consent to reuse student-generated content.
- **Act with integrity** – take a risk-based approach to the use of implied licences ensuring that you act in good faith.
- **Maintain academic integrity standards** – include examples from social media in your academic integrity guidance and acceptable use policies for students.
- **Understand your own IPR position** – be aware of the rights that external social media hosts may have in relation to your intellectual property.
- **Do not reinvent the wheel** – use the UCISA (2014b) templates¹⁷⁷ to respond to reports of copyright infringement.

9.3 Data protection and privacy

As with copyright and IPR, HEIs are generally also very well aware of their responsibilities under the *Data Protection Act* (1998), therefore this section merely serves to highlight a few tips to avoid issues that can arise due to the ease of capturing and sharing information on social media¹⁷⁸. Particular care needs to be taken with regard to the sharing of images and video clips where individuals are recognisable, as this may infringe on an individual's right to privacy (as defined by Article 8 of the *European Convention on Human Rights*) as well as data protection legislation. Personal data must be fairly and lawfully processed and learners should be informed about all uses of their personal data and consent to that use. Institutions should also be aware that individuals captured on audio or video undertaking activities such as singing, dancing, acting, miming, reading aloud or even simply giving a lecture may be covered by performers' rights and their explicit consent will be required to publish the video clip or podcast. The Web2Rights project¹⁷⁹ established that even avatars recorded in virtual worlds can acquire performers' rights.

The *Data Protection Act* makes special provision in relation to sensitive personal data: this comprises data about a person's religious beliefs as well as personal data relating to racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, membership of trade union organisations, physical or mental health, sexual life and offences or alleged offences. Whenever processing sensitive personal data, explicit consent is required and additional safeguards should be in place. Social networks that support student societies may therefore process sensitive personal data. The ease of combining data from different sources may also mean that personal data or sensitive personal data, whilst anonymous in its original source, can be aggregated with other data such that individuals are identifiable.

In Section 3, Delivering benefits, we look at the potential uses of social media in supporting research and sources of guidance (see Minocha and Petre 2012¹⁸⁰) to ensure that research projects conducted using social media comply with university ethics policies and data protection legislation.

Care also needs to be taken in using social media channels to target advertising. Collecting the personal data of individuals via social media channels for purposes of advertising or marketing will not of itself breach the *Data Protection Act*, but users have the right to object to this. People should therefore be given the opportunity to opt in before being exposed to marketing or advertising material from the institution.

177 UCISA (2014b) *Responding to copyright infringement reports*: www.ucisa.ac.uk/publications/copyright

178 *A report based on data from Freedom of Information requests (Big Brother Watch 2011) highlights breaches of patient confidentiality in the NHS due to postings on social media* www.bigbrotherwatch.org.uk/files/NHS_Breaches_Data_Protection.pdf

179 www.web2rights.com/web2rightsdotorg/index.html

180 Minocha, S. and Petre, M. (2012) *Handbook of social media for researchers and supervisors: digital technologies for research dialogues. The Open University and Vitae*: www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/reports/innovate-open-university-social-media-handbook-vitae-2012.pdf/view

Individual users should consider that data posted to or uploaded to social media sites that are outside of the European Economic Area may not be covered by appropriate data protection and they may find themselves in breach of UK data protection legislation.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Protect individual privacy** – ensure that consent is obtained before using images of individuals. A model consent form has been provided by Web2Rights¹⁸¹.
- **Help your users stay safe** – provide guidance to staff and students on the risks inherent in sharing personal data via social media.
- **Stay legal** – ensure that the institution’s social media-related data-processing complies with relevant legislation.
- **Consider research ethics** – provide guidance on the use of social media in research and ensure that ethics policies are updated to cover research conducted using social media.
- **Do not spam others** – invite people to opt in to receiving marketing material.
- **Offer clarity about your policy** – for institutionally-hosted sites consider developing a privacy policy – you can use the template provided by Web2Rights¹⁸² as a basis for this.

Additional resources

- The Information Commissioner’s Office has published guidance on the application of the *Data Protection Act* to social networks¹⁸³.

9.4 Inappropriate content

We looked in more detail at what constitutes inappropriate content in Section 8, The right to have your say. Content may be inappropriate for a variety of reasons such as because it is obscene, offensive, incites violence, infringes copyright etc. and we are using the generic term to cover all of these eventualities. Some offensive content will fall short of breaking the law but other material may contravene legislation including the: *Defamation Act 2013*; *Equality Act 2010*; *Public Order Act 1986*; *Protection from Harassment Act 1997*.

The legal position is that an institution may be vicariously liable for inappropriate content posted on a site that the institution hosts, or for remarks made by one of its employees if the institution is deemed to have authorised the activity (i.e. it is unlikely to be held responsible for remarks posted on an employee’s personal blog). Institutions hosting their own social media platforms should therefore provide for a *notice and takedown procedure* so as to minimise liability for illegal or offensive content. Whilst liability lies with the online host, it is sensible to apply the same procedure to institutionally branded use of widely used platforms. Where inappropriate content has originated from the institution’s network, (whether the site to which it is posted is institutionally or externally hosted) there should be an incident response procedure to trace the activity to specific computers and user accounts. This applies to content which infringes copyright as well as material which is illegal by its nature e.g. racist remarks. The institution is unlikely to face penalties provided it does not have *actual knowledge* of the content and provided it acts quickly once notified of inappropriate content. The institution will however face greater liability should it have played a part in transmitting or altering the content. Similarly, it will be more difficult to argue lack of knowledge of the content where the institution plays a role in moderating a particular platform or group. As an example, in the case of inappropriate material posted to a chat room or bulletin board used by tutorial groups and monitored by a member of the institution’s teaching staff, the institution could be deemed to have sufficient editorial control to be strictly liable for the content.

¹⁸¹ www.web2rights.com/web2rightsdotorg/navigator/content/dataprotection/diagnostic/index.htm

¹⁸² www.web2rights.com/web2rightsdotorg/navigator/content/documents/3.12%20Privacy%20Policy%20Template.pdf

¹⁸³ Information Commissioner’s Office Guide to data protection: http://ico.org.uk/for_organisations/guidance_index/~/_media/documents/library/Data_Protection/Detailed_specialist_guides/social-networking-and-online-forums-dpa-guidance.ashx

Other considerations are whether the institution needs a procedure to check the identity and provenance of a complainant before taking down material and whether there should be a *put back* procedure if, for example, disputed material is found not to infringe copyright or if a complaint is deemed to be frivolous.

Some of the most common issues are of libel, or contempt of court, e.g. commenting on a legal case before it is permissible to do so. This is very easy to fall foul of but also very easy to regulate against i.e. institutional policy should state: “Do not discuss cases which are ...”.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Clarify your procedures** – have a clear mechanism for reporting inappropriate content including details of the complainant, their interest in the matter and their contact details.
- **Apply a notice and takedown procedure** – you can use the template provided by Web2Rights¹⁸⁴ as a basis for this.
- **Clarify roles and responsibilities** – identify the person or persons responsible for deciding whether or not content is inappropriate.
- **Define levels of seriousness and appropriate responses** – create a rubric for categorising inappropriate content and determining the appropriate action. You may like to use the model suggested below.
- **Keep records** – maintain a log of all reported incidents and the outcome.
- **Involve your network team** – have an incident response procedure to trace the source of inappropriate content posted via the institution’s network.
- **Communicate** – ensure in particular that any institutional social network moderators are aware of their responsibilities.

¹⁸⁴ www.web2rights.com/web2rightsdotorg/documents.html#a3

Categorisation model for dealing with inappropriate social media posts (adapted from Rowe 2014)¹⁸⁵

Level	Category	Action	Description
1	Trivial	No action	These are relatively trivial comments that should not provoke an institutional reaction. Intervening in these cases is likely to be counterproductive.
2	Minor	Optional – possibly contact student/ staff member to discuss comment	These are comments that are not particularly offensive but display a lack of respect or judgement. There is no imperative to contact the perpetrator but the institution could choose to do so e.g. to suggest a more appropriate or constructive way of making that comment or criticism.
3	Moderate	Issue a warning	These types of comment warrant contact being made with the perpetrator. Comments in this category will generally display a distinct lack of respect and judgement and risk causing offence. They should be addressed via provision of advice and information and usually a warning regarding appropriate behaviour.
4	Serious	Formal disciplinary action	These types of comment warrant immediate contact being made with the perpetrator. Comments in this category would generally be those that break a law (physical threats, racist, sexist, homophobic or other discriminatory comments); constitute bullying; or are admissions/offers to engage in inappropriate behaviour in respect of academic matters (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, collusion). Generally a warning will be insufficient in these cases. A formal admonishment would be the minimum action and more severe penalties such as exclusion or expulsion (in the case of students) might be considered. In some (extreme) cases, law enforcement agencies may need to be involved.

9.5 International law

Many social media tools are available worldwide and support for international recruitment and international research is indeed part of their appeal for HEIs. This does however mean that if content infringes a law in another country then those making the content available could be sued in that other country. As an example, copyright materials that could be made available under the US fair use provisions may fall foul of UK copyright law where the boundaries are more narrowly drawn. As an example it is possible for a wiki to be built up by a number of contributors across the world: each may have diligently followed local laws but some may have ended up doing things that would have been illegal in UK law. It is illegal to import something from another country which would be infringing copyright had the act in question been carried out in the UK, thus the wiki host could be liable for illegal content that was incorporated in good faith by a third party in another country. Defamation laws may also vary from country to country. Whilst the risks are real, actual examples of cross-border cases going to court are extremely rare (one of the most notable examples was the French state blocking the sale of Nazi memorabilia via Yahoo)¹⁸⁶.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Keep guidance up to date** – ensure that copyright guidance for staff and students covers use of social media.
- **Clarify and communicate procedures** – have a clear mechanism for reporting inappropriate content.
- **Act quickly when you need to** – apply a notice and takedown procedure.

¹⁸⁵ Rowe, J. (2014) Student use of social media: when should the university intervene? *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* Volume 36, Issue 3, 2014: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01587919.2014.899054#U9O3v-kcRHY

¹⁸⁶ <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2000/nov/20/internetnews.freepress>

9.6 Liability as an internet service provider

The extent to which an institution as an internet service provider (ISP) might be directly or vicariously liable for the actions of its users is discussed more specifically in each of the other headings under the legal issues section and viewed in the context of specific examples such as copyright infringement, posting of offensive material etc. A good overview of the issues has been provided by Jisc¹⁸⁷. To summarise here, the institution is:

- directly responsible for its own published content;
- vicariously responsible for content published by employees in the course of their employment;
- directly responsible in cases where the institution exercises editorial control over published content;
- potentially negligent where action, or inaction, causes harm to its users in a way that could have been reasonably foreseen e.g. neglecting a duty of care to staff and students.

In some cases the issues may be less clear cut e.g. where the institution is acting in more of an intermediary role or as a conduit to other social networks. In all cases the application of common sense and reasonable behaviour should help. If you have clear policies and guidelines and act promptly when notified of a problem, you will go a long way to mitigating risk.

9.7 Prevention of terrorism

Over the last few years there have been suggestions in the media that universities and colleges could be fertile recruitment grounds for violent extremists. Research by Universities UK (2011)¹⁸⁸ suggests there is little evidence to back this up but HEIs need to be aware of how their use of social media relates to their obligations under the *Terrorism Act 2006*. A number of criminal offences could conceivably be initiated using social media for instance:

- Acts preparatory to terrorism;
- Encouragement to terrorism;
- Dissemination of terrorist publications;
- Terrorist training offences.

Discussion of the issues raises complex questions around freedom of speech (especially given universities' legal obligation to promote this) and the fact that abhorrent views cannot be challenged if they cannot be expressed. There are also issues around legitimate research into terrorism and concerns that staff may be asked to look out for warning signs that they are ill-equipped to judge; unions have indeed expressed concern that are being asked to spy on students. HEIs need to be aware of the risks and be proactive about promoting their values as well as implementing the range of policies, from equality to computer misuse, that play their part in ensuring such crimes are not committed or facilitated via institutional facilities. UUK (2011) makes the point that institutions, staff and students have quite limited obligations under criminal law to disclose information about terrorist offences and activities to the police and that the *Terrorism Act 2006* does not create any general legal obligation to monitor and report the activities of members of a university's community. However, the *Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015* now places a duty on higher and further education institutions to report those at risk of radicalisation¹⁸⁹.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Understand the risk** – undertake an institution-specific review of risk on a regular basis.

¹⁸⁷ www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/hosting-liability

¹⁸⁸ *Universities UK (2011) Freedom of speech on campus: rights and responsibilities in UK universities*: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/FreedomOfSpeechOnCampus.aspx#.U9UvrekCRHY

¹⁸⁹ *Home Office (2015) Prevent duty guidance*: www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance

- **Be value-driven** – encourage behaviours that support the institution’s values. UUK (2011) offers a suggested set of principles that should apply to a university community in both its physical and virtual spaces:

“The University expects its students and staff to make a personal commitment to the following principles:

- 1. assume responsibility for their behaviours and the effects of them on other person*
- 2. promote and preserve the welfare of other persons within the community and the welfare of the community as a whole*
- 3. accept that they are part of a community with a strong tradition of enquiry and questioning and respect that tradition whilst exercising the freedom to challenge its implications*
- 4. be free to consider the broad range of human opinion and ideas*
- 5. seek to develop as people who contribute positively to the wider society*
- 6. pursue excellence in their work and study*
- 7. operate in accordance within the range of behaviours set out above.”¹⁹⁰*

¹⁹⁰ Universities UK (2011) *Ibid. Universities UK (2011) Freedom of speech on campus: rights and responsibilities in UK universities:* www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/FreedomOfSpeechOnCampus.aspx#U9UvrekRHY

10 When it goes wrong



THIS SECTION AT A GLANCE

- we look at the ways in which social media can be used to perpetrate particular types of bullying, harassment and other crimes and offer tips on staying safe online;
- we present some examples of bullying and harassment in the academic environment;
- we explore the institution's duty of care and offer good practice guidance on fulfilling that duty in relation to social media.

The UUK (2011)¹⁹¹ principles set out in Section 9, Legal issues, are a good example of a proactive approach to developing desirable behaviours both on campus and in virtual space. Many other institutions have adapted text from the UCISA (2014a) *Model regulations for the use of institutional IT facilities and systems*¹⁹² to encourage appropriate online conduct from students, staff and others associated with the University. However, despite the enormous benefits of social media in many aspects of everyday life, the tools, like so many others, have the potential to be misused. The BBC in June 2014 reported that 50% of calls passed on to front-line police now involve crimes originating from misuse of social media¹⁹³. Other forms of cybercrime are also on the increase (and are indeed opening up as a whole new subject area in many universities). Institutions need to understand the issues and be proactive about preventing them.

10.1 Cyber bullying and harassment

In Section 7, Managing your digital presence, we looked at the fact that, certainly on the part of young people, a considerable amount of inappropriate behaviour and behaviour that causes offence to others may stem from naivety and the desire to win peer approval rather than any malicious intent. In this section we look at how such behaviour, whatever the original intent, can have serious consequences both for perpetrators and victims.

Online bullying and harassment is often carried out by the same types of perpetrators and for the same reasons as in the physical world. In the digital world however the choice of victim may be more random and people can be subject to this type of persistent behaviour from complete strangers.

Behaviours that may constitute bullying or harassment can take a variety of forms and various terms have been coined to describe behaviours that specifically relate to the use of social media.

¹⁹¹ *Universities UK (2011) Freedom of speech on campus: rights and responsibilities in UK universities: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/FreedomOfSpeechOnCampus.aspx#U9UvrekcrHY*

¹⁹² www.ucisa.ac.uk/modelregs

¹⁹³ www.bbc.com/news/uk-27949674

Creeping

Creeping involves following another person's actions on social media such as looking at all of their posts and photographs without necessarily making any attempt to communicate directly with that person. As the name implies, this practice is not usually associated with healthy interest and may lead to other things. Teenagers appear to be developing a set of unwritten social protocols around how often, and in how many different fora, you might look up somebody you were attracted to without appearing to be a creeper.

Stalking

Online stalking is akin to stalking in the physical world and involves persistent and unwanted contact with another person. High profile cases often involve obsession with celebrities but this can happen to anyone and often involves former partners or other people who feel they have been badly treated in some way. Stalking via a single channel can often expand to intrude on various aspects of everyday life.

Trolling

Trolling involves deliberately upsetting individuals or groups of people by posting inflammatory material on the internet via blogs, micro blogs, chat rooms, wikis etc. Internet trolls may perpetrate types of abuse that are racist, sexist, homophobic or relate to religious views, or may carry out more seemingly random abuse such as defacing tribute sites dedicated to dead individuals in order to upset friends and family members.

Webcam ratting

Ratting involves spying on an individual by taking control of their webcam using a piece of malicious software (known as malware or spyware) called a Remote Access Trojan (RAT). RATs can be difficult to detect because they do not usually show up in lists of the programmes you are using or have an obvious impact on system performance. Ratters are able to gain access to (and record from) the webcam without activating the indicator light so the victim is unlikely to know they are being spied on. The RAT virus is usually installed on the victim's computer by them clicking on a link or an attachment in an email. Videos and images obtained through ratting may be used for blackmail purposes – they can also be used to obtain confidential information including bank account details and other security information similar to other kinds of phishing attack (see Section 10, When it goes wrong).

Students are under a lot of pressure and bullying or harassment via social media can often be the last straw for some people leading to depressive disorders and even suicide. There have also been concerns that cries for help via social media posts have gone unheeded¹⁹⁴. The social network Facebook recognises this and in 2014 launched a guide *Help a friend in need*¹⁹⁵, specifically aimed at encouraging college students to look out for, and act upon, signs of emotional distress in their friends' social media posts. Facebook states:

*"People can report suicidal content from a post by clicking on the upper-right corner and following the prompts. Our team personally reviews these reports 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and provides people in need with resources in their local language from one of our 33 global suicide prevention partners."*¹⁹⁶

Awareness of bullying and harassment is probably strongest in terms of its association with young people but anybody can be affected. The prevalence of social media use is increasing the extent to which teachers and tutors are subject to abuse. Criticism on sites such as Ratemyprofessors.com¹⁹⁷ and The Student Room¹⁹⁸ can often overstep the bounds of acceptability¹⁹⁹. There are a number of celebrity academic cases but this issue is something that many academics on social media may encounter.

¹⁹⁴ Sandler, E.P. (2009) www.psychologytoday.com/blog/promoting-hope-preventing-suicide/200904/can-social-media-help-prevent-suicide

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.jedfoundation.org/professionals/programs-and-research/help-a-friend-guide>

¹⁹⁶ www.facebook.com/notes/facebook-safety/announcing-a-new-suicide-prevention-guide-for-college-students/682432228444229

¹⁹⁷ www.ratemyprofessors.com/

¹⁹⁸ www.thestudentroom.co.uk/

¹⁹⁹ This article concerning Keele University is discussed in Section 8, *The right to have your say* http://www.theregister.co.uk/2007/05/22/keele_facebook

Cambridge classicist Professor Mary Beard (OBE) has been the victim of misogynist trolling on more than one occasion. In 2013 she appeared as a panellist on BBC Question Time and, in response to a question about whether the UK could cope with more immigration, she cited a recent report claiming that immigration had brought some benefits to the local area. Following this she received online death threats and menaces of sexual assault. As much of the material was too obscene to be broadcast or published in the press, such that reporting of the incident would not give the general public an idea of what was actually involved, Professor Beard took the bold step of publishing some of the material on her blog and re-tweeting some of the comments she received.

“The level of the abuse was so shocking that even those accustomed to the cut-and-thrust of online debate were appalled.”²⁰⁰

The result was that the Don’t Start Me Off website, which encouraged anonymous posters to vent their anger on targets chosen by the administrator, was closed down. Later in the year another television appearance prompted abuse by an individual via Twitter and, again, Professor Beard decided to *name and shame* the perpetrator by re-tweeting the comments resulting in public outrage and an apology from the perpetrator. Reflecting on the nature of the abuse she has received, Professor Beard is quoted as saying:

“It was so ghastly it didn’t feel personal, or personally critical. It was such generic, violent misogyny. In a way, I didn’t feel it was about me.” However, despite her capacity to deal with the matter effectively she also said: *“Anybody who claims it makes no difference to them must either be very weird or lying.”²⁰¹*

Professor Beard concludes:

“The medium is not the problem, it’s the people using it... We have to take part of the responsibility for policing it into our own hands. That’s why shouting out and making a fuss is important. It’s saying: Look, you do not need to sit there and fume or be told it’s better not to say anything because it gives the trolls the oxygen of publicity. You should say No!”

In many cases the precise sources of abuse and a higher education provider’s relationship with, and level of liability for, the abuse may be far from clear cut. An example is a long running controversy surrounding Woodbury University²⁰², a private, non-profit university in California, who built a campus in the virtual world Second Life. The virtual campus was said to include educational spaces, designed mostly by students, including a mock representation of the former Soviet Union and a replica of the Berlin Wall. Linden Labs, the owners of Second Life, destroyed Woodbury’s campus in 2007 and again, after rebuilding, in 2010 due to what it described as breaches of community standards and terms of service. The issue was reported to be that a number of trolls (also known as *griefers*) who committed acts of vandalism causing distress to other Second Life users, and destruction of features they had invested resources in building, were affiliated to Woodbury campus and that Linden Labs was responding to customer pressure to enforce community standards. Woodbury University denied the allegations and claimed that Linden Labs destroyed resources it had invested thousands of dollars in creating. The Dean of the University’s School of Media, Culture and Design is reported as saying that the policy of having an open facility, allowing freedom of expression and accepting affiliation from people who were not registered students, was in keeping with the University’s Mission. The comments on articles about the incident²⁰³ reflect the extent of controversy. Some commentators have gone so far as to say the University’s School of Media, Culture and Design behaved in a calculating and cynical manner and that the trolling/griefing was deliberately staged as a publicity stunt. Others, including examples on UK academic blogs²⁰⁴, criticise Linden Labs for its destruction of educational resources and for its press silence on the matter.

200 www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jan/26/mary-beard-question-time-internet-trolls

201 www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/twitter/10218942/Twitter-trolls-mess-with-Mary-Beard-at-their-peril.html

202 www.woodbury.edu/

203 <http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/woodbury-u-banned-from-second-life-again/23352>

204 E.g. <http://steve-wheeler.blogspot.fr/2010/05/expelled-woodburys-second-life.html>

10.2 Exercising your duty of care

Section 9 of this Toolkit looks at the legal issues relating to the use of social media in education but, in relation to bullying and harassment, it is worth looking briefly at the institution's duty of care to its staff and students. Duty of care is a legal obligation (summed up in the law of Delict in Scotland and Tort in England, Wales and Northern Ireland). Jisc Legal (2003)²⁰⁵ states:

“Duty of care is the obligation to exercise a level of care towards an individual, as is reasonable in all the circumstances, to avoid injury to that individual or his property.”

An institution would be liable to prosecution if a negligent act breached its duty of care. It is however an area of law open to considerable interpretation and as Jisc Legal goes on to point out: *“Liability for breach of a duty of care very much depends on the public policy at the time the case is heard”*.

As an institution you therefore need to think very carefully about how best to protect your staff and students from cyber bullying without inadvertently accepting liability for matters beyond your control. We discuss this in Section 8, The right to have your say, where we highlight the risk of giving students and staff a false expectation that the University will monitor all related unofficial social media groups and deal with inappropriate behaviour. Research in Australia (Rowe 2014²⁰⁶) found that staff were more likely than students to believe that the institution has a responsibility to protect them from negative comment on social media sites outside the institution's control. The report concluded that a university may need to take action if an offensive or inappropriate comment on a student-run site is reported to them but that they should be wary about getting involved in an official capacity and that generally the preferred option is to advise the complainant to approach the relevant group administrator or social network provider to have the post removed or an offending site or account deactivated. It goes on to say that in the most extreme cases e.g. where a post is particularly offensive or involves a possible threat to the safety of an individual, more direct action may be appropriate and necessary to ensure the matter is dealt with quickly and to show support for the victim, although some such cases may be a matter for the police rather than the institution.

Is the University a high risk environment?

For staff ...

A lecturer at the University of York has expressed concern that academics are more at risk than other professions because of the *impact agenda*, which pressures them into building a public profile – often by cultivating a strong online identity. After experiencing harassment by colleagues in the HE sector, Dr. Perry set up the Gender and Digital Culture project²⁰⁷ (jointly with the University of Southampton).

A 2013 survey of 398 working professionals found that 40% of those in HE had experienced negative and inappropriate behaviour while online in a professional capacity (of this group 33% reported five or more instances of such behaviour). The figure was equally split between males and females. The issues were defined as: 30% unprofessional/inappropriate behaviour; 26% sexual harassment; 26% attacks on character; 6% abusive/threatening; 12% unidentified. In the majority of cases people ignored the behaviour and kept silent about it. Dr. Perry is quoted in a Times Higher Education article as saying:

*“If your institution is requiring you to have an impact online, then they need to have mechanisms in place to keep you safe. We found that they don't have those mechanisms, or where they do, the onus is always on the individuals to do something themselves, such as confront the person, or delete their [own] online account.”*²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Jisc Legal (2003) *Duty of care in the further and higher education sectors*: www.jisclegal.ac.uk/portals/12/documents/pdfs/dutyofcare.pdf

²⁰⁶ Rowe, J. (2014) *Student use of social media: when should the university intervene?* *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* Volume 36, Issue 3, 2014: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01587919.2014.899054#U903v-kcRHY

²⁰⁷ <http://genderanddigitalculture.wordpress.com/about/>

²⁰⁸ www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/academics-face-the-cybercreeps-alone/2009183.article

and students ...

The issue of student safety came to the fore in 2010 with the launch of a site called FitFinder²⁰⁹ which encouraged users to describe and pinpoint the location of attractive people spotted on campus. Originally started as a joke by a student at UCL, the site attracted 2,000 users in its first few hours and ultimately spread to 52 universities. Emails by some institutions asking students not to use the site had the opposite effect and a blanket ban by Jisc Technologies (formerly Janet) drove users to mobile and wireless devices and was reversed following complaints from some universities. Many press reports portrayed the site as harmless fun²¹⁰ but some universities received complaints from concerned students. Although the site was not run via university servers, UCL asked the perpetrator to take it down and he ultimately complied after UCL imposed a fine of £300 for bringing the college into disrepute (the student risked being unable to graduate if he did not pay).

A similar issue arose in 2013 when a series of social media sites with names such as *Spotted:<institution>* cropped up. In this case users were asked to post descriptions and/or images of people spotted in institutional libraries. This caused some students to state that they no longer felt safe in the library. UCISA issued guidance to members about using existing procedures to require hosts to effect a takedown of such pages, focusing particularly on the visibility of university insignia and the lack of subject consent.

A few simple steps can help your institution discharge its duty of care.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Define limits** – have a clear policy and guidance on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour: this can take the form of a specific social media policy or may be handled by the IT acceptable use policy and other documents such as the student charter and staff conditions of employment.
- **Be consistent** – have a clear and consistent approach to dealing with inappropriate posts on university official social media channels e.g. by using the categorisation model and related actions shown in Section 9, Legal issues.
- **Offer guidance** – support staff and students in the effective use of social media using the suggestions outlined in this Toolkit.
- **Help keep your users safe** – alert staff and students to the dangers of misuse of social media and point them to sources of advice and help such as those referenced in this Toolkit.
- **Act quickly and only when you need to** – be wary of overreacting to ill-considered remarks but be prepared to alert the relevant authorities if an individual appears to be facing real risk.

Additional resources

There are many sources of advice and help for those concerned about cyber bullying and harassment.

- The BBC WebWise site²¹¹.
- Jisc resources on esafety^{212,213}.

²⁰⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FitFinder>

²¹⁰ www.theguardian.com/education/mortarboard/2010/apr/28/fitfinder-for-university-library-crushes

²¹¹ www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/0/24955662

²¹² www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/internet-safety

²¹³ www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20130701101356/http://www.jisclegal.ac.uk/ManageContent/ViewDetail/ID/2884/e-Safety-Toolkit-4-February-2013.aspx

10.3 Hacking, phishing and spam

Aside from the misuse of social media to cause emotional harm to individuals, a range of crimes are aimed at damaging corporate reputation. *Hacking* involves obtaining login details for a social media account and then using those details to send *spam* (unsolicited bulk messages) to the account holder's contacts. The types of spam may include: advertising, pornography and random nonsense. Both individual and corporate accounts can be affected but in general the impact in terms of reputational damage is greater when a corporate account is hacked. Some high-profile examples of hacking include Fox News announcing the assassination of President Obama in 2011²¹⁴ and the UK Labour Party agreeing to give everyone their own owl²¹⁵ in 2014.

Hackers, especially those who have some knowledge of their victim, can often guess weak passwords. Other techniques for obtaining passwords include *phishing*: sending an email with a link which prompts the person to log into a fake copy of a social media site upon which the hacker captures their username and password, and tricking the victim into installing a *keylogger*: again involving clicking on a link to a website which automatically installs a piece of malware to capture keystrokes that can then be analysed for usernames and passwords. The practice of tricking users into clicking on malevolent links, in order that they reveal confidential information or that the hacker can take control of their computer, is also sometimes known as *click-jacking*.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Offer guidance** – ensure your staff and students are aware of these simple steps to protect their own accounts:
 - use strong passwords^{216,217};
 - do not use the same password on multiple sites;
 - ensure you have up-to-date anti-virus software on your computer;
 - do not click on links or open attachments in emails from unknown sources;
 - do not download programs or apps that are not from a trusted source.
- **Keep institutional accounts safe** – protect institutional social media accounts from hackers by:
 - ensuring that all staff who contribute to your social media presence are aware of the techniques used by hackers as outlined in this Toolkit;
 - ensuring that all staff who contribute to your social media presence follow the guidelines for individuals outlined above;
 - keep the number of staff who know the credentials for institutional social media accounts to the minimum needed for effective operation;
 - do not share a single corporate username and password across multiple individuals.

Additional resources

- The University of Oxford offers platform-specific advice on protecting accounts, a consideration of two-factor authentication and an exploration of threats to accounts via *social engineering* techniques²¹⁸.

10.4 Misuse of personal information

This section should perhaps be subtitled the *dangers of over-sharing* as an increasing tendency to put personal information in the public domain, and to accept contact requests from others on social networks without fully checking out their background, poses a variety of risks (in this case generally more so for individuals than for institutions).

²¹⁴ www.darkreading.com/attacks-and-breaches/fox-news-twitter-account-hacked-claims-obama-killed/d/d-id/1098715?

²¹⁵ www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-27926420

²¹⁶ Microsoft guide to creating a strong password <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-vista/tips-for-creating-a-strong-password>

²¹⁷ The University of Bristol has a useful checklist for passwords www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec/protectyou/passwords/

²¹⁸ <http://help.it.ox.ac.uk/infosec/protectyourself/socialmedia/index>

The most obvious issue is the risk of identity theft – many people put sufficient information on social networking sites, such as Facebook, to enable criminals to impersonate them with sufficient credibility to misappropriate funds by taking out loans or credit cards in their name.

The sharing of location-specific data is also on the increase. There are a range of location-based social networking sites (e.g. Foursquare²¹⁹ and Tinder²²⁰) that allow users to find information about events and services in the local area and to see when friends are nearby. The risks of this were highlighted in 2010 by a group of Dutch Internet users who created a site called Please Rob Me²²¹ to demonstrate how data from a range of social media sites could be triangulated to identify addresses where the owners were away on holiday. The dangers of revealing location are also evident where someone may be the victim of stalking.



GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

- **Offer guidance** – ensure your staff and students are aware of these simple steps to protect their personal information:
 - examine your privacy settings on social networking sites to ensure they are appropriate;
 - investigate the background and credentials of other people before accepting a request to connect with them via social media;
 - weigh up the benefits of sharing each element of your personal information against the risks – is having a few extra *friends* or *followers* wish you a happy birthday worth the risk of criminals getting hold of this information?
 - weigh up the benefits of sharing information about your current location against the risks to person and property.

²¹⁹ <https://foursquare.com/>

²²⁰ www.gotinder.com/

²²¹ <http://pleaserobme.com/>

11 Guidance for users from professional services

Hopefully this Toolkit has highlighted the potential importance of social media in education. It is an area that touches on many aspects of your institution's business and therefore requires consideration by senior management teams working together rather than being something that can be assigned to one particular department. Many people are already aware of the very real risks of social media through the many horror stories in the press; we particularly encourage senior management teams to give equal consideration to the benefits being delivered and to discuss how social approaches fit with the values of your institution and where these tools can support particular elements of your mission.

11.1 General considerations

If you already have a social media strategy or policy, developed during the early days of implementation, now might be a good time to review that document to see whether it reflects all of the uses you ought to be making of social media and whether it strikes the right balance between encouraging good practice and managing risk. If you do not already have a strategy or policy then now might be a good time to think about clarifying your approach. We suggest that, as a minimum, you might want to look at your approach to the use of social media from the following perspectives:

- fit with mission and values;
- clarity of purpose;
- consistency of identity channels and audience;
- marketing and outreach;
- student support;
- enhancing learning and teaching practice;
- enhancing research;
- business and community engagement;
- accessibility and inclusivity;
- legal issues;
- HR issues;
- IT issues;
- training and guidance for staff and students;
- measuring outcomes.

You may find it is better to use a few tools well than to try to keep up with too many new developments. On the other hand, allowing experimentation and recognising that different tools suit different purposes may fit better with your institutional culture.

It may be worth having a discussion about the extent to which it is possible or desirable to control activity on social media, especially if your approach to date has been very focused on trying to maintain control of developments in order to manage reputational risk.

Most of all think about the opportunities. With all the hype around MOOCs at the moment it is easy to forget how effective other channels have been at reaching a wide audience – the Open University reached 40 million downloads of learning resources on iTunes U by 2011²²² and global downloads topped 1 billion in February 2013²²³. There have been some surprising success stories such as the Glasgow philosophy lecturer who topped the worldwide iTunes U charts in 2005 and had a direct impact on widening participation²²⁴.

Understand where you are and where you want to be. It is important to be realistic about your institutional readiness to embrace social media (largely a cultural rather than a technical issue) and to have a plan for moving forward that includes both staff development and measurement of outcomes.

11.2 Hints and tips

You will find good practice guidance spread throughout each section of this Toolkit but a few of the main pointers for corporate users are highlighted here:

- **Know why you are doing this** – be clear about what benefits you want to achieve.
- **Be consistent** – have an appropriate combination of strategy/policy/guidelines to communicate your approach to all users. This does not need to be complicated – focus on how your use of social media supports your core principles and values rather than on defining a detailed set of rules about what can and cannot be done.
- **Understand your users** – think about using approaches such as *service design*²²⁵ to better understand how social media can improve the experience of interacting with your institution. This will help you choose the right tools and design effective processes to support their use.
- **Be visible and accessible** – make sure your users can find you by clearly signposting links to your social media presence on the home page of your website. Make sure the tools you choose are accessible to the widest possible range of users.
- **Create a strong digital identity** – you will have corporate branding and communication guidelines but finding your corporate *voice* in social media channels can be more of a challenge. Your style should maintain professional standards although it is likely to be less formal than other types of communication. Be careful to avoid common abbreviations that may make your posts less accessible to those who do not have English as their first language. Where you have a group of staff contributing to corporate communications do not be afraid to let them have individual identities – the National Rail Enquiries helpline on Twitter (@nationalrailenq) is a good example of this working well.
- **Be current and relevant** – by setting up a social media presence you are committing to keeping it up-to-date and relevant to the target audience. You may want to consider splitting a channel into different identities for different audiences if topics are becoming mixed or, conversely, amalgamating groups that are similar and have limited activity. You also need to ensure that dormant accounts are closed down. This may involve making a final post and leaving the archive visible or removing a site altogether. It is likely that those with corporate responsibility may have to do some regular housekeeping of channels used by other parts of the institution.
- **Ensure adequate resourcing** – related to the above, and also to the timeliness of responses and meeting user expectations, is the need to ensure that official channels of communication have an

222 www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-15150319

223 www.apple.com/pr/library/2013/02/28iTunes-U-Content-Tops-One-Billion-Downloads.html

224 <https://jiscinfonetcasestudies.pbworks.com/w/page/59093568/University%20of%20Glasgow%20-%20Use%20of%20podcasting%20in%20Philosophy>

225 See for example Baranova, P., Morrison, S. and Mutton, J. (2010) *Service design in higher and further education: a briefing paper*: http://wiki.cetis.ac.uk/images/8/82/Service_Design.pdf

active presence at all reasonable times. What is likely to meet user expectations may vary depending on the purpose for which a particular communication channel is set up. What is clear is that one or two people doing this in their spare time is not likely to generate effective engagement. A certain amount of dedicated resource may be needed in a number of key areas of the institution.

- **Engage your users** – keep your social media channels social and do not use them simply to broadcast information. As part of offering meaningful engagement you will need to decide how best to encourage discussion and the exchange of ideas whilst finding appropriate ways to respond to criticism and views you do not agree with. There is more on this topic in Sections 3, Delivering benefits and 8, The right to have your say. We offer a framework for deciding what oversteps the bounds of acceptability and the appropriate action to take in such cases but you as an institution need to find your own voice and create your own image as a place of stimulating and thoughtful debate.
- **Protect your users** – a duty of care to both staff and students demands pro-activity about safety and about sources of advice in cases of cyber bullying or harassment whether or not this takes place through official institutional channels. You should moderate comments on your official presence to avoid spam postings or the publication of material that could constitute an offence, whilst ensuring that you do not stifle discussion and the expression of legitimate opposing views. We offer guidance on this in Sections 9, Legal issues and 10, When it goes wrong.
- **Protect your institution** – in Section 4, Social media strategy and policy, we offer a model for developing a policy, and associated procedures to deal with any breaches thereof, in order to ensure that your institution operates within the law and to mitigate the risk of legal liability or reputational risk should any of your users break the law. In Section 10, When it goes wrong, we look at steps to protect your corporate accounts from malicious use.
- **Keep an eye on trends** – social media is here to stay but is a fast-moving environment so you need to keep an eye on what your users are doing (and saying) and also look out for new developments that might offer opportunities for you to innovate and differentiate.
- **Measure success** – think about what meaningful success measures look like for your institution and measure the things that matter.

12 Guidance for individual staff

This guidance is aimed at helping you as an individual staff member to get the most out of social networking tools to help you in your professional life. If you are creating communication channels for a particular department or project you may well fall under clear university guidelines but in other circumstances the distinction between personal and professional may be less clear (especially in the case of academic staff).

Possibly the best set of guidance for professionals using social media is that provided by the BBC to its staff:

“...there are particular considerations to bear in mind. They can all be summarised as: ‘Don’t do anything stupid.’” (BBC 2011²²⁶)

12.1 General considerations

As with corporate use, the starting point is really to establish what you are trying to achieve. What is your purpose in having a social media presence and what is your target audience? In this Toolkit we are giving the term *professional user* to people who might have a variety of reasons for engaging in social media. These might include:

- managing an information channel on behalf of your department;
- providing a service to a particular group of users;
- promoting, and gaining contributions to, a research project;
- use in learning and teaching;
- enhancing your own professional practice or profile.

You may indeed be carrying out any mixture of these or indeed all of the above functions so the distinction is really between these types of use and purely social use. If you are managing a departmental account or running an account for a project or service it is likely that you will operate under that identity. Otherwise, the distinction between enhancing professional practice and simply keeping in touch with family and friends is a fairly obvious one but questions of identity may be less clear cut in practice. A common pattern is that people begin to use social media socially and then start to realise how it could be useful in their working lives. At this point it is necessary to think about whether to try to set up and maintain separate digital identities. This may appear to make sense (e.g. if you are a tutor and do not want students having access to personal information or if you do not want to bore colleagues with your leisure interests) but it can be an overhead and you should not assume it is impossible for others to make connections between your various identities.

²²⁶ BBC (2011) News: social media guidance: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/14_07_11_news_social_media_guidance.pdf

These questions come to the fore particularly in relation to academic blogging²²⁷ – an academic is clearly an individual with an interest in a particular subject and likely to be part of a community of practice around their interests and it is also likely, regardless of what platform they choose to blog on, that it will be widely known which institution employs them to research and teach in that area. It is something of a conundrum: social media is social and the blogs and Twitter accounts that get the best engagement and following are generally those where the authors put some of their personality into the posts so the question is really, how much of your own opinions and views is too much?²²⁸ The answer can only stem from the application of common sense and decency. A useful rule of thumb is to ask yourself, “would I say this during a conference presentation?”

12.2 Hints and tips

A starting point should be to check out your own institution’s social media strategy, policy or guidelines to find out how this applies to you and what help is available. The social media guidelines produced by Edina (2011)²²⁹, based at the University of Edinburgh, are also a useful source of information and the basis for guidance issued by many universities.

Another useful approach is to look at how real-world peers are using social media and think about how comfortable you would be adopting their style. You might even go so far as to have one or two informal mentors to double-check with when things get heated or to help you reflect on the question, “could I have handled that differently?”

Key points for consideration include:

- **Let relevant colleagues know what you are doing** – do you have the authority to set up the type of social media channel you are proposing? If you are representing part of the institution or using the institution’s facilities it is likely that you will need to seek some form of approval. If nothing else, letting people know what you are doing is a good way to make sure that others can publicise and promote your activity.
- **Think about your digital identity** – we give guidance on managing your personal identity in section 7, Managing your digital presence. Where you are representing your institution the key issue is to ensure that you are acting with integrity. Declare affiliations where relevant and make it clear whether you are representing the views of your department/research group/institution or personal views with which they may disagree. Where a number of people are contributing to the social media channel, be as transparent as possible about who is making each contribution.
- **Choose your connections well** – think carefully about how you connect with other people in the network e.g. whether *friending* students on Facebook is appropriate. Check out the background of other users before allowing them access to information and do regular housekeeping to check you are not being followed by spam accounts.
- **Show respect for others** – legislation demands a certain code of respect and fairness in relation to some areas (e.g. gender, age, race, sexuality, belief) but as part of a community it is to be hoped that all users would behave in terms of good netiquette and professional appropriateness. The internet is a very public forum and care needs to be taken as casual comments that may amuse some people could cause offence to others (and who knows whether those others might be potential employers or research funders?). Think carefully before responding to provocation and/or criticism to ensure you do so in a way that is measured and appropriate.
- **Give credit where it is due** – ensure you acknowledge sources of information and provide links where appropriate. Make sure your own postings do not breach anyone else’s rights/copyright and that images are cleared for use (or are Creative Commons licensed and appropriately credited). Do not link to any materials you suspect may be pirated, copied or unlicensed.
- **Follow good online writing practice**²³⁰ – this includes making your writing *scannable* by using meaningful blog titles, putting important keywords at the beginning of sentences, breaking up large blocks of text and writing succinct posts. An informal style does not mean writing as stream of

227 An article in *The Times Higher Education* in 2008 gives links to a number of popular academic blogs and it is interesting to view the different approaches www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/by-the-blog-academics-tread-carefully/403827.article

228 This needs to be viewed very much in context: an example that received some bad publicity is that a Vice Chancellor’s innocuous comments on institutional sporting events were deemed to reflect an inappropriate set of priorities at a time when staff in the institution were at threat of redundancy.

229 http://edina.ac.uk/about/social_media/social_media_guidelines.html

230 www.gov.uk/design-principles/style-guide/writing-for-the-web

consciousness, or that editing is unnecessary.

- **Engage and reciprocate** – share and comment on other people’s work and show your expertise through giving constructive advice and useful suggestions.
- **Maintain confidentiality** – ensure that anything you are publishing is appropriate to go into the public domain. Material that should not be released would normally include:
 - research that is not yet in the public domain;
 - 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;
 - information about students (it may be possible to deduce the identity of individuals).

13 Guidance for staff involved in supporting students

This guidance is aimed at staff in support roles rather than direct use by students. The guidance has many similarities with the previous section because the emphasis is on supporting students in making *professional* use of social networks to further their learning and research and their future careers.

13.1 General considerations

Institutions exhibit very different student profiles so it cannot be assumed there is a *one size fits all* set of guidance on providing student support.

Some students, particularly in the younger age group, may be a lot more social media savvy than institutional staff in terms of keeping up with the latest applications and incorporating them into their everyday lives, but that does not mean to say they have thought about how the tools can be applied to their personal and professional development or what might be the future consequences of some of their current activities. Other students may have had less access or exposure to such technologies for a variety of reasons and may need to gain confidence in using the tools before the social aspects can enhance their learning experience.

In section 10, When it goes wrong, we look at the duty of care the institution has to all users of its social media channels. Australian research (Rowe 2014²³¹) appears to show that staff are more likely than students to expect their institution to look out for their welfare and protect them from other users of social media, whereas students may resent institutional intervention in student network groups as an invasion of privacy. In sections 8, The right to have your say, and 9, Legal issues, we look at when and how an institution should formally intervene in the case of inappropriate behaviour on social media. There is however a general need to educate students about the risks of social media in the same way that institutions might exercise pastoral responsibilities in educating them about the risks of alcohol or drugs. In the case of social media however this can be put in the context of potential considerable benefits in creating a social media presence that will help them in their future lives.

It is clear from section 3, Delivering benefits, which looks at the benefits of social media in supporting student recruitment and transition into higher education, that most students generally see the advantages of using these tools to support their social integration prior to, and immediately upon arrival at, university. It cannot however be taken as read that they will necessarily expect to be using the tools for learning and teaching or personal development or that they will readily see the value in doing so. Many may indeed prefer to keep learning and social technologies separate.

There are thus three main aspects of student support in relation to social media:

- Encouraging students to create the type of digital identity they are happy to carry with them into their future

²³¹ Rowe, J. (2014) Student use of social media: when should the university intervene? *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* Volume 36, Issue 3, 2014: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01587919.2014.899054#U9O3v-kcRHY

lives – this involves helping them see the benefits but also highlighting the risks both of disciplinary action for inappropriate behaviour and of ill-judged actions coming back to haunt them in later life.

- Encouraging students to make the most of the affordances of social media to support learning and research.
- Pastoral care – providing guidance on esafety and using the social networks to look out for and support students at risk due to academic or personal issues.

13.2 Hints and tips

There are lots of good examples of providing resources and training for students. Do not assume that just because you have a student social media policy, students will actually read it. Guidance materials need to be engaging and immediately relevant. Use the resources highlighted in this Toolkit to get some good ideas as to how your own materials can be enhanced. Encourage students to explore the following topics:

- **My digital footprint** – ask students to conduct their own searches to gain an idea of what the digital footprint actually looks like and to reflect on the impression it gives and what they might want to change.
- **Posting about other people** – encourage students to think about the implications of posting comments about, and images of, other people. The BBC editorial guidelines for the use of images from social media sites have a very good summary of the ethical implications²³².
- **Using other people's content** – use social media as an example to introduce concepts relating to academic integrity e.g. what can and cannot be reused and how external material should be cited.
- **Showcasing your assets** – encourage students to create digital content to support their studies and showcase their talents to enhance employment prospects. Get them to identify for themselves what kind of transferable skills they might be learning from their use of social media, for example:
 - online design and layout;
 - creativity;
 - writing skills;
 - multimedia skills;
 - reflection and critical thinking;
 - collaboration;
 - practising safe and responsible use of IT;
 - communication and debating skills in communities where they are open to diverse views.
- **Overcoming distraction** – how to manage time and use social media to support deep learning when it offers so many distractions.
- **Post in haste, repent at leisure** – emphasise the longevity of digital media and the value of taking time to reflect rather than posting when you are feeling particularly emotional e.g. angry or shocked about a recent event.
- **Who's following you?** – encourage students to think about building a network of contacts and to consider questions of digital identity and what online profiles actually tell you about other people.
- **Staying safe** – ensure students have ready access to esafety guides and understand their importance; do not bury critical information in long policies that may not be read. Emphasise the importance of looking out for others and reporting signs that a fellow student may be suffering distress.

Additional resources

- Jisc resources on esafety^{233,234}.

²³² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidance/social-media-pictures>

²³³ www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/internet-safety

²³⁴ www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20130701101356/www.jisclegal.ac.uk/ManageContent/ViewDetail/ID/2884/e-Safety-Toolkit-4-February-2013.aspx

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15 Acknowledgements

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Dr. Gill Ferrell, Lead Consultant, Aspire (Management and Innovation Consultancy for Education)

UCISA is very grateful for the assistance received from colleagues across the sector. In particular, we would like to thank the following individuals who acted as critical friends during the drafting process.

Julian Bancroft-Martin, Senior Project Manager – Corporate Policies, University of Worcester

Bob Booth, Communication Manager, Business Services, Corporate Information and Computing Services, University of Sheffield

Andrew Cormack, Chief Security Advisor, Jisc Technologies

Gilles Couzin, Senior Web Trainer and Consultant, IT Services, University of Bristol

Ruth Drysdale, Senior Co-design Manager, Jisc

Alun Edwards, Research Officer, IT Services, University of Oxford

Gillian Harding, HR Communications Officer, Human Resources, Kingston University

Fiona Harvey, Education Development Manager, University of Southampton

Rob Needham, Head of Customer Service and Communication, Corporate Information and Computing Services, University of Sheffield

Jim Nottingham, Director of IT – Strategic Development, University of the Arts London

Dr. Paula Nottingham, BAPP Arts Programme Leader, Middlesex University

Katherine Pickles, Web Editorial Manager, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

Tom Pieroni, Digital Skills Intern, University of Salford

Peter Reed, Technology Enhanced Learning Academic Lead, University of Liverpool

Nigel Robertson, Team Leader/eLearning Designer, Waikato Centre for eLearning, The University of Waikato, New Zealand

Jo Robinson-Lamb, Communications Specialist, IT Service, Newcastle University

The project to publish the UCISA Social Media Toolkit was managed by Anna Mathews, UCISA Head of Policy and Projects, with oversight from Adrian Ellison, UCISA Executive Committee Secretary (and Director of IT at the University of West London), and Fiona Strawbridge, Chair of the UCISA Digital Skills and Development Group (and Head of E-Learning Environments at University College London).

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