



# **A Practical Guide to Social Media Communication**

For University representatives who set-up and maintain a social network, blog or site

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# A Practical Guide to Social Media Communication

Anglia Ruskin University Corporate Communications

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## Purpose

Such is the rapid growth and application of social media it is important that all of us who use it, in any capacity, for personal and business use, understand the impact we can have on the reputation of our university. If you are aware of our university's key messages and expectations regarding engagement on social media it can help you make an informed decision about the content you post or the comments you make, whether on an official university account or on a personal account where it is clear your association to Anglia Ruskin.

This guidance has been established to protect the interests of employees and our university. When using social media it is important that employees are clear about who is being represented and take responsibility for ensuring that any references to Anglia Ruskin are factually correct and accurate, do not breach confidentiality or data protection and that respect is shown for the individuals and communities with which you interact. It is important to note that this policy does not apply to employees' personal use of social media platforms where the employee makes no reference to Anglia Ruskin University or associates their employment status. However, please always refer to our [Staff Handbook](#) and [Regulations for the use of our IT resources, systems and services](#) for further guidance about your use of the internet, University systems and equipment.

## Defining social media

'Social Media' refers to websites and online media which allow people to interact, comment, share digital media and participate in discussions and can be defined by the following categories:

- **Social networks** e.g. Facebook, Myspace, Google+, allow you to add friends, create groups, participate in discussion and chat and post digital media such as videos and photos.
- **Business networks** e.g. LinkedIn, BranchOut, are similar to social networks but with a professional or career-orientated purpose.
- **Blogs** e.g. Blogger, Tumblr are sites hosted on or powered by blog systems such as WordPress, which normally feature timely online journal-style content on a particular topic. Typically they allow and invite comments and feedback.
- **Social streams** e.g. twitter, are micro blogs which allow the user to post short messages that are open and public. You can 'follow' the posts of other users, which then appear in your stream.
- **Wikis** e.g. Wikipedia, wikispaces, are collaboratively created repositories of content. Wikis allow users to create and edit new and existing articles and content.
- **Photo and video sharing** e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, allow users to post video or photo content. Also allow comment or share other people's channels.
- **Social bookmarking** e.g. Delicious, Digg, Reddit, are used to share and rate favourite content and comment on the submissions of others.
- **Crowd Wisdom** e.g. BuzzFeed, storyful, storify, allow multiple users to build content and a community around a certain subject or topical news headline.
- **Social curation** e.g. Pinterest, Flipboard, allow open idea sharing based on an online noticeboards format.
- **Question and answer** e.g. Quora, Yahoo answers, are spaces that allow users to post questions and invite answers from the public.
- **Location services** e.g. Foursquare, Swarm, enable 'check in' at physical locations, this is then shared online. Swarm turns this into a game and lets you win tokens and take up 'mayorships'.
- **Document sharing** e.g. Slideshare, Prezi, Docstoc, allow users to share large documents and choose whether to add to a searchable library.

## Risking our reputation

As with traditional media, ill-considered comments and poor responses to particular issues and circumstances can rapidly develop into negative issues. This can have a damaging effect on our reputation. Both negative and positive stories can spread at a rapid pace and require us to respond at a speed which is difficult to coordinate. Audiences both consume content and participate in its creation, such that a negative issue can evolve and develop based on the contributions of others which may or may not have any factual basis.

**Before you set up** any open-access public accounts in the name of Anglia Ruskin University, you must first **seek guidance** from the Corporate Communications team. **Approval will be required** for all accounts from Andrea Hilliard, Head of Corporate Communications and Events. Please email [socialmedia@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:socialmedia@anglia.ac.uk) in the first instance with details of the account you wish to set up.

## Social media branding

It is important that our university's social media channels are correctly formatted to meet our brand guidelines. Please review this on [www.anglia.ac.uk/brand](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/brand)

Icon style avatars are available by emailing [socialmedia@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:socialmedia@anglia.ac.uk)

## Best practice & recommendations

Before you start please contact the Corporate Communications team [socialmedia@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:socialmedia@anglia.ac.uk). Make a plan and follow this advice:

1. **Understand the difference between a business page and an individual profile:** social media feeds for organisations and businesses are different from individual user profiles. E.g. Facebook - Pages are moderated by more than one page administrator; these individuals must logon to Facebook using a personal Facebook page in order to post content on the page or monitor comments. Page administrators do not receive notifications when users take action, such as becoming a fan or creating wall posts.
2. **Clearly define objectives:** do you want to highlight content, spark action, or encourage awareness of an issue? Clearly defined objectives can help you create text with the most appropriate videos or photos.
3. **Identify the best platform:** decide whether you need to create a unique social media platform or whether you can instead post your message on an Anglia Ruskin University corporate social media channel. Research which platform (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.) would be most appropriate for your target audience.
4. **Draft content appropriate for social media** – in most cases, the general public (or a segment of the general public) is the intended audience for posts. Therefore the text posted should be short, simple, and easy to read. It's advisable to have a content calendar which you can update weekly with your planned messages or themes. Think about your words and apply our brand tone of voice and remember to keep it concise. On Facebook: each post or status update can be a maximum of 420 characters including a link and for Twitter: each post can be a maximum of 140 characters including a link, although media such as photo or video will use characters.

**All text should be positive and encourage the viewer to take action and include a link to visit the Anglia Ruskin University website for more information.**

5. **Tone of voice** – the tone of voice used on all social media platforms associated with Anglia Ruskin University should reflect the tone and personality of Anglia Ruskin University. Please refer to our [Saying it](#) guidance document.
6. **Branding** – all social networking profiles must be branded with the Anglia Ruskin University logo – contact [socialmedia@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:socialmedia@anglia.ac.uk) to request the right file type.

## Good customer service – dealing with posts

We've developed a [quick reference guide](#) to help you in responding to posts. Most comments fall into four broad categories:

- **positive comments** – those that appreciate our university and the value of what we provide. *Recommended action:* respond ASAP, amplify the sentiment, thanking the author directly if at all possible.
- **constructive negative comments** – those that criticise our university or our people for flaws in our product or service. *Recommended action:* see below for responses.
- **disruptive negative comments** – non-constructive insults directed at our university or other members of our community, and comments designed to distract and interrupt the conversation. *Recommended action:* see below for responses.
- **spam** – links or mentions of unrelated websites or brands. *Recommended action:* generally delete these especially if the content is disruptive or negative, but check below.

There are a few ways to deal with negative comments or threads, please consider all the below before deciding how to respond (or not), and be sure to consult with colleagues, your manager and, ultimately, the Corporate Communications team:

1. **Ignore it.** You don't have to respond to every negative comment. If you get a lot of traffic then the negative post will drop off the front page quickly. Responding to a negative post can legitimise it or invite others to jump in and escalate it. So not responding is an option especially if it is one of those off-the-wall, judgemental or nonsensical negative comments.
2. **Delete it.** If a negative post goes over the line or violates our values and culture – then delete it. Try not to delete posts unless they are offensive, as this is not in the spirit of social media, opens us up to criticism and possible further posts.
3. **Let our followers handle it.** Our community can be our best defenders when negativity erupts. Our fans generally defend Anglia Ruskin University which is more powerful than us entering into an argument and encouraging an escalation of a negative discussion.
4. **Redirect it.** Many times posters on Facebook aren't really trying to be negative at all, but have a problem that needs to be solved. Help them by responding online and trying to take them to a direct message area to chat about getting them the right contact to help.
5. **Deal with it.** If all else fails then you're going to have to deal with it, escalate to the Corporate Communications team and the Press Office for advice and guidance.

### **On a personal level – advice for individuals**

1. Know and follow relevant department policies including the code of conduct.
2. Be aware when and how you mix your work and personal lives – the general public considers us ‘the voice’ of our university 24/7. Represent us well.
3. Be transparent and identify yourself when discussing department-related topics or issues - use your real name, declare your position with Anglia Ruskin University and be clear that you are giving your personal opinion.
4. Consider what you say before you say it – it’ll be accessible on the web for a long time!
5. Be original and respect copyright.
6. Use discretion. Take care not to publish information that shouldn’t be made public. If you aren’t 100% sure, seek advice.
7. Play fair; be polite, be considerate – don’t pick fights or engage in them, remember what you say will be public for a long time.
8. Stick to your area of expertise and talk about what you know.
9. It’s a conversation so be human - use your own voice and bring your personality into the conversation. It makes it more interesting!
10. Admit your mistakes – we all make them so when you do, be quick to admit and correct them.
11. Make sure your personal online activities don’t interfere with your job performance. It is far better to own up to mistakes and maintain transparency than try to cover them up as they are often uncovered.
12. If it’s official department communication, be dedicated, be constant – get permission, listen, plan, contribute regularly and keep listening.

## Rules of use for fans/followers

The following community statement should be included on all Anglia Ruskin University Facebook pages and other Anglia Ruskin University social media platforms where possible:

Thanks for taking the time to connect with Anglia Ruskin University. This page is your place to view and share links, ask questions and post photos and comments that relate to our university. We welcome your thoughts, however we ask that you remain respectful and follow these simple house rules:

- Firstly, please comply with the site's terms of use.
- Play nice, please keep your comments clean; no abusive, bullying, threatening or defamatory posts.
- Keep it appropriate, i.e. no spamming or posting offensive or inappropriate posts.
- Take care, no posting of fraudulent, deceptive or misleading content that is in violation of copyright or any law or regulation.

This is your page as much as it is ours and we encourage you to interact with our community. To safeguard others any comments or posts that do not meet our house rules will be removed and repeat offenders may be blocked from the page. Please understand that comments posted to this page by our fans do not represent the opinions of Anglia Ruskin University.

## **Crisis management**

In circumstances where there has been a critical or serious incident on campus, or there is any other serious issue in the public domain that could impact the university's reputation, the following protocol in relation to the use of social media should be followed:

- All official comments posted on behalf of the university must be authorised by the university's Head of Corporate Communications and Events who will liaise with the appropriate Directors and/or Deans.
- The Head of Corporate Communications and Events will seek approval from relevant members of CMT with regard to any communications to be posted on the corporate Facebook or Twitter accounts or any other official Anglia Ruskin University social media channels.
- Staff including Faculty, research centre or administrative, who are responsible for content on Anglia Ruskin University social media channels outside of the corporate sites must liaise with the Head of Corporate Communications and Events before posting any comments during or related to critical incidents.
- If the issue is serious enough to impact the university's reputation or violate current legislation and this is becoming evident through posts on an Anglia Ruskin University social media channel and you cannot reach the Head of Corporate Communications and Events, please elevate the issue immediately to the University Secretary & Clerk's office and/or the Pro Vice Chancellor, Corporate Marketing & International Development Services.

## **University social media contacts**

Anglia Ruskin University Corporate Marketing, International and Development Services is the department responsible for monitoring all Social Media channels in use under the name of Anglia Ruskin University.

For enquiries related to our corporate channels including Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Instagram and Snapchat please contact Katy Christie, Communications Manager ext. 4729 or our Social Media Officers: Cynthia Inesta and Tom Harper on ext. 3675 OR 2300 [socialmedia@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:socialmedia@anglia.ac.uk)

For Press Office, contact Jon Green ext. 4717.

For reputation and crisis management, contact Andrea Hilliard, Head of Corporate Communications and Events ext. 4727.

## **Social Media policy and breach of guidelines**

Please read and refer to the [Regulations for the use of our IT resources, systems and services](#) or seek advice from IT services or your HR representative. Please report any breach of guidelines to your line manager in the first instance.