



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean

Social Media Guidelines



Please contact Duncan Ireland with any queries on (01463) 279 259 or duncan.ireland@uhi.ac.uk

- **Let us know before you open a University related social media account** – we can help you get started with advice on account set-up as well as the on going management and promotion of your page.

- **Use University of the Highlands and Islands branding** wherever possible for consistency. Please contact the webteam for the correct logo files webteam@uhi.ac.uk

Contact **Web Team** for any issues relating to page set up or using the University brand identity for social media. webteam@uhi.ac.uk

- **Be aware of copyright and data protection issues.** Ensure that you have permission to use the materials as any infringement could lead to legal action, even on social media sites.

- **Consider your tone of voice** – Twitter, Facebook and other social media allow for more informal, conversational communication so don't be afraid to approach your messages in this spirit. Sometimes you may need to write in a purely utilitarian way and this is fine too, but always write in the first person, for example *'We are hosting a debate...'* rather than *'the University of the Highlands and Islands is hosting a debate...'*

- **Build a niche** – don't be tempted to tweet / share general news if it is unlikely to engage your audience. This will avoid duplication of messages (they may have seen the news on your website) and ensure your followers are getting the information they started following you for in the first place.

- **Respect others' privacy** – don't post private information and/or individuals contact details.

- **Be as accurate as possible, but don't try to hide your mistakes** – when appropriate, use references to back up your message. If you make a mistake don't try to hide it, simply update the page with a correction. We all make mistakes and (generally) social media users like to feel they are communicating with people, not robots.

- **Always be courteous** – social media can often feel like an informal chat, but remember that you are representing University of the Highlands and Islands in a public space. Be professional and respectful at all times. Do not engage in arguments or extensive debates. Anything you post can and will be seen, it may not always be possible to remove it.

- **Always respond to criticism publicly where possible.** Don't try to sweep negative posts from others 'under the carpet'. Social media is a public forum and ultimately it looks good for us to be dealing with issues rather than hiding from them. Respond positively and promptly. If you are unsure how to respond to any negative criticism, please contact Duncan Ireland for advice.

- **Don't irritate your users with promotional spam** – social media users can be a cynical bunch and will see through excessive bombardments of marketing material. Weight your messages appropriately – consider whether your post will engage or irritate.

- **Be responsive and transparent** – Continual interaction between you and your followers will help build a community and help generate trust. Make it clear that you are blogging / tweeting / Facebooking, etc. in your role as a staff member. One of the great benefits of social media is that the individuals maintaining social media sites personalise large and complex institutions. It's important to use a consistent tone of voice.

- **Be active** – Social media presences require care and feeding. If you do not have the time or resources to check in on these sites at least a few minutes each day, and to post fresh content several times a week, reconsider jumping in to social media at this time. Your site is only as interesting as your last post – if that post is several months old, visitors will consider it mothballed.

- **Be timely** – One of the great benefits of social media is the ability to share information almost instantly with a large audience. This timeliness is also one of the expectations of that audience. Be prepared to move quickly in response to new developments, announcements, or emergencies with relevant information on your site. **A short amount of accurate information delivered at the time of need can sometimes be more valuable than a full report delivered well after the issue has passed.**

- **Comment** – As a consumer as well as a producer of social media, offer comments on interesting posts and share the good work of others using your sites. Social media is not (only) about sharing your news and success, it's about sharing information that is of interest to your readers and viewers.

- **Monitor all comments** – check your platform/s regularly. There are a number of good tools that can help you manage multiple social media accounts. Use your discretion to remove advertisements, spam and comments that are hateful, obscene or defamatory.