Guidelines for
SOCIAL MEDIA USE
at McMaster University

VERSION 1.0
April 2019

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Introduction

Social media is a key part of McMaster University's communications plan. And while particular social media companies may come and go, the principles of good communication stay the same: have a plan, know your audience, provide value to that audience and be transparent in your communications.

McMaster's Communications and Public Affairs team manages the University's central social media presence. In collaboration with the Social Media Group, this team has also developed and maintains a set of social media guidelines and best practices. These guidelines are meant to help University staff in deciding whether and how to use social media as part of their area's communications and marketing.

You may also consider leveraging McMaster large and established social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube.
If you have questions about whether/how to use social media on campus, please contact Communications and Public Affairs at comms@mcmaster.ca.

Questions to ask yourself

Do I have a plan?

Before launching a social media account, you should have a plan in place for managing the account. You should consider:

- Your goal for the site – what do you want to accomplish?

- Who your audience is and what tool is appropriate to reach them.

- How you will maintain a regular posting schedule (i.e. 1-3 posts/day for Facebook, 5-10 post/day on Twitter, etc.)

- How the site will be promoted (linked to from other sites, posters, organically)

- How you'll measure success

Who will oversee the account?

Maintaining a successful social media presence can take a considerable amount of time. Does your team have the resources necessary to commit to a social media program?

Student employees and interns can provide useful guidance in how to best use social media - however, it is recommended that at least two staff members (one of whom is a full-time employee) have administrative rights on any University social media accounts.

How will I manage passwords and login information?

Good password management practices includes regularly changing passwords and removing administrative access for those who have moved on to other positions or are no longer employed at McMaster. Passwords should be changed at least on a monthly basis, and after any "takeovers" by students, researchers, etc.

How will I moderate comments?

Those who oversee social media accounts should also be prepared to moderate conversation/comments (where applicable), according to existing McMaster policies. These include: The McMaster University Anti-Discrimination Policy, the McMaster University Policy and Procedures on Sexual Harassment, and the Student Code of Conduct.

Posts that should be removed immediately include: The use of obscene, threatening, discriminatory, or harassing language as well as comments advocating illegal activity.

How will I measure success?

Measurement is an important part of any communications plan. Measuring your activity on social media helps determine which tactics are most successful and allows you to track progress toward the goal(s) set out in your social media plan.

Some social media sites, such as Facebook (Facebook Insights) and YouTube (YouTube Insights), have built-in analytics pages that help measure things like site visits, engagement, video views, active users and demographic data and can tell you how visitors found your site. Other social media sites can be measured with third-party tools.

Marketing and communications leads at the Faculty level have access to Meltwater Engage for day-to-day social media management and analytics. Discounted subscriptions to this tool are available by contacting Communications and Public Affairs.

Your social media measurement program should consider more than just the number of people following your account. Depending on your goals, you may want to measure engagement rates, shares, traffic driven to specific websites and more. An analytics tool such as Google Analytics, installed on your website, will help you capture some of this data.

How do I brand my account?

There is strength in McMaster's brand - so use it to your advantage! Guidelines on the proper use of logos, colours and more, as well as templates for the most popular social media, are available on McMaster's brand guidelines site.

A note on personal accounts used for University activities

If you're using social media to communicate about University activities as an individual, you should clearly note your status as an employee on your profile. Remember: The same standard of care used for all other University communications should be used in your social media posts, and all McMaster policies continue to apply. Use good judgement when engaging in social media activity and don't post anything you wouldn't say to your colleagues or supervisor.

Please contact the Communications and Public Affairs team before setting up a social media account for your area. We'd be happy to discuss these guidelines, as well as help you with the right strategy for your social media program.

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