



Guideline: Social Media

Purpose

These guidelines set out best practices and governance for the use of social media by staff at The Australian National University (ANU).

These guidelines aim to uphold academic freedom, protect the University's reputation and build our social media profile to enhance the impact of our work.

Scope

These guidelines apply to academic and professional staff at ANU who use or are considering using social media, in both work and personal capacities.

The online conduct of students, including on social media, is covered by the [ANU Discipline Rule](#) and [Code of Conduct](#).

Definitions

Social media can be defined as forms of electronic communication (websites and applications) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, opinions, personal messages and other multimedia content.

Some of the most used social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. Blogging sites such as Tumblr and Medium are also considered 'social' publishing platforms.

Guidelines

As Australia's national university, ANU has a unique responsibility to shape public debate and thinking for the better, as well as widely communicate how our work improves Australia and the world.

One of the most effective ways to do this is through social media – which has the power to communicate ANU research and expertise to a large and diverse audience in an accessible way.

ANU has established an active presence on social media and many staff are now responsible for publishing official content across a range of platforms. A large number of academics also manage their individual professional social media profiles.

While the University's core values and standards apply to social media just as much as to content on traditional platforms, social media presents some particular challenges which this guide aims to address.

ANU staff should ensure they are familiar with the following guidelines and comfortable in their use.

1. All ANU staff and students are free to use social media as private citizens as long as commentary and conduct does not contravene any laws or relevant University codes of conduct governing free speech.
 - a. The personal use of social media must make it clear comments are not on behalf of ANU.
2. The University's [policy on academic expertise and public debate](#) says that academics can expect ANU to support their right to speak publicly, provided they speak within their area of expertise and comments are defensible based upon their research and/or expertise. If you have a vested interest in what you are discussing, be the first to say so.
 - a. As part of the University's unwavering commitment to academic freedom, academic staff are free to use social media, and build their public profile within their area of expertise via social media, with support from the ANU [Media and Communications team](#).
3. Academic and professional staff are unable to comment on social media on behalf of ANU on issues relating to the operations of the University as an institution.
 - a. Only the Vice-Chancellor, Chancellor, the ANU Media spokesperson, or individual staff who have been specifically delegated authority to do so for a particular issue may provide comment on social media on behalf of the University.
4. If a corporate issue relating to the University emerges on social media, staff who manage ANU-branded accounts should contact the Media and Communications team for approved responses.
5. To protect and enhance the University's reputation the management of ANU-branded social media accounts by professional or academic staff must be approached consistently and strategically.
6. Before establishing a new ANU branded social media account, there must be a clear communications strategy outlining the purpose of the account and trained staff to actively manage it and create engaging content. If there are existing social accounts that can be used, do not establish a new account as this fragments audiences.
 - a. The Media and Communications team should be consulted before any new ANU-branded account is created to provide strategic advice.

7. All social media accounts should be frequently audited to ensure they remain active and fit-for-purpose. Accounts that no longer serve their purpose or are inactive for three months should generally be closed down. For advice, discuss with the Media and Communications team.

8. Ensure your social content is high quality and engaging by keeping these key considerations front of mind:

- * Know your audience and platform: from potential students to policymakers, the University has a diverse audience of followers who will engage with different content and tones of voice and on different social media platforms. Before posting, make sure you have a specific audience in mind and use language that resonates with them on the platform they are using. For example, the same story could be illustrated using different content and language on Twitter versus Instagram. Be playful and inspire curiosity whenever possible. Make sure your content is emotionally engaging and intellectually stimulating.
- * The Yellow Social Media Reports 2020 (for [consumers](#) and [businesses](#)) are helpful resources to better understand how Australians are using social media, including breakdowns by demographic, location and platform.
- * Be interactive: social media is about talking with people, not at them. Don't just think about what you want to tell people, think about what you want people to do or tell you (a clear call to action) and why/how they want to engage with you. Respond to their questions and comments promptly and politely.
- * Be thoughtful and tell your story well: just because social media requires fewer words, doesn't mean it requires less thought. Social media should be treated as concise, considered, high quality storytelling – written well and with a clear purpose. Take time to craft social content – draft, edit and re-draft the way you would a news article or important email.

9. Posting on social media is a form of publishing. This means the usual rules of publishing apply, including defamation and copyright.

On Facebook, administrators of public Facebook pages may be held responsible for publishing defamatory third party comments on posts (see [Dylan Voller vs news outlets ruling](#)).

It's best practice to assume all online content is protected by copyright. Make sure you have permission to post copyright items, accurately attribute work to the copyright owner and never claim another person's work as your own. If it is unclear who owns content, it's best to be cautious and refrain from posting it. This [resource](#) from the Australian Copyright Council provides additional guidance.

10. Understand and follow the rules and policies of the major social media platforms, especially the [Twitter Rules](#) and [Facebook Community Standards](#).

11. Be fair, constructive and respectful. Before posting, consider how other people might read and interpret your comment. You should only post content you would feel comfortable saying directly to another person without causing offence. When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep your responses appropriate and polite. When discussions become antagonistic or abusive, it's best to disengage.
12. If you believe you have bullied, harassed or abused on social media, these incidents can be reported to social media platforms, which will act to enforce their policies. On Twitter, for example, [abusive behaviour](#) includes 'using aggressive insults with the purpose of harassing or intimidating others' and 'encouraging or calling for others to harass an individual or group of people'.
13. The advice of the [E-Safety Commissioner](#) is also very helpful, including resources on [cyber abuse](#) and [e-safety for women](#) and the following guidance.
14. To manage trolls and haters we need to: remove their audience, remove their power and deprive them of the attention they seek. We can do this by:
 - * Reporting the troll or hater to website administrators and if they appear again under a different name, report them again.
 - * Ignoring comments. Remember: do not respond to nasty, immature or offensive comments.
 - * Blocking the troll. Take away their power by blocking them. If they appear under a different name, block them again.
 - * Backing other users up online. Support those who are the target of trolls and haters, without allowing the troll or hater to re-engage.
 - * If trolling or hate is persistent or particularly nasty, then it might be considered cyberbullying/abuse. In this case, the E-Safety Commissioner advises to keep evidence of the material for police.
15. The E-Safety Commissioner does not provide legal advice. See what they can do [here](#).
16. The University's Legal Office is able to provide a degree of support and advice to staff who believe have been bullied, abused or defamed on social media. There is a limited range of legal options to address online trolling, particularly where it occurs outside of ANU systems and by unknown posters. The ANU Legal Office can be contacted at Legal.Office@anu.edu.au.

Further training and support

To ensure ANU academic and professional staff effectively engage in social media, the Media and Communications team provides skills workshops, as well as tailored advice and guidance upon request.

Please contact media@anu.edu.au to find out more about training and support options.

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