

University of East Anglia Social Media Policy: for staff responsible for UEA social media accounts

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1. Introduction

Used by most students and many members of staff both personally and professionally, social media and online conversations form part of the personal and working lives of those at UEA.

With more than 200 social media accounts already directly affiliated with the University and its many departments, and more being created regularly, it is vital that the University provides useful and clear guidance on how to manage these accounts safely and effectively.

This ensures those responsible for these accounts can run them confidently, and promotes consistency in the institution's public voice.

2. Objectives and scope

The purpose of this policy document is to direct staff to guidance, advice and warnings about the use of both their personal and UEA social media accounts, to assist staff in feeling confident and safe when engaging in social media.

It will, in more details, lay out the rules and considerations for any member of staff setting up or involved in running a UEA-affiliated or official UEA social media account.

This document will *not* provide detailed training or instruction on the day-to-day running of social media accounts. Further guidance on how to set up and operate social media accounts can be found in the University's [Social Media Guidelines](#).

3. Definition

Social Media allows conversation and the creation and sharing of content on web-based and mobile devices. It is an ever-changing medium with popular networks in the UK including [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Flickr](#) and [YouTube](#), chat applications like [Snapchat](#) and [WhatsApp](#), and blogging websites like [Wordpress](#) and [Blogger](#).

4. UEA social media

UEA already has a number of established and centrally-controlled social media channels used to communicate both externally, to prospective students and the public, and internally to audiences including staff and students.

These include:

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/ueaofficial>

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/uniofeastanglia>

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/ueaofficial>

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/edu/school?id=12699>

Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/uniofeastanglia/>

Tumblr: <http://uniofeastanglia.tumblr.com>

Instagram: <http://instagram.com/uniofeastanglia>

The Marketing Team within Admissions, Recruitment & Marketing (ARM) oversees the main UEA social media channels - currently reaching an audience of more than 100,000 fans and followers.

The team is responsible for the University's social media presence. This involves monitoring, instigating and responding to conversations and providing customer service via Twitter and Facebook, running social media marketing campaigns, and handling requests to promote events or stories using these channels.

It also includes, in conjunction with the UEA Communications Office, maintaining an overview of all active UEA-related social media accounts and ensuring consistency and appropriate messaging across these channels.

5. Personal social media accounts

5.1 Definition

Personal social media accounts are those owned by staff which have no affiliation with or relation to the role they hold at UEA. For example, personal Facebook accounts, Twitter accounts without a UEA reference in the Twitter handle or biography, and any account used to talk about personal, social, or general topics.

5.2 Use of personal social media at work

There is an existing [Code of Conduct on Social Media Use](#), which covers the use of personal social media by employees and those with comparable honorary status. This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with the University's existing regulations and policies relating to provision and use of University IT and computing facilities, including the [Conditions of Computer Use](#) and the [Social Media Guidelines](#).

6. UEA social media accounts

6.1 Definition

UEA social media accounts are those attributed to or affiliated with UEA or one of its departments. Accounts can be linked to the University via the account name, profile, description or biography. A number of such accounts already exist for administrative departments such as Estates, Accommodation and the Dean of Students office, and most Schools of Study also operate their own social media accounts.

6.2 Ownership

The Marketing Team does not create or operate social media channels on behalf of individuals or departments but does offer comprehensive advice and assistance, set out in the [Social Media Guidelines](#).

Ownership and responsibility for UEA social media accounts falls to the individuals or teams running them, and they must adhere to the guidelines set out in this policy. Owners of accounts not adhering to these guidelines may be required to cease operating them.

The Marketing Team must be made aware via marketing@uea.ac.uk of all newly created social media accounts for University records. Existing social media administrators should get in contact with Marketing Team to make them aware of channels that have been launched if they haven't already done so.

6.3 Aims of a UEA social media account

Before an individual or team at UEA sets up a new social media channel, they are advised to meet colleagues in the Marketing Team or Communications Office to discuss their aims and objectives. This should be followed up with confirmation of the creation of the account as outlined in 6.2 above.

Questions to consider before starting a new social media account include:

- Does the team have the time to properly maintain the account?
- Are you confident with using the technology?
- What are your objectives and how will you measure success?
- Will you be offering something different to that already provided by UEA?
- Do you have enough content to keep your audience engaged?
- How will you market your channel both offline and online?
- Would UEA's top-level accounts act as a better platform to promote your information?

6.4 Reputation and representing UEA online

Social media accounts linked to UEA are representing the University in a highly public forum. This means they have the potential to affect the reputation of the University and its staff and students. Staff operating social media should therefore exercise the same caution as they would when representing the University in any public capacity.

Staff must ensure social media accounts do not:

- Bring the University or its staff and students into disrepute
- Breach confidentiality, data protection or copyright
- Offend or insult
- Encourage, support or promote illegal activity
- Use or encourage derogatory comments
- Use the University's brand or visual identity in a damaging way

Disagreements and disputes should be avoided. Where it is necessary to engage, this must be directed offline to a non-public communication route.

6.5 Opinion versus fact

UEA social media messaging should serve a purpose, remain factual and be impartial. Personal opinions about the University, its staff and students, or about sensitive issues relating to the University, must not be shared through UEA channels.

If the views of the member of staff or team operating a social media channel differ from the University's position on a particular topic or issue, this should be discussed with line managers, not on social media.

UEA social media channels must not engage with or share campaigns, surveys or petitions unless instigated or officially supported by the University.

6.6 Data Protection

Owners of UEA social media accounts should be aware of data protection issues regarding confidential information relating to staff, students, clients and business contacts and must comply with Data Protection legislation. More information about Data Protection and how it related to the University is available on the [UEA website here](#).

6.7 Content removal

Owners of UEA social media accounts are expected to remove any content deemed unsuitable at the request of the Marketing, Communications or Vice Chancellor's offices.

If channel owners are unsure about the appropriateness of messages, they should check with their line manager, the Marketing Team or the Communications Office before posting.

6.8 Dormant social media accounts

An abandoned or dormant social media account can be damaging to the University's reputation. Important queries could be ignored, and dormant accounts could put followers off from engaging with other social media channels or directly with the University.

If multiple accounts on one social media platform are sending the same messages or targeting the same specific audience, it can also cause confusion to followers.

The Marketing Team retains the right to close down accounts which become dormant, or redundant due to duplication.

6.9 Reporting incidents

Staff should report any social media incidents of concern to the Communications Office, the appropriate School or department, or if necessary, to Security and/or the emergency services. Such incidents could include:

- Abuse or threats directed at an individual, department or the University as a whole
- Complaints about the University, its students, staff or procedures that are beyond the scope of the individual or department receiving them
- Comments which raise concern about the safety or welfare of an individual

6.10 Approaches from the media

Any approaches from journalists or members of any media outlet requesting comment or information must be directed to the UEA Communications Office. No UEA social media account, including the centrally-controlled channels, should engage in conversation with the media online. All media enquiries should be directed to press@uea.ac.uk.

6.11 Disciplinary action in relation to social media

If a member of staff engages in activities which breach the guidelines of this policy relating to the use of a UEA social media account, the University reserves the right to investigate fully and to withdraw (either temporarily or permanently) the authority of the user to operate that channel. The University also reserves the right to close down the account.

If a serious breach of these conditions is proven, it may lead to disciplinary proceedings in accordance with HR's disciplinary, dismissal and grievance guidelines, set out here: <https://www.uea.ac.uk/hr/employee-information/policies/disciplinary>.