

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices

Introduction

Social media is a powerful and popular communication tool that supports The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) to illustrate the story of who we are, what we do, and why we are doing it. Every HKUST-related account plays an important, cohesive, and reassuring role in building stories and engaging with a global audience which includes current and prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, potential donors, external media, and local community members.

These guidelines are designed to help HKUST members including but not limited to employees, students, volunteers, affiliates, and consultants (e.g. creative agencies) from a brand management perspective in making appropriate decisions when managing and/or developing social media platforms or initiatives either on behalf of the University or in situations when doing so, it may give rise to an impression of affiliation to the University.

The Brand Marketing Team of the Global Engagement & Communications Office is responsible for managing these guidelines, which will be updated from time to time to cope with the development of the social media landscape. Please notify the Brand Marketing Team (email to brand@ust.hk) of a new or changed social media account with the account name, along with the contact information of the authorized administrator(s).

Guidelines for engagement on social media on behalf of HKUST

These guidelines apply to all types of social media usage on behalf of HKUST, including departmental and individual professional use.

- **Adhere to the University policies and guidelines.** When you are acting on behalf of HKUST, your behavior will be governed by and should be consistent with the [University Policies, Guidelines & Procedures](#), and [Regulations on Academic Integrity](#)
- **Do not create or develop social media accounts, profiles, or initiatives bearing the University's identity such as name and symbol without prior approval** from your respective School Deans or the Director of the Interdisciplinary Programs Office (IPO), Dean of Students, or Vice Presidents. All social media accounts, profiles, and initiatives from schools, departments, and institutes should be approved by the designated person-in-charge of the School, Department, Office, Unit, or similar (hereinafter referred to collectively as "Unit").
- **Be prudent.** Do not engage in behavior that could raise actual or apparent conflicts of interest and reveal confidential or proprietary information relating to the University on social networks. Amongst others, [HKUST's University Policies, Guidelines & Procedures](#)

on [Conflict of Interest](#) sets forth staff member's obligation to conscientiously consider at all times whether a conflict of interest may arise and to avoid or minimize such conflict including in their social media and communications duties.

- **Be accurate.** Get the facts straight before posting them on social media sites. When possible, link back to the original source. Review content for grammatical and spelling mistakes. If you make an error, correct it quickly. This will earn you respect in the online community.
- **Do not disclose, post, or share proprietary HKUST information, data, or communications.** This includes, but is not limited to any intellectual property, operating plans, vendor communications, financial data, presentations, and correspondence that are intended for internal consumption.
- **Do not use or disclose personal information.** This includes, but is not limited to ID, telephone numbers, addresses (other than an authorized business address or business phone number), and those as outlined in the [University Policies, Guidelines & Procedures](#).
- **Respect intellectual property rights.** When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and that of the University. Ensure permission is granted by relevant authorized parties before using third-party copyrighted or trademarked material or a person's likeness in a digital context. Any use of intellectual property (e.g. music, photos, or videos) without obtaining necessary clearance for its use may expose HKUST to significant financial liability and reputational risk. Units are responsible for obtaining the necessary permission for the use of intellectual property and a person's likeness in connection with their communications activities. Units are also responsible for bearing all costs associated with such rights clearances, including any costs that may arise if it fails to obtain the necessary clearance (e.g. legal and settlement costs).
- **Take necessary measures to ensure the security of your social media account.** Social networking services and accounts, particularly those with HKUST affiliation could lead to reputational risk to the University if they are not well managed. As a responsible administrator of HKUST-affiliated social media account, you should
 - (1) use passwords that are not easily traceable;
 - (2) deploy multi-factor authentication for all accounts where it is available;
 - (3) register accounts using only HKUST official email addresses; and
 - (4) regularly monitor social media accounts, especially those that are not used frequently;
 - (5) change the password and remove the old "Admin Role" on the account when an authorized administrator or external agency that helps manage the account is changed;
 - (6) maintain a plan for recovering social media accounts in case they are compromised.

- **Do not maintain dormant social media accounts bearing the HKUST name.** Any dormant social media account with HKUST affiliation should be removed from the relevant social network. Please also notify the Brand Marketing Team of the Global Engagement & Communications Office once you have removed it.

Guidelines for departmental use of social media on behalf of HKUST

All guidelines included in section one, above, plus:

Be attentive and sensitive when engaging on social networking services. Be prepared that your posts can reach anyone, may not necessarily stay on the social media site used but may be shared to other media channels, and may be miscommunicated or misinterpreted, and that it would be taken out of its original context. Do not post classified, sensitive, or unauthorized information about the University or its affiliates or individuals in the University's community.

Plan your manpower appropriately. Use of social media on behalf of HKUST should all be owned and maintained by staff and/ or faculty and/ or authorized persons of your Unit as appropriate. While student interns or helpers can also support in generating content or collaborating on social media initiatives, they should not take up the owners' role of these official HKUST-branded social media accounts or profiles. Administrators should closely monitor their responsible social media sites with at least a few times daily/regularly checking on comments that require feedback, especially in some popular social events. Being responsive in offering feedback will help build the University's reputation as engaging and open.

Be sensible and thoughtful when handling comments. Comments are core elements of social networking services. Please be reminded to consider the best way to respond as it may reflect on you, your Unit, and the University. In normal circumstances, it is advised that prompt response be given whenever practical or appropriate. In the event of receiving pure emotional expressions or asking of sensitive questions, an immediate reply might trigger more negative comments. As such, it would be more appropriate to leave them unanswered and let them die down; or handle them through inbox message, or politely reply that an official statement will be published in due course. Do not take negative comments personally and do not delete comments simply because you disagree with the comments, opinion, or reaction. [You have the right to remove the comments only if they breach the terms and conditions or rules set forth in the social media channel or your fan page or expose private information of others, contain commercial solicitations, are factually untrue/slandorous, are out of context, are threatening or abusive, or are offensive.]

If you encounter threatening comments that may pose a potential hazard to the University or any of the staff on a post, please report it to your respective Unit and Campus Management Office to seek for assistance and advice. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a

comment especially the answer could be sensitive, please seek a second opinion from your supervisor or contact the Global Engagement & Communications Office.

Avoid inappropriate or offensive content. Connect sensibly. Consider carefully who you “follow” or “become connected as a friend”, link to or allow into your social media channel and to review to what extent you will allow comments. Connecting to other social media channels could build credibility and community while it could also imply your channel has been endorsed by a certain organization, group, or person. This also applies to the selection of websites for advertising. Please make sure those websites do not host offensive or pornographic content or promote hatred, intolerance, discrimination, or violence. It is your Unit’s responsibility and also that of your vendors who support paid media campaigns for you to manage and exclude websites and domains with inappropriate or offensive content. You or your vendors may be asked to take down or block paid media placements that occur on websites that carry inappropriate or offensive content.

Examples of inappropriate or offensive content include, but are not limited to: bullying or intimidation of an individual or group, discrimination or stereotyping of race, gender, age, social status or nationality, hate group paraphernalia, graphic crime scene or accident images, cruelty to animals, murder, self-harm, extortion or blackmail, and/or ads using profane language.

Please note that social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube can suspend your accounts or channels if your content is regarded as hate speech, harassment, or cyberbullying. You should stay tuned for the latest policy of each social media platform to make sure your content fits with their requirements. Below are the policy pages of certain major social media platforms for your easier reference:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/policies>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/about/legal/terms/api/>

Twitter: <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/media-policy>

YouTube: https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/2803176?hl=en&ref_topic=6151248

Link back. You are encouraged to link your social media channels to your own Unit’s website, the HKUST homepage and/ or HKUST social media sites where appropriate. Make sure all links work.

Getting help

If you need assistance or have some general questions on a matter related to social media at HKUST, please contact the Brand Marketing Team, Global Engagement & Communications Office at brand@ust.hk. Additionally, you may contact the Brand Marketing Team to connect with colleagues at HKUST working on social media.

Best Practices

A consistent name helps build consistent image. Try to put HKUST prior to name of the Unit or program or event (e.g. HKUST Sustainability, HKUST Alumni). This helps users to find relevant HKUST Unit or program or event and enhance awareness on all HKUST Units or programs or events. However, do not intend to change your current names on accounts as any change may cause confusion for users.

Be consistent and maintain freshness. Keep your social media site updated and post at regular intervals. Facebook posts should be updated once to twice a week; no more than twice a day. Avoid 2 posts at the same time. Same applies to other social media channels such as LinkedIn and Instagram.

Strive for a harmonious social site. If you encounter sensitive questions or comments, you should direct the conversation to inbox messaging for handling. This could minimize the generation of possible negative comments by others on your page. It is always a good practice to create house rules for your social media sites. If someone posts anything not align with your house rules, you could hide the post and if the postings are egregious; you could even ban the user. However, please be reminded that banning should always be the last option and should be applied only when certain user continuously posts egregious comments. In the case of photos and videos, you can also report them to Facebook for elements like spam/scams, pornography/nudity, graphic violence, attacks on an individual or group, hate symbols, and illegal drug use.

Smart connection via hashtags. Hashtag is an effective tool within social media sites like Instagram where users can follow hashtags and see all other posts that use them. This broadens the exposure of the post. Apart from the related event names or slogans, the University encourages different Units to include also #HKUST when preparing posts or feeds on their social media platforms where they see appropriate for broadening the University's exposure.

Create affiliate synergy. Tagging the social media accounts of affiliates can help draw new followers and engagement among the University communities. However, you should make sure you get the agreement of the affiliate before tagging.