Social Media Communications Policy
November 2012

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1. Introduction

Royal Holloway, University of London, recognizes the right to freedom of expression and encourages the positive use of social media to enhance communication and raise the College's profile. However, because the line between public and private is not always clearly defined with social media, it is important that users understand their rights and responsibilities.

This policy is consistent with the College's e-mail guidelines, and outlines good practice for all social media platforms including but not limited to:

- Social networking
- Micro-blogging and blogs
- Forums and discussion boards
- Video and photo sharing sites
- Social bookmarking
- Wikis

2. Have a strategy

Social media can be a useful and cost-effective communications tool for advertising events, promoting the College and its activity, networking, and engaging in instant dialogue, but there's no point in using it unless you're going to use it well. Think about the following points:

- Who are your target audience?
- What type of social media would be most effective to communicate with them?
- How do you intend to implement and maintain it?
- What are your objectives?

The College's Communications Department maintains corporate profiles on facebook and Twitter. Take advantage of how well-established these are. Rather than setting up your own area for your department / group, ask the Communications Department to promote your events. You will have an instant audience of thousands. It also looks more professional when we work together and present a united front. Anecdotal feedback from users is that they don't want updates from each separate area of the College; they would prefer to see all information collated. With so many different groups, it can be difficult for users to ascertain which are official, and which are unofficial.

3. Good conduct

Think about whether you want to identify yourself as a member of staff at Royal Holloway, and know that if you do:

- You are subject to all standard College HR policies, including good conduct.

- You are encouraged to clearly indicate when you are not speaking officially for the College. You may want to use a disclaimer such as: 'All opinions are mine and not those of my employer.'
- You represent Royal Holloway at all times, and your social media usage is visible to other staff and students.
- Keep in mind that social media is not the place to air work frustrations.
- Always demonstrate respect for other points of view, and try to keep comments constructive.

4. Tone of voice

Social media by its very nature can be more informal than other methods of communication. However, most account administrators remain anonymous when updating 'corporate' accounts and a hypothetical voice is adopted to ensure consistency.

Please also refer to the College's editorial guidelines:
http://www.rhul.ac.uk/it/staff/cms

5. Confidentiality and legal issues

Staff should be aware that current UK law applies to the use of social media as it does to other channels of communication. This includes but is not limited to the law of defamation and the Copyright Design and Patents Act 1988.

- Only disclose publicly available information.
- Don't use social media for breaking news that hasn't yet been published through College channels.
- Give proper credit to other sources; it is fine to quote or re-tweet others, but don't attempt to pass things off as your own.

6. Use of IT facilities

- Personal use of social media should not cause unwarranted expense or liability to be incurred by the College, or otherwise impact on the delivery of services.
- The College has the legal right, at any time, to inspect or monitor all data held on College computer equipment.
- The College doesn't routinely monitor social media content posted by staff, but reserves the right to respond to content in violation of College policies on conduct.

7. Further information / help

The Communications Department is happy to help with any editorial queries you may have.

You can find HR's policies, procedures and contact information here:
http://www.rhul.ac.uk/humanresources

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