OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)
27 – 29 January 2017

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

The CEC is asked to:-

i) **receive** a new set of social media guidelines from the social media working group.

ii) **approve** the proposed social media guidelines.

1. **Background**

1.1 Social media plays a significant role in how we reach and communicate with students. The office run accounts are working well and continue to be the central hub of our activity on social media. However, we think that a new set of guidelines is needed for student representatives and affiliated groups who are interested in using social media to promote who they are and what they're doing, so the wider impact of the Association can be seen.

1.2 Since the current guidelines were approved by the CEC in March 2015, there have been many changes to the how the Association is structured, our future direction and the makeup of the CEC. Therefore, these new social media guidelines have been created by 5 members of the CEC and Vice President Communications alongside the Head of Digital Communications.

1.3 During the CEC meeting in October 2016, the committee voted in favour of allowing affiliated Facebook groups to choose to be Closed rather than Public (but no such group may be set as Secret), a change which is reflected in the following guidelines.

1.4 This document will serve as guidance for students who hold a role within the Association and want to have a presence on social media for their role, society or group. There is no requirement for reps to use social media.

2. **Proposed Social Media Guidelines for 2016-18**

2.2 The main purpose of the Association’s official activity on social media is to build student community and create spaces to listen to the student voice. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are the Association’s main channels on social media and links to the office run accounts are:
3. Why should I use social media?

3.3 Social media offers an opportunity for reps to further engage with students in their role. It can be used to provide support and build relationships with students. Being part of the student community also allows us to increase our awareness of student ‘hot topics’ and problem areas, gather information and views as well as share news, events and other information with students. It can also make us more visible to the students we are representing, and facilitate them in contacting us.

4. Why do these guidelines exist?

4.1 This document contains guidance for students who hold a role within the Association and want to have a presence on social media for their role, society or group. There is no requirement for reps to use social media.

4.2 To receive promotional support and to be considered an affiliated social media channel, reps are expected to follow these guidelines to ensure the Association’s brand, reputation and values are upheld. In return, the office will provide logos (if required) and imagery, as well as help with promoting affiliated accounts via the Association’s website, magazine, newsletters, forums and main social media accounts.

5. Code of Conduct

5.1 The Association’s Code of Conduct for All Volunteers should be read in conjunction with these guidelines. Student reps should note that when they are communicating on social media, whether they are acting in an official capacity or using a personal account, the Association has the right to take disciplinary proceedings against its members where appropriate.

5.2 Please remember that not all students like their photo to be published or shared on social media, so out of courtesy, you should always seek their permission.

Facebook

6. Affiliated Groups and Privacy levels

6.1 There are already multiple groups that are formally affiliated to the Association. Reps are encouraged to build up these groups rather than create new ones.

6.2 A list of these groups can be found on the Meet Students page on the Association website. Other such groups may be added in future by agreement of the Central Executive Committee (CEC). If students wish to set such a group up, they should submit it for approval by emailing ousa@open.ac.uk who will pass it onto the CEC.
6.3 Admins are expected to do their utmost to ensure groups are a safe space for students and that no barriers are placed for student engagement. These affiliated groups must continue to invite Vice President Communications and/or another nominated member of the CEC to be admin.

6.4 In the interest of safety, groups can determine their own level of privacy. i.e. whether to be Closed or Public. Groups should not be created as Secret.

6.5 A contact email address should be provided for each affiliated group, via email to: ousa@open.ac.uk

7. **Pages and Personal Profiles**

7.1 Reps can decide whether a Page or Profile is most appropriate for their own needs and it is down to the individual to manage this.

7.2 **Our recommendation - Pages:**

7.3 For reps already on Facebook in a personal capacity, our recommendation is to create a Page, which is the simplest way to separate personal posts from those relating to your role. Pages also help protect your existing profile and allow students to message you via your page, without exposing any personal details.

7.4 We recommend that you use your role title as your Page name, and provide a brief introduction (including your name and term of office) in the About section.

7.5 We also ask you to have a second admin to your page in Vice President Communications and/or another nominated member of the CEC.

7.6 Pages should follow the Association’s brand guidelines and artwork can be obtained via the office by emailing: ousa@open.ac.uk

7.7 For more information on how to use Facebook, please refer to the Facebook Help Centre.

8. **Personal Profile**

8.1 Facebook’s terms of service states that users must use their real name and own information when creating an account, so using your role title is not possible for creating a new profile.

8.2 If a rep decides to use a personal profile for their role, we encourage you to put role information in your Intro section and consider using a branded banner or profile image, so you are recognised as being an official representative.

8.3 It is up to the post holder if they wish to invite students to become Facebook friends. However, caution should be always taken if reps choose to add students to personal profiles. We suggest adjusting your privacy settings carefully, so that you can decide who will see what’s on your profile.

8.4 At the end of the post, reps should remove role information and branding from
their profile.

9. **Twitter**

9.1 The first thing you'll need to do is pick a unique username. As Twitter usernames are restricted to 15 characters in length, you might want to choose a username that focuses on your role title, society, group or real name. Unless they are widely recognised or common search terms, avoid using abbreviations.

9.2 Accounts should be created as Public i.e. so tweets are not protected.

9.3 Your role title or society/group name should be added to your Bio. If appropriate, we also encourage you to put your term of office in the bio section, e.g. Vice President Communications 2016-18. We would also recommend you include the phrase “… at the @OUstudents Association” (or similar) to link back to the Association’s main account.

9.4 As the Association has an established student community on Twitter, we encourage you to use the #OUstudents and #teamOUstudents hashtags when appropriate, or mention @OUstudents in your tweets so we can retweet them from the main account. During the two main student intake dates in February and October, you might also want to use the #new2OU hashtag, which is an active space for Freshers.

9.5 When your post ends, it is your responsibility to delete the account or hand it over to the office by emailing the account details to ousa@open.ac.uk

9.6 For more information on how to use Twitter, please refer to the Twitter Help Center.

10. **Instagram**

10.1 Just like the guidelines for Twitter above, you’ll need to pick a unique username. Usernames can be up to 30 characters in length so we recommend choosing a username that focuses on your role, group or society. Unless they are widely recognised or common search terms, avoid using abbreviations.

10.2 Accounts should be created as Public as opposed to private.

10.3 Your role title or group name should also be added to your Bio. If appropriate, we also encourage you to put your term of office in the bio section, e.g. Vice President Communications 2016-18.

10.4 To reach as many OU students as possible, we recommend you include the following hashtags with your posts: #studying #student #oustudents #openuniversity

10.5 We also recommend that you tag the main Association account (@OUstudentslive) so we can like your post and share it elsewhere (i.e. in the magazine, website, etc.).
10.6 When your term ends, it is your responsibility to delete the account or hand it over to the office by emailing the account details to ousa@open.ac.uk

10.7 For more information on how to use Instagram, please refer to the Instagram Help Centre.

11. Advice on content

- Be original! Create your own content and report back on what you’ve been up to. Keep students updated with what you’re working on, what meetings and events you have attended. Try using different types of content including photos and videos.

- To avoid duplication, reps should focus on sharing information that relates to their own role and remit. For example, it would be most appropriate for the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Faculty Rep to advertise a STEM Careers Fair.

- Try to avoid simply repeating information that’s already been shared elsewhere. Further the conversation by adding your own comment or opinion before reposting.

- Some information may not be role-specific. For example, a reminder about the final enrolment dates, changes to university policy – in this case, discussion with other reps and awareness of what has already been shared is a good idea.

- There is no formal requirement to share University news and information. But if you feel that it’s relevant to your role, or a ‘hot topic’ being discussed by many students, then feel free to get involved.

- When help or support is being requested, check what information is available elsewhere, then signpost students to these pages. Lots of information can be found on the Association and University websites. Any information that is shared should come from a reputable source – if at all unsure, check with other student reps or the office.

- Enjoy! Social media is a great way to make connections with other students all over the globe. Show off your personality and have fun!

Rachel Hughes
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