

Heriot-Watt University Student Union

Social Media Guidelines

Introduction

We operate within the world of Students, so Social Media is a very desirable method of communicating with our students. Over 90% of our target demographic uses at least one form of social media everyday (Mintel, 2014). It is therefore important that HWUnion Staff and Officers think critically about their use of these tools and adopt a common-sense approach to managing the potential risks of using them.

HWUnion is the main representative channel for all students at UK campuses of Heriot-Watt University. As such, we are responsible to the student body for our conduct, as well as being bound by HWUnion policies.

The visibility of Social Media platforms, together with the difficulty we can face in separating our actions as a representative of HWUnion and our personal conduct, means that a lack of forethought could result in damage to Staff, Officer and the Union's reputation.

Definition of Social Media

Social Media is an ever changing area of technology, with new platforms coming online all the time. Typically, Social Media is referred to as web-based applications which allow users to interact with each other and share views, information, interests and other content. Building online communities and networks is key, along with encouraging participation and engagement by other users.

For the purpose of these guidelines, Social Media refers to any platform where content is posted and shared publically, and is not limited to the primary channels utilised by the Student Union.

2 Points to Always Remember

Social Media use is:

- **Public:** What is posted enters the public domain and is available to others. Your comments can attract attention from large numbers of people in a short space of time, and even if a "private" function is used, the comments you make are open to others to interpret.
- **Permanent:** Your use of social media results in comments you make being permanently available – even if later removed, copies may already have been taken that could be republished.

Social Media Guidelines

General Guidelines

- You are the Public Face of the student body and you should participate in the same way that you would in person, professionally and responsibly.
- You should try to add value to the conversation by contributing your knowledge or unique perspective. Only write about things you are familiar with and check your facts before posting. Be honest when you make a mistake.
- You are responsible for the online spaces related to your area, and you are also accountable for any delegation of this responsibility to others. Monitor your spaces regularly.
- If your Social Media use attracts attention of other media outlets (such as newspapers, television etc) remember that the HWUnion President is the main spokesperson for the Student Union and you should liaise with them before handling any enquiries.

Using Social Media in your Personal Life

- You should be aware that what you publish cannot be isolated from your representation of HWUnion, and may be picked up by the media and students. As such you can still be held to account for views expressed when not acting in an “official” HWUnion capacity.
- To reduce risk, a disclaimer such as “The views I express are my own and do not reflect the views of Heriot-Watt University Student Union” should be included on personal pages. However, please note this does not protect HWUnion from being associated with the content you post.
- Manage your privacy settings to reduce unwanted attention and be selective about who you add to your networks.
- As with other forms of publishing, you should be aware of issues such as libel, defamation and slander.
- Remember that you are still bound by HWUnion and Heriot-Watt University policies on code of conduct, equal opportunities and regulations.

Whether in a personal or official capacity, you must not...

Bring the Student Union into disrepute, for example by:

- Insulting members, colleagues, staff or other institutions. Discussion and debate is acceptable, personal attacks are not.
- Making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups
- Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content

Breach confidentiality, for example by:

- Revealing confidential intellectual property or information owned by the Organisation
- Giving away confidential information about an individual or organisation
- Discussing the Student Union’s internal operations (such as staffing arrangements, future business plans or budgets). These would be communicated centrally if our membership are to be informed.

Breaching copyright, for example:

- Using someone else's images or written content without permission. Be aware that using images found on Google Image search are usually copyright protected and should not be used.
- Failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something

Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment or, any individual, for example by:

- Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age
- Using social media to bully another individual
- Posting images that are discriminatory or offensive, or links to such content.

Using Social Media

Accounts & Profiles

Social Media should be personal, so we will not create generic accounts or profiles for individual Office Bearer positions (e.g. HWUnion International Officer) or as separate accounts to your existing account (e.g. Jamie HWUnion). Officers have been elected as themselves, so should represent themselves on Social Media using their usual profiles.

Extra profiles are confusing for everyone, and increase the amount of work for you, having to regularly check various accounts. Understandably, there is likely to be student groups with whom you will want to communicate – however there is no need to add them to your profile as a friend / connection (unless they are a friend!). See below regarding using Groups to help you build your community.

An exception to this rule is made for permanent HWUnion staff. Other exceptions may be made by the Head of Corporate Services.

Facebook Groups

Facebook designed their Groups feature for the sole reason of grouping people together who share a common interest, and they do not require users to be “friends” in order to communicate with each other. They are ideal for building smaller communities who wish to be able to discuss issues, share information and plan social activities – so let's use them for that purpose!

If required, groups should be created to link relevant students together. There should be a clear purpose / common interest which is most likely to be for existing student groups (such as LGBT Group, Disabled Students Group etc).

Facebook Groups also have the added advantage of better notifications to group members. Posts on a Profile Page are not always displayed on all Friends' news feeds, however updates to posts in Groups appear as notifications, ensuring maximum engagement.

Branding

All official HWUnion Facebook Groups should follow the HWUnion Brand Guidelines, which cover both the visual design and the language / tone that should be used. Please speak to the Marketing & Design Co-Ordinator for more information.

Group Privacy

Ideally groups should be a **Public Group**, however if in some circumstances where an element of confidentiality may apply, it is acceptable to create a Closed Group or Secret Group. Please see the table below regarding what can / can't be seen for each privacy type.

The Union's "Hwunion Comms" profile (facebook.com/hwunion.comms) **must** be added to all groups that are created.

The Marketing & Design Co-Ordinator can advise on other privacy settings that may be applicable.

	Public	Closed	Secret
Who can join?	Anyone can join or be added or invited by a member	Anyone can ask to join or be added or invited by a member	Anyone, but they have to be added or invited by a member
Who can see the group's name?	Anyone	Anyone	Current and former members
Who can see who's in the group?	Anyone	Anyone	Only current members
Who can see the group description?	Anyone	Anyone	Current and former members
Who can see the group tags?	Anyone	Anyone	Current and former members
Who can see what members post in the group?	Anyone	Only current members	Only current members
Who can find the group in search?	Anyone	Anyone	Current and former members

Who can see stories about the group on Facebook (like in News Feed and search)?	Anyone	Only current members	Only current members
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Administration of Group

It is important to think about who will be given administrative access to your group. Anyone granted admin access must follow the rules of these guidelines and it is your responsibility to ensure that is the case.

Facebook Pages

Facebook pages were created as a promotional tool for business and organisations to use. Users “Like” a group to follow and see its updates and can “check in” to the page location, but it is not suitable to engage members in discussion. For this reason, Facebook Pages have limited use within HWUnion, apart from as our main organisation-wide promotional channel.

How HWUnion Uses Facebook

“What’s going on at HWUnion”

Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use to promote all The Union’s services • Brand awareness and recognition • Share a mix of relevant links, blog posts, and engaging student related content, alongside promotional content • Engage with our influencers by encouraging feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link page to sub-pages / groups • Agree posting regularity • Develop Groups – i.e. Freshers Group • Encourage personal approach to responding to comments
	Metrics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. posts per day • No. of Page Likes • Post engagement – Likes, Shares, Comments

How HWUnion Uses Twitter

“What is happening now”

Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand awareness and recognition • Develop Union personality • Engage with our influencers and encourage dialogue through feedback and responding to questions • Notifications of current activities • “Live Chat” with students regarding issues • Live Tweeting of big events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree key Union hashtags to be used (freshers, elections etc) • Agree who will use the account
	Metrics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tweets per day • No. of Followers • Tweet engagement – Mentions, Retweets, Favorites

How HWUnion Uses Instagram

“What we have done”

Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Diary” of Union activities• Brand awareness and recognition• Showcase The Union and its activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage staff to photograph their activities
	Metrics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photo engagement – Shares, Comments, Views

How HWUnion Uses Youtube

“See and hear what we’re doing”

Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add personal element to what we do• Interactive view of what we’re doing• Demonstrate we embrace new technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allocate resource to produce video content• Identify key activities that benefit from online content• Train Officers in producing “vlog” style videos
	Metrics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No. of views• Video Engagement – likes, comments

How HWUnion Uses Our Website

“Find out more”

Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hub of all information – everything is on our website• Used to support other Social Media channels to provide further information• Knowledgebase of Frequently Asked Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve Freshers / Welcome content• Improve presence of our Officers online• Include democratic processes online (voting, opinion gathering)
	Metrics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No. of Visitors• No. of Page Views• Bounce Rate %age• Time on Site