Social Media Guidelines for Learning & Teaching and Researchers

Approved by Senate, 2013-09-23

1. Purpose Statement

Dalhousie embraces the use of social media by those involved in research, learning and teaching at the university. With the rapid growth of social media, Dalhousie recognises the need to have guidelines that highlight important considerations for the university community. Information specific to learning and teaching with social media is addressed in section five. Section six addresses researchers and social media.

2. What Is Social Media?

Social media consists of web-based tools and platforms that enable users to create, share and exchange content, information and ideas. Social media technologies are also called "Web 2.0" technologies. Examples of social media technologies include blogs, wikis, discussion boards, media sharing sites and virtual worlds. Popular social media sites include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype and Flickr.

3. Identifying Yourself Online

3.1 Be Transparent

Clearly state the roles and goals of social media accounts.

3.2 Privacy and Security

By definition, information shared using social media is not private. Disclosing sensitive personal information such as phone numbers, addresses, and birthdates on social media sites is extremely risky. Be aware that expressing opinions online is a form of sharing personal information. Review privacy and security setting options and the relevant policies. Privacy protection is limited and policies undergo regular updates. Pay particular attention to policies surrounding the retention and storage of data.

3.3 Social Media Directory

Individuals who manage public social media accounts, social media administrators, expressly for the purpose of communicating with the Dalhousie community, are encouraged to register their account(s) with the university's Social Media Directory, maintained by the Social Media Communications Officer. Please note: this does not apply to social media accounts created for the purposes of communicating with a closed, private group (ie. class discussions). To register a social media account, complete the Social Media Account Registration Form and email it to: besocial@dal.ca

4. Online Community Expectations

4.1 Integrity

Dalhousie community members are expected to maintain a high level of integrity and adhere to all university policies and regulations when using social media. This includes, but is not limited to:
- Code of Student Conduct
- Personal Harassment Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Prohibited Discrimination Statement
- Intellectual Honesty Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Scholarly Misconduct Policy

Federal and provincial laws also apply when using social media.

4.2 Terms of service

Observe the Terms of Service of all social media platforms. Questions about terms can be directed to Dalhousie's Social Media Communications Officer.

4.3 Presence and Maintenance

Social media accounts require regular updates and monitoring to ensure content remains relevant and accurate. Conversation should remain aligned with the predetermined goals of your social media account.

4.4 Accurate Reporting and Copyright

Confirm information with relevant parties before sharing online. Read and re-read content before posting to confirm updates are free from errors.

All photos, podcasts, videos, news stories or other content should be used only in compliance with copyright laws. Obtain consent, cite sources and include a link to the website, if appropriate. Consult with [Dalhousie Libraries' Copyright Office](#) to familiarize yourself with current copyright regulations.

Fair dealing rules for educational purposes do not apply to external social media sites. Material that is permitted to be shared via Dalhousie learning management systems such as Blackboard/OWL and Moodle is not automatically permitted on external social media sites.

4.5 Respectful Communication & Personal Responsibility

Faculty and students are **personally responsible** for what they share ("post") via social media. Posts are public and can continue to be found online even if the original post is deleted. Consider which individuals, causes, brands or organizations the account "likes", "friends" or "follows", and avoid creating the impression they are endorsed by Dalhousie.

Social media administrators are encouraged to respond to comments and questions in a timely fashion and remove conversation that is not in accordance with your predetermined posting guidelines (i.e. posts that use your account to demean or harm an individual, spam or otherwise use your community to promote endeavors unrelated to Dalhousie).

Differences in opinion are expected, and indeed encouraged, but it is important to remain respectful and constructive. Hateful or offensive language may be cause to pursue action under existing Dalhousie policies, provincial, or federal law (section 4.1).

Before joining an online community, it is beneficial to become familiar with the established social norms among community members.

4.6 Posting Schedule

Each social media platform benefits from a different posting schedule; be cognizant of how the different platforms operate and the speed at which information flows. Excessive posting can damage online reputation and effectiveness when conveying information to community members.

5. Social Media Use for Learning & Teaching

5.1 Why Use Social Media for Learning and Teaching?

There are a number of reasons to use social media technologies in learning and teaching settings, including:

- Instructors can create a more student-centred learning environment in their courses.
- Students can create their own content and build their own meaning (constructivist pedagogy).
- Students and instructors can create communities of learning and practice to enhance learning.
- Students and instructors can share content and ideas that lead to more authentic learning contexts.
- Students and instructors can create personal learning environments and networks that contribute to a process of lifelong learning.
- Social media may facilitate critical discussion and analysis, and may facilitate group tasks.

5.2 Using Dalhousie Supported Social Media Tools

Dalhousie has a suite of social media technologies that can be used for learning and teaching such as wikis, blogs and discussion boards. These are available within institutional systems such as the Blackboard/OWL learning management system. There are a number of advantages to using these institutional systems, including:

- Provision of technology and support from the Help Desk, Instructional Technologies and the Centre for Learning & Teaching (CLT).
- Use of the Dalhousie authenticated log-in system, providing a safe and secure environment.
- Institutional recording of data and student participation for assessment analysis and other purposes.
- Dalhousie supported social media tools enable the sharing of copyrighted materials under the fair dealing exemption.

5.3 Best Practices for Teaching and Learning with Social Media

For Instructors

- Ensure social media use aligns with the stated learning outcomes of the course and/or learning activity.
- Clearly communicate why and how social media tools are to be used in the course and what is expected from students.
- Direct students to this document.
- Actively moderate and facilitate interaction with planned social media activities to foster the learning experience.
- Build learning activities that take advantage of the user-generated aspect of social media so that students create their own content and build their own meaning.
- Employ existing online and social media resources (e.g. video and image sharing sites) to bring more authentic, subject-related content and interaction (e.g. role-plays) into learning activities.
- Promote student and peer connections in social media environments so that students can share their work and learn from each other.
- Back up content and assessment submissions from students on external sites that are not supported by Dalhousie.
- Ensure that all parties are educated about copyright and any associated restrictions on the sharing of information.
- Be particularly cautious when using external social media platforms that permit sharing of content with individuals outside the context of the teaching and learning environment.

For Students

- Review this document thoroughly
- Ensure you understand the learning objectives outlined by the instructor on how to use

social media tools in your learning activities. If you have concerns about using social media for a course, speak to your instructor.
- Engage in meaningful and substantive interaction that contributes to the learning activity.
- Take advantage of the user-generated aspect of social media to create your own content, personalize learning and build your own understanding of course material.
- Use existing online and social media resources (e.g. online video and image sharing sites) to understand the real-life applications of your studies.
- Take advantage of social media to engage in lifelong learning that will stretch across your academic and professional careers.

6. Social Media Use for Researchers

Research into social media indicates an increasing acceptance of these sites as legitimate communication tools among scholars. Some popular social media tools among scholars are:

- Non-academic social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
- Blogs
- Online document management sites (e.g. Google Docs)
- Media repositories (e.g. Flickr and YouTube)
- Wikis (including Wikipedia)

Scholars are also exploring the use of academic social networking sites such as Academia.edu and ResearchGate.net This could be due to challenges associated with managing personal and professional identities on non-academic social networking sites.

6.1 Benefits, Concerns and Considerations of Social Media Use

Frequently cited **benefits** of social media among scholarly users are:

- Keeping up-to-date with research topics
- Following other researchers' work
- Discovering new ideas or publications
- Promoting current research
- Making new research contacts
- Collaborating with other researchers
- Soliciting advice from peers
- Maintaining professional image
- Recruiting highly qualified personnel like graduate students
- Scheduling and managing access to equipment and resources

Some **concerns** associated with social media use include:

- Time required to maintain accounts
- Privacy and the persistence of digital records in social media

Some **considerations** when using social media to conduct research:

- Recruitment of participants via social media can result in the participants unwittingly broadcasting sensitive information
- Data collection using social media can result in sensitive information residing with third parties with whom no data protection or data ownership agreements have been arranged
- Consult with Dalhousie Research Services and Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) to learn about ethical considerations when conducting research using social media.

6.2 Additional Resources for Researchers

In addition to the guidelines in this document, the following are recommended resources for academics who are interested in using social media in their work:

- Cann, A., Dimitriou, & K., Hooley, T. (2011, Feb). *Social Media Guide for Researchers*. Research Information Network. Available at http://www.rin.ac.uk/our-work/communicating-and-disseminating-research/social-media-guide-researchers

- Neal, D.R. (2012). *Social Media for Academics: A practical guide*. Chandos Publishing. ISBN: 1843346818

These guidelines are to be reviewed every two years.