

Social Media Use Guidelines for Staff

[Social media](#) is an emerging, rapidly changing part of the Internet and our daily lives. These guidelines will be updated as new sites, communities, technologies, cultures and trends develop. Social media refers to online community sites including Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn, file sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube, blogs, forums, microblogging (Twitter), and virtual communities such as Second Life. These and other '[Web 2.0](#)' sites are now common place for sharing, learning, connecting with others and expressing our views.

Curtin recognises the use of and participation in online communities to learn, advocate, collaborate, exchange and contribute for the benefit of your professional and personal development. It's important as a university that we stay active, aware and fully engaged with our community.

Social media is relatively new to many people, and the etiquette of participating in them is still emerging. We have put together some "best practice" guidelines from education and industry sources to help you use these channels effectively, and to protect your personal and professional reputation – and that of the University. You can also refer to current [university policies](#) on [Academic Freedom](#), [Media](#), [ICT](#) and the University [Code of Conduct](#).

These guidelines are split into two sections:

- General social media use guidelines
- When you are asked to represent Curtin online

See [Google](#), [YouTube](#) or [Wikipedia](#) for more information on social media. Help us to stay up to date by sending us your feedback at dmu@curtin.edu.au

General Social Media Use Guidelines

Social media is about people not technology, so remember that your conduct reflects not only on yourself but on your employer. It is becoming an increasingly important and constant component of our work and personal lives, even more so with many channels available on mobile devices. Please be mindful of this when posting or responding online. Think about not only what you will post, but the tone you will post in and the audience who will be reading it – online content can be found and viewed anytime, anywhere.

Curtin understands and respects that you may have any number of personal profiles, avatars, blogs and Twitter accounts. Under no circumstances would we wish to interfere with your private business. However, please bear in mind how you represent the Curtin in your private time – social media is blurring the lines between the personal and professional aspects of many people's lives, and anything posted can have an impact on both. Please bear this in mind when posting.

1. **Be transparent.**

Be honest about your identity through your real or username. If you are engaging, sharing or contributing on behalf of Curtin, say so (see 'When you are asked to represent Curtin online'). If you post directly about Curtin in your personal time, please identify your association with Curtin as a staff member, and include a disclaimer on your site or post that you are sharing your personal views and opinions, not as a representative of Curtin; for example – 'Views expressed on this blog are purely those of David Jones.' Don't hide your identity for the purpose of promoting Curtin.

2. **Protect your privacy.**

Whilst it's important to be transparent about who you are, be mindful not to divulge additional personal information that may potentially compromise your privacy or professional confidentiality. Use separate email addresses for social media and generally apply as much common sense as possible to protect against scammers and identity thieves. Further information in relation to privacy is available from the [government](#).

3. **Be accurate.**

Have all the facts before you post to avoid posting misleading or incorrect information about you or the University. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible, it's a good gesture that also builds links and findability. If you make an error, be the first to correct it – quickly and visibly. This will earn you respect in your online communities.

4. **Be respectful.**

Play nice. You are more likely to have a positive outcome when posting if you are constructive and respectful. It's OK to discuss a bad experience or disagree with a statement, concept or person so long as you do it in a considered and constructive manner. You're not obliged to agree with posts, so long as you maintain respect. Don't use inflammatory, racist or offensive language, and never upload offensive or explicit written, audio or video content. Don't be a mole (fake personality or someone trying to falsely promote themselves or their company) or a [troll](#) – you'll be banned or ostracised from communities. It's wise not to be reactive - if you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed.

5. **Be responsible.**

Be careful what you post! Many employers are now reviewing online postings and activity before extending offers of employment, so don't compromise yourself by posting abusive, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous, obscene or even illegal content that may come back to haunt you. Be ethical, considerate and responsible – you are personally responsible for content you publish and comments you make. Be mindful and ensure you never insult anyone online on the grounds of race, circumstances, sex which may be contrary to Curtin's [Code of Conduct](#).

6. **Always think before you post.**

There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines will show posts years after the publication date. More critically, the web is viral and virtually instantaneous - comments can be forwarded worldwide in seconds. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you've posted something you wish you hadn't it's already too late to change it.

7. Maintain personal and organisational confidentiality.

Do not post confidential personal or commercial information about Curtin, its students, its alumni or your fellow employees. Posting confidential, personal or commercial information may breach legal obligations and/or University policy and procedures. Use good ethical judgment and follow [University policies](#). If situations involving individuals are discussed on a social media site, be sure that they cannot be identified. As a guideline, don't post anything that you would not repeat in person, in public, to the parties in question.

8. Respect University time and resources.

Please remember Curtin computers and your work time are to be used for University-related business, so use them within reason. It's appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing work goals such as seeking sources for information or working with others to resolve a problem. Conduct your personal business on non-Curtin machines and in your own time. See Curtin's [ICT policy manual](#) for further details.

When you are asked to represent Curtin online

Curtin has Corporate Relations and Development staff authorised to post content about the University online – please contact dmu@curtin.edu.au for assistance and advice. The University also recognises the use of social media for open dialogue and the exchange of ideas where it's beneficial for the organisation and/or individual in their work or research capacity.

Please be considerate, transparent and understand that as a Curtin employee you are representing your employer and their reputation. We appreciate your engagement in and positive use of social media on behalf of Curtin – it's critical that as employees and as an organisation we stay relevant and connected.

As well as our general guidelines, you should also consider the following.

1. Be personable.

Be honest about your identity, and speak in the first person. Be transparent about being a Curtin employee and why you are posting – simply be who you are. If you are posting content for publicity or promotional purposes, make sure you are authorised to do so and please adhere to Curtin's [Media Policy](#). Social communities don't like the hard sell and will usually spy a mole very quickly, which could have a serious detrimental impact on the reputation of the University. State why you are posting.

2. Be appropriate.

Consider the context in which you're representing Curtin. Choose your tone appropriately – don't be officious when engaging with young students or on a casual platform, and likewise be professional and businesslike where the situation requires. Social media means just that – it's about communicating with people so always post smartly. Respect and empathise with your audience.

3. Use a disclaimer.

Whenever you post ensure you make it clear this is the content you are authorised to post or the information you have to hand. Check with Curtin's [Media Policy](#) and your area supervisor when publishing content on your school or area's behalf, or in your area of expertise.

4. Be connected.

Wherever possible connect with other Curtin content, sites or postings. Always reference the source. If you are authorised to create new groups, blogs or sites, always use Curtin corporate logos and materials – contact your marketing representative for guidance and materials.

5. Be committed.

Successfully engaging in social media is no one time deal – to engage with and build a network or following you need to be committed to regularly posting fresh content. Colleagues or followers will quickly move on to find new value unless you post on a regular basis, which varies depending on the platform from monthly, weekly, daily to even hourly with status updates, and the expectations of your audience. Dead end content may actually have a detrimental effect on your professional and personal online profile.

6. Ensure continuity.

Social networks, groups, communities, blogs and forums need continuity to be effective. Unlike advertising or print, social media is not a release and forget platform, it requires two way interaction, open dialogue and continuous fresh content. Ensure you not only have a plan for when to begin engaging, but when to handover to other colleagues or areas, and when and how to leave a community, thread or group. Don't leave a community untended as it may indicate a lack of commitment to the other users or members and reflect badly on Curtin.

7. Be active and add value.

If you participate in a social network, join a Facebook group, use Twitter or comment on someone's blog or forum, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. By publishing as a Curtin staff member, you represent Curtin's brand and reputation, so be innovative and insightful whenever you can. Ask yourself if your posts will be of interests to readers. Self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from Web sites or groups. For authenticity and credibility, monitor your comments, delete spam and abusive posts, and build your networks and communities in a way that complements your online and offline profile. By all means link to Curtin where appropriate.

8. Reference your work.

Always provide links or references when posting content. Don't breach copyright laws, abide by [creative commons](#) licences, and obtain consent when citing colleagues or organisational links when reposting content. In particular, ensure any music or academic content contained within audio and video files has permissions to be published.

9. Think about your customers.

If responding to blog posts, comments or Tweets, as a communicator remember you're also a customer service officer. How will your interaction reflect on Curtin? Consider your own online exchanges and purchases and act as you yourself would expect to be spoken to by a company. Be personable, relaxed and friendly, as appropriate to the channel or site you're communicating on.

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