Social Media Guidelines

Document summary

Effective date	July 2025	**Last updated**	October 2024
Document owner	Communication and Marketing Department (CMD)		
Approved by	CMD	**Reviewed by**	
Enquiries	Manisha Govender		

Revision

This is a living document that will be updated as required.

Version	Revision Type	Amendments	Approved by	Signed	Review date

Table of contents

Purpose 2
Introduction 2
Definitions 2
Applicable to 2
Guidelines details 2
1. Social Media Accounts 2
2. Social Media Account Manager and Practitioner Posts 3
3. Inclusivity 4
4. Editorial guidelines (text) 4
5. Media 5
6. Monitoring and Analysing Performance Metrics (General) 5
7. Monitoring and Analysing Performance Metrics (Platform-Specific) 6
Related links 7

Purpose

These guidelines contain recommendations to

- support and guide the use of social media platforms to benefit the university
- optimise, monitor and measure engagement with Users
- ensure consistency in Social Media Content style and quality

Please note: This document must be read in conjunction with the Social Media Policy and the Social Media Standards.

Introduction

Vision 2030 should inform all aspects of the university's operations to help build a positive image of UCT as a leading institution. Vision 2030's core values, and especially the three core pillars of excellence, transformation, and sustainability, should shape and guide the content produced for social media dissemination and for engagement with users on the respective platforms.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Appropriate Social Media Content	Social Media Content complying with the stipulations of the Social Media Policy
Digital Presence	Comprises Websites, Social Media sites and Accounts, including their Digital Content, and the Digital Content on UCT Web Applications, mobile apps, chatbots, and other internet-enabled products and services, etc., whether hosted internally or externally to UCT
Social Media Content	Without limitation, written; verbal; pictorial; photographic; video; and similar or associated content placed on UCT Social Media Platforms; includes direct messages and private posts
Users	The audience of UCT's Social Media Accounts; the consumers of the content on such accounts

Applicable to

The guidelines are applicable to all Social Media Content on UCT Social Media Accounts and sites. We recommend that they be followed and implemented by all Social Media Account Managers and Social Media Practitioners.

Guidelines details

1. **Social Media Accounts**

1.1. There should be a strategy behind the use of Social Media Accounts and posts.

1.1.1. Formulate what you want to achieve and how you will measure success before creating the account.

1.1.2. Clearly identify your audience and what you want or need to communicate.

1.1.3. Use each platform's tools to gauge performance and refine your strategy.

1.2. Social Media Crises

1.2.1. Account Managers should learn to identify and manage potential crises that could stem from the following:

1.2.1.1. Misinformation

1.2.1.2. Negative publicity

1.2.1.3. Security breaches

1.2.1.4. Controversial incidents involving members of the UCT community

1.2.2. Reach out to CMD proactively to learn how to manage crises and for assistance to formulate a plan to deal with them.

2. Social Media Account Manager and Practitioner Posts

2.1. Recognise and amplify user-generated content that aligns with UCT's values and initiatives.

2.2. Use a respectful and professional tone in all interactions, avoiding slang or overly casual language.

2.3. Consider whether your audience is internal or external. Understand your target audience's interests, preferences, and platforms. Tailor content to resonate with specific groups, such as students, alumni, or prospective students.

2.4. Showcase student and staff accomplishments and research breakthroughs.

2.5. Use a variety of content types, including text, images, videos, and infographics, to keep the audience engaged.

2.6. Encourage active participation through polls, Q&A sessions, live events, and interactive posts.

2.7. Link to detailed information on original, authoritative sources such as UCT websites where possible and if required.

2.7.1. Link to documents at their original locations.

2.8. Use shortened URLs only when necessary, such as to comply with character limits in a post.

2.8.1. Shortened URLs obscure their destinations. This can be exploited by criminals to direct users to harmful sites. To ensure users are aware of where links will lead, it is advisable to use the full, actual URLs instead.

2.9. Consider supporting other UCT Social Media Accounts by cross-linking and reposting relevant content.

2.10. Post frequency and timing

2.10.1. Develop a content calendar: Create a structured plan outlining post topics, formats, scheduling, and goals. This ensures consistency and aligns content with broader objectives.

2.10.2. Use scheduling tools: Employ platform-specific tools to automate posting in advance on the respective social media platform to maintain a steady flow of content.

2.10.3. Analyse audience insights: Leverage platform analytics to identify optimal posting times, audience demographics, and content preferences. Monitor engagement metrics to refine and optimise posting frequency and timing.

2.10.4. Establish a posting cadence: Aim for 3-5 posts per week to sustain audience engagement. Regular posting preserves the momentum of UCT's online presence, ensuring that the institution remains prominently featured in the minds of its followers and bolstering the likelihood of content dissemination and engagement.

2.10.5. Adapt to trends and events: Be responsive to current events and trending topics, adjusting the content and posting schedule as needed to remain relevant.

2.10.6. Monitor and refine: Regularly track key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the effectiveness of posting strategies. Use the insights provided to adjust frequency, timing, and content.

3. Inclusivity

3.1. Be mindful of language choices to avoid stereotypes, biases, and discrimination. Use inclusive language that respects diversity and promotes equality.

3.2. Avoid using images of UCT's Upper Campus or other spots that highlight colonial history. Instead, focus on pictures of people or capture parts of the buildings in a way that shifts or challenges the original colonial context.

4. Editorial guidelines (text)

See the CMD Editorial Style Guide for additional guidance and information.

4.1. General

4.1.1. South African English should be used.

4.1.1.1. For guidance, refer to the Oxford South African Concise Dictionary.

4.1.2. Evaluate whether your choice of words, punctuation, capitalisation, and style enhances clarity and readability for the reader.

4.2. Abbreviations

4.2.1. Abbreviated academic and general titles should not have full stops.
E.g.
- Prof, Dr, Mr, Mrs, Mx

4.3. Dates and time

4.3.1. Write out dates rather than using DD/MM/YYYY (South African format), to avoid confusing international users.
E.g.
- 4 April 2016 (**not** 4th April 2024 **or** the 4th of April 2024)

4.3.2. Use digital 24-hour time, with a colon rather than a full stop or an "h".
E.g.
- 09:00 (**not** 9 AM **or** 09h00)

4.3.2.1. Where the time provided is relevant to an international audience, it should be indicated that it is South African Standard Time (SAST).

4.4. Spelling

4.4.1. Academic degrees

4.4.1.1. Write levels of study as follows: bachelor's degree, honours degree, master's degree, postgraduate degree/diploma, doctoral degree.

4.4.2. The word "email" should be written without a hyphen ("e-mail").

4.4.3. Both "undergraduate" and "postgraduate" should be written as one word.

4.4.4. Titles of works

4.4.4.1. Title case (except for articles, conjunctions, and prepositions) and italics should be used for the titles of works of fact, fiction, or art.
E.g. *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* was created by Hokusai.

4.4.4.2. Quotation marks should be used for the titles of lectures, MOOCs, workshops, conferences, book chapters, academic articles, unpublished manuscripts, speeches, and theses.

4.5. Telephone numbers

4.5.1. International codes should be used unless the call is specifically local, such as the emergency services.
E.g.
- +27 (0)21 685 3328

5. Media

5.1. Images

5.1.1. Consult the social media platforms' guidelines for images.

5.2. Live streaming

5.2.1. Strive for high quality visuals and audio, with minimal background noise.

5.2.2. Conduct a technical rehearsal to ensure that hardware and software are functioning correctly.

5.2.3. Have backup equipment and a contingency plan to handle technical issues.

5.2.4. Have a procedure in place to handle emergencies or unexpected interruptions during the live stream.
E.g.
Temporarily changing the image or moving the camera away

5.2.5. Promptly inform the live stream audience of any emergencies or changes of plan, e.g. rescheduling.

6. Monitoring and Analysing Performance Metrics (General)

6.1. Engagement metrics

6.1.1. Likes, Shares, Comments, and Reactions

6.1.1.1. These metrics indicate how your audience is interacting with your content. High engagement levels generally suggest that your content is resonating well with your audience.

6.1.2. Engagement Rate

6.1.2.1. This is the ratio of total engagement (likes, comments, shares) to the number of followers, providing a clearer picture of content performance relative to audience size.

6.2. Reach and Impressions

6.2.1. Reach

6.2.1.1. The number of unique users who have seen your content. This metric helps you understand the breadth of your content's visibility.

6.2.2. Impressions

6.2.2.1. The total number of times your content has been displayed. Multiple impressions per user can indicate strong content visibility but need to be balanced with engagement metrics to assess effectiveness.

6.3. Click-Through Rate (CTR)

6.3.1. The ratio of users who click on a link or call-to-action (CTA) within your post to the number of users who view the post. A high CTR indicates effective content that drives audience action.

6.4. Follower Growth

6.4.1. Tracking the increase in your follower count over time helps assess the growth of your audience and the effectiveness of your content in attracting new users.

6.5. Sentiment Analysis

6.5.1. The tone of the comments and reactions to your content (positive, negative, neutral). Understanding sentiment helps gauge the overall perception of your brand and content.

7. Monitoring and Analysing Performance Metrics (Platform-Specific)

7.1. Facebook

7.1.1. Page Likes and Follows: Track the number of users who like and follow your page to understand audience growth.

7.1.2. Post Reach and Engagement: Monitor reach and engagement for individual posts to identify top-performing content.

7.1.3. Video Metrics: View metrics such as video views, average watch time, and engagement with video content.

7.1.4. Facebook Insights: Use Facebook's built-in analytics tool to get detailed reports on page performance, audience demographics, and content effectiveness.

7.2. X

7.2.1. X Impressions and Engagements: Track how many times your tweets are seen and how users interact with them.

7.2.2. Retweets, Likes, and Replies: Measure engagement with your tweets through retweets, likes, and replies.

7.2.3. Follower Growth: Monitor the increase in your Twitter followers over time.

7.2.4. XAnalytics: Use Twitter's analytics dashboard to get insights into tweet performance, audience interests, and demographics.

7.3. Instagram

7.3.1. Post Engagement: Track likes, comments, and shares on your posts.

7.3.2. Story Metrics: Monitor views, replies, and swipe-ups for Instagram Stories.

7.3.3. Follower Growth: Keep an eye on the increase in your Instagram followers.

7.3.4. Instagram Insights: Leverage Instagram's analytics tool to analyse post-performance, audience demographics, and activity times.

7.4. LinkedIn

7.4.1. Post Impressions and Engagement: Measure the number of times your posts are seen and how users engage with them.

7.4.2. Follower Growth: Track the increase in followers on your LinkedIn page.

7.4.3. Company Page Analytics: Use LinkedIn's analytics to get detailed insights into post-performance, audience demographics, and engagement metrics.

7.5. YouTube

7.5.1. Video Views and Watch Time: Monitor how many times your videos are viewed and the total watch time.

7.5.2. Engagement Metrics: Track likes, comments, shares, and subscriber growth.

7.5.3. Audience Retention: Measure how long viewers watch your videos on average.

7.5.4. YouTube Analytics: Use YouTube's analytics to gain insights into video performance, audience demographics, and traffic sources.

8. Monitoring and Analysis Tools
    8.1. Social Media Management Tools
        8.1.1. Tools like Hootsuite, Buffer, and Sprout Social provide analytics across multiple platforms. The analytics available on the free versions is limited and the paid for versions offer more comprehensive statistics.
    8.2. Platform-Specific Analytics
        8.2.1. Use built-in analytics tools on each platform for detailed performance metrics.
    8.3. Google Analytics
        8.3.1. Track website traffic from social media channels to measure the effectiveness of your social media campaigns in driving website visits and conversions.

Related links

- Digital Presence Governance Framework (ratification process underway)
- Digital Presence Policy (ratification process underway)
- Digital Presence Standards
- Digital Presence Guidelines
- Social Media Policy (ratification process underway)
- Social Media Standards
- Disability Policy
- Transformation Plans and Policies
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0
- CMD Editorial Style Guide