



## Best Practice Guide - Social Media

Social media allows us to publish, share, converse, network and bookmark – meaning we can expand the reach of our work and enable others to share it with friend and within their communities. AECC University College staff should be able to enjoy the benefits of social networking whilst understanding and maintaining the standards of conduct expected by the institution, which apply online as they do offline.

We encourage staff members to interact on social media as individuals, to let us know what you're currently working on, to engage in conversation, to join in the successes of the institution, and to help share our work and news. Please keep in mind you are representing AECC University College when using these online channels.

**All new social media platforms and pages should be in consultation with the Marketing team.**

### Getting Started

There are a number of social media platforms and tools available, but which is the most appropriate for you or your team? Our short guide to getting started will explain how to evaluate the most effective channel for you and your target audience.

#### 1. Secure approval and coordinate responsibility

To gain a successful social media presence, firstly you should secure the approval of the Head of Marketing and your Head of School or Manager, as appropriate. You will need to identify a coordinator who will have the primary responsibility for maintaining and monitoring your profile or page.

It's important to make sure the designated coordinator has the available time and enthusiasm to dedicate to the project. Checking of your social media profile or page should be carried out daily, but this does not have to take up a significant amount of time. It is also a good idea to have someone assigned and trained in social media as a back-up, to cover leave, and to make sure they have the passwords to gain access to the accounts.

Social media platforms are most successful when they are populated and updated frequently, with timely content and responses to questions or queries. Should your social media account be judged not to be managed in line with the Marketing team's

expectations, the Marketing team hold the right to ask you to suspend the social media account.

## **2. Have a specific aim**

Determine what you wish to achieve from creating a social media account. Are you trying to create a platform or forum for new students, wishing to communicate with alumni, or generally want to promote your School?

Having a clear understanding of what you wish to accomplish, with whom you wish to engage, and what type of content you wish to share, and researching the best tool/s to create and generate content will help you identify how best to reach your target audience. The Digital Marketing Manager can help measure the success of your social media presence – but you can also track your success with various metric tools online. The more work you do prior to creating an account, the more likely you are to create a successful social media presence.

## **3. Understand the platform**

Every social media platform has their own style and requirements. You can learn how these communities work, and what type of content is of more interest to your target audience, by ‘listening’ and spending a good amount of time on the platform before you dive straight in. This step is crucial to helping you plan what value you can add.

## **4. Choose the tool for you**

After understanding various platforms, you will then be able to make a choice on which social media tool best suits your needs and aims.

You may find that the short, 140-character bursts of Twitter match with your goals. You may have a strong selection of video and image content and a well-developed community following that would best be suited to a Facebook group or page.

Don't try all social media channels at once. A single well-defined and focused social media tool is better than several poor platforms that lack substance and engagement. It's also a good idea to check if your team or School already has a social media presence – perhaps there are accounts which have previously been created but are no longer maintained. Evaluate whether these can be used or whether they should/could be deactivated.

If you're still unsure as to which platform or tool would best suit your needs, feel free to contact the Marketing team for advice.

## **5. Have a content plan**

The best social media platforms are not those that are sporadic with content. It's recommended that you plan in advance what you're going to communicate and share online. Plan your content around a mix of things you need to promote, what your audience wants to hear, and what they may be talking about at different times of the year. It's often good to ‘piggy-back’ on current trends or events, but be careful and assess whether the trend (or hashtag for example) is relevant to your message and

overall goal. A good mix of messages, engagement, and varied multimedia content keeps your social platform looking active and appealing.

## **6. Creating your social media account**

When creating your social media profile or page, choose a name that clearly identifies your School or team and its connection to the University College. It is essential you run the name past the Marketing team for approval. There are some naming conventions in place and the Marketing team will be able to assist with the choice. For example, some Twitter accounts already running are named as follows:

AECCSchoolHWP – School of Health, Wellbeing and Performance  
AECCLS – Learning Services team

Make sure you connect with the primary social media accounts for AECC University College, as this means we can support you, engage, and share your content. Please follow the University College brand guidelines when it comes to social media avatars, icons and header imagery. If you're unsure of what to use, contact the Marketing team for advice.

Have the profile or page up and running well before you plan to 'officially' launch it – to ensure you're confident in maintaining and managing the account.

## **7. Launch**

Once your social media platform or page has been created and you've populated it with content for a while, then you are ready to 'launch' your new presence. You can update your sections of the website with your new social media handles and add these to your personal email signatures. Don't forget to alert the Marketing team about your activity so we can help extend your reach.

Also, you can notify others of your social media presence by connecting with accounts who have similar interests – one of the most effective ways to do this is by linking to sites and accounts from your platform, and mentioning them in your posts.

## **8. Evaluate**

Once your page or platform is running, you will find that some of your content performs well and other posts receive less engagement. Utilise social media tracking tools to see which posts are viewed and shared most, which generate comments, likes, retweets etc. Be prepared to adjust your content plan in response to who is engaging with your platform. It's also beneficial to read up about social media algorithms and best posting times, to make sure your content is reaching its maximum potential.

## Social Media Platforms at AECC University College

### Twitter

Twitter is an online news and social networking service where users post and interact with messages, 'tweets', restricted to 140 characters, as well as being able to share links to videos, websites, articles and post photos, videos and gifs (animated images) of potential interest to others. 'Tweets' of other users can be 'retweeted' to your own timeline, or 'liked' by starring the tweet.

Through our [@AECCUniversityC](#) account, AECC University College provides news, press releases, events, and important announcements to the local community and beyond. This is the official Twitter channel.

### Academic Schools

AECC University College's School of Health, Wellbeing Performance is currently our only academic school on Twitter, and is managed by the Head of School. [@AECCSchoolHWP](#)

### Professional Services Teams

Learning Services manage their own Twitter account. [@AECCLS](#)

### Students

[@AECCSU](#) is managed by the Students' Union.

### Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website intended to connect friends, family and business associates. It allows you to share articles, photos, videos and send text-based posts. There's also functions to create groups and events, and to manage business pages.

AECC University College's Facebook page ([facebook.com/AECCUniversityCollege](https://facebook.com/AECCUniversityCollege)) is a public page where news, press releases, updates, events and community engagement posts are published. Since October 2016, the Facebook page has grown its followers with a 46% increase of 'likes' to the page.

The page is regularly updated by members of the Marketing team, and questions and queries are responded to in a timely manner.

Alumni can keep in touch and catch up on news and information at our dedicated Alumni page ([facebook.com/AECCUniversityCollegeAlumni](https://facebook.com/AECCUniversityCollegeAlumni)). We also encourage visitor posts from those offering job opportunities for our Alumni.

A Facebook page for AECC University College Chiropractic Clinic is also managed by the Marketing department with a focus on patients related and community content. ([facebook.com/AECCUniversityCollegeChiroClinic](https://facebook.com/AECCUniversityCollegeChiroClinic))

## Instagram

Instagram is a primarily mobile photo and video-sharing and social networking service. Instagram users can take photos and videos, apply effects, create live video content and 'stories' and share them across other social media platforms.

[@AECCUniversityCollege](#) Instagram is used to share photos of campus life and Bournemouth lifestyle, to showcase events, and to communicate important announcements. The platform is particularly popular with our current and prospective students and therefore is a key social media platform for student related content.

[@AECCSU](#) is the Students' Union Instagram and is managed by the Students' Union reps.

## YouTube

YouTube allows billions of people to discover, watch and share original video content. Providing a forum for people to connect, inform and inspire others across the globe, YouTube acts as a distribution platform for original content creators to produce videos which can be cross-shared across other social media platforms.

Our YouTube channel ([youtube.com/AECCchiropractic](https://youtube.com/AECCchiropractic)) publishes video content and collects our own video content into playlists. Video content is regarded very highly in terms of engagement. Our video content should be on-brand and in the University College style.

## LinkedIn

LinkedIn is an online networking community for business people. We strongly recommend that AECC University College staff join LinkedIn – it's a great way to connect with your colleagues and your place of work. There are over 100 million registered users, including AECC University College academic and professional services staff, alumni and current students.

The AECC University College's [LinkedIn profile](#) is managed by the Head of Marketing.

## Guidelines

These guidelines apply to all staff using University College social media channels, or channels in relation to the University College. AECC University College reserves the right to take appropriate action if staff members publish content that does not adhere to the content of this document. Please remember staff are reminded that they are expected to operate within the law, and both the University College Code of Conduct and policy framework in their interactions with social media, just as much as in all other aspects of their working life. The below policies and guidelines are of particular importance and can be accessed on the Staff Information Portal.

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Appendix 34 Communications Policy
- Human Resources Strategy
- Marketing and Communications Strategy
- Email Policy
- Computer Use Regulations

Staff should...	Staff should not...
Use social media where it offers value to students, staff, patients, colleagues or clients.	Avoid publishing material that is liable to cause offence, including pornographic material or abusive language.
Only offer advice, support or comment on topics that are within your area of expertise or responsibility as a University College employee.	Avoid publishing material that could be described as harassment or bullying.
Be aware of the varied nature of potential readership – which may include potential, current or past students, colleagues or research/business partners.	Avoid publishing material that could be considered defamatory, or that breaches copyright law.
Be transparent – make sure that your official channel is obviously official, and that readers/correspondents are in no doubt that the author of the content is an employee of AECC University College.	Avoid publishing material that discriminates on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political or religious belief or contravenes the University College's Equality and Diversity Policy.
Keep work and personal/official social media accounts and profiles separate.	Do not publish material that reveals information which is confidential to the University College or which is not in the public domain – consult your line manager if you are unsure.
Exercise good judgement when entering any debates or offering opinions – be restrained when interacting with, and responding to, potentially contentious posts on social media sites.	Do not publish material which reveals personal information about a staff member, student, client, patient or other (data, contact details, photographs) without their consent.
Take effective precautions when utilising social networking sites to ensure your own personal safety and to protect against identity theft.	That damages the reputation of AECC University College. Consult your line manager if you are unsure whether content is appropriate.
Manage login and account information responsibly. Whilst there will need to be different models for different sites and teams, share social media account information where appropriate and keep individual account information private.	Take precaution when mentioning AECC University College from personal/unofficial social media accounts.  Comments made by staff concerning University College activities or business

	<p>using their unofficial/personal social media channels may be considered subject to the guidelines above for official channels particularly if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The member of staff is clearly identified as being a member of AECC University College staff in the conversation, channel title or their profile information.</li> <li>- Any claims are made to be speaking in a professional capacity or on behalf of AECC University College.</li> </ul>
<p>Inform the Communications Officer if you receive a press query or a request to interview, which relates to AECC University College.</p>	<p>Do not use the University College's name, logos or branding elements in personal or unofficial channels.</p> <p>If you wish to make it known you are an employee of AECC University College, please add a disclaimer where appropriate, such as 'the views contained here are my personal views and do not represent the view of AECC University College.'</p>

## Best Practice Advice

### Ask For Help

Don't be afraid to ask for advice or help from our Marketing team. If you are unsure about anything related to social media, please contact [marketing@aecc.ac.uk](mailto:marketing@aecc.ac.uk) for support.

### Time Management

Endless amounts of time can be spent on social media, and not to the best effect. Limit the amount of time you spend attending to your social media presence. Make a plan of what is required in regards to posting content, traffic evaluation, and reviewing your implementation.

### Be Authoritative

Using our tone of voice, we can convey our confidence in being world leaders in musculoskeletal and health sciences. This also relates to remaining professional at all times on your social media platform – anything you post in your role as an AECC University College employee reflects on the institution. Do not engage in arguments or heated debates, but do take part in conversations which are within your field of expertise or knowledge.

### Be Honest

Transparency is key on social media. We want to be open, friendly and approachable, but to also be sure to indicate who you are and your affiliation with the University College.

### **Know Your Audience**

Be sure to research your chosen social media channel. Observe conversations on your preferred channel to maintain a clear and current understanding of what is relevant and of interest to your community. You will also be able to tap into trends and common practices.

### **Language**

Try to communicate in the AECC University College tone of voice. Avoid using abbreviations and jargon.

### **Commit to the project**

If you do not have the time or resource to check and manage your social media profiles at least a few minutes every day, and to post fresh, engaging content several times a week, you may want to reconsider using social media at this time.

### **Be Responsive**

Social media is exactly that – sharing information almost instantly with a global audience. The timeliness of social media is also an expectation of your audiences. Be prepared to respond quickly to new developments, announcements, or emergencies with relevant information. If you don't know the answer to someone's question, let them know you've forwarded their request to the relevant person and will get back to them shortly.

### **Think Before You Post**

Remember that anything you share within social media, even within a closed network, is not totally private. It can, and will, be shared, stored and spread globally. Avoid posting anything online you wouldn't feel comfortable seeing on AECC University College's homepage.

### **Quality Not Quantity**

Avoid over posting of content. Try to average around three posts a day and ensure they are spread out over the course of several hours. Twitter is more transient in nature and content has a short lifespan, so it's an option to repurpose content, but this option should only be carried out with certain types of content. For example, you can use 'ICYMI' (In Case You've Missed It) but this should be used sparingly.

### **Check the Facts**

Make sure your communication is accurate. Don't post information until you have verified the facts, as disinformation can have a greater negative impact than delayed information.

### **Be Informative**

Sharing information that is of interest to your readers and viewers is often something you will do more than sharing news and successes. Don't just talk about your specific course, team, or area – share information from other trusted sources outside of the University College. This will increase the value of your social media presence and also drive traffic to your platform.

### **Respond!**

Social media platforms without comments or conversation are not very social. Be prepared to accept and respond to comments. Not all comments will be positive, but we should respond

to all comments in a professional manner. Provide more information that may help resolve an issue. In cases where you feel uneasy or not sure how to respond to negative conversation or comment, other AECC University College staff may be able to provide a suitable response: For example, where a defamatory comment was made about the effects of chiropractic treatment, the Director of Research responded with a positive, evidence and fact-based response. Do not engage with comments or messages that damage the reputation of AECC University College.

### **Separate Personal and Professional Accounts**

Balancing your professional and personal social media presences can be tricky. Keep these two presences as separate as possible by keeping content about your personal opinions on your personal page.

### **Positive reasons to use social media**

Social media provides a worldwide audience – potential students, current students, staff, alumni, patients, referrers can all be reached through social media.

Social media allows us to share news and information from across AECC University College and more importantly allows us to hear directly and immediately from stakeholders about what is important to them.

Social media can provide a cost effective way of reaching your target audience.

Social media can provide market research in terms of what students are saying about us, what our competition is doing, and other information that is readily available on the internet.