

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

FOR INSTITUTIONS



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GUIDELINES FOR INSTITUTIONS AT RUHR-UNIVERSITÄT BOCHUM

As an institute on Instagram, as an administrative unit on Facebook or as a faculty on Twitter: these guidelines have been drawn up to ensure your institution at Ruhr-Universität is thoroughly informed and ready to participate in social media. Here, you will find non-binding recommendations, university guidelines and legal information on how to use social media. The guidelines thus help avoid mistakes as much as possible and help communicate a consistent image of RUB.

Please note: even if a potentially very high reach can be achieved via social media sites, a university's essential information must always be published on its websites first. This is because public institutions are obliged to make their information easily accessible without any access restrictions. Moreover, the high reliability and credibility of official university websites in the public perception must not be underestimated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THIS SHOULD BE DONE BEFORE SETTING UP A SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT:

Before you set up a social media account, you should draw up a concept that answers the following questions:

- Which target group do you want to reach with which content?
- Why do you want to set up your own social media presence for this purpose? Or could existing channels such as your own lectures or seminars, websites, flyers, posters or newsletters, central RUB services such as social media sites, the news portal or press releases fulfil this purpose? Remember that any essential information must always be published outside social media first.
- Which social media channel is best suited to address your target group and your topics? The services differ in terms of functionality, direction of communication, reach and media (text, image, video).
- Do you have enough topics to post continuously? TIP: Draw up an editorial plan template for several weeks in which you also allow for daily updated content.
- Check personnel and financial resources: Who would be responsible for which tasks? Who would receive which authorisations and how much time would the continuous management of the social media account take?
- The person responsible for the content of the social media account, the so-called provider, must be named in an easily accessible legal notice.
- Is there a budget for potential ad placements, which could, for example, ensure a significantly higher reach on Facebook?
- Before you set up your website, contact the RUB social media team for advice! Here you can also verify the rights to use the university's logo or brand (see university guidelines).

This should be taken into account when managing a social media account:

- Social media accounts live from the interaction with users. Encourage it by activating the news and comment features of the site. Respond to comments and answer questions as quickly as possible within 24 hours on weekdays.
- It is important to continuously maintain the site, for example by posting articles regularly. It can be helpful to draw up an editorial plan.
- Follow other RUB social media accounts with your social media account by liking, following or subscribing to them, depending on the platform. Most importantly, follow central RUB sites, in order to keep track of their topics and ideally share content or quote each other.
- When choosing your topics you should be creative, keep your target group and their interests in mind and look for interesting suggestions. When publishing and distributing external content, please respect applicable copyright laws. When publishing photos or videos showing people, the law on one's own image applies (see applicable law).
- On social media sites, advice on studying or working at RUB and on topics related to studying or working at RUB should only be given in general terms. Once personal matters are concerned, individual concerns are discussed and personal content and data are communicated, advice has to be provided by email, phone or in personal interviews.
- Exam information and information on a student's performance are never communicated via social media, but by phone, email or in personal interviews. Intentional business-damaging or reputation-damaging statements, threats, insults and advertising for third parties are prohibited.
- Your content should be phrased with your target group in mind and never sound patronising. Irony, satire or sarcasm should be handled with care, as they can easily be misunderstood.
- It is helpful to publish a netiquette, a collection of rules of conduct, on the respective social media site, to which you can refer users when dealing with critical posts or comments (see template for netiquette).

CRITICAL COMMENTS, HATE POSTINGS, SHITSTORM: WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE'S TROUBLE?

While interaction with the users is what makes social media so attractive, it can sometimes lead to difficult situations. Feel free to contact the RUB social media team with questions about problematic posts or comments. General recommendations are:

- Illegal content (for example, copyright infringements or violations of the right to one's own image as well as insults) should be deleted immediately. Legally, there is initially no obligation to monitor or proactively control the comments or publications of third parties on your own social media account. However, once a user reports a violation to the owner of a social media account, the owner is officially informed of that violation. The infringement should then be deleted as soon as possible in accordance with the so-called "notice and takedown" principle.
- In order to avoid conflicts, it is recommended to inform the user whose content has been deleted. This is not necessary for instances such as trolling or obvious spam.
- Advertising and dubious appeals should also be deleted immediately. In some cases it makes sense to inform the respective user why their post has been deleted in order to prevent reposting.
- Posts in which your institution is criticised should not be deleted, but answered objectively or left without comment.
- In some cases, you can respond best to provocations, abusive language or accusations by ignoring them in order to "starve" the respective author. Mostly, however, it is recommended to respond with objective arguments, to ask follow-up questions and to refer to the netiquette. If that netiquette is violated, you should – in successive escalation stages – warn, delete the contents, report the author and possibly even block them.
- It is recommended to take a screenshot before deleting a post so that you can document your course of action if necessary.
- You should clear up any misunderstandings as quickly as possible. Misinformation should never be deleted without comment, but always corrected transparently.

ONLINE, TOO, WE ARE RUB UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES

We wish to promote a consistent image of Ruhr-Universität Bochum and to use the synergies generated by our various social media accounts. We also want to avoid conflicts regarding content or strategy between employees within the RUB. This is why we ask you to adhere to the following university guidelines.

- Central social media presence is managed by the social media team at the Corporate Communications Department. Here, information is published on behalf of the university management. The topics are selected by the editorial staff at the Corporate Communications Department.
- The decentralised institutions are responsible for the management of decentralised social media content. Here, information is not published on behalf of the university management, but on behalf of the decentralised institution that manages the respective account. The central social media team acts exclusively in an advisory capacity and is not liable for decentralised social media activities.
- As a general rule, central and decentralised social media sites belong to the university and may only be set up, designed, passed on or deleted with the consent of the head of the institution.

- It is recommended that several (ideally three) employees have administrative rights to cover for each other in case of absence. This is particularly important in the event of a crisis. In addition, countermeasures can thus be taken if an administrator's account is hacked.
- When an administrator leaves the institution, they are obliged to relinquish the administration rights. If an account is not administered via admin rights, the password for the account must be changed when an employee leaves. Their supervisor must be able to access the account in an emergency.
- If a decentralised social media presence is being considered, the RUB's social media team must be informed of this fact in order to assess possible synergies and the use of trademarked terms.
- All research institutions as well as engineering and administrative departments at Ruhr-Universität are obliged to use the RUB's corporate design in social media:
 - ▶ **NAME:** In many social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram you have to choose a username (e.g. @ruhrunibochum) that is displayed when your account is mentioned or tagged. This name may only contain the name of the university if your institution is incorporated into the university. Please try to keep the name as short and concise as possible, but still understandable for outsiders. TIP: As the audience in social media networks is very international, we advise against using the abbreviation "RUB" in the username.
 - ▶ **PROFILE PICTURE:** Since profile pictures are displayed in the round format on all major social media sites, we do not use the square RUB logo, but a photo of the logo at Musisches Zentrum. Please reach out by email to: socialmedia@uv.rub.de. We will send you the profile picture.
 - ▶ **COVER PHOTO:** You are free to choose your own title image. The corporate advertising of the RUB provides six pictures that can be downloaded at the RUB's social media website.
- All employees who manage a social media account should also read the Social Media Guidelines for Employees!
- Using social media for official purposes during working hours
 - ▶ is approved by the university management as a general rule, but must also be approved by the respective employee's superior,
 - ▶ is voluntary, unless social media management is explicitly part of the job description.
- Setting up and managing an official social media account
 - ▶ has to be approved by the respective employee's superior,
 - ▶ is voluntary, unless social media management is explicitly part of the job description.

CAN EVERYONE DO WHAT THEY LIKE?

APPLICABLE LAW IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is not a lawless space. You should familiarise yourself with the relevant legal regulations with regard to photos and videos as well as for dealing with other users' content on your social media platform. This list includes the most important laws as well as helpful advice and examples. Please note that we can only provide an overview at this point. Like many areas of the digital space, the legal system is also subject to constant change and is constantly becoming more and more complex.

Still, if you are aware of the existence of the following legal framework and keep it in mind, you will be well equipped to navigate social networks safely.

LAW: The speech law regulates the admissibility of (public) statements. A lot falls under freedom of speech from Article 5 Basic Law (GG). However, untrue factual statements, insults and so-called abusive criticism are prohibited.

EXAMPLE: A user writes in a comment under a post about a researcher: "This smart-arse steals from others, like all humanities scholars. Frauds, the lot of them." This comment contains both elements of untrue factual allegations and insults. It should therefore be hidden, and the user should be informed about the violation and the site's netiquette.

LAW: The State Data Protection Act (LDSG) contains regulations for the collection, storage and processing of personal data.

EXAMPLE: Social media plugins on websites are small buttons with the symbols of the respective platforms, including Facebook and Twitter. If you click on them, you can share the link of the website in the respective network, for example. However, simply by embedding the plugins on a website, the respective platform can track who is browsing the website, even if the person does not click on the plugin. Therefore, the use of plugins is not recommended.

LAW: The Art Copyright Act (Kunsturhebergesetz, KunstUrhG) governs the right to one's own image. Apart from a few specific exceptions (pictures of public meetings, public figures or pictures in which people are not in the focus), the consent of the individual is required prior to publication.

TIP: Have the people you photograph for social media sign a consent form. You can ask the RUB photo department (www.rub.de/bilder) for a template.

LAW: The Copyright Act (UrhG) regulates the protection of texts, images, audio and video content (so-called works). In most cases, the publication or distribution of such works is only permitted with the consent of the respective copyright holder.

TIP: Ask the creator of each work whether you may use it on social media. In any case, you must include the full name of the author directly at the work. It is not necessary to use the © symbol. For Creative Commons licenses, you can read up on the definition of the licenses here: <https://de.creativecommons.org/index.php/was-ist-cc>.

LAW: The Trademark Act (MarkenG) contains regulations for the protection of names and logos.

EXAMPLE: Nobody may claim to belong to Ruhr-Universität Bochum or use it for advertising purposes unless they are actually a RUB member. The use of the RUB logo is not permitted without restriction, either. (See university guidelines)

LAW: An individual's employment status also determines which legal regulations apply. This applies in particular to confidentiality / official secrecy.

TIP: It is prohibited to discuss sensitive topics like an institute's research projects or the finances of your own department in social media in any way, let alone communicate them in public.

LAW: Please always observe the general terms and conditions, terms of use and guidelines issued by the hosts of the respective social media platform. Most common elements include:

1. Provisions on limitations of liability of the portal and the liability of the user.

EXAMPLE: Anyone who sets up a fan page on Facebook can be held liable for the content on the page. Comments or posts that violate applicable law and are reported to the page must therefore be deleted by the owner of the Facebook page.

2. The host has licenses granted for user-generated content; as a result, the user may have no influence whatsoever on the use of the data provided and the profile data generated through usage.

EXAMPLE: Content such as photos and videos can be shared and downloaded by social network users at their own discretion. We therefore recommend to consistently state the copyrights of the respective contents in order to indicate authorship in case of doubt.

3. In their terms of use, many hosts list specific requirements for competitions or contests on the respective portal. These must be observed in order to avoid problems with the host (caution or even blocking of the social media account).

TIP: Conditions of participation are an indispensable element in competitions. We are happy to help you set them up or create templates on request.

4. The host is not obliged to maintain their service permanently.

TIP: As Facebook, Twitter and Co. may delete themselves at any time or become temporarily unavailable, your communication should never be conducted exclusively via these channels.

5. The host determines law and jurisdiction; these may be outside the German legal domain.

EXAMPLE: Most social networks such as Facebook (which includes Instagram), Twitter and YouTube have their headquarters in the USA and can therefore invoke local law in certain cases, such as the storage and disclosure of data.

ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

If you have any questions or if you, as an RUB institution, would like to become active in social media, please contact the RUB social media team. We are also happy to provide advice and assistance for existing social media sites at any time:

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ANNEX NETIQUETTE (RULES OF CONDUCT)

This social media account of the institution XY wishes to enable direct communication with the users and encourages your participation. At its heart is respectful and friendly interaction. The following rules of conduct constitute the basis of communication:

- Our tone is objective, polite and respectful.
- We don't respond to provocations, and we don't insult, abuse or provoke our users.
- We delete discriminatory, unconstitutional, demagogic, illegal, pornographic, extremist, racist, vulgar, disparaging or otherwise inappropriate posts.
- We also delete advertising, spam and commercial content of third parties.
- Comments on a post should always refer to its content. Off-topic comments are not welcome.
- In order to ensure that everyone understands everything and to avoid misunderstandings, we post in German or English – and expect the same from our users.
- We comply with data protection policies: confidential contents such as addresses, telephone numbers, student registration numbers are never published or requested in social networks.
- We adhere to the general standards and terms of use of the respective social media platform.
- As RUB employees, we provide information via social media to the best of our knowledge and belief, but they aren't legally binding.
- As employees of our university, we are loyal to our employer in the social media.
- When publishing images and texts in social media, we observe the applicable copyright laws and personal rights regarding one's own image. And we expect the same from our users.