Dear Colleagues,

Communicators have important work to do on behalf of UBC. The speed at which communications now move means we must be highly effective at expressing the value we create in the world and delivering on that promise in all we communicate. The work of creating a world-renowned UBC brand depends upon a collective, tireless effort to communicate, engage and deliver exceptional experiences for all those we come into contact with each and every day.

Our goal is to ensure that UBC is well known, highly valued and deeply connected in British Columbia, Canada and around the world. Our identity is often the most immediate representation of our institution, people and brand to our many audiences. Having a strong brand guideline system allows us to tell our collective story with the power of one voice.

We appreciate your respect and collaboration in maintaining UBC’s brand guidelines. We hope this site and guide are helpful for you. I thank all of you for your dedication to supporting UBC.

Rick Hart
Associate Vice-President
Communications
As UBC continues to evolve as a global university, our social presence and leadership on social media channels must also evolve and respond to the fast-moving world of digital communications. Social media is a conduit to engagement — for busy communicators, it can feel like a daunting task to meaningfully invest in the myriad online conversations and communities. But that intentional investment is what sets UBC apart and is intrinsic to successfully managing and increasing quality engagement on our social channels.

Which is why we hope this guide will do some of the heavy lifting for you. Whether you are just stepping into your first communications role at UBC or looking for strategies to enhance your existing social media practice, we want to help you create smart, succinct content that achieves your strategic goals.
SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

STRATEGY
Start with the end in mind

If you are considering setting up a social media account, think about the goals you want to achieve then strategically, step by step, imagine how social media will help you achieve them. You might find when you consider the work and commitment involved to build a community, that partnering with an existing UBC social media strategist would help you reach your objectives more efficiently.

For example, you could work with partners who already have reach, influence and established communities. At UBC, that means thinking of other units or departments who you might have things in common with, looking at overlap between desired audience, and building partnerships and collaborating to get your content on their channels. If you’re a small research unit in the Faculty of Arts, you might be better off working with Arts Communications to get your announcement, event, or latest research on Faculty channels rather than investing in and managing one of your own.

We’re often stronger when we collaborate. If you do decide to create a new social media account, be sure that you are supported in your strategy, time commitment and of course, have the training and skills needed to successfully manage content and communities in a fast-paced environment.
CAPACITY: INVESTING IN YOUR SUCCESS
Currently, there are over 150 Facebook accounts and 300 Twitter channels at UBC. That is a lot of ‘voices’ vying for audience eyeballs. In the competitive landscape of content creation, storytelling and content marketing, distribution is the fiercest ‘litmus’ test of whether you will capture attention or not.

Social media requires discipline. Monitoring and posting every day means having dedicated time for your community. UBC channels should be recognizable not only by their avatar but for their engaged and lively presence.

MANAGING A SOCIAL CHANNEL
Below are four key areas that you and your team need to be focusing on and properly resourcing to ensure success.

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2.0 STRATEGY

UBC’S DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM
Instead of looking at each of our digital communications channels as its own silo, we approach our digital presence like a connected ecosystem. Like any healthy ecosystem, relationships are vital to its continued growth. Brand and Marketing manages UBC’s main social channels and works closely with Media Relations to ensure the UBC community is kept up to date, informed and inspired. Some channels are better at broadcasting news while others are better at engagement and conversation, but no matter the channel, we always take an audience-centric approach to our content. In other words, we put the needs of our users ahead of our own.

RIGHT CONTENT, RIGHT CHANNEL, AT THE RIGHT TIME
Creating or curating the right content for distribution is a little like juggling — you have to have a certain type of content for a particular channel and you have to design that content so it can be successfully consumed in a variety of contexts including desktop, tablet and mobile. It takes some training and sometimes you’ll drop a few balls initially but in time, and with a good strategy, your digital presence on social channels will become a seamless means of content distribution.

DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

BRAND AND MARKETING

Facebook  Twitter  Instagram

LinkedIn  ubc.ca  Email

YouTube  UBC Events  Digital Signage

MEDIA RELATIONS

news.ubc.ca  Twitter

Email  Email

OTHER FACULTY, DEPARTMENT, UNIT, PROGRAM OR AUDIENCE-SPECIFIC CHANNELS
2.0 STRATEGY

LANGUAGE AND TONE

Your tone will vary somewhat according to the character of your unit/faculty and your audience but it is still ‘UBC’. There is no wiggle room for using UBC official social media channels to ‘sell’, use profanity of any kind, poor grammar or misspelled words. If you are in doubt, ask yourself if what you are about to post would make sense coming from one of the top 40 universities in the world? This quick ‘litmus’ test is good for use in circumstances where you have doubts about the appropriateness of your content or if you have a new person who is in training and might accidentally wander into territory that could jeopardize UBC’s reputation.

Speak with a supervisor for a second opinion or a colleague if you are unable to reach a manager. Taking a pause before publishing is a surprisingly effective way of avoiding errors in social media publishing.

Avoid jargon: As a leading research university, you will come across a lot of jargon, long titles and academic language. Try to avoid using this kind of vocabulary on social media —keep it accessible above all and avoid using acronyms, as these may be unfamiliar to new audiences.

Proofread: Always double check titles of buildings, projects and people and double check the links you are including in any post. UBC prides itself on being inclusive, respectful and transparent. Please review UBC’s Statement on Respectful Environment for Students, Faculty and Staff.

Social media has more flexibility than a press release, external facing website or print publication. Real-time media means that you are commenting in the moment and humour can often enhance the experience for our audiences. This type of content should be limited but ‘snow days’ or specific student events or University holidays lend themselves to real-time media or using user-generated content to showcase our community conversation.

To better understand how to write on behalf of UBC, visit our Writing Toolkit page at www.brand.ubc.ca/brand-toolkit/writing/ for strategic and practical advice.
3.0 Editorial Planning

On any given day, our audience is overwhelmed by torrents of digital information. What are we adding to the conversation that is meaningful, helpful and unique? At UBC, we are fortunate to be on the cutting-edge of new knowledge in hundreds of disciplines that shape the future of our world. Both campuses are set in spectacularly beautiful geography and the diversity of our community reflects a global community that is actively participating in its education and living up to our motto, *Tuum Est* (It Is Yours). We don’t have to look far for outstanding content. What we do need to focus on is strategy, editorial style, and analytics.

An editorial calendar will help you:

- anticipate content
- plan a good topic mix
- streamline your workflow
- more effectively collaborate

There's no one right way to structure your calendar — what matters is that it works for you and your team — but there are a few key elements that you’ll want to include information about:

- date
- key message
- channel
- link
- assets such as photos, graphics or videos

Editorial Planning

Strategic planning is an inherent skill and activity for any social media manager — using an online digital calendar that others can have a sightline to is vital to growing a thriving social media presence. Communications and Marketing uses a collaborative spreadsheet to plan what channel content will be posted on, when it will go out, who submitted the content, and editorial notes as required for various channels.

Being prepared ahead of time means you are not doing social ‘on the fly’. Not only does editorial planning save you time and effort, it ensures you’re being proactive about your reputation, responsible towards your community and professional in your communications.
3.0 EDITORIAL PLANNING

HOW THE EDITORIAL PROCESS WORKS
AT BRAND AND MARKETING
At Brand and Marketing, we hold ourselves to a high editorial standard. Our public-facing channels reach a lot of people around the world and we take that responsibility seriously. To that end, we developed an Editorial Litmus Test to instill some rigour and process into what makes it onto our channels. Our content should at all times serve the university but we also have to recognize our audience has a short attention span, wants to be told a story and at various points during the day, wouldn’t mind being delighted and inspired.

We encourage you to create your own editorial guide and hope ours might serve as a starting point for your social media team.

EDITORIAL LITMUS TEST
When making content decisions, we ask these questions:

- Would this story speak to priorities in the UBC strategic plan?
  Learn more at strategicplan.ubc.ca

- Would this story reinforce the UBC brand?
  Learn more at brand.ubc.ca

- Is there capacity to tell this story?
  Do we have the time, tools, budget, and space on our channels?

- Is it, in fact, a story?
  Does it have a narrative? A beginning, middle, and end?

- Does it inspire, delight, or educate our audience?
  Might they see UBC in a new way? Could it change behaviour?

- Would this story resonate with our audience?
  Would it provide a good user experience? Would it perform well on social channels?
3.0 Editorial Planning

**StoryBox**
Would you like to elevate your story to UBC’s main channels?

StoryBox is an internal tool for communications and marketing professionals at UBC. It allows communicators across UBC to share stories for publication on ubc.ca and official UBC social channels.

Our enterprise-wide digital story tool ensures your content is delivered to Brand and Marketing immediately. Through StoryBox, you can submit an existing story or submit an original story that is ready for publication.

Every Wednesday, stories are discussed at the Brand and Marketing editorial meeting (which we encourage Communicators to attend at least once) and a lineup is prepared for publication on the ubc.ca homepage and UBC’s official social media channels the following Monday.

If you’d like to elevate your content to a wider audience, please submit to StoryBox. Please review the editorial guidelines for our enterprise-wide channels before submitting.
EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND OUR SOCIAL PRESENCE
4.0 UBC AVATARS: YOUR INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD

It does not matter whether you are a two-person unit or a Faculty — avatars introduce who you are on any given social channel to the world. They are a key way organizations identify themselves in social media. In just a few pixels, we need to communicate not only that we are from UBC, but also the specific unit the channel or page is representing.

UBC’s avatar system provides a unifying look to avatars used by the University, while ensuring that units can still clearly identify themselves, including the use of unit colours. By using these avatars, those who manage social media on behalf of UBC will create a much more consistent, coordinated, and professional presence for the university in social media.

Fact: All UBC faculties, departments and units must use avatars that adhere to the guidelines below on official UBC social media channels in accordance with UBC Policy GA7.

If you need avatars, please visit the social media page on brand.ubc.ca to send in your request.

4.0 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND OUR SOCIAL PRESENCE

HASHTAG COMMUNITIES

Leverage from our collective global community by using the #UBC hashtag. This is more effective than using up valuable space by adding three or four hashtags that are specific to an event, unit or external business. In some cases, it is necessary to use unique hashtags.

Conferences generally have hashtags and this can be an effective internal communications but keep in mind a lot of your audience may not be attending that particular conference and unfollow you after days of conference tweets.

Always put your audience first — keep their experience top of mind when crafting your posts and be mindful and considerate that hashtags represent living, breathing communities. People will have specific hashtags on their lists and be monitoring them — showing up too often in someone’s feed can feel like you’re dominating the conversation. Balance is key — at UBC we’re a thought leader but always respectful of others in our community.

UBC AVATARS

INSTITUTIONAL   FACULTY, SCHOOL OR UNIT
4.0 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND OUR SOCIAL PRESENCE

USING MULTIMEDIA CONTENT

Tips for sharing Graphics

• Don’t embed lots of text in social graphics. It’s not accessible and looks cluttered. Note: Facebook also limits your ability to reach people with ads when there is lots of text in an image.

• Use photos and graphics with lots of ‘safe space’ around the edges. Social platforms will sometimes crop images to display them differently.

• Need a logo? Visit brand.ubc.ca to download the latest logos and to review our Visual Identity page

Tips for Sharing Video

• Keep it short. If you have a longer video, use a short excerpt for social.

• Embed subtitles in your video for accessibility. Most social video is watched on mobile devices without the sound on.

• Share video natively where possible. Uploading your video file directly to Facebook or Twitter provides a better user experience.

Tips for Sharing Photos

• You’re typically safe if you build photos or graphics at a 1:1 ratio and a 2:1 ratio (e.g. 1200 x 1200px and 1200 x 600px). See this online guide for more information.

2:1 Ratio

1:1 Ratio
5.0 Resources

- Social Media Moderation Policy
- Social Media: Personal or Faculty Use Guidelines
- Social Media Response Framework

Let’s Connect
Visit UBC’s official social channels:
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Facebook
- LinkedIn

Get Involved
The Social Media Meetup Group is a community of practice for UBC staff who manage official social media channels. If you’re interested in joining, please fill out this request form.