Social Media Policy for British Association of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons (BAOMS) – v1.0

Guidelines for Responsible and Effective Digital Engagement

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital communication, social media has become a powerful tool for scientific organisations to share knowledge, foster collaboration, engage with the public, and enhance their reputation. However, the reach and immediacy of these platforms also present significant risks, including the potential for misinformation, breaches of confidentiality, and reputational harm. This policy sets out the principles, responsibilities, and best practices for the use of social media by employees, researchers, students, and affiliates of a scientific organisation.

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on appropriate, ethical, and effective use of social media by fellows/members/administrative staff of the organisation, both in professional and personal capacities when referencing the organisation's work. This policy applies to all forms of social media, including but not limited to Twitter/X, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, blogs, and forums, as well as emerging platforms.

2. Principles

- Accuracy: Communicate information, relevant information, scientific findings and views accurately, supporting statements with evidence wherever possible.
- Integrity: Uphold the highest standards of scientific integrity and ethical conduct.
- Respect: Engage respectfully with colleagues, collaborators, and the public, fostering an inclusive digital environment.
- Transparency: Clearly indicate personal views versus official organisational positions.
- Conflicts of interest: These must be clearly mentioned.
- Confidentiality: Protect sensitive data, unpublished research, and proprietary information.
- Compliance: Adhere to all applicable laws, organisational codes of conduct, and relevant policies.

3. Official Accounts and Representation

- Official social media accounts must be created, managed, and monitored by designated communications staff or authorised personnel.
- Content posted on official channels should reflect the mission, values, and scientific standards of the organisation.
- Only authorised individuals may respond to media enquiries or issue statements on behalf of the organisation.
- Brand identity (logos, names, trademarks) must be used in accordance with organisational guidelines.
- Crisis communication procedures must be in place for responding to misinformation, negative publicity, or emergencies.

4. Personal Use of Social Media

- Employees and affiliates are encouraged to engage in scientific / specialty related communication but must clearly distinguish personal opinions from those of the organisation and must make this obvious.
- Do not disclose confidential or proprietary/sensitive information about the organisation, research, partners, or collaborators.
- Be aware that personal posts, even when made 'off-duty', may be associated with your professional role and the organisation's reputation.
- Exercise caution when discussing ongoing research, unpublished data, or sensitive topics.

5. Content Guidelines

- Information must be accurate and fact-checked, where possible.
- Cite sources and give credit for intellectual property, images, and data where relevant.
- Do not post content that is defamatory, discriminatory, harassing, threatening, or otherwise inappropriate.
- Refrain from engaging in arguments or hostile exchanges; maintain a professional tone at all times.
- Correct errors or misstatements promptly and transparently.

6. Privacy and Data Protection

- Adhere to applicable data protection and privacy laws such as the GDPR.
- Do not share personal data of colleagues, fellows, members, associates without explicit consent.
- Securely manage passwords and access to organisational social media accounts.
- Report any suspected data breaches or privacy incidents in accordance with organisational procedures.

7. Engagement and Community Management

- Foster constructive dialogue and respond to questions or comments in a timely, respectful manner.
- Moderate comments and user contributions to prevent the spread of misinformation, spam, or offensive material on organisational channels.
- Use social media to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the scientific community and beyond.
- Engage with broader scientific initiatives, campaigns, and international observances where relevant to the organisation's mission.
- Promote open science and the accessibility of knowledge, while respecting intellectual property and confidential information.

8. Training and Support

- Provide regular training and resources for staff, researchers, and students on responsible social media use, digital literacy, and science communication best practices.
- Encourage the sharing of positive organisational achievements, specialty related activities, and public engagement efforts via official channels.
- Designate a contact person or team for social media queries, support, and incident reporting.
- Review and update the policy in response to evolving digital trends, legal requirements, and lessons learned from incidents.

9. Compliance and Enforcement

- Non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action.
- Serious breaches, such as the unauthorised release of confidential data or harassment, may lead to further legal or reputational consequences.
- All users are encouraged to report suspected breaches or concerns to the designated compliance officer or communications team.

10. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- Q: Can I comment on controversial topics?
- A: 'Employees' can participate in public discourse, but must clarify when they are expressing personal opinions and ensure their comments are respectful and evidence-based. Avoid speaking on behalf of the organisation on sensitive issues unless authorised.
- Q: What should I do if I see misinformation about our organisation online?
- A: Report the incident to the communications team or designated officer. Engage only if authorised, and ensure any responses are factual, calm, and impartial, referencing credible sources.
- Q: Who can create an official organisational account?

- A: Only designated staff with approval from the communications or leadership team.
- Q: How do I separate my personal and professional social media usage?
- A: Avoid mixing personal opinions and organisational work. Use disclaimers, keep accounts distinct, and adhere to privacy settings and organisational guidelines.

11. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required in response to significant developments in digital communication, social media platforms, or legislation. Feedback from staff, fellows, council members and other stakeholders is actively encouraged to ensure the policy remains relevant, clear, and effective.
By following these guidelines, BAOMS can harness the benefits of social media to advance knowledge, foster collaboration, and serve the public interest, while minimising risks and protecting the integrity of association and specialty.

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