



SOCIAL MEDIA

INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

GUIDELINES FOR ACCOUNT ADMINISTRATORS OF UNIVERSITY OF SURREY
ACCOUNTS AND SOCIETY, SPORTS CLUB AND OTHER GROUP ACCOUNTS

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CONTENTS

Values	3
Part One Overview	5
Inclusive Language	6
Gender	7
Race	8
Age	9
Gender Reassignment	10
Sexual Orientation	11
Religion or Belief	12
Pregnancy/Maternity	13
Carers	14
Socio-Economic	15
Disability and Neurodiversity	16
Part 2 Accessibility Guide	17
Text Tips	18
Accessible Images	19
Accessible Videos	20
Reminders	21

VALUES

At the University of Surrey, we want to build an inclusive, progressive organisation which ensures that people are at the heart of what we do.

We are committed to weaving our values of Inclusion, Inspiration, Innovation and Integrity through the fabric of our organisation, and this means both corporately in our decision making and as individuals all working towards the Strategic Vision of the University.





PART 1

OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW

How social media is managed by University of Surrey employees and its current and future subsidiaries – both in a professional and personal capacity – has the potential to affect themselves (personally) but also others due to the potential for public and widespread exposure of content.

This includes – but is not limited to – those people featuring in the University’s content e.g. student Content Creators or staff, followers of the University’s official channels and other social media users within the wider online community who are exposed to content that has been published or commented on.



INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

At the University of Surrey, we are committed to creating an inclusive community, where individual members of staff and students feel welcomed, valued and included. Inclusive language can help to promote this culture and support a sense of belonging. However, it is important to note that everyone has different individual personal preferences about language and identity, and language is always evolving and changing, which means there are no definitive rules but understanding some key principles will help you adopt an inclusive approach on a day-to-day basis.

Some suggested key principles:

- Consider taking an individualised approach; people are not the same and we are not defined by single characteristics.
- Be guided by the terms people use to describe themselves. Not everyone is comfortable with the same language being used. If appropriate, ask, but try not to assume.
- Consider how using language that acknowledges diversity and conveys respect to all people enables individuals to feel a sense of belonging.

If in doubt, you may wish to consult the various [staff networks](#) across the University for their perspectives.

GENDER

Ensure **representation** during the selection of Social Media Content Creators e.g. **students, staff or others who feature in the content.**

Points to Consider:

- Diversity of content – **relevant events and commemorations** – International Women's Day and Men's Health Month - consulting and collaborating with the relevant staff networks e.g. Women's Network and Men's Health and Wellbeing Group.
- **Awareness** of **sexism, misogyny** and **sexual harassment** to **mitigate** any potential legal or ethical risks.
- Take into **consideration an individual's preferred pronouns.**
- Recognising the **value of research projects** that are relevant to sex and gender.
- Due regard should be given to the EDI team's guidance on **inclusive** language.

*Social Media team to engage with users to build in improvements as feedback is received.

RACE

Ensure **representation** during the selection of Social Media Content Creators e.g. **students, staff or others who feature in the content.**

Points to Consider:

- **Diversity of content** – relevant events and commemorations e.g. Black History Month, East and South East Asian Heritage Month and Lunar New Year – consulting and collaborating with the relevant staff and student networks e.g. SEED and Students' Union networks such as the International Network and the Race Equality Network.
- **Awareness of racism.**
- Where relevant, consider **inclusive curriculum principles** while also upholding academic freedom.
- For content targeted at international audiences, consideration should be given to **cultural awareness and language** e.g. whether subtitled translations are required.
- Recognising the **value of research projects** that are relevant to race.
- Due regard should be given to the EDI team's guidance on **inclusive language.**

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AGE

Ensure representation during the selection of Social Media Content Creators e.g. students, staff or others who feature in the content e.g. **mature students**.

Points to Consider:

- Referring to '**life-long**' **learning** where relevant to ensure that we champion all age groups and show relevance e.g. Surrey Showcase, a lecture series or WP&O schools initiatives in support of UN SDG 4 (Quality Education).
- Diversity of content e.g. **relevant events** and commemorations e.g. historical events experienced or witnessed by older and current generations e.g. Holocaust Memorial Day or Remembrance Day or student societies volunteering with elderly groups.
- Considering **preferred social platforms for different age groups** e.g. Facebook generally attracts an older audience than Tik Tok. Other mediums should be considered alongside social media to take this data into account e.g. stakeholder engagement group meetings, traditional media coverage and direct mail.
- Considering the **accessibility of colloquial language** for **older generations** e.g. 'Gen Z speak'.
- Recognising the **value of research projects that are relevant to age**, including research linked to the new Institute for Lifelong Health and Ageing Well post -launch.
- Due regard should be given to the EDI team's guidance on **inclusive language**.

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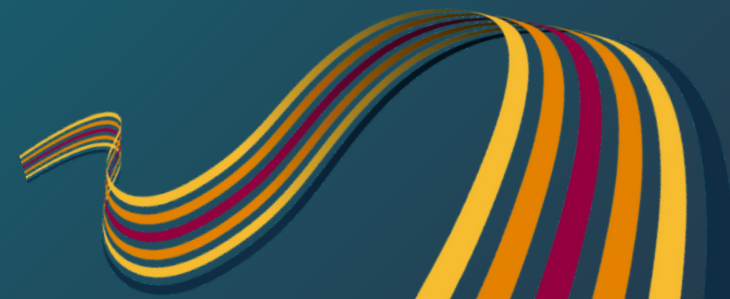
GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Ensure representation during the selection of Social Media Content Creators e.g. students, staff or others who feature in the content.

Points to Consider:

- **Diversity of content** - events and commemorations E.G. IDAHOBIT and Trans Remembrance Day.
- **Awareness of transphobia.**
- **Awareness of views** around **gender critical theory**, recognising ideologies and balancing these with the **Equality Act to protect people of all identities** in accordance with the law and our commitment to Freedom of Speech.
- Take into consideration an **individual's preferred pronouns.**
- **Consulting and collaborating** with the relevant staff networks e.g. **The Rainbow Network** and **Rainbow Allies.**
- Recognising the **value of research projects** that are relevant to **gender reassignment.**
- Due regard should be given to the EDI team's guidance on **inclusive language.**

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SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Ensure representation during the selection of Social Media Content Creators e.g. students, staff or others who feature in the content.

Points to Consider:

- **Diversity of content** - e.g. relevant events and commemorations e.g. **PRIDE, LGBT History Month** and LGBTQIA+ People in STEM.
- **Awareness of homophobia.**
- **Consulting and collaborating** with the relevant staff networks e.g. **The Rainbow Network** and **Rainbow Allies.**
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RELIGION OR BELIEF

Ensure representation during the selection of Social Media Content Creators e.g. students, staff or others who feature in the content.

Points to Consider:

- **Diversity of content** e.g. events and commemorations e.g. **religious events** in partnership with our **multi-faith Chaplaincy** such as Holi, Ramadan and Christmas.
- **Awareness of Islamophobia, antisemitism and other discrimination.**
- **Consulting** and collaborating with the **Centre for Religious Life** and Belief and Students' Union groups e.g. Islamic Society and Christian Union.
- Recognising the **value of research projects** that are **relevant to religion and belief.**
- Due regard should be given to the EDI team's guidance on **inclusive language.**

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PREGNANCY/MATERNITY

Ensure representation during the selection of Social Media Content Creators e.g. students, staff or others who feature in the content.

Points to Consider:

- Diversity of content e.g. events and commemorations e.g. **Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week and Parents Mental Health Day.**
- **Sensitivity to the issues** that could arise when talking about pregnancy and maternity issues, including baby loss and Mother's Day (potential for triggering or exclusive content), as well as the **language** we are using e.g. 'parental leave' etc.
- Consulting and collaborating with the relevant staff network – CAPE and Parents' Returner Network.
- Recognising the **value of research projects** that are relevant to **pregnancy and maternity.**
- Due regard should be given to the EDI team's guidance on inclusive language.

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CARERS

Ensure representation during the selection of Social Media Content Creators e.g. students, staff or others who feature in the content.

Points to Consider:

- **Diversity of content** e.g. celebrations and commemorations as well as relevant events such as Surrey's **summer school for young carers** and external partnerships e.g. Surrey Action for Carers.
- Consulting and collaborating with the relevant staff networks e.g. **Young Carers and Carer Support Network.**
- Recognising the value of **research projects that are relevant to carers.**
- Due regard should be given to the EDI team's guidance on **inclusive language.**

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC

Ensure representation during the selection of Social Media Content Creators e.g. students, staff or others who feature in the content.

Points to Consider:

- **Diversity of content** e.g. Community Hub, cost of living support, financial advice, hardship support and **Widening Participation and Outreach** (WP&O) projects.
- Being **aware of different cultures**, life experiences and financial circumstances so audiences can relate to content and participate in events e.g. signpost to free events as well as ticketed events, scholarship opportunities and grants etc.
- Recognising the **value of research projects that are relevant to socio-economics**.
- Due regard should be given to the EDI team's guidance on **inclusive language**.

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DISABILITY & NEURODIVERSITY

Points to Consider:

- **Accessibility and neuro-inclusion guidelines** e.g. captions on videos, contrast checks and the use of flashing images. We should keep abreast of tech developments that might support this category in the future e.g. the British Sign language (BSL) Google project to translate content into BSL.
- Ensure **representation during the selection of Social Media Content Creators** e.g. students, staff or others who feature in the content.
- **Diversity of content** – relevant events and commemorations e.g. **Neurodiversity Celebration Week** and **Disability History Month**.
- **Consulting** and **collaborating** with the relevant staff networks e.g. **Purple Network** and **Neurodivergent Network** as well as student societies e.g. Autisoc.
- **Awareness of ableism to mitigate any potential legal or ethical risks** and operate under the social model of disability (making the environment as disability inclusive as possible).
- Recognising the **value of research projects that are relevant to disability**.
- Due regard should be given to the EDI team's guidance on **inclusive language**.

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PART 2

ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE

TEXT TIPS



Keep it Simple: Use plain, everyday words. Short sentences are best.

- *Avoid:* "Leverage synergistic paradigms."
- *Use:* "Work together."

Capitalize Hashtags (CamelCase): Helps screen readers read each word.

- *Good:* #AccessibleSocialMedia
- *Bad:* #accessiblesocialmedia

Emojis in Moderation:

- Use 1-3 per post, at the end.
- Screen readers read them aloud (e.g., "smiling face").

No Fancy Fonts: Stick to plain, easy-to-read fonts. Custom fonts can break screen readers.

Descriptive Links: Tell people where a link goes.

- *Good:* "Download our free guide on accessibility."
- *Bad:* "Click here."

ACCESSIBLE IMAGES

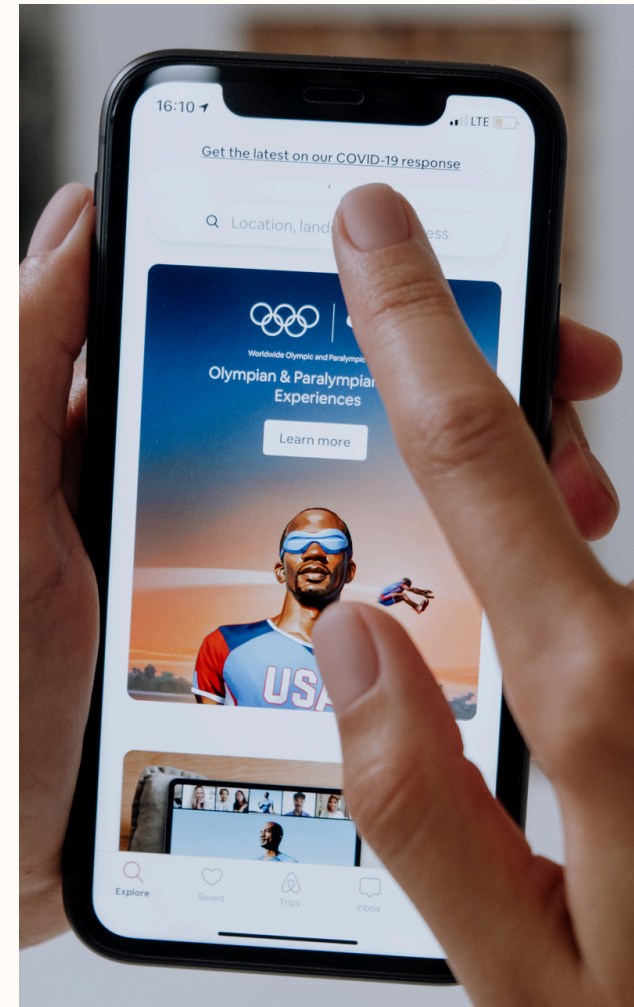
Alt Text (MUST DO!): Describe your image for people who can't see it.

- **What it is:** A short description read by screen readers.
- **How to do it:**
 - Describe what's in the image and its purpose.
 - Include any text shown in the image.
 - Keep it brief and to the point.
 - **NEVER** start with "Image of..." or "Picture of..."
- *Example:* "Three diverse people smiling and working collaboratively on a laptop."
- **Where to find it:** Most platforms have an "Alt Text" field when you upload. Always use it!

Color Contrast: Make text in images easy to read.

- Use dark text on light backgrounds, or light text on dark backgrounds.

Limit Text in Images: If an image has lots of text, put that text in your post caption too.



ACCESSIBLE VIDEOS

Captions/Subtitles: Provide text for everything said.

- **Why:** For deaf/hard-of-hearing users, and for everyone watching with sound off (most social media videos!).
- **Types:**
 - **Open Captions:** "Burned in" to the video, always visible. Great for all platforms.
 - **Closed Captions:** Can be turned on/off. Supported by YouTube, Facebook, X, LinkedIn.

Transcripts: For longer videos, offer a full text version of the audio in the description or a link.

- **Clear Audio:** Make sure voices are clear and background music isn't too loud.

Flashing Content: Avoid rapid flashes (more than 3 per second) to prevent seizures. Give a warning if unavoidable.



Top Tip

Check auto-generated captions for mistakes.

Make them easy to read: clear font, good contrast (white text on black background often best).

Sync them with the speech.

REMINDERS

- **Be Mindful of Trends:** Some trends (like emoji strings, complex visuals) can be inaccessible.
- **Inclusive Language:**
 - Refer to slide 6
- **Test Your Content:** If possible, ask someone who uses assistive technology to try out your content!

Small Changes = BIG Impact

By following these simple tips, you're helping to build a more inclusive and welcoming online space for everyone.

In the spirit of inclusion and continuous improvement, please let us have any feedback by contacting Jo McCarthy-Holland (j.mccarthy-holland@surrey.ac.uk) and Kate Bailey (k.bailey@surrey.ac.uk).

