

How to deal with criticism

Stay calm. You should **always respond** to critical comments or messages, and **not simply delete** them. The only exceptions are if users post content or comments on your site that are illegal – for example because they are offensive, racist or infringe on any copyrights. In those instances, you must delete the posts as soon as possible. We recommend that you take a **screenshot** before deleting a post so that you can substantiate your action if needed. You should also delete advertising and dubious calls for action. You may want to include our **netiquette guidelines** on your page and refer users to them if necessary. If you are not sure how to respond to a specific comment, please contact the Communications and Press Service immediately. Together, we will come up with a strategy for preventing any conflict on your page from getting out of control.

Do you know your rights and obligations?

Social networks do not operate within a legal vacuum. As a rule, official matters are subject to **professional secrecy**. Confidential information (such as expressly confidential research data or trade secrets) must not be communicated to the public. For every post, you must therefore make sure you have **the right to publish the content (photos, videos and text)**. Even sharing content could be illegal.

Private use of social networks

Even during your private use of social networks, your posts may be perceived as statements from a TU Braunschweig member and understood within the context of the university. Where necessary, clearly mark private posts as such and contact us if any issues should arise.

Relevant legal texts and areas of law

- Since 25 May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has been the common data protection law for all EU Member States. The GDPR regulates the handling, processing and storage of personal data, including photographs.
- The German Telemedia Act (Telemediengesetz, TMG) includes stipulations on the obligation to provide a legal notice on websites and on the liability of the owner of the social media platform (the service provider).
- The right to free expression (Äußerungsrecht) governs the legitimacy and scope of (public) expression. The freedom of opinion (Meinungsfreiheit) as detailed in Article 5 of the German Constitution (Grundgesetz, GG) is very far-reaching. However, false factual claims, insults, and abusive criticism are not permitted.
- The German Federal Data Protection Act (Bundesdatenschutzgesetz, BDSG-neu) supplements, gives specific form to and amends the GDPR.
- The German law on the protection of copyright for works of art and photography (Kunsturhebergesetz, KunstUrhG) contains stipulations on a person's right to their own image. With only a few specific exceptions (photos of public gatherings, prominent people involved in current affairs, and images in which people are only accessories), you must obtain the depicted person's consent before publication.
- The German Copyright Act (Urheberrechtsgesetz, UrhG) governs the protection of texts, images, audio and video content. In most cases, the publication or distribution of such work is only permitted with the consent of the relevant copyright holder.
- The German Trademark Act (Markengesetz, MarkenG) contains specifications for the protection of names and logos.
- In June 2018, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that the administrator of a Facebook page shares responsibility for the processing of personal data (C-210/16).

Please note: Some social networks (such as Facebook) require you to publish a **legal notice**. Always make sure to adhere to the general terms and conditions, terms of use, and guidelines of the social network of your choice.

Please also make sure you are in compliance with our privacy notice: www.tu-braunschweig.de/en/data-protection-declaration.

www.tu-braunschweig.de/presse

Would you like more tips and advice on using social media?

The Communications and Press Service is happy to help. Please contact us if you require any further assistance.

Contact and advice

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Technische
Universität
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Communications
and Press Service



Social Media

Communicating Science

Social Media Guidelines for Your Professional Use

Social networks have long been an integral part of our daily lives at this juncture, and they play an important role in the working world as well. Technische Universität Braunschweig maintains official accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn, managed by its Communications and Press Service. In addition to this, many of TU Braunschweig’s facilities, institutes and student initiatives are active on social networks. **We welcome these separate social networking accounts.** It is important for universities to be represented in this realm, to provide information, explain facts and engage in dialogue with society. **These social media guidelines offer you support and assistance as you use social networks on behalf of your institute or organisation.** If you have any further questions, please feel free to get in touch with TU Braunschweig’s Communications and Press Service.

Before getting started

Determine whether social networking activities **make sense for your area**, and **which social media platforms are the most appropriate for you**. The Communications and Press Service will be happy to assist you if needed.

Ask yourself the following questions before creating a social network account:

- What do I hope to achieve through my presence on social networks?
- Who is my target audience? Are they active on the network I plan to use?
- Do I have enough content and topics to keep the account interesting over time?
- Do I have enough time to maintain the account?
- Is there a stand-in who can maintain the account when I am absent?

As a rule, you should only establish a social media presence for your organisation after obtaining the consent of the organisation’s management. Central and decentralised social media accounts belong to TU Braunschweig and may only be created, designed or deleted with the respective management’s consent.

We recommend that you assign administrator rights to more than one employee, to ensure that changes to your social media presence can be made at any given time. Wherever possible, administrator rights should be assigned to an employee’s personal profile on that platform. That way, it is easy to revoke the rights if the employee leaves the organisation. If a social network does not allow for multiple administrators and provides only one access code, that access code should only be disclosed to a very limited number of people. In this case, the access code must be changed if any of the administrators should leave the organisation. Make sure to choose a very secure password. The organisation should be able to access the login information and administrator rights at any given time.

Who are you speaking for?

Official external communication on behalf of TU Braunschweig as a whole may only be released by the Executive Board and the Communications and Press Service. On your decentralised social media, **you speak for your organisation only, and not on behalf of the entire university.** The public, however, will perceive you as a part of TU Braunschweig. Please keep this in mind for all of your posts.

Keep it friendly

Be sure to use **friendly, objective and polite language** when addressing your users. Use short, active sentences and focus on the essential information.

Honesty is the best policy

Communicate in an **honest and transparent way**. Check each post for accuracy, making sure that no false information reaches your users. And if a mistake does slip through, be straightforward and **don’t be afraid to own up to it**.

Be communicative

Social networks are not one-way streets. Engage in dialogue with your target audience and welcome their questions, comments and even criticism. Make sure to respond to every comment in an **appropriate and timely manner**. Ideally, you should check your social media account for new messages **at least twice daily**.

Be careful with personal data

Never publish any third parties’ personal information without their consent. Also advise your users not to disclose their own personal information.

Netiquette

For our Facebook account, we have drawn up the following netiquette guidelines. You are welcome to adapt and include them in your social media presence if you like.

Technische Universität Braunschweig uses the Facebook page to keep you up to date on university news, services and life on campus. We appreciate your interest and look forward to a lively exchange with you. Please keep in mind the following netiquette guidelines as you post.

- **Respect:** Opinions, discussions and constructive criticism are much appreciated on our page. However, we ask all users to be polite and show each other respect and consideration. Posts that contain offensive, racist, pornographic, unconstitutional or illegal statements will be deleted immediately.
- **Data protection:** Data protection is very important to us! Please refrain from posting personal information (such as enrolment numbers, addresses and phone numbers) about yourself or anyone else. Instead, send us a direct message and let us get in touch with you outside of Facebook via e-mail or phone.
- **Language:** To enable a fruitful discussion, we ask that you write your posts in either German or English.
- **Advertising:** The contents of our page should reflect the many diverse topics that make up TU Braunschweig. Advertising and spam are not welcome and will be deleted.
- In addition, please follow the standards of the Facebook community and the platform’s general terms of use.
- In the event of repeated violations of our netiquette guidelines, we reserve the right to block individual users from our Facebook page.