

Social Media Guidelines for Conestoga Employees

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Introduction

The use of social media allows Conestoga to connect directly with a variety of audiences, including current and prospective students, college employees, alumni, donors, partners and friends, media and the general public.

Social media sites can be powerful communication tools for sharing information as well as building and maintaining relationships with our stakeholders and ambassadors across the broader community. Because of the very public nature of social media, sites and postings can also have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. As a result, it is very important that social media activities related to Conestoga are carefully considered and well-managed to reflect positively on the college's brand, image and profile.

The information provided here is intended to provide guidance primarily for Conestoga faculty and staff who use social media to connect with students or other audiences on behalf of college programs, departments or activities. The best practices cited here may also benefit student groups and individuals who maintain personal sites.

If you have suggestions or questions about the guidelines, please contact Corporate Communications at communications@conestogac.on.ca

Best Practices

Understand and respect the terms of use of any social media platforms you employ. Before you launch a new social media presence, become familiar with the standards, styles and expectations of the various sites. Learn how the different types of communities work, and what other individuals and organizations are saying about your preferred topics.

Protect confidential information about yourself and others, including Conestoga students, employees, donors and alumni. Do not disclose personal information online or encourage others to do so. Assume that whatever is published online, even within a closed network, can and will be shared, stored and spread globally. Restrict discussions with students regarding their personal information to their official Conestoga email accounts, private messages through D2L, or direct contact in person or by phone.

Maintain a professional tone just as you would in a real-world work environment. Your online postings are public, and reflect both on you as an individual and on Conestoga as an institution. Express yourself clearly and authentically, avoiding the use of industry jargon or overt sales pitches: if what you're saying

is truly interesting, there's no need to embellish it. Vulgarity and obscene language are never appropriate.

Remain positive and respectful of your audience as well as of our students, employees, partners, current and potential funders, government agencies and other stakeholders. Ensure that the content of your posts will not alienate, harm or offend any of these groups. Conestoga's success is built on positive relationships and broad community support.

Strive for clarity and accuracy. Verify information and review all content for spelling and grammatical accuracy before you post. Both you and the institution will be judged by the quality of your writing. Errors of fact and careless mistakes are likely to create a negative impact on Conestoga's reputation as a leader in post-secondary education. If you do make an error, post a clarification or retraction promptly.

Obtain consent before posting photos or videos online. If someone is identifiable in a photograph or video, you need that individual's permission to share or publish the material online or elsewhere. Standard consent forms can be obtained through [Corporate Communications](#).

Respect copyright and intellectual property. Do not post text, images or other content that does not belong to you without permission from the content owner. If you share or reference the ideas or work of others online, give them credit and provide links to the original work where possible.

Avoid making endorsements. Advertising on behalf of external vendors and endorsements of products, causes or political parties and candidates are prohibited on Conestoga websites and social media sites. If you use direct messaging on social media to contact individuals or groups, any messages with a commercial purpose may be subject to requirements under Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation.

Institutional vs. personal accounts

The lines between personal and professional use can often become blurred in social networks. It is recommended that employees keep their personal networking sites distinct from their professional activities:

- Manage the privacy and security settings of your personal social media accounts. Students should be restricted from accessing your personal accounts, whether for viewing or posting. Check privacy settings frequently, as they can shift and change without notice.
- Decline student-initiated "friend" requests and do not issue "friend" requests to students.
- Avoid exchanging private texts, phone numbers, personal e-mail addresses or photos of a personal nature with students.
- Assume that any information you post online can be accessed, altered and passed on to your colleagues, your supervisors, your students and the general public. No privacy mechanism is guaranteed.
- Monitor all content you or others post to your social media accounts and remove anything that is inappropriate. Ask others to refrain from tagging you on any photographs without your permission, and to remove any undesirable content related to you.

Whenever you identify yourself online as a Conestoga employee, you are effectively representing the institution, whether you are using an institutional account or a personal one. If you are expressing personal opinions, make that distinction clear by stating that “All opinions expressed here are my own, and do not necessarily reflect those of Conestoga College.”

Using Social Media at Conestoga

- 1. Determine your needs and resources.** Building and maintaining a social media presence can be very time-consuming. You may want to start small, by publishing information and materials through Conestoga’s main social media sites rather than starting your own. If you decide to establish a social media page or profile for your department or program, identify who will be responsible for updating and monitoring the site as well as the manager who will ultimately be accountable for all content posted to the site.
- 2. Create a detailed plan.** Define your goals, your target audience and the key messages you wish to communicate. Setting goals and developing a strategy for your social media presence – including who you will follow and the kind of comments you will allow from other users – will help you choose the appropriate tool or tools, create relevant content and engage your audience in positive and beneficial dialogue. How will you monitor and measure success?
- 3. Secure approval** from your chair or manager before creating a new social media page or profile to ensure that everyone is aware of the communications happening within their departments or teams.
- 4. Contact Corporate Communications** (communications@conestogac.on.ca) so that we can include your site in the college’s Social Media directory and help drive traffic to your page or profile. This will increase the visibility of your social media site as well as the ability to provide statistics on site usage.
- 5. Identify yourself** by creating a profile name and bio that clearly indicate the department or area you represent. If you identify yourself simply as Conestoga College, your audience will infer that you are speaking for the entire institution.
- 6. Use Conestoga branding** to make your account instantly recognizable as an authentic Conestoga site. Permission for use of the college logo and trademarks can be obtained through Corporate Communications: follow the usage guidelines provided in the [Graphic Standards Guide](#).
- 7. Establish your back-up.** Keep your account active by sharing your login information for any institutional accounts you operate with a colleague who can post and respond in your absence. Please provide this information to Corporate Communications as well for use in emergency situations.
- 8. Link back** to the main Conestoga website (www.conestogac.on.ca) whenever possible to redirect your audience to content that resides there. When linking to a news article about Conestoga, for example, check first to see whether an original news release that presents the story from the college’s point of view is available in [Campus News](#).
- 9. Respect college time and property.** Use of social media while on the job should be reserved for Conestoga-related communications. A well-planned strategy will ensure the time you spend in engagement with your audience will be both positive and productive.

10. **Delete your social media account** if it has served its purpose and is no longer being maintained. Doing so will help ensure that our social media community remains vibrant and active and will protect inactive sites from abuse. If you delete an account, please inform Corporate Communications so we can remove the deleted account from our social media directory.

Media Inquiries and Emergency Situations

Media inquiries

If you become engaged in conversation (online or off) by members of the media who ask you to speak on behalf of Conestoga, please let them know that you are not an official spokesperson for the organization, but that you will connect them with the college's Corporate Communications office. Then contact Corporate Communications at extension 3336 or communications@conestogac.on.ca

Crisis situations

During emergency situations, it is important that the organization speaks through a single voice in order to accurately, clearly and authoritatively communicate essential information in a timely manner, and avoid the confusion that often occurs during such events. Examples of crises include weather emergencies (such as a flood or snowstorm), a fire, natural disaster, medical emergency, accident or any similar event or occurrence. During these times, please do not comment on the emergency or send messages out about it on social media. If asked for information or comment via a social media channel, please advise people to monitor the main Conestoga website, Twitter and Facebook accounts for updates. All media inquiries should be referred to Corporate Communications at ext. 3336.

Social media sites:

The college's official social media sites include Facebook - [Connect with Conestoga](#), Twitter - [@ConestogaC](#), YouTube - [Conestoga College](#), and LinkedIn - [Conestoga College](#). Direct links to these sites are provided in the footer on the Conestoga website.

Social networking activities at the college also include many program and departmental sites on these platforms, as well as Instant Messaging, Instagram, Vine, etc. All of these activities fall under the definition of social media, and should be used in accordance with the general guidelines provided above.

Resources

Information published through Conestoga's social media sites must comply with college policies and federal and provincial laws, including, but not limited to:

1. [Acceptable Use of Technology](#)
2. [Accessibility at Conestoga](#)
3. [Protection of Human Rights](#)
4. [Student Code of Conduct](#)
5. Employee Code of Conduct
6. [Graphic Standards Guide](#)
7. [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

8. [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)
9. [Copyright Act](#)
10. [Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation \(CASL\)](#)