Office of Communications & Marketing

Elliott School of International Affairs Social Media Guide

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THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

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Social Media Policy

When operating any GW-affiliated social media accounts, it is important to familiarize yourself with the [university social media policy](). This policy applies to all social media use on behalf of the university, including social media content created or posted on university-sponsored accounts. We have outlined some of the most important highlights below.

Your Content Must Not…

- Make broad value statements on controversial topics without coordinating with central communications. (e.g., messages that suggest "GW believes" or "The university supports"…)
- Disclose any regulated, restricted, or otherwise non-public information.
- Be abusive, threatening, defamatory, obscene, harassing, or create a hostile work or learning environment.
- Negatively impact the university's image or the image of a member of the university community.

Posting Appropriate, Lawful, Accessible, and Accurate Content

Accounts representing the University should not post or re-post the following:
- Profane or off-topic content.
- Content that violates copyright, trademarks, or other intellectual property rights; or content that is not accompanied by credit to the original source.
- Content for which GW does not have a license to use.
- Content that is not digitally accessible (e.g. sufficient color contrast)
- Content that has not been double-checked for accuracy.

Be Mindful of Non-Public Information

- Do not post information, such as special university announcements, to social media until it has been officially released by the university or by your unit.
- Do not post unauthorized or confidential information about GW community members.
- Do not post information protected by FERPA.

Moderate and Engage With Caution

GW's Social Media Policy includes the following provision regarding unfavorable or inappropriate content:

> *"The university reserves the right to delete content that is defamatory, obscene, threatening, or harassing; targets or disparages any ethnic, racial, religious, or gender group; advocates illegal activity; infringes copyrights or trademarks; contains spam, junk mail, or unauthorized solicitations; or violates any applicable local, state, or federal law, or university policies."*

- Please flag for OCM content that receives a high volume of unfavorable or inappropriate content or engagement.

- Do not engage with users that are "trolling" your account.

- Do not delete comments or posts from users expressing reasonable opinions or disagreement unless it falls into any of the categories in the provision above.

You can flag content by sending an email to socialmedia@gwu.edu.

When to Escalate

Scenarios in which you should escalate to your supervisor, the Office of Communications & Marketing, and/or GWPD:

- Content that suggests a threat to the safety of a community member (supervisor, OCM, GWPD).

- Content alleging wrongdoing by a community member—especially officers, administrators, units, faculty or staff (OCM).

- Content or events that, in your judgment, may present a reputational threat to GW (OCM).

The George Washington University Brand

Maintaining a strong, consistent brand is a vital part of maintaining GW's strength as an institution. Below are best practices for ensuring your content is in line with GW brand standards. More information can be found on the [GW Visual Identity website](#).

Referring to GW

When writing about or referring to the university, please be mindful of the following rules:

- The university's proper name is "the George Washington University."

- The "the" should only be capitalized at the beginning of a headline or sentence. In all other instances "the" should remain lower-case.

- As an acronym, always use "GW" and never "GWU."

- "George Washington" can be used to refer to the university, but only in cases where it is clear that you're referring to the university and not the person (e.g., George Washington is a university where faculty and students not only study the world, but change it.)

GW Logos

Do not create unofficial logos for the George Washington University. Official logos are [available to download](#) and use as you need. Guidance is also provided for when to use each type of logo. Never use a GW athletics logo on materials not related to GW athletics.

For information on logos specific to the Elliott School of International Affairs, please see [the section below](#).

GW Color Palette

GW's color palette is a highly visible and expressive component of our identity—and it's more than just buff and blue. The palette includes core primary, core accent and secondary colors to help you communicate your message and add variety.

The core primary colors define the GW brand. They are to be present across all communications and applications. The core accent colors are used to expand and add flexibility to your materials.

When using the GW color palette, you must keep digital accessibility in mind. GW has identified [accessible brand color combinations](#) for your convenience. You can also reference the [Digital Accessibility section](#) of this document.

Core Primary Colors

PANTONE **302 CP**	**PANTONE** **7503 CP**	WHITE

Pantone® 302

CMYK* 100/48/12/58
RGB 0/59/92
HEX 033C5A
HEX TV 063244
Madeira® 1162
Pantone® Metallic 10267**

Pantone® 7503

CMYK* 10/15/50/29
RGB 168/153/104
HEX AA9868
HEX TV 908065
Madeira® 1338
Pantone® Metallic 10347**

White

CMYK* 0/0/0/0
RGB 255/255/255
HEX FFFFFF
HEX TV FFFFFF

Accent Colors

PANTONE **2925 CP**	**PANTONE** **1205 CP**

Pantone® 2925

CMYK 85/21/0/0
RGB 0/156/222
HEX 0190DB
HEX TV 3C8FC9
Madeira® 1096
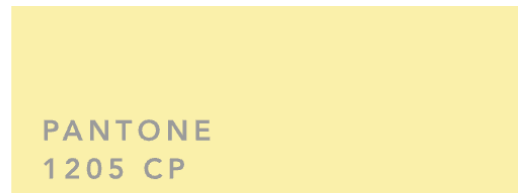
Pantone® 1205

CMYK 0/3/43/0
RGB 248/224/142
HEX F9E08E
HEX TV FFEDBA
Madeira® 1349

The Elliott School Brand

In addition to the general University-wide branding guidelines, the Elliott School of International Affairs has its own set of branding and messaging guidelines that are good to follow when creating content for social media.

Referring to the Elliott School

The Elliott School should always be referred to as the Elliott School in writing and never ESIA. It should always read as "the Elliott School" as opposed to "The Elliott School" unless at the beginning of a sentence.

If referencing both GW and the Elliott School together, it should read "the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs," unless at the beginning of a sentence. At the beginning of a sentence, "the" would be capitalized.

Elliott School Messaging

On the Elliott School faculty and staff resources blog, there are some central messages that you can use on social media to emphasize the reputation and uniqueness of both the Elliott School and GW as a whole. A few include:

- GW's Elliott School of International Affairs is a superb place to study international affairs because of our extraordinary comparative advantages.
- Our location in the heart of Washington, D.C., provides our students unparalleled access to U.S. and international organizations where internship and work experience enhance their classroom education.
- GW is one of only nine universities in the United States that has a school devoted exclusively to the study of international affairs. Our faculty consists of world-class scholars and renowned policy practitioners who deliver an innovative, interdisciplinary curriculum.

Elliott School Logos

The Public Affairs team does not create logos for initiatives or organizations within the Elliott School. You can access Elliott School-specific logos and templates on our resources blog.

Hashtags

On the central Elliott School accounts, there are a handful of hashtags that we like to use. These include: #OnlyAtGW, #RaiseHigh, #WeAreElliott, and #ElliottProud. It is best practice to work these into your copy and not use them all at the end of a message.

Social Media Platforms

The key to a successful social media strategy is understanding the various platforms and what your audience looks like on each one. The central Digital Content Team has provided some guidance, and the full commentary on each platform can be found at the bottom of the [social media website](#).

Facebook

Facebook's longer-form posts are great for sharing news content. Video performs particularly well on Facebook as it plays automatically when users scroll through their newsfeed. Live-streaming offers a great opportunity to broadcast to an audience that cannot participate in person, particularly for high-profile events where you want to maximize your audience.

The central Elliott School accounts have identified our primary audiences on Facebook to be older alumni, graduate students, and faculty.

X (Twitter)

X (formerly Twitter) is a fast-paced social media platform where people talk about things happening in the moment around the world. Even though the character count has increased in recent years, it is best to keep your messages short. Guidance on this platform is ever-evolving given constant changes under the new leadership, but you can always email elliottsocial@gwu.edu with any questions.

The central Elliott School accounts have identified our primary audiences on X (Twitter) to be alumni, faculty, media outlets, peer competitors, and thought leaders.

Instagram

Instagram is a mobile platform for sharing photos or videos. You can write descriptive captions, but good and compelling imagery is the most important part of a post. Instagram stories are almost like their own social platform within the app. Daily stories can be created with text, polls, Q&A, emojis or our GW gifs overlaying a photo or video.

The central Elliott School accounts have identified our primary audiences on Instagram to be prospective and current students, as well as young alumni.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional development platform. The central Elliott School accounts use this platform for brand awareness and reputation purposes. Faculty and alumni are also active here. LinkedIn account managers should have access or a path to confirm alumni status if you are trying to build community on this platform.

TikTok

TikTok is a short-form video platform with an algorithm that delivers its users highly individualized content. Users expect a rawer form of video on this platform as opposed to the highly produced videos of YouTube. The primary audience on this platform is Generation Z, but that diversifies by the day.

Threads

Threads is a brand-new social platform launched by Meta in the summer of 2023. It is important to consider that content that may have worked for Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, or TikTok will not translate directly to Threads. Although often referred to as a replacement or competitor for X, the tone of the platform is decidedly less formal.

The central Digital Content Team is closely monitoring this platform, and have begun posting experimentally to the GW University account. **There is no rush for GW-affiliated accounts to post to Threads at this time.**

Cadence & Content

A critical component to creating great social media accounts is identifying the cadence at which you would like to post, as well as your content streams. Different paces work for different platforms, and having a few consistent content streams will help you keep up.

Recommendations

Below is the general posting cadence that the central team would recommend for successful social media accounts. This may change depending on where you are in the academic year. For example, it may slow down in the summer but pick up around times like Commencement.

Platform		Cadence
Facebook	→	2-3 times a week
X (Twitter)	→	3-4 organic posts a week Re-post once a day if relevant content can be found
Instagram	→	2-3 times a week
Instagram Stories	→	As the opportunity presents itself. This lends itself well to posting a lot in one day, as it disappears in 24 hours.
LinkedIn	→	2-3 times a week
TikTok	→	When starting an account, daily is best. When your account's following has been established, this can slow down to 2-4 times a week.
Threads	→	Posting cadence not yet identified. Research is still being conducted by the Digital Content Team.

Content Streams

Identifying your content streams is a great way to ensure you always have something to post, even if you don't have time to come up with something organically. Some examples that you may want to consider are:

- The central Elliott School accounts
- GW Today
- GW University events calendar
- Central GW accounts (e.g., @gwuniversity, @gwadmissions, @gwalumni)
- News articles featuring faculty or relevant events

- Faculty social media (if they are posting about their work)
- Daily faculty media mentions email (if you receive it)

A list of social media accounts affiliated with the Elliott School can be found in the [Resources section](#) of this document.

Central Elliott School Accounts

The central Elliott School accounts are here to support you! Feel free to tag us in your content or re-share what we have posted to boost your own posting cadence. Those involved in event promotion have a variety of posting opportunities available to them from the Elliott School accounts, as discussed in the events training.

When there is a university-wide or Elliott School-wide announcement, please take the lead from the central GW or Elliott School accounts when posting about it. Feel free to reshare what these accounts put out either with or without commentary, but it is best practice not to share the news organically. Re-posting an existing post boosts our reach while ensuring the language around the announcement or news is approved and branded appropriately. Please do not take visuals from central accounts and edit them to fit your account's branding.

The central Elliott School accounts make an effort to recognize holidays and commemorative months at the lead of the Office of Communications & Marketing. If there are holidays that pertain to your accounts, but not necessarily the Elliott School as a whole, please feel free to share on your own. However, when possible, please take the lead from the Elliott School accounts and re-share what is posted.

Account Goal-Setting

Setting goals for each of the social media accounts you manage helps make sure each piece of content has a purpose and makes sense for your audience. Social media is very fast-moving, and without goals it becomes very easy to fall into the trap of posting for the sake of posting rather than because you want to communicate with your audiences.

Metrics-Based Goals

A great place to start with goal-setting is to look at your account's performance. Is there a certain type of content that performs best that you'd like to post more of? Maybe you want to increase the engagement on your posts by a certain percentage. Looking at your account's current performance will help you determine what a realistic goal would be that you can easily measure with reporting tools like Hootsuite and Sprout Social.

Content-Based Goals

If you're feeling like the content on your social media accounts lacks direction or seems haphazard, setting goals around this can be helpful to get back on track. A good goal to start with would be creating a pillar social media strategy.

In a pillar social media strategy, you identify three to five different themes that you want your posts to fall under. These serve as the pillars for your account, with the hope being that each piece of content you publish falls under at least one of these pillars. A post could fall under multiple pillars as well.

Digital Accessibility

When running accounts affiliated with GW, it is required to follow digital accessibility standards to ensure all content is accessible to our entire audience. GW offers a great digital accessibility training, but there are more tips and tricks to know for social media. You can always reach out to elliottsocial@gwu.edu with any questions regarding digital accessibility on social media. Standards and best practices can also be found on the Accessibility at GW website.

Alternative Text

Alternative (alt) text is used by those with visual impairments, cognitive challenges or technical limitations who may not be able to see the images that are on a webpage. The alt text is then displayed as plain text, read aloud via a screen reader, or output using a braille reader. **Alt text is required for all images posted to social media.**

Examples of Alt Text on Images

Good: Spring flowers bloom across Kogan Plaza

Okay: Kogan Plaza

Bad: Kogan

Good: GW Chair of the Board of Trustees, Grace E. Speights

Okay: Grace E. Speights

Bad: Speights headshot

Good: Accessibility at GW

Okay: Accessibility graphic

Bad: graphic

The Digital Content Team has identified five top tips for writing great alt text:

1 You don't need to describe everything, just what is important for the user to understand the image.

2 Write in plain language, avoid abbreviations. (e.g., "The Elliott School of International Affairs," not "ESIA")

3 Context matters when considering what details to include.
   a. For example, alt text for a photo of students working in a laboratory posted to the main GW University accounts may not identify the exact tools and technology being used. The same photo posted to the GW Engineering accounts might include that since it would be of interest to their audience.

4 Don't start your alt text with "photo of" or "image of." The assistive device will do this automatically, so if you do it, it creates a frustrating experience for the user.

5 Avoid using images with excessive copy. The Digital Content Team has a saying for this tip: "If it's a flyer, pin it. Don't post it." If you must post a graphic, keep in mind that the image should be treated as a billboard. Fewer details are better and more accessible.

Formatting Social Posts

Playing around with formatting when writing social media posts has been a popular trend when posting memes to brand accounts. One example of this is using manual spacing to create two columns in a tweet. This is not digitally accessible. Assistive devices will read left to right regardless of how many spaces you add, which results in your message being lost to anyone using one. **Do not force formatting not supported by the platform you are using.**

Fonts

Another popular meme trend has been to import fonts into social copy that a platform does not support. This may include bold, italic, or strikethrough text or a fancier font than the default. While it looks fun, assistive devices skip over anything like this as it is not supported by the platform and thus they do not know how to read it out. **Do not import any font or text format not supported natively by the platform.**

Capitalization

Yet another meme trend has been to play around with capitalization in copy, especially to indicate a mocking tone. You may have seen text in posts written "LiKe tHiS" intended to be funny. Assistive devices will start pronouncing a new word every time they see a capital letter, which results in anything written in this way to be lost in translation. In addition, neurodivergent individuals may struggle with this type of content and become overwhelmed when trying to understand it. **Use capitalization properly and do not play with it for meme purposes.**

Captions

When posting video content, captions are required to make it accessible. Facebook, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn allow you to upload a caption file when posting a video. TikTok has a

built-in caption feature that you can make use of very easily. Instagram does not have either of these options, which means you will need to burn the captions into your video before posting it.

Hashtags

Hashtags are a great way to create branded content or find content to re-share to your accounts. There is an accessible way to do this, and it's super easy. **Capitalize the first letter of each word in your hashtag, #LikeThis**. As previously mentioned, assistive devices begin reading a new word when they see a capital letter, so this will ensure the hashtag is read out correctly. In contrast, not capitalizing the first letter of each word will result in the assistive device smashing all the words together in one run-on phrase.

Another way to make your hashtag usage as accessible as possible is to **incorporate your hashtags into your social copy instead of dumping them all at the end**. Choose a couple of hashtags that make sense for your post, and work them into your writing.

Good Example	→	In a true #OnlyAtGW moment, our students had the opportunity to present their research at the Department of State! We are so #ElliottProud of them.
Bad Example	→	Our students presented their research at the Department of State! #onlyatgw #elliottproud #statedepartment #students #deptofstate #research #college

Emojis

Emojis can be super fun and a great way to liven up your content. It's important to follow a few rules when it comes to using them:

- Place emojis at the end of your content. This is the most accessible way for assistive devices to read them. Accessible Social has a great example of what happens when you use emojis as bullet points.
- Use the default skin tone for emojis with a selection to choose from whenever possible. This way, assistive devices will read it as "hand-raise emoji" instead of "hand-raise emoji skin tone five," which can become confusing.
- **Do not create pictures with emojis**. Assistive devices will read out the code for each emoji, resulting in a frustrating experience for the user and your message being completely lost. Accessible Social has another great example of what this sounds like.

Resources

GW Communications & Marketing

- [University social media policy](#)
- [Social media tips and tricks](#)
- [GW Visual Identity](#)
- [Make a Canva account](#)
  - [Access GW-branded templates](#)

Elliott School of International Affairs

- [Elliott School social media site](#)
- [Elliott School branding/design tips and tricks](#)
- [Elliott School logos and templates](#)
- [Affiliated accounts list](#)
- [Flickr account](#) (find photos here)

Digital Accessibility

- [Digital accessibility training video](#)
- [Standards and best practices](#)
- [GW brand color accessible combinations](#)
- [WebAIM color contrast checker](#)
- [Accessible Social website](#)
  - [Order the Accessible Social book](#)

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