'Don't affect the share price':

Social media policy in higher education as reputation management

Introduction

- analysis of social media policies from 14 UK HEIs

- policy text analysis

- what do these policy texts reveal about UK HE?

My main points

- blur lines between corporate communication and L&T advice

- marketing- rather than pedagogy-driven

- enhance brand/protect reputation

- more about control than guidance

- 'new managerialism' (Deem 1998)

What is social media?

Getting social media wrong 1

Kingston
University
London

Getting social media wrong 2

Some replies …

James Lawless
@lawlessj

RT @StarbucksIE: Happy hour is on! Show us what makes you proud to be British.#MyFrappuccino bit.ly/JlXOcu >> 800 years oppression?

↩ Reply   ⇄ Retweet   ★ Favorite

The Ringmar affair

My mistake was to use the freedom of speech to discuss the institution itself – the LSE and English academia. Freedom of speech is fine […] but only as long as speaking freely did not deter prospective students from applying. In an era of commercialized education, the limits to freedom of speech are set by the market. (Ringmar 2007: 44)

Don't affect the share price?

The simple rule for everyone should be *don't affect the share price*, no matter what technology you are using.

Derek Morrison
Associate Head of e-Learning, HEA

My questions

- Who was responsible for creating policy?

- Did this inform policy aims and language?

- What are the policy aims?

- What is the rationale for the policy?

- What are the policy 'levers'?

Methodology?

•Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) the 'inspiration'

•'"critical" implies showing connections and causes that are hidden' (Fairclough 1992: 9)

My corpus of policy texts

•convenience sampling

•purposive, nonprobability sampling?

- ▪ England, Scotland and Wales
- ▪ chartered in C19th (Durham)
- ▪ red brick (Bristol)
- ▪ plate glass (Essex)
- ▪ post '92 (LJMU)

Q. 1: who created policy?

Location of policy

Marketing (7/14)	HR (3/14)	Other (4/14)
Aberystwyth University	University of Central Lancashire	Heriot Watt University
University College London	Durham University	University of Essex
University of Glamorgan	University of Surrey	Open University
University of Huddersfield		Robert Gordon University
University of Leicester		
Liverpool John Moores University		
Oxford Brookes University		

Q. 2: does this inform policy?

Example from marketing

It is important to be mindful that we may attract negative as well as positive comments. Correct handling of such comments can serve to promote LJMU as a responsive, helpful organisation that aims for ***high levels of customer service*** [emphasis mine].

Liverpool John Moores University

Example from HR department

An individual is free to talk about the University. However instances where the University is brought into disrepute may constitute misconduct or gross misconduct and ***disciplinary action will be applied*** [emphasis mine].

University of Surrey

University of Essex policy

- to encourage good practice

- to protect the University, its staff and students

- to clarify where and how existing policies and guidelines apply to social media

- to promote effective and innovative use of social media as part of the University's activities

Q. 3: What is the rationale?

Brand management 1

Social media presents an opportunity but also a challenge for ***brand and reputation management*** [emphasis mine].

University of Leicester

Brand management 2

An organisation's brand is moving from being what it says it is on its website or in its adverts and brochures to being what its customers (or those who have experienced the company) say it is and tell other people it is. Frequently the arena for these conversations comprises […] social media tools and technologies …

Open University

Control of messages

It is important […] that OU engagement is undertaken with ***a common voice*** [emphasis mine] and does not contribute a plurality of, or conflicting, messages.

Open University

Q. 4: what are the policy aims?

Promote and protect

The purpose of the social media policy is to ***promote the interests*** [emphasis mine] of the University of Glamorgan within the realms of social media whilst ***protecting the integrity of the University*** [emphasis mine] ...

University of Glamorgan

Reputation management 1

The purpose of this guidance is ***to protect the reputation*** [emphasis mine] of employees of Durham University and the University as a whole from abuse via staff usage of social networking and personal internet sites.

Durham University

Reputation management 2

In order to promote student and staff safety and reduce legal, operational, financial and ***reputational risk*** [emphasis mine] to the University, all staff who use Web 2.0 services are responsible for compliance with this policy.

Heriot-Watt University

Q. 5: what are the policy levers?

Disciplinary action 1

… you are free to talk about UCLan on your site. However, you must avoid bringing the University into disrepute in any way, as this may constitute gross misconduct as listed in the Disciplinary Procedure in the staff handbook.

University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)

Disciplinary action 2

Anybody is free to talk about the University on social media sites. However, please be aware that disparaging or untrue remarks which may bring the University, its staff or students into disrepute may constitute misconduct and disciplinary action may be applied.

University of Huddersfield

Disciplinary action 3

Staff whose use of Web 2.0 services, whether for work or private use, exposes the University to risk of legal liability, operational, financial or reputational loss may be subject to disciplinary sanctions.

Heriot-Watt University

Social media users register 1

If you already have a social networking site or intend to initiate one which indicates in any way that you work at UCLan you should inform your manager.

University of Central Lancashire

Social media users register 2

All proposals to establish new social media presences related to learning and teaching, with an anticipated life-span of under 4 months, must be submitted to the Social Media Officer and where necessary reviewed by the Social Media Group.

Aberystwyth University

Social media users register 3

All new accounts to be set up on social media sites including (but not exclusive to) Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube, should be approved by the Web Team before they are created. […]. Links from www.glam.ac.uk to unapproved Facebook or Twitter accounts will be removed.

University of Glamorgan

Social media users register 4

In particular any official University social networking site/group must be approved by the University's Social Media Overview Group. A central record will be kept of all approved sites.

University of Essex

Social media users register 5

Get in touch with us! Let us know what you've set up: we'll add you to the list of UCL social media users on this site, and also try to keep you up to date with central social media developments.
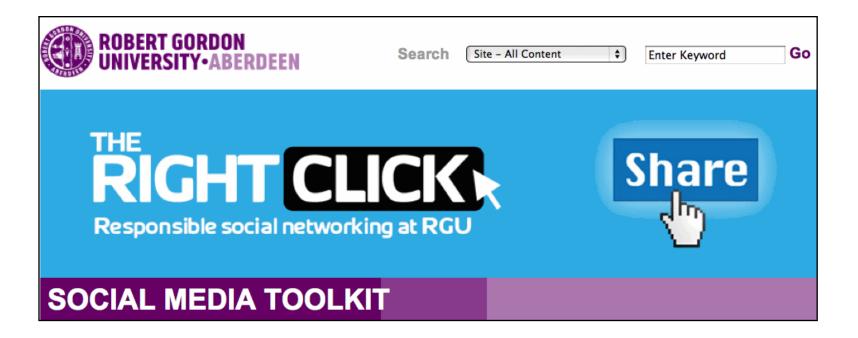
University College London

Conclusion

•alternative title: *the presentation of universities in everyday life*

•Erving Goffman (1959)

•'impression management' – 'front stage'

•messy business of disagreement kept 'backstage'

The way forward?

•less fear and defensiveness

•a more 'light touch' approach

•cross-departmental/faculty collaboration

•close involvement of students and academic staff

Robert Gordon University

This presentation

goo.gl/hl9Ov