REPORTING STANDARDS

Social Media

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trust in media

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INTRODUCTION

This document contains the Reporting Standards for Social Media.

The PDF versions of the Reporting Standards are issued at a certain point in time. As Reporting Standards are updated periodically, please check the website https://www.abc.org.uk/reporting-standards to ensure you are using the latest applicable standards.

Each section of the Reporting Standards may contain the following:

- Definition
- Principles
- Requirements
- Reporting
- Guidance

If you are after a quick understanding of the key points of any section then the definition and principles will provide an overview.

The guidance sections provide examples of how the requirements might be complied with. We will add to or amend these over time where we consider there may be a benefit following the identification of specific circumstances or requests for advice.

If you have any queries regarding how the Reporting Standards affect you or any specific queries please contact the ABC Client Services team on 01442 870 800 or email info@abc.org.uk

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SOCIAL MEDIA

DEFINITION

The measurement of a product's defined Social Media metric(s).

PRINCIPLES

1. **Prior notification of Social Media metric(s) details to ABC**

2. **Social Media metric(s) reported separately**

3. **Evidence to support the claim must be retained and made available for a minimum period**

REQUIREMENTS

1. **Prior notification of Social Media metric(s) details to ABC.**

    a) You must obtain ABC's agreement in advance that your Social Media metric(s) is/are capable of being recorded and checked. This will include:

        i) The particular Social Media metric(s) to be certified

        ii) The specific product to be certified. *For example by URL*

2. **Social Media metric(s) reported separately**

    a) The Social Media metric count will be that recorded on the last working day of a month. The audit will not verify the authenticity of the original source data included in the count.

    b) Data for different products or Social Media will not be aggregated.

3. **Evidence to support the claim must be retained and made available for a minimum period**

    a) For all Social Media reported, you must be able to provide any records relevant to the claim, including those necessary to support any optional metrics or analyses reported.

    b) Records supporting the claim must be retained, and made available to us on request (in accordance with the ABC Byelaws), until we have completed the audit of the subsequent certificate, unless we agree otherwise.

REPORTING

You will report Social Media as follows, which will be reported on the ABC Certificate:

1. By each specific product showing:

    a) The URL (or if not available the name identifying the product). *For example: http://twitter.com/ABC_UK, ABC Today App*

    b) The Social Media type. *For example: Facebook, Line*

    c) The Social Media metric. *For example: Facebook Likes, Twitter Followers*

    d) The metric count.

2. As a minimum, the metric count on the last working day of the last month covered by the Certificate.

3. As an option:

    a) By metric count on the last working day of each month covered by the Certificate.

    And/or

    b) The average of the metric counts on the last working day of each month covered by the Certificate.

4. You must report Social Media for the relevant Reporting Period, which will be a whole calendar month or any combination of consecutive calendar months (up to a maximum of 12).

    a) If you are reporting a particular Social Media metric for the first time this may commence part way through the period covered by the certificate.

    b) To remain registered you must report Social Media data for certification at least once a year, as follows:

        i) Within 12 months of registering with ABC.

        ii) Subsequent certificates must have Reporting Period end dates that are within 12 months of each other. For example: a certificate for a period ending 31st December 2025 must be followed by a certificate ending no later than 31st December 2026.

5. You may include two or more separate Social Media counts on a single certificate (these can be from different brands):

    a) They will be listed individually, with a figure for each.

    b) They must each fall within the same Reporting Period , being a whole calendar month or any combination of consecutive calendar months (up to a maximum of 12).

6. All products will appear in the relevant data tables and reports. However, where you're reporting products to these Reporting Standards on an ABC Brand Report or Group Report, you may ask us to not publish the individual certificate(s).

GUIDANCE

G2. Social Media metric(s) reported separately

a) We will need to access the reported Social Media product. The metric counts may be confirmed by simply viewing publicly available data or via the use of other technologies. We will agree in advance the process for submission of your claims to us and how we will confirm the metric count(s).

RETURN FORM SUBMISSION, AUDIT, CERTIFICATION

DEFINITION

The Return Form is a submission in which the Social Media claim is reported to ABC for certification. Each Social Media claim is subject to audit.

PRINCIPLES

1. **A Return Form must be submitted for the registered product for every applicable Reporting Period**
2. **The Return Form must be submitted by the Submission Deadline**
3. **ABC will issue a Certificate based on the Return Form**
4. **Each claim is audited to verify it is in accordance with the applicable Reporting Standards**

REQUIREMENTS

1. **A Return Form must be submitted for every applicable Reporting Period**

    a) You must submit a Return Form for the Reporting Period you have chosen to report. To remain registered we must ordinarily issue certificates at least once a year but please contact us if the product's frequency/availability is irregular.

    b) We will advise you how to submit your Return Form and by when. *For example, online via the ABC return website. However, if you have not heard from us at the appropriate time please contact us.*

    c) You will submit your Return Form to us, authorised by an appropriate individual representing your organisation.

    d) Whilst our systems contain some arithmetic and logic validation processes, the accuracy of the Return Form remains your responsibility.

    e) Estimates and assumptions must not be made on the Return Form unless the Reporting Standards allow for them, or we have authorised them.

2. **The Return Form must be submitted by the Submission Deadline**

    a) We will inform you of the applicable Submission Deadline.

    b) It is your responsibility to ensure Return Forms are submitted by the Submission Deadline. Failure to do so can result in a penalty and/or cancellation of your product's ABC registration under the ABC Byelaws.

3. **ABC will issue a Certificate based on the Return Form**

    a) We will publish the certified data on our website subject to any timing criteria applicable to the sector. We may also make arrangements to provide our data to be published via commercial data providers and to those who subscribe to our data services.

    b) We will confirm when your Social Media figures will become publicly available, normally 5 working days after a draft Certificate has been sent to you.

4. **Each claim is audited to verify it is in accordance with the applicable Reporting Standards**

    a) The audit must be carried out by ABC Staff Auditors.

    b) Requirements in relation to the auditor and audits will be covered by the ABC Byelaws, ABC Audit Programmes and contractual arrangements.

c) If following an audit we identify material problems with the Return Form or Certificate, then we will propose to revise the claim. If a Certificate has already been issued we will issue an updated certificate that identifies the changes. This replaces your original Certificate and must be used in its place. The process is as follows:

i) We will send you a letter detailing the reason/problem giving rise to the amendment.

ii) You will have 10 working days from the receipt of this letter to provide any further information to us, or object to the revision of the claim.

iii) If you wish to object to the revision of the claim you must do this in writing to the Director of Audit who will investigate and provide a decision within 10 working days. If the objection is to a decision by the Director of Audit or the Chief Executive then the first level of appeal will be in accordance with the Review Procedure detailed in the ABC Byelaws.

iv) Subsequent Certificates will not be issued until we have resolved all queries on a previous audit and issued the updated Certificate, if applicable.