

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**  
**OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR**  
**POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to regulate the official use of the University's Social Media channels.

Users of the University's social media channels are required to demonstrate high standards of ethics and conduct and to act responsibly when they exchange ideas and information on the University's social media networks.

Further, users must understand that they have responsibilities as representatives of the University and that their actions can have either a positive or a negative impact on the public image and reputation of the University.

This document aims to protect the University from any unexpected outcome resulting from the use of social media on behalf of the University.

This policy supplements the University's internet and email policies.

**2. Organisational scope**

This policy applies to all official social media activity undertaken by users of the University's social media networks, including but not limited to students, academic and other staff as well as third-party suppliers representing the University.

Non-compliance with this policy and the procedures described in it may constitute misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken against staff members and/or students.

**3. Policy statement**

The University embraces the evolution and use of social media as a tool of communicating in the global world.

Given that social media afford users a public platform to express themselves, it is important that the University establishes clear guidelines regarding responsible behaviour, standards of conduct and expectations that users must adhere to when using social media for official purposes (refer to Social Media Guidelines).

Users are expected to be mindful of the fact that any official activity on public platforms has an impact on the image of the University, and users should at all times refrain from any activity that can tarnish this image. It should also be noted that certain conduct may be regarded as misconduct in terms of the provisions of the relevant Disciplinary Code and Procedure of the University, and that it may also constitute a criminal offence, in which case offenders may be prosecuted by the authorities. The guidelines, rules and regulations governing users' conduct during normal interaction in the University's Code of Conduct also apply to users' conduct online.

It is the policy of the University to allow freedom of expression, academic freedom and the right of association. However, users are expected to exercise these rights in a responsible manner so as not to injure another party in any way.

### **3.1 Definition of terms**

- 3.1.1 Social media: any website or medium that allows for public communication, including but not limited to social and professional networking sites, blogs, micro-blogging sites, video- and photo-sharing sites, forums, discussion boards and groups, podcasting sites and instant messaging services (including short messaging services (SMSs)).
- 3.1.2 University: University of Pretoria
- 3.1.3 Users: students, part-time and full-time employees, contractors and third-party suppliers and/or those authorised to generate content for social media platforms associated with the University
- 3.1.4 Undesirable conduct: inclusive of, but not limited to, the generation of content that is detrimental to the image or reputation of the University, that is defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing and/or libellous, or conduct that may create a hostile work environment.

### **3.2 Personal use of social media**

- 3.2.1 Personal use of social media must be conducted in a manner that indicates no link or association with the University. For this reason personal use is not covered in this policy.
- 3.2.2 The University will, however, take necessary steps should users make use of social media in a manner that has a direct, indirect or potential impact on the University's reputation or interests.

### **3.3 Authority**

- 3.3.1 Users must establish with their division, supervisors and, where necessary, the Office of the Registrar if their intended actions are authorised. The Registrar is the owner of this policy.

## **4. Use of social media for the University**

Users must –

- 4.1 only disclose and discuss information about the University or its activities which are not confidential and are publicly available;
- 4.2 take reasonable steps to ensure that content published is accurate and not misleading;
- 4.3 ensure that the use of social media complies with the relevant rules of the University and the terms of use of the relevant social media;
- 4.4 comply with the laws of the country, for instance those on copyright, privacy, defamation, discrimination and harassment; and
- 4.5 always be respectful and courteous when using social media.

## 5. Use of images and videos

- 5.1 Caution must be exercised before releasing images or videos that are identifiable, and preferably permission must be obtained before release.
- 5.2 Care must be taken when dealing with population groups such as minors, patients or research subjects.

## 6. Responsibility for implementation

Deans, directors and heads of academic and support service departments, as well as student leaders, must ensure that the provisions regarding the acceptable use of social media are complied with, and they should take reasonable steps to ensure that all users take note of the contents of this policy.

## 7. Policy life cycle

This policy should be reviewed every five (5) years.

## 8. Document metadata

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