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**University of Pretoria**

*Social Media Guidelines*

**Purpose**

Social media have developed into popular communication tools that now form an integral part of the lives of people. Guidelines for the use of social media have been developed by the University of Pretoria (UP) to facilitate the use of social media as a communication tool and to provide support and guidance for users of UP social media platforms. In addition, the aims of the guidelines are to ensure quality content and standardised and structured social media procedures in line with University policies, and to protect the University from any unexpected or undesirable outcomes resulting from the use of social media. These guidelines will enable the University to engage in social media conversations with current and potential students and stakeholders of UP. The official use of social media at UP is governed by the University’s internet and email policies that outline acceptable as well as unacceptable behaviour when using the internet. **(Web and email policy to be linked here – in progress)**

The ongoing development of technology and social media platforms, and also the collective experience that the University gains in the use of social media, will require that this policy be updated regularly.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all official social media activities undertaken by users of UP social media channels, including but not limited to students and employees of UP as well as third-party suppliers representing the University.

**Exceptions**

These guidelines apply to social media accounts created for the purpose of officially representing UP and its faculties, programmes and entities, and do not apply to personal social media accounts. These broad guidelines for students as well as academic and general staff aim to ensure applicability and adaptability to all UP faculties and departments.

**Clarification**

In view of the fact that faculties and departments could have different communication, information technology and information management structures and approval processes, University employees should consult with their line managers to establish the relevant authorisation and approval processes in their departments.

**Definitions**

**Content generator**: A person authorised to generate content for social media platforms associated with UP.

**Community manager**: A person appointed to post, share and moderate content and to give feedback to fans or followers on any social media page that is owned by UP.

**Social media**: Social media refer to internet- and web-based technologies that people use to communicate with one another and receive and share news and. Types of social media include platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Flickr, LinkedIn and YouTube, as well as blogs and podcasts.

**Social media accounts**: These are accounts or profiles created on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and LinkedIn.

**Social media best practices**: These consist of widely recognised guidelines, ethical considerations, and conventions for creating successful social media campaigns and accounts.

**Guidelines**

**User experience management**

**Engage with users** – All UP’s social media accounts should be managed to encourage user interaction, increase engagement and keep fan bases or followers informed.

# Content generation and community management

**Understand your audience** – Content generators and community managers should understand their audience and provide them with content that they can relate to. At the same time the underlying messages posted about UP should be transparent and consistent and in line with the University’s brand and values.

**Keep content clean** – Be an ambassador for your faculty/department and keep your social media postings legal, ethical, respectful of others and free of undesirable content. Posted content should, for example, not be threatening, obscene, in violation of intellectual property rights or privacy laws, or otherwise injurious or illegal. Community managers must be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures.

**Be consistent** – Fans and followers should be provided with regular, informative and accessible content that allows them to become part of a wider UP online community.

**Be neutral** – Do not use faculty or departmental social media to promote personal projects or endorse commercial enterprises, non-University causes or personal opinions.

**Adjust your tone** – When writing for social media, adjust your tone so that it is appropriate for your audience and in line with the University’s tone of voice (please refer to the UP Brand and Corporate Identity Policy).

**Add value** – Add value through your social media interactions by contributing valuable content or answering specific questions.

**Use correct language** – Corporate social media networks should use English as the language of communication, and community managers should ensure that spelling and grammar are correct.   
**Use appropriate images and graphics** – Community managers should ensure that all imagery and graphics used, such as cover pictures, backgrounds and images that accompany posts, are in line with UP’s corporate identity and brand guidelines.

**Handling of negativity, complaints and general comments**

**Be helpful and polite** – All comments and enquiries by social media fans and stakeholders should be attended to in a helpful and polite manner.

**Keep to response time** – General comments, queries and complaints should be attended to within a specified response time. It is proposed that matters raised during the week be responded to within 24 hours while matters raised over a weekend be responded to on the following Monday*.*

**How to respond** – Answers to frequently asked questions should be generated for all common questions and general enquiries. It is also a good idea to direct fans or followers to the University’s website for more information.

**What to do if you are uncertain about a response** – If community managers are uncertain about how to respond to a query or comment, they should acknowledge the query/comment and ask for the customer’s contact details. It is proposed that a community manager should then pass the query on to the relevant contact person who will supply the appropriate response to the community manager within a specified response time.

**How to handle complaints** – In case of a complaint, a community manager can use a standard response to acknowledge a user’s opinion, request the user’s contact details, take the complaint offline and provide an answer within a stipulated time frame. All high-priority, serious or critical complaints must be directed to the relevant contact persons immediately.

**How to attend to negative comments** – Social media posts that could have a negative impact on UP’s reputation should, as a precautionary measure to protect the University, be escalated to the Department of University Relations (Communication and Marketing Division) immediately. Community managers are advised to handle negative perceptions of the brand by following public relations and customer services principles.

**Promote transparency** – Do not delete negative posts or tweets unless they contain content that is profane, racist, sexist, intolerant of religion or is otherwise inappropriate or undesirable.

**Turn negatives into positives** – Try to place emphasis on positive aspects or to point out other possibilities.

**Dealing with campaigns, third-party applications and user data capturing**

**Campaign entry forms** – Third-party applications, for instance entry forms developed for Facebook, must comply with UP policies with regard to design, development, hosting, security (SSL certificate), and user data storage procedures. Contact the web office in the Client Service Centre for advice

**Compliance** – All social media campaigns must be conducted in compliance with the South African Consumer Protection Act, 2008 (Act 68 of 2008) and the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act 4 of 2013).

**Platform rules** – Social media campaigns must comply with the rules and terms and conditions of the social platform it is rolled out on, for instance, Facebook states that no Facebook functionality may be used as an entry mechanism.

**Terms and conditions** – All social media campaigns must provide terms and conditions that are easily accessible to users.

**Campaign footnotes** – All social media campaigns must be accompanied by a footnote on the entry form stating that users are providing their information to the University of Pretoria and not to the social media platform.

**Campaign data** – All user data gathered through campaigns must be provided to UP. The responsible agency and UP must keep a record of each campaign database for three years.

**Social media teams**

**Content generators** – Each for institutional UP social media platform must have at least one designated employee who is identified as being responsible content.

**Administrators** – Each social media account must be assigned either an internal employee or designated service provider to be responsible for administering the account.

**Social media partners** – All social media partners must be declared to UP.

**Responsibilities** of content generators and community managers

**Respect copyright laws** – By posting content to any social media platform, the community manager confirms that UP owns or otherwise has all rights required to lawfully use that content, or that the use of that content is permitted in terms of fair use principles.

**Be accurate** – Ensure your social media content is accurate and make every reasonable effort to avoid communicating inaccurate, deceptive or false information via a social media platform.

**Comply** – Get the necessary departmental approvals for the social media initiatives that you launch on behalf of the department.

**Establish trust** – When engaging in social media always act honestly to ensure your credibility is maintained.

**Ensure confidentiality** – If you have any questions about whether information is confidential or proprietary, or if you have doubts of any kind, speak to your line manager before releasing information that could potentially harm or embarrass UP.

**Use the voice of the University** – If you post content as a UP representative, this content should be conveyed in the same positive, optimistic voice that UP uses in all its communications.

**Adhere to terms and conditions** – The terms and conditions of each social media platform must at all times be respected and adhered to.

**Supply usernames and passwords** – All social media usernames and passwords (where applicable) must be supplied to UP for secure storage.

**Establish e-mail accounts** – All social media email accounts and all account recovery accounts must have valid @up.ac.za accounts or aliases.

**Create social media accounts** – The creation of social media accounts for the purpose of representing UP or its faculties must be approved by the relevant UP staff members.

**Ethical principles in short[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Social media users should keep the following ethical principles (that we have called Rise-UP) in mind and undertake to adhere to them every time they go online:

**R – Responsibility** Use the social media platform responsibly and only for its intended purpose. Take responsibility for what you post and the effects it could have.

**I – Integrity** Maintain your ethical wholeness online by following the same moral principles that guide your daily life when you are offline.

**S – Security** Secure your profile/account by protecting your username and password. Do not click on or post links that may contain malware. Do not share personal details. Beware of phishing schemes.

**E – Equality** Treat all people and their diverse views and opinions as equally worthy of respect. Promote equality regarding access to information by being helpful to others who want to learn how to use social media platforms.

The following preventative and awareness measures are recommended: [[2]](#footnote-2)

* + When signing in to a UP social media platform, a pop-up window with information on the intended use of the platform and required principles of behaviour could appear. In order to access the site the UP user must click a check box to acknowledge having read and understood the statement.
  + All UP role players should be informed of the UP Social Media Policy, for instance, as follows:
    1. All first-year students should be introduced to this policy during orientation.
    2. All other students should be made aware of UP social media policies via standard communication avenues, such as ClickUP and the student portal.
    3. All lecturing and non-lecturing staff should be trained (for instance at workshops) to understand, use and interpret the policy and related information ethics issues. The African Centre of Excellence in Information Ethics (ACEIE) develops awareness programmes on matters related to information ethics, such as the use and abuse of social media and related policies. The ACEIE is able to assist with training-the-trainer initiatives.
  + From a legal perspective it could be beneficial to include a general disclaimer on UP social media platforms.
  + Raising awareness (marketing) of Rise-UP principles of online behaviour could include printing Rise-UP in study guides, including it on ClickUP pages, printing and distributing Rise-UP as bookmarks, printing it on student cards and publishing it in the *Perdeby*.

**Legal aspects**

All terms and conditions and any other legal disclaimer or requirement must be approved by the University of Pretoria Legal Services Division.

**Confidentiality/Security**

The information contained in this document is confidential UP information and may not be disclosed to any party outside its intended audience without the written permission of the University of Pretoria.

**Enquiries**

The Department of University Relations manages the corporate social media accounts for the University of Pretoria and enquiries can be directed to the Communication and Marketing Division of this department. Technical/web enquiries can be directed to the web office in the Client Service Centre.

1. African Centre of Excellence in Information Ethics [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. African Centre of Excellence in Information Ethics [↑](#footnote-ref-2)