

1. Purpose of policy

1.1 The University encourages the use of social media channels by staff, students and associates to connect with each other and a broader community of researchers, business partners, alumni, supporters and colleagues as an important tool of academic, community, and business engagement, research and learning.

1.2 With the rapid growth and application of social media, USC recognises the need to provide clear guidance about the University's expectations when social media is used as part of employment, study or in association with the University. In particular, this policy emphasises the expectations of a safe, inclusive, diverse and supportive learning environment as set out in the USC Student Charter – students and staff of the University can expect to be treated with courtesy and respect, regardless of the communication channel.

2. Policy scope and application

2.1 This policy applies to all use of social media (except for non-identifiable private use of social media, as defined below) by all staff and students of USC, as well as any other members of the University community to whom the USC Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy applies.

2.2 This policy applies to all social media. Without limiting the scope of its application, social media is described under Definitions below.

2.3 This policy covers future social media systems, and access to social media by any means regardless of ownership, including via computer, tablet, mobile phone, handheld or wearable device.

2.4 In addition to this policy, all members of the University community are advised to consult the Social Media – General Guidelines that complement this policy. For information about how official USC social media channels are managed by the Marketing and External Engagement team, staff are also directed to consult the Social Media – Guidelines for USC Use (staff only access via MyUSC). Further Staff Guidelines may be developed as required.

3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to these procedures and are critical to its effectiveness:

Official USC social media refers to any public social media account, group or site that seeks to represent USC as a whole or in part for promotional purposes, including (but not limited to) promoting USC initiatives, research or events. Official USC social media is managed by, or in consultation with, Marketing and External Engagement.

Non-identifiable private use of social media is use of social media by a member of the University community in a way that does not associate the user with the University; and does not impact on the University or a member of the USC community in ways that could be reasonably considered to be inconsistent with section 4 of the Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy or section 4 of the Student Conduct – Governing Policy.

Social media are interactive forms of electronic communication (such as websites and internet-based applications) that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking or activities. Without limiting the use of the term to describe the phenomenon as a whole, examples of social media include:

- social and professional networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Bebo, Yammer), including official and unofficial pages on social and professional networking sites that are set up by individuals, groups, clubs and societies
- geo-spatial tagging sites (e.g. FourSquare)
- blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs
- micro-blogging sites (e.g. Twitter)
- news services and aggregators, including feedback and commentary discussion forums
- video and photo sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Instagram)
- wikis and online collaborations (e.g. Wikipedia)
- forums, discussion boards and groups (e.g. Google groups, Whirlpool, Reddit)
- vodcasting and podcasting sites
- online multiplayer gaming platforms (e.g. World of Warcraft, Second Life)

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Vice-Chancellor and President

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Chief Operating Officer

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Director, Information Technology

FIRST APPROVED

26 October 2017

LAST AMENDED

9 November 2017

EFFECTIVE START DATE

30 October 2017

REVIEW DATE

26 October 2022

STATUS

Active

- instant messaging (including SMS)

4. Use of social media

4.1 Conditions of use

4.1.1 Given the public and ubiquitous nature of social media, it is important staff and students are aware that the standards of behaviours that apply in 'real life' for interacting with others within and outside the USC community also apply to online interactions. The same respect, courtesy and professionalism expected in real life interactions should be displayed online. Likewise, the consequences that apply for breaching University policies and procedures including the Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy and the Student Conduct – Governing Policy apply to breaches of conduct in an online environment.

4.1.2 The University provides students, staff and bona fide members of the USC community with access to University Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, including connections to internet networks. All use of ICT facilities and connections, including use of social media, is subject to the Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources – Governing Policy, as well as relevant University policies and procedures relating to conduct, which include, but are not limited to:

- Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Bullying and Harassment (Staff) – Governing Policy
- Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Bullying and Harassment (Students) – Governing Policy
- Conflict of Interest – Governing Policy
- Sexual Harassment Prevention (Students) – Governing Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy
- Student Academic Integrity – Governing Policy
- Student Conduct – Governing Policy
- Student General Misconduct – Procedures

4.1.3 Where a person uses social media services not provided by the University, they are expected to abide by the relevant University policies and procedures when undertaking any activity as a student, staff member or member of the USC community, or while engaged in any activity which may identify the University or impact on the University or on members of the USC community.

4.1.4 Staff may share their expertise through social media. Where comment is made on a matter which is directly related to their area of expertise, staff may establish their credentials by using their title, affiliation with USC, and link to their staff or research profile. It may be necessary to include a disclaimer which states that the opinions expressed do not necessarily represent that of USC.

4.1.5 Requests for staff to act as spokespersons on behalf of the University through social media are managed through referral to Marketing and External Engagement.

4.1.6 Only official USC social media accounts and public groups may use the USC logo or branding, or purport to represent USC. Advice and approval of this use of social media is provided through Marketing and External Engagement.

4.1.7 USC, as an institution, has an obligation to use social media in a way that complies with various regulatory requirements of public sector organisations, including appropriate recordkeeping and Right to Information.

4.1.8 The responsible use of social media for activities undertaken by student groups and associations or individual students is encouraged by the University. However, this use is independent of the University, in the sense that these organisations and individuals do not represent the views of the University nor hold any official role in the University's media management.

4.2 Social media for University promotion

4.2.1 The University uses various social media services provided by external providers (for example Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) as key marketing channels to promote the University. Such activity occurs through official USC social media accounts and is also subject to the conditions outlined in the Marketing and External Engagement – Managerial Policy and the Social Media – Guidelines for USC Use (available for staff access on MyUSC).

4.2.2 Reputation is crucial to USC's future as it affects the University's ability to recruit students and staff, and to attract funding for teaching and research. Reputation is influenced by people's contact with USC, by what others say about USC, and by what they see and hear about USC in various media, including social media.

4.2.3 As custodians of the USC brand and the University's corporate identity, Marketing and External Engagement must approve any social media account or site that seeks to represent USC as a whole or in part. This includes any account or site that is established for promotional purposes, including (but not limited to) promoting USC initiatives, research or events. In addition, Marketing and External Engagement may, at its discretion, require the deactivation of any non-official social media account that seeks to represent USC as a whole or in part.

4.3 Use of social media for learning, teaching, and research

4.3.1 In addition to the use of social media for University promotion as identified under section 4.2, staff and students may wish to use social media for teaching and learning, to conduct research or for other purposes which relate to the academic activities of the University. This reflects the University's encouragement of the use of new technology in innovative ways to the benefit of the University and the University community.

4.3.2 Persons responsible for managing the use of social media for academic purposes should make users aware of their responsibilities and the expectations set out in this and other University-related policy and procedures.

4.3.3 Where possible, the use of social media for academic purposes should occur in private (closed or unlisted) groups or settings, and be limited to the duration of the academic activity. For example, a social media group or channel created for learning and teaching in a particular course should be restricted to current course participants, and the account closed at the conclusion of the relevant teaching period. This requirement is not designed to restrict teaching and learning practice, but to protect the University, its staff and students from unexpected or unintended risks and consequences that can arise from public use of social media.

4.3.4 Social media created for academic purposes must not seek to represent USC as a whole or in part. Such accounts must not use the USC logo or branding, or USC promotional images or assets. Persons responsible for managing the use of social media for academic purposes must include a disclaimer that the account is not an official USC communication channel, and that any content or information posted by or within the account does not represent the University or its views.

4.3.5 Staff who wish to use social media in the conduct of research and who require an association with the USC brand to do so, must consult with Marketing and External Engagement as well as the Office of Research to determine the appropriate strategy.

4.4 Identifiable private use of social media

4.4.1 Staff and students who engage in "identifiable private use" on any social media are required to comply with the University's policies and procedures as set out in section 4.1.2. That is, any staff member or student who identify themselves as being a staff member or student of the University of the Sunshine Coast anywhere within their personal social media profiles.

4.4.2 Comments on matters outside a staff member's area of expertise should be made in their capacity as a private citizen, without any association to USC. Otherwise, it may be necessary to clearly identify the comment as a personal view and include a disclaimer which states that the opinions expressed do not necessarily represent that of USC.

4.4.3 Staff must not release any University information unless it is classified as 'public' information, and should avoid any perception of promotion of private business interests while interacting on social media as a staff member. Refer to the Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy and the Conflict of Interest – Governing Policy.

4.4.4 Where a student or staff member makes identifiable private use of social media that is suspected of breaching University policy, or has the potential to impact on the University's reputation, or could reasonably be considered to be inconsistent with Section 4 of the Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy or Section 4 of the Student Conduct – Governing Policy (See also the Student General Misconduct – Procedures); the University will act in accordance with the relevant policy.

4.4.5 Personal use of social media by a student or staff member, in a way that does not associate the user with the University is considered to be 'non-identifiable private use', as defined in section 3 above, and is not a matter for this policy.

5. Responding to potential breaches

5.1 Any person concerned that the conduct of a student or staff members using social media contravenes this or other University policies and procedures may report their concerns to the University.

5.2 In relation to staff

5.2.1 Reports regarding staff should be sent to the Director, Human Resources. Reports will be reviewed to determine whether the matter requires investigation or action under the appropriate policies and procedures and/or a response on behalf of the University.

5.2.2 Staff members who believe they are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against via social media may address their concerns through Human Resources.

5.3 In relation to students

5.3.1 Breaches of this policy suspected to constitute student misconduct should be reported to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) as set out in the Student Conduct – Governing Policy.

5.3.2 Students who believe they are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against via social media may address their concerns through the Student Grievance Resolution – Governing Policy and associated Procedures. In the first instance, where appropriate, students are encouraged to make use of the options for conciliation or mediation as part of the informal resolution process of the Student Grievance Resolution – Procedures, before proceeding to lodge a formal grievance. Instances where this may be inappropriate include where there are threats of physical violence, which should be reported to USC Security or the Police. Students are encouraged to contact Student Wellbeing for personal assistance and support if they are experiencing sexual harassment.

5.4 Responding to breaches

Where required by the University, a user is expected to remove, and cooperate with all attempts to remove, any comment, post or other online content where the University forms the view that it is in breach of the University's expectations of staff or students.

6. Recordkeeping

Social media use for the business purposes of the University (including teaching and learning, research, engagement and administration) attracts recordkeeping obligations which should be managed according to the Information Management Framework – Governing Policy.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Acceptable Use of ICT Resources - Governing Policy
Acceptable Use of ICT Resources - Procedures
Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Bullying and Harassment (Staff) - Governing Policy
Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Bullying and Harassment (Students) - Governing Policy
Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Bullying and Harassment (Students) - Procedures
Conflict of Interest - Governing Policy
Copyright - Governing Policy
Equity and Diversity - Governing Policy
Health, Safety and Wellbeing - Governing Policy
Information Management Framework - Governing Policy
Marketing and External Engagement - Operational Policy
Sexual Harassment Prevention (Students) - Governing Policy
Staff Code of Conduct - Governing Policy
Student Academic Integrity - Governing Policy
Student Conduct - Governing Policy
Student General Misconduct - Procedures
Student Grievance Resolution - Governing Policy

RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

Right to Information Act 2009 (Qld)
Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)
Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cwlth)
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth)
Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cwlth)
Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 (Qld)
Queensland Information Standards
Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
Work Health & Safety Act 2011 (Qld)
Fair Work Act 2009 (Cwlth)
Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cwlth)
Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)
USC Student Charter
Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)