

<b>Social Media Policy</b>			
<b>Policy Sponsor</b>	Vice President, University Relations	<b>Category</b>	Administrative
<b>Policy Contact</b>	Associate Vice-President, Communications and Marketing	<b>Effective Date</b>	June 2, 2021
<b>Approved By</b>	Executive Team	<b>Review Date</b>	June 2, 2026
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### 1. Purpose

Athabasca University supports multiple means for engagement and expression, including the use of official Social Media accounts. These accounts provide vital venues to communicate and promote engaging conversations about university events, issues, recognitions and accomplishments, academic opinions, as well as providing organizational and educational opportunities for open, online expression. This policy sets out guidance for best practices and encourages use of official Social Media accounts to enhance the reputation of the University.

### 2. Scope

Social Media is an important tool for corporate, business, and educational engagement. This policy and its related procedures apply to any member of the University Community who makes use of the University's Social Media accounts established by or on behalf of the University and its business and academic units and any social media use in any context that may be considered as representing the University.

It does not apply to sharing personal views on personal social media accounts.

### 3. Definitions

<b>FOIP Act</b>	Alberta <i>Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act</i> R.S.A. 2000, c. F-25, as amended from time to time.
<b>IT Asset or Assets</b>	Digital information and technology assets, which include: Software (applications, database management, operating systems, licenses, etc.); End User Devices (portable storage devices, computers, laptops, tablets, smart phones, displays, net stations, etc.); Digital Information; Cloud-based or on-premise Servers (multi-user physical or logical computers, etc.); Networks (cables, circuits, switches, routers, firewalls, etc.);

	and Digital Storage Devices and Systems (cloud-based, removable or fixed devices that retain Digital Information, etc.) owned by, under the custody of, or commercially made available to, the University.
<b>Intellectual Property or IP</b>	Any invention, work, information or material, trade secret, data, or technological or industrial design or process, regardless of form, including anything protectable by patent, copyright, industrial design, trademark, or other intellectual property rights.
<b>Official AU Social Media Account</b>	Official University Social Media Accounts are those that are approved, established by or on behalf of the University and its business and academic units by Communications within University Relations.
<b>Official Statement</b>	Any news, announcement, or other communication that has been developed and approved coming directly from, or on behalf of, the university.
<b>Personal Information</b>	Means recorded information about an identifiable individual as specified in section 1(n) of the FOIP Act.
<b>Sensitive Data and Information (Identity)</b>	Sensitive data is associated with a person and is typically identifying. Any data or information that reveals: racial or ethnic origin; political opinions; religious or philosophical beliefs; trade union membership; genetic data; biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person; and data concerning health or a natural person's sex life and/or sexual orientation.
<b>Social Media</b>	All forms of public, web-based communication and expression that bring people together by making it easy to publish content to many audiences that may include (but is not limited to) the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat)</li> <li>- Video and photo sharing websites (e.g., Flickr, YouTube, Instagram/Instagram Stories, Pinterest)</li> <li>- Micro-blogging sites (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr)</li> <li>- Blogs (e.g., Corporate blogs, Personal blogs, Media hosted blogs)</li> <li>- Collaborative publishing (e.g., Wikipedia)</li> </ul>
<b>University</b>	Athabasca University
<b>University Community</b>	All Board Members, contractors, postdoctoral fellows, volunteers, visitors, and other individuals who work, study, conduct research or otherwise carry-on business of the University.

**Visual and editorial identity and design standards**

A formal set of guidelines governing the use of an integrated system of identifiers (visual elements, symbols, templates, descriptors, etc.) the application of which ensures consistency, quality, and correctness in university promotional, or information materials directed to internal and external audiences.

**4. Guiding Principles**

- 4.1.** The University values the opportunities that Social Media accounts provide to gather in online communities of shared interest to create, share, or consume content and especially encourages the use of online forums that allow for respectful dialogue and freedom in speech and expression.
- 4.2.** The University also has a responsibility to create positive, inclusive spaces for users throughout its social media accounts.
- 4.3.** Members of the University Community are expected to be familiar with any and all applicable University policies, as well as laws and regulations related to human rights, harassment, privacy, consent, copyright and intellectual property, and the authorized collection and use of information.
- 4.4.** Acceptable use of the University's Social Media accounts must adhere to:
  - a) Relevant provisions in Collective Agreements and University Codes of Conduct; and
  - b) University policies and procedures including those that are foundational to the appropriate and secure use of the University's digital information and IT Assets.
- 4.5.** Social Media participation by members of the University Community is expected to be transparent and demonstrate responsible, accountable usage.
- 4.6.** Use of official Social Media accounts may facilitate opportunities to pursue freedom of enquiry and expression. At the same time, this Policy imposes responsibilities upon members of the University Community who are expected to:
  - a) Use this freedom in a manner consistent with a responsible and honest search for and dissemination of knowledge and truth. Academic freedom is intended for use in an academic role. The right to academic freedom is addressed separately in the context of the collective agreement with the Athabasca University Faculty Association.
  - b) Exercise sound judgment with regard to their use of Social Media and other online activities where they could be perceived as representing or acting on behalf of the University.

- c) Be transparent about affiliation with the University whenever there may be a connection made to the University as a result of online activities in a personal capacity.
- 4.7. The University will not tolerate any activity on University Social Media accounts that does not promote values of integrity and respect.
- a) This includes, but is not limited to, intolerant, unlawful, defamatory, or obscene activity or the unauthorized use or disclosure of Sensitive Data and Information or Personal Information about another individual.
- 4.8. In circumstances where Social Media conduct is not in compliance with this Policy, at a minimum the Social Media user will be expected to address inappropriate postings in a manner that is transparent and promotes continuous improvement.
- a) Individuals who breach this policy may also be subject to the breach provisions outlined in the applicable Codes of Conduct.
  - b) Individuals who breach this policy and who are members of a bargaining unit are subject to applicable disciplinary articles or any other relevant articles of their respective Collective Agreement.
- 4.9. Only individuals authorized by University Relations may make official statements on the University's Social Media accounts.

## 5. Applicable Legislation and Regulations

[Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.A 2000, c.F-25](#)

## 6. Related Procedures/Documents

List any related Procedures and templates or other supporting documents related to the policy

[All collective bargaining agreements in which the Governors of Athabasca are a party](#)

[Brand and Editorial Guideline](#)

[Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Members of the Board of Governors](#)

[Code of Conduct for Members of the University Community](#)

[Harassment, Violence, and Sexual Violence Policy](#)

[IT Policy Suite](#)

[Social Media Procedure](#)

[Student Code of Conduct and related policies](#)

[Use of University Identity, Logos, Name and Symbols of Armorial Bearings Policy](#)

NOTE: The subject matter and scope of this policy and its related procedures are also supported by internal-use only Guidelines or Standard Operating Procedures.

**History**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Action</i>
June 2, 2021	Executive Team (Policy Approved)