



Social Media Policy - Students

Policy owner	Dean: Student Affairs Registrar
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Date last amended	Not Applicable
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1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 Social media has become an important and powerful tool that, if used correctly, provides an opportunity for unprecedented levels of communication and engagement.
- 1.2 The IMM Graduate School of Marketing (“IMM”) recognises the need to have a policy and guidelines which ensure that those who use social media, either as part of their job, study, association with IMM or in a personal capacity, have guidance and an understanding of best practice where social media is used, and to be aware of the potential issues and risks that may arise from its misuse.
- 1.3 This Policy provides a guideline as to what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use of these platforms so that you may continue to participate on social media in a responsible and safe manner.

2 POLICY SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to the use of social media in a ‘personal/private’ capacity by staff, students and those engaged in partnership with the IMM. It extends to:
 - 2.1.1 your own content on social media. **Social media** means any facility for online publication, communication and commentary, including, without limitation, blogs, wikis and platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Signal, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, and any other forms of communication that may now, and in the future, be classified or generally regarded as social media.
 - 2.1.2 your private digital content which is intercepted, forwarded or captured as a screenshot and then published on social media

For example:
Someone may take a screenshot of your sexist comment in a private message which then goes viral; and
 - 2.1.3 your conduct in the real world which is documented digitally and published on social media.

For example:
A student is filmed in a vicious road-rage attack which is published on YouTube and a viewer identifies the individual as a student of IMM.

3 IMPORTANT SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Although you are required to read the entire Policy, particular notice should be taken of the following key principles relating to social media:

- 3.1 **It is “published”** – Under South African Common Law, once **one** other person has seen your content on social media, it is considered “published content” and can therefore carry the same legal consequences as content that is published in a newspaper, on television or any other public platform.
 - 3.2 **Once it’s out there, it’s out there for good** - The Internet never forgets – what you publish will be around for a long time, so reflect on and edit your content carefully. If you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, then you shouldn’t do it.
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- 3.3 **Social media lacks context and tone** – Humour, irony and sarcasm are often hard to understand without your facial expressions and gestures (even with emoticons and emojis) and can create misunderstanding. Consider what you say carefully and think about how it might be interpreted.
- 3.4 **You have the right to freedom of expression but that right shouldn't be given a greater importance than the basic human rights of others** – for example, someone else's right to a good reputation, dignity or privacy. Before you post something on social media, think about the impact that it could have on your colleagues, clients, stakeholders, IMM itself and the general public.
- 3.5 **Nothing about social media changes your responsibilities and obligations to the IMM.** It does not matter if you are using a private account, a pseudonym account or an anonymous account, **your obligations in terms of any contract with IMM and any other applicable policies, apply equally to your conduct on social media.**
- 3.6 **Retweeting, sharing, liking or being tagged in content** – Even if you did not create the content yourself, you could potentially be held responsible for sharing, retweeting, or liking other people's content on social media, as if you had published the content yourself. If you are tagged in content which is offensive, derogatory, defamatory, racist, insulting, unlawful or otherwise objectionable in terms of this Policy, untag yourself from that comment or dissociate yourself from the content by stating that you do not agree with it.
- 3.7 **Promptly clarify statements that are misinterpreted** – Even well-considered statements can create confusion and be misinterpreted. Always monitor the comments your posts may generate and clarify your statement if needed.
- 3.8 **Use privacy settings** – this limits the extent to which your activities are visible and accessible to the public. Be aware that social media platforms frequently modify privacy settings and terms and conditions, so what's private today, may not be private tomorrow. Even if you have maximum privacy controls, never forget the power of a screenshot.
- 3.9 **Be accurate and beware of fake news** – In the post-truth era, fact-check all posts, comments and links to ensure they are accurate and true before posting them. Sharing fake news can have serious and sometimes criminal consequences. Assume every bit of information you receive is false until proven otherwise:
- 3.9.1 check whether the main news publications are carrying the story;
 - 3.9.2 consider whether the article evokes an overly emotional response - if yes, it may be fake news;
 - 3.9.3 interrogate the source of the article and confirm that the source is credible; and
 - 3.9.4 use fact-checking websites to verify the information.
- 3.10 **Social media disclaimers don't prevent liability** – The use of disclaimers such as *"I tweet in my personal capacity"* or *"My views are not those of my employer"* will not prevent liability in terms of this Policy. There is no disclaimer that can absolve you of your duties to the IMM as described in this Policy, even when using an anonymous, fake or pseudonym account. You are who you are in the real world when you go online.
- 3.11 **You may not set up a social media account, blog or webpage carrying the identity of any of the IMM's brand identities (including name or logo),** without the express permission of the IMM. Only specifically authorised staff are permitted to do so. Official use of the brand logos and corporate identities of IMM's brands on any social media channels must comply with the official Corporate Identity (CI) guidelines of the brand
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- 3.12 **Help us to identify complaints and criticism** – Your assistance is vital in helping us monitor the social media landscape. Immediately upon becoming aware of a discussion thread, posting, comment, statement or misrepresentation that needs to be brought to the attention of the IMM and/or has the potential to impact on the reputation of an individual, or the business as a whole, take a screenshot of the content and immediately alert the IMM by sending an email to helpme@immgsm.ac.za.
- 3.13 **Do not air your grievances online** – You may not use your personal social media platforms to air personal grievances regarding IMM. IMM has well-established internal grievance policies and whistle-blowing mechanisms, which can be followed if you have a grievance against IMM.

4 THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS IN A 'PERSONAL/PRIVATE' CAPACITY

IMM fosters an open and expressive environment and does not object to, or discourage, the personal use of social media. However, in using social media, always remember that your relationship with IMM is based on trust and confidence.

Staff, students and organisations that work in partnership with the IMM are not permitted to bring the name of IMM into disrepute by virtue of their conduct on social media. In order to avoid this, the following guidelines must be adhered to when engaging on personal social media accounts:

- 4.1 Nothing about social media changes a student, staff member or affiliate's responsibilities to the IMM. Your contractual obligations, as well as the obligations outlined in various IMM policies (including the Student Code of Conduct), apply equally to your conduct on social media.
- 4.2 In the age of social media, affiliation with the IMM is easily identified, known or presumed, and online content is therefore more readily associated with the IMM.
- 4.3 Staff, students and affiliates should respect the law and the rights of others. In particular, staff, students and affiliates should not post, link to, retweet, share or like any content that:
- 4.3.1 Is offensive, derogatory, defamatory, racist or insulting – for example, calling someone a racist word, swearing or falsely accusing them of a crime;
- 4.3.2 Amounts to hate speech – hate speech is harmful or hateful content that discriminates on the basis of any of the prohibited grounds such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion;
- 4.3.3 Is fraudulent or untrue;
- 4.3.4 Is harassing or threatening;
- 4.3.5 Is abusive, obscene, pornographic, indecent, lewd, suggestive or otherwise objectionable;
- 4.3.6 Is invasive of the privacy of others – before you post anything on social media, think about whether the content is yours to share (and be particularly mindful of posting photographs of others without permission); or
- 4.3.7 Infringes on intellectual property rights – for example, using written content, logos or pictures without permission.
- 4.4 Avoid content that is dishonest, inaccurate and misleading or content that amounts to fake news.
- 4.5 It breaches the General Rules and Policies of the IMM, which states (among others) that a student may not act or threaten to act in a manner which interferes with the work or study of any member of staff or student in general and specifically in relation to the person's race, gender, beliefs or sexual orientation, and a student may not abuse or otherwise interfere with any member of the IMM community in any manner which contributes to the creation of an intimidating, hostile or demeaning environment for staff or students in general and specifically in relation to the person's race, gender, beliefs or sexual orientation.
- 4.6 Think before you share, forward, retweet or repost.
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The best advice is to have fun on social media, but responsibly. Ultimately approach social media in the same way as you approach the real world. Use sound judgment and common sense, act with professionalism and integrity, and adhere to IMM's values. Remember the "billboard test" - if you wouldn't want the content on a giant billboard with your photo, name and surname and the name of the IMM, don't put it on social media and don't let it exist in digital content.

Most importantly, always remember that you are an ambassador for the IMM – whether you're on social media or not – and that your conduct on and offline has the potential to cause serious damage, not only to the reputation of IMM, but also to your own reputation and career.

5 NON-COMPLIANCE

The IMM views any non-compliance to this policy as well as any non-compliance with its obligations in terms of legislation in a serious light. Any deliberate action by a student to contravene this policy will be subject to disciplinary and /or legal action.
