



University of Lynchburg

Office of Marketing and Communications (MarCom)

Social Media Policy

Questions? Contact the Office of Marketing and Communications (MarCom) at
marcom@lynchburg.edu.

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Policy

The use of social media is increasingly common among University departments, students, and employees, and these communication tools have the potential to impact organizational and professional reputations significantly. The purpose of this policy and its related application process is to ensure that all social media interactions on behalf of the University of Lynchburg represent the University's best interests and that individuals who speak on behalf of the University have the authority and approval to do so under the circumstances.

The policy applies to employees of the University of Lynchburg and to students who maintain official social media accounts on behalf of University offices or groups.

Official Social Media Accounts

Official accounts are those:

- Created by a University employee to represent and promote the University.
- Created for University schools or departments.
- Which uses the University of Lynchburg, or UL, in their account names. (Only official accounts may use the University name.)
- Which has at least one faculty or staff person as an account administrator at all times. Only current staff, faculty, and currently enrolled students are eligible to serve as account administrators.
 - When an account administrator leaves their job at the University or no longer wants to be an account administrator, the academic or administrative department must assign a new account administrator from Lynchburg. They should also remove the former administrator's access by changing the login information. They should also immediately notify the MARCOM social media manager to update the official records.

Account Creation/Setup

1. Please notify MarCom of your intention to create a social media account by contacting the University Social Media Manager at marcom@lynchburg.edu. It is critical that you consult with our office before creating an account.
2. Before launching your account, it's important to be clear about the purpose of the account as well as your goals, audience, suggested names, and content ideas. Please create a social media plan that includes each of these elements and include it with your request to start an account.
3. When naming the account, include the University of Lynchburg, UL, or Lynchburg at the beginning of the name. (e.g., UL_StudentLife)
4. Please provide a current faculty or staff contact when registering your account. Our office will contact this person in an "emergency" situation, such as if a post or comment needs to be removed in a time-sensitive manner because it is inaccurate or violates the social media policy. We do not manage your account.
5. Once these steps are completed, the social media manager will create an account for you, filing the usernames and passwords, and then passing ownership on to you.

Account Maintenance

- Official accounts must conform to the social media policy.
- Social media accounts are most effective when their content is updated regularly. Account administrators should work closely with their content providers to ensure that the material remains current and relevant. Additionally, it's important to respond promptly to comments and questions from followers.
- Posting may slow down during summer or winter breaks, but should not stop altogether.
- MarCom will conduct semiannual audits of all University-affiliated accounts. Accounts found to be non-compliant will be asked to take measures to become compliant or have their accounts deleted.

Respect: University of Lynchburg, the Public, and the Law

- When you represent the University of Lynchburg on social media, you are an ambassador. You communicate, both by what you say and by your tone and demeanor, what a University of Lynchburg employee or student is like.
- You are expected to be respectful of others. Your posts and your language should be appropriate for everyone. Don't enter into arguments or be uncivil.
- You must not post anything illegal, defamatory, or obscene.
- Likewise, you must respect the law. Be mindful of copyrights held by others. Remember education-related regulations such as FERPA. Never post any confidential information on social media.

Trademark Violations

- Accounts that use the University's name or trademarks without permission will be contacted and asked to change or remove the unauthorized content.
- Malicious accounts will be reported to the social media site if the abuse continues.
- Duplicate accounts will be reported to social media managers if the current account can be identified. The University will assist in merging accounts or reporting outdated duplicate accounts.

Endorsements and Advertisements

- On official accounts, do not post a personal opinion that is at odds with the mission and goals of the University of Lynchburg.
- Do not endorse or advertise a political candidate or party, a product, or a business.

Comments

Comments are essential to social media because conversation and user participation are what make it a social platform. Official accounts will accept user comments. As an account administrator, part of your responsibility is to monitor the comments on your account.

- If the comment is in the form of a question or seeks information, you should respond as soon as possible, preferably on the same day. Don't worry about telling a user that you need to research the issue and get back to them — better to make sure you're accurate than to misinform.
- Sometimes, comments are negative. Users expect to be able to voice their opinions on social media. Therefore, it is usually best to leave negative comments on a page, and it is even more effective if you can politely address the concerns raised in those comments. You'll also find that sometimes "fans" may come to your defense and address the person who posted the original negative comment.
- Comments that should be deleted or hidden immediately are those that contain profanity, illegal content, or personal attacks. Attacks based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, veteran status, disability, or medical conditions will be hidden and reported to the Title IX office.
- Comments containing spam or advertisements should also be deleted or hidden. Users who continuously post unauthorized advertisements on your pages can be banned from posting.
- Comments that include confidential information about the University of Lynchburg, its students, colleagues, patients, donors, vendors, or other individuals should be deleted or hidden. This includes names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, and other relevant information. Follow applicable federal requirements such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), as well as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) regulations.
- Always observe fair use, copyright, and disclosure laws. Always credit people for their work and ensure you have the necessary rights to use content before posting it on social media. Posts must not violate laws governing the use of copyrights, trade secrets, and other intellectual property.

Graphics

- Social media sites offer the option to upload a photo or graphic as a profile picture or graphic identifier.

- We encourage departments to create their own graphics for their social media accounts, but they must follow the [Brand Guidelines](#). You can email your social media graphics to marcom@lynchburg.edu if you need clarification on whether they follow the [Guidelines](#).

Interacting with Sports Recruits

- The rules of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) do not allow comments about possible recruits to appear on an official social media account or the account of employees.
- Messages to recruits may not be sent using social media. Other forms of electronically transmitted messages to recruits, such as texts, instant messenger, or message boards, are also not permitted.

Personal Social Media Accounts (Employees of the University)

- When discussing the University from a personal perspective, ensure that you disclose your affiliation as a University employee. Transparency is very important in social media.
- If you disclose your relationship to the University, please also be aware of the way your content and that of your friends/followers/contacts might reflect on the University.
- Posting content that contradicts the University's mission and goals may result in disciplinary consequences.
- Please refer to the [Employee Handbook](#) for detailed guidelines.

Using Social Media at Work

- Social media can be a valuable tool for both conducting University business and other professional activities, such as research and communication with other professionals in your field.

- However, employees must keep their social media activity limited to professional interactions while at work. Discuss social media use with your supervisor so you understand their expectations.