



UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

POLICY DOCUMENT

Social Media Policy

WITS POLICY

Version No. 1

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Policy Title	Social Media Policy
Policy Officer	Shirona Patel/Ferna Clarkson
Date Approved	
Date Effective From	
Last updated	

1 POLICY PURPOSE

With the rapid growth and application of social media, the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (hereinafter “Wits” or “the University”) 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 the University or in a personal capacity, have guidance and an understanding of best practice where social media are used, and to be aware of the potential issues and risks that can arise from its misuse.

The University expects that Wits staff, students and affiliates who contribute to social media will familiarise themselves with this policy and related guidelines and will act responsibly in references to Wits in their social media and online activities.

This policy should be read and applied within the framework of the University’s Statute, rules, regulations, policies and procedures as amended from time to time (hereinafter “University Rules”) and in conjunction with the University’s relevant internet-related policies such as the Terms and Conditions of Use and the Acceptable Use Policy).

2 DEFINITIONS

Social Media is a broad term used to describe a range of online tools such as websites, web-based platforms and applications that are designed for online interaction, content consumption and to generate content.

Examples of social media applications, channels and platforms include Facebook, Google Plus, Twitter, Tumblr, Snapchat, WordPress, Blogger, Wikipedia, Amazon ratings, Flickr, Instagram, YouTube, Vimeo, Viddler, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, chat rooms, email, etc.

This list is fluid as social media continues to evolve and different applications replace others.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

Personal, academic and professional use of social media by Wits staff, students and affiliates must not amount to misconduct.

Misconduct comprises behaviour within or without the precincts of the University, or whilst on official business of or representing the University, without just excuse, which

- a) constitutes a breach of any statute, regulation or rule of the University; or
- b) constitutes a failure or refusal to comply with any punishment or order imposed or made under these rules; or
- c) constitutes a failure or refusal to obey a lawful order; or
- d) constitutes conduct that tends to bring the University or any part of it or a member of its staff or a student or any part of its student body into contempt or disrepute; or
- e) interferes with the governance and proper administration of the University; or
- f) interferes with the conditions necessary for teaching, learning or research.

This policy applies to all social media activity by members of the University Community.

4 APPLICATION OF POLICY

This Policy applies to all employees and students of the University, invitees, visitors and guests of the University and any persons officially associated with the University in whatever capacity (hereinafter, “the University Community” who use social media within the course and scope of the University’s business and/or use social media utilising infrastructure belonging to the University (hereinafter, “Users”).

This policy also applies to affiliates which include: Student Organisations and Societies; Adjuncts; Alumni; Graduates; Contractors; Consultants or any other persons who participate in social media and who may be identified as having an association with Wits.

5 PRINCIPLES

General conduct:

Depending on the context, employees and students may be seen to be representing Wits and should, at all times, act with due care, consideration and responsibility on all social media fora. Particularly,

1. Users may not make official statements on behalf of the University unless they are duly authorised to do so. In the case of an emergency or crisis involving the University or members of the University Community in their capacity as such, all communication will happen under the auspices of Wits Communications Services.

2. Users may engage in good faith, in the best interests of the University and with the care and skill that can reasonably be expected from a person with his or her knowledge and experience.

Value-based conduct:

It is expected that Users reflect the core values of the University in any social media activity. These are to always act ethically, respectfully and responsibly:

Ethical conduct:	Promoting:
	a) in letter and in spirit, the rules of the University and laws of the country b) ethical treatment of people c) ethical use of resources
Respectful conduct:	Preventing:
	a) violation of confidentiality
Responsible conduct:	Promoting
	a) human rights and social responsibility b) equity and equal opportunity c) academic freedom and freedom of expression d) trustworthiness e) integrity f) fairness g) courtesy
	Preventing
	a) the abuse of power b) sexual, racial and other forms of harassment c) disrespect for persons and property d) discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age
	Promoting
	a) transparency b) inclusivity c) accountability d) good practice e) mutual responsibility for maintenance of an ethos and environment conducive to safety f) security and well-being

	Preventing a) misuse of personal and university information and property and the name of the University b) improper conflicts of interest c) practices threatening safety, security, health or well-being d) political action which impinges on the rights of others
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6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The relevant social media representatives are the first point of referral for all enquiries regarding a particular social media post or account since content is generated from multiple sources. The Wits community are advised to contact or refer questions to this person as a first step.

Should there be a likelihood of reputational or brand risk, users are advised to contact Marketing and Communications for comment/review.

Academia

All academics and research experts are encouraged to engage in public debate and to contribute to the public and digital spheres through commentary within their respective areas of expertise, and are encouraged to liaise with the Head of Communications in order to ensure effective coverage and to limit any possible negative publicity.

Students and staff

Students and staff who require a social media presence with regards to Wits or its affiliates are requested to contact the Head of Marketing to assist with best practices and to approve branding and the use of Corporate Identity for the channels.

7 CONSEQUENCES OF BREACH

Breach of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the Wits Code of Conduct for Staff, Rules for Student Discipline and other relevant University policies, which may lead to disciplinary action or other relevant sanctions. Where inappropriate use under this policy constitutes a breach of any law, action may also be taken in accordance with that law by Wits or concerned third parties.

8 POLICY REVIEW

8.1 Review procedure

This policy will be reviewed annually by Marketing and Communications and presented to Senate IT and the Risk Committee.

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Summary	Changed by
0.1	14/07/2017	Draft	Ferna Clarkson
0.2	17/07/2017	Draft	Shirona Patel
0.3	18/07/2017	Draft	Lynn van der Plank
0.3	23/07/2017	Draft	Ntibi Maepa
0.4	06/11/2017	Final	Ferna Clarkson