



Parent Policy:	Social Media Policy
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Policy Sponsor:	Vice President, Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer
Administrative Responsibility:	Marketing & Communications Manager Web & Social Media Strategist
Appendix B	

Use of Social Media Code of Conduct

The following document is posted by the College to guide employees, students, or alumni who participate in social media channels online in the name of the College. It may also aid those who have personal social media channels. The guidelines, a compilation of “best practices” from respected online university, agency and industry sources will help you use these forums effectively, protect your personal and professional reputation, and help you to follow College policies and branding standards.

Getting Started

- Determine who will be empowered to respond directly to users and when a supervisor’s approval may be needed.
- Set up e-mail notifications so you know when someone posts to your area. (YouTube and Flickr, for example, offer this when someone posts a comment.)
- Keep comments as open as possible—do not automatically or arbitrarily censor a negative post. (Although posts that are obviously spam or offensive can be removed.)
- Have and display comments guidelines.
- Know who your audience is.
- Think about how you are going to measure success: Clicks on a blog, unique page views, number of comments, tools such as HootSuite, counts of followers and fans.

Be transparent. Be honest about your identity. If you are authorized to represent the College in social media, say so. A good resource about transparency in online communities is the Blog Council’s “Disclosure Best Practices Toolkit” at <http://blogcouncil.org/disclosure/>.

Be accurate. Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It’s better to verify information first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible. If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly. This will earn you respect in the online community.

Be respectful. You are more likely to achieve your goals if you are constructive and respectful. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it is wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed. Your reputation, and the College’s, is best served when you remain above the fray.

Be a valued member. If you join a social network such as a Facebook group or comment on someone’s blog, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Don’t post information about topics unless you are sure it will be of interest to readers. Self-promoting behaviour is usually viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from websites or groups.

Think before you post. There is no such thing as a “private” social media site. Search engines can turn up posts years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. You may view your posted material as your intellectual property; but the fine-print rules of the social media channel you are using may establish otherwise.

Maintain confidentiality. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Lethbridge College, its students, its faculty, its employees or alumni. Use good ethical judgment and follow college policies. If you discuss a situation involving individuals on a social-media site, be sure that they cannot be identified. As a guideline, don’t post anything that you would not present at a conference.

Check often. Visit your channel at least twice daily, and preferably have the application open all day. (e.g., Twitter, Facebook.)

Update Often. You will get out of the social networks, what you put it into them. On Facebook consider updating your page no more than 1-2 times a day and spread the posts throughout the day. On Twitter you can get away with updating more frequently (5-10 times a day).

Respond to questions quickly. For questions directed to your channel, respond as quickly as possible—within the hour, if possible; at least within the day, even if it is only to say, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out and get back to you”.

Give feedback on removed posts. If you remove content because it violates commenting guidelines, be professional and contact the commenter and explain politely why it has been removed.

Be aware of liability. You *can* be held legally liable for what you post on your site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be under copyright, defamatory, libellous or obscene (as defined by the courts). Employers are increasingly conducting web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.

Personal site guidelines

Disclaimer. A common practice among individuals who write about the field in which they work is to include a disclaimer on their site, usually on their “About Me” page or in the footer. If you discuss higher education on your own social media site, we suggest you include a sentence similar to this: *“The views expressed on this [blog, website, forum] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of Lethbridge College.”* This is particularly important if you are a department head or administrator. Be aware that if you identify your affiliation with the Lethbridge College, readers will associate you with the college, even with a disclaimer that your views are your own.

Don’t be a mole. Never pretend to be someone else and post about the College. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors.

Don’t use the College logo or make endorsements. Do not use the College logo, athletic logo or any other official College marks or images on your personal online sites. Do not use Lethbridge College’s name to promote or endorse any product, cause, political party or candidate.

Protect your identity. While you want to be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against you. Think twice before listing your home address or telephone number or your work telephone or e-mail address. It is a good idea to create a separate, non-Lethbridge College e-mail address that is used only with your social media site.

Communicating with students. Instead of "friending" students on social networks, consider creating a group or page for your program (see *Procedures to Create an Official Media Presence*). This will allow you to communicate with students on a platform they are comfortable with, while retaining privacy and boundaries.

Adopt and follow a code of ethics. There are numerous existing codes of ethics for bloggers and other active participants in social media, all of which will help you participate responsibly in online communities. If you have your own social media site, you may wish to post your own code of ethics.

Definitions

1. **Confidential Information:** Includes, but is not limited to, personal information as defined by the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, proprietary information of a non-public nature that may be of use to competitors of the College or be harmful or prejudicial to the College or its stakeholders if disclosed, as well as all legal information and advice that are not public knowledge. Examples of this would include but are not limited to:

- Legal matters that are not public knowledge
- Financial information that would not be available in the annual report
- Business processes
- Contractual agreements with vendors, third parties, consultants
- Information related to intellectual property, e.g. course evaluations, program proposals.
- Personal information with respect to an individual, which includes students, employees, donors, etc.
- Employment related information

Copyright: Has the same meanings, definitions and restrictions as defined by the Canadian Copyright Act. In relation to a Work, this means the sole right to produce or reproduce the Work or any substantial part thereof in any material form whatever, to perform the Work or any substantial part thereof in public or, if the Work is unpublished, to publish the Work or any substantial part thereof in any format.

Personal Information: Has the same meaning as in the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation.

Please direct any questions regarding this document to the Policy Administrator or
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