Public Comment and Social Media Policy 2025

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Part 1 Purpose and application

1.1 Purpose

(1) This Policy:

    (a) explains:

        (i) our expectations of staff, affiliates and students when taking part in public discussion as University community members;

        (ii) the distinction between professional, official and personal public comment; and

        (iii) who is authorised to speak on behalf of the University.

    (b) provides guidance about social media use.

1.2 Start date

(1) This Policy commences on 2 June 2025.

1.3 Application

(1) This Policy applies to the University and to University community members.

(2) This Policy applies to public comment when it is University-related conduct.

    (a) This includes:

        (i) professional and official public comment;

        (ii) other public comment which asserts or implies a connection to the University;

        (iii) public comment which uses University ICT resources; and

        (iv) University-related use of social media.

(3) This Policy does not apply to personal public comments, or use of personal accounts, which:

    (a) are unconnected with the University;

    (b) do not refer to the University; and

    (c) do not use University ICT resources.

        Note: See *Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy*.

(4) This Policy applies in addition to the requirements of:

    (a) the *Staff and Affiliates Code of Conduct*;

    (b) the *Student Charter*;

    (c) the *Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy*;

    (d) the *Email and Electronic Messaging Policy*; and

(e)   the *Work Health and Safety Policy*.

(5)   This Policy does not apply to comments made on Viva Engage.

(a)   The *Viva Engage Terms of Use* apply to that platform.

Part 2   Principles

2.1   Principles

(1)   We encourage and support University community members to comment publicly on any issues related to:

    (a)   their area of expertise; and

    (b)   personal interests.

(2)   For public comment, public announcements or social media use that are University-related conduct, we expect University community members to:

    (a)   uphold *our values* of excellence, trust, and accountability;

    (b)   act consistently with our ethical framework and the *Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom*;

    (c)   take reasonable care for their own health and safety, and that of others; and

    (d)   comply with all relevant laws, University policies, procedures and guidelines.

        (i)   This includes those relating to health and safety, copyright, privacy, defamation, harassment, and discrimination.

(3)   University community members may engage in good faith discussions or debates made or held for any genuine academic or educational purpose.

(4)   Subject to subclause 2.1(3), for public comment, public announcements or social media use that are University-related conduct, University community members must not:

    (a)   risk any person's health or safety;

        (i)   This includes risks relating to psychosocial hazards from exposure to traumatic materials or events, frequent conflict, psychological violence, coercion, harassment, or aggressive or abusive comments;

    (b)   bully, harass, sexually harass, abuse or intimidate any person;

    (c)   promote or engage in unlawful discrimination;

    (d)   be misleading or deceptive;

    (e)   breach any person's privacy rights;

        (i)   This includes intentionally exposing someone's identity, private information or personal details (e.g. full name, address, phone number, personal email address, student identification number) without their consent;

        Note: See *Privacy Policy*.

    (f)   publish or send 'restricted material' or 'prohibited material';

        Note: See the *Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy*

(g) conduct or encourage any illegal activity;

(h) disclose confidential information belonging to the University or which the University is obliged to protect; or

(i) violate any person's legal ownership interests, including copyright or other intellectual property rights.

(5) We do not condone breaches of law or of our own policies.

(a) We will co-operate with authorities in investigating breaches.

(6) Only official University representatives may comment publicly on the University's behalf.

(a) Other University community members must not:

(i) represent, or give the impression that they represent, the University unless authorised to do so;

(ii) imply that the University endorses any personal views they express; or

(iii) publish content that makes the University appear to be affiliated with a company, social group, political affiliation, product or individual when that is not the case.

Part 3   Public comment

3.1   Professional public comment

(1) This clause applies to:

    (a) academic staff; and

    (b) professional staff with academic or professional qualifications that establish an area of expertise.

(2) Professional public comment should be:

    (a) within a person's area of expertise;

    (b) accurate; and

    (c) consistent with:

        (i) the *Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom*; and

        (ii) (if applicable) clauses 366 to 368 of the *Enterprise Agreement*.

(3) Professional public comment should not:

    (a) imply that the University endorses the views expressed; or

    (b) imply that the commentator represents the University.

(4) When making professional public comment, University community members:

    (a) should identify themselves and their role;

    (b) may use the University's name and their University title in order to establish their credentials; and

    (c) may use University ICT resources, consistently with the *Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy*.

        Note: The University may monitor this use.

(5) University community members must not misrepresent their expertise.

(6) University community members are responsible for the content of their professional public comments.

3.2   Personal public comment

(1) Personal public comment should:

    (a) be made from a personal address or a personal account;

    (b) not use the University letterhead, logo or branding;

    (c) not include the University's name or the commenter's University title;

    (d) not imply that the University endorses the views expressed; and

    (e) not imply that the commenter represents the University.

(2)   If a personal public comment refers to the University it should, where possible, include a statement that the views expressed are not those of the University.

(3)   University community members are responsible for the content of their personal public comments.

3.3   Official public comment

(1)   Official University representatives must:

    (a)   comply with applicable laws, University policies and procedures;

    (b)   identify themselves and their University role;

    (c)   comment only within their areas of responsibility and authority;

    (d)   avoid saying or doing anything that might damage the University's interests or reputation; and

    (e)   follow the terms of use of the communications platforms they use.

(2)   Except where they have authority to do so, official representatives must not:

    (a)   imply that the University will take any action or initiative; or

    (b)   commit the University to take any action or initiative.

(3)   Individuals must not misrepresent their authority.

3.4   Collective statements of opinion

(1)   Collective statements of opinion include public comments about events, activities or issues.

    (a)   They do not include:

        (i)   operational communications e.g. communications about the University's operations, programs, initiatives or administrative activities;

        (ii)   official statements made on behalf of the University;

        (iii)   public comments made by individual University community members; or

        (iv)   public comments made by staff unions or student representative organisations, consistently with their respective constitutions.

(2)   Before making a collective statement, a member of the University community must give others in that part of the University a chance to comment on it before it is released.

    (a)   University community members who may hold minority views must be free to participate.

        (i)   There must be no undue influence or pressure to support a view or not to express a view.

        (ii)   Wherever possible, communications should be accessible for users with disabilities.

        Note: Further information about accessibility is available from the *Accessibility intranet page*.

(b)   The process may be an anonymous ballot or any other process which:

   (i)   ensures that participants can express support for, opposition to, or neutrality on, the proposed statement; and

   (ii)   provides a confidential way for them to comment.

(3)   When making a collective statement of opinion, the University community member should state:

(a)   the part of the University on whose behalf it is made;

(b)   that it is not made on behalf of the University as a whole; and

(c)   the basis on which it has been endorsed.

   (i)   For example, that it represents the unanimous view or majority view of that part of the University.

Part 4 Public announcements

4.1 Public announcements

(1) Announcements which are not course-related must not be made before or during a lecture, seminar or tutorial.

    (a) They may only be made at the conclusion.

    (b) This applies to announcements made in or immediately outside the relevant room.

    (c) Attendance by University community members during these announcements is voluntary.

(2) University community members must not make, or give permission for another person to make, a non-course-related announcement at the beginning of or during a lecture, seminar or tutorial.

Part 5   Social media

5.1   University-related use of social media

(1)   University-related use of social media includes:

   (a)   using an official University account;

   (b)   using University ICT resources or other University equipment to access, or facilitate access, to an account;

   Note: This does not include use of the University's internet resources on a personal device.

   (c)   posting content that implies a connection between a University community member and the University, without a statement that the content is the poster's own and not the University's; or

   (d)   posting content about the University or University community members.

5.2   Professional use of social media

(1)   This clause applies to:

   (a)   academic staff; and

   (b)   professional staff with academic or professional qualifications that establish an area of expertise.

(2)   Professional social media use should be:

   (a)   within a person's area of expertise;

   (b)   accurate; and

   (c)   consistent with:

      (i)   the *Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom*; and

      (ii)   (if applicable) clauses 366 to 368 of the *Enterprise Agreement*.

(3)   Professional social media use should not:

   (a)   imply that the University endorses the views expressed; or

   (b)   imply that the commentator represents the University.

(4)   When using social media in a professional capacity, University community members:

   (a)   should identify themselves and their role;

   (b)   may use the University's name and their University title in order to establish their credentials; and

   (c)   may use University ICT resources, consistently with the *Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy*.

   Note: The University may monitor this use.

(5)   University community members must not misrepresent their expertise.

(6) University community members are responsible for the content of their professional use of social media.

(7) If a University community member comments about an issue outside their area of expertise (including reposting or endorsing content posted by others) they should:

    (a) use a personal account; or

    (b) where possible, include a statement that the content is their own and not the University's.

        (i) This can be communicated within a post or at an account level.

5.3 Personal use of social media

(1) Personal social media use:

    (a) is unconnected with the University;

    (b) makes no reference to the University; and

    (c) is not made using University ICT resources.

(2) University community members may use ICT resources for personal use of social media consistently with the *Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy*.

Note: The University may monitor this use.

(3) Anonymity or using a pseudonym does not by itself ensure that social media use is unconnected with the University.

    (a) The content, context and manner of the communication as a whole will be considered.

(4) Personal social media use should:

    (a) be made from a personal account;

    (b) not use University letterhead, logo or branding;

    (c) not imply that the University endorses the views expressed; and

    (d) not imply that the person represents the University.

(5) When using personal accounts, University community members should avoid creating the impression that they are speaking in their professional capacity or on behalf of the University.

    (a) They should avoid using their:

        (i) University title;

        (ii) University position;

        (iii) qualifications; or

        (iv) enrolment details;

    in any way that might do so.

(6)   University community members are responsible for the content of their personal use of social media.

5.4   Establishing official University accounts for learning and teaching purposes

(1)   Staff must obtain approval from the relevant Head of School before establishing official University accounts for learning and teaching activities.

(2)   A Head of School may only approve establishing an account if they are satisfied the following are appropriate:

(a)   the account name;

(b)   the social media platform to be used;

(c)   the risks and benefits of the account;

(d)   the means of protecting student privacy;

(e)   the guidance given to students about use of the account;

(f)   the resources available for operating the account, including for moderation, updating and risk management;

> **Note**: This should include cybersecurity measures such as two factor authentication, multiple account administrators and the correct use of password storage.

(g)   the account manager;

(h)   how often content will be moderated;

(i)   how often the content will be reviewed and updated; and

(j)   how often the information required by this clause will be reviewed and updated.

5.5   Establishing other official University accounts

(1)   Staff must obtain the approval of the Head of Social Media and Content before establishing official University accounts for purposes other than learning and teaching activities.

(2)   Official University accounts existing at the time this Policy commences must be approved and registered:

(a)   as required by this Policy; and

(b)   within six months of the commencement date.

(3)   Applications for approval of official University accounts:

(a)   must be lodged with the Head of Social Media and Content; and

(b)   must include a business case for establishing the account.

(4)   The application must specify:

(a)   the account name;

  (b) the social media platform to be used;

  (c) the risks and benefits of the account;

  (d) the resources available for operating the account, including for moderation, updating and risk management;

  (e) the proposed account manager;

  (f) how often the content will be moderated;

  (g) how often the content will be reviewed and updated; and

  (h) how often the information required by this clause will be reviewed and updated.

 (5) The Head of Social Media and Content may create a form for these applications.

5.6 Operating official University accounts

 (1) All official University accounts must:

  (a) clearly state that they are maintained and operated by the University;

  (b) except with approval, be used only for the purposes for which they were established;

  (c) prominently display up to date contact information;

  (d) be appropriately branded; and

  (e) be moderated and updated consistently with the terms of their registration.

   Note: See *Brand Policy* and *Brand Style Guidelines*.

 (2) The registered account manager is responsible for developing, maintaining and monitoring their official University account.

  (a) This includes moderation and updating.

 (3) The account manager must ensure that the account is operated consistently with all applicable University information and communications technology requirements.

  (a) In particular, this includes security and privacy requirements.

 (4) The account manager must approve:

  (a) adding any electronic link to or from an official University account;

  (b) adding a third-party link to such an account;

  (c) individuals authorised to post content to, or respond to content on, the account; and

  (d) the terms of any such authorisation.

 (5) The account manager must consult with the relevant brand co-ordinator before giving their approval.

5.7 Social Media Register

(1) The Head of Social Media and Content will establish and maintain a University-wide register of official University accounts.

    (a) All official University accounts must be registered.

(2) The Social Media Register will record, for each account:

    (a) the name, handle and URL;

    (b) the platforms through which it is operated;

    (c) the account manager, by position title;

    (d) contact details, including out of hours and emergency phone numbers;

    (e) the account administrators and any email addresses used for the account;

    (f) the person responsible for moderating the account, by position title;

    (g) how often the content is moderated; and

    (h) how often the content is reviewed and updated.

(3) Account managers for new accounts must apply for registration at least one month before the account is proposed to operate.

(4) The Head of Social Media and Content may decline to register an account if they think:

    (a) the content is inappropriate;

    (b) the moderation or review arrangements are inadequate; or

    (c) the account may adversely affect the University's business, reputation or its relationships with others.

(5) The Head of Social Media and Content may withdraw registration from any account if they think:

    (a) the account or its content breaches this or any other University policy;

    (b) the content is inadequately moderated;

    (c) the content is not being reviewed or updated consistently with its registration;

    (d) the account is being used inconsistently with the purposes for which it was established; or

    (e) the account may adversely affect the University's business, reputation or relationships with others.

(6) The University will not provide information and communications technology, marketing or other support to unregistered official accounts.

5.8   Recordkeeping

(1)   The account manager is responsible for ensuring that records of social media communications are made and kept, consistently with the *Recordkeeping Policy*.

> **Note**: The Archives and Records Management Service can advise about establishing appropriate recordkeeping systems.

Part 6   Breaches of this Policy

6.1   Breaches

(1) A breach of this Policy may constitute:

    (a) a breach of:

        (i) the *Student Charter*; or

        (ii) the *Staff and Affiliates Code of Conduct*;

    (b) a breach of the *Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy*; or

    (c) misconduct under:

        (i) the *Enterprise Agreement*; or

        (ii) the *University of Sydney (Student Discipline) Rule*; or

    (d) a breach of the *Research Code of Conduct*.

(2) A person will have acted in breach of this Policy if they have:

    (a) personally engaged in a breach;

    (b) materially assisted or encouraged another person in a breach; or

    (c) promoted unauthorised conduct on social media or otherwise.

Note: News reports or social media posts that refer to a breach having occurred without endorsing the unauthorised conduct will not breach this requirement

6.2   Breach outcomes

(1) The consequences of a breach of this Policy will depend on type and severity of the breach.

(2) Breaches may result in:

    (a) access to ICT resources being limited or discontinued;

    (b) disciplinary action being taken by the University; and

    (c) in the case of serious breaches, civil or criminal proceedings.

Part 7 Roles and responsibilities

7.1 University community members

(1) comply with this Policy and related University policies;

(2) make professional public comments, including on social media, that:

    (a) are accurate and within their area of expertise;

    (b) identify themselves and their University role;

    (c) do not imply that the University endorses the views expressed; and

    (d) do not imply that the commentator represents the University;

(3) make personal public comments, including on social media, that:

    (a) come from a personal address or account; and

    (b) contain no implied connection to the University; and

(4) obtain approval before establishing official University social media accounts.

7.2 Official University representatives

(1) make public comments that:

    (a) are within their areas of authority;

    (b) identify themselves and their University role;

    (c) do not damage the University's reputation;

    (d) follow the terms of use and cultural norms of the platforms they use; and

    (e) comply with applicable laws, this Policy and related University policies.

7.3 Heads of School

(1) approve:

    (a) official University social media accounts that are related to learning and teaching; and

    (b) which staff members are allowed to use these accounts.

7.4 Head of Social Media and Content

(1) approves:

    (a) official University social media accounts that are not related to learning and teaching; and

    (b) which staff members are allowed to use these accounts.

(2)   establishes and maintains the Social Media Register.

7.5   Account managers

(1)   develop, maintain and monitor official University social media accounts.

Part 8   Definitions

(1)   In this Policy a reference to 'we', 'our' or 'us' means the University.

account	an account with an electronic medium or service where users may create, share, or view user-generated content e.g. videos, photographs, blogs, podcasts, messages, emails or website profiles. This includes services such as Facebook, X, TikTok, LinkedIn, or Instagram.
account administrator	the person responsible for day-to-day operation of an account. This person may also be the account manager.
account manager	the person recorded in the Social Media Register as responsible for an official University account. This person may also be the account administrator.
collective statement of opinion	a public comment made by one or more University community members on behalf of a separately identifiable group of University community members. Groups may include: • the Academic Board or one of its committees • a professional services unit or portfolio • a faculty or University school • a centre or multidisciplinary unit • a student or staff representative organisation
Enterprise Agreement	the *University of Sydney Enterprise Agreement 2023-2026* or any replacement agreement.
ethical framework	the expectations and requirements established through the operation and interaction of: • the *Staff and Affiliates Code of Conduct*; • the *Student Charter*; • the *Research Code of Conduct*; • the *Academic Integrity Policy*; and • the *Higher Degree by Research Supervision Policy*
Head of School	a Head of School in a faculty or a Head of School and Dean of a University school.

ICT resource	as set out in the *Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy*. That is: any ICT service, ICT asset or digital information.
local brand co-ordinator	a member of the Marketing and Communications staff authorised to manage brand approvals across the University. **Note**: See *Brand Policy* and *Brand Approval Procedures*
official public comment	a public communication made by an official representative of the University, on an official University account or elsewhere.
official representative	a person who is authorised to comment publicly on behalf of the University.
official University account	an account established or operated by the University for general marketing and public communications purposes. It does not include accounts established by individual University community members or visitors.
personal public comment	a public communication which: • is made from a personal address or account • does not refer to the University • is neither official nor professional public comment.
personal account	an account established or operated by an individual or group: • for purposes unrelated to, and unconnected with, the University; and • not used for making professional public comment.
professional public comment	a public communication: • made by an individual • about their area of expertise • in their individual capacity. It does not include comment made as a representative of the University.

public comment	a public communication through any medium.
	This includes:
	• publications
	• media interviews
	• public speaking engagements
	• public inquiries or submissions
	• forums and blogs
	• letters to newspapers
	• comments on websites and social networks.
	It does not include comment made on internal University communications networks, such as Viva Engage.
Residential College	any of:
	• Mandelbaum House;
	• Sancta Sophia College;
	• St Andrew's College;
	• St John's College;
	• St Paul's College;
	• Wesley College;
	• Women's College.
social media	electronic media platforms or services which provide users with electronic means to create, share, or view user-generated content.
social media use	includes:
	• posting content,
	• re-posting or sharing content posted by others
	• commenting on content posted by others
	• uploading images or videos (including themed 'frames')
	• captioning images or videos
	• participating in online petitions and fundraisers
	• 'liking' or otherwise 'reacting' to content posted by others using emojis
	• sending direct or private messages within social media platforms or services.

Social Media Register	the register established by clause 5.7.
staff	includes all employees and affiliates of the University.
student	as set out in the *University of Sydney (Student Discipline) Rule*: • a person who is: • currently admitted to candidature in an award course at the University; or • a non-award student, exchange student or study abroad student.
student representative organisation	has the meaning given at clause 7.1 of the *Student Associations Policy.* That is any of: • Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association (SUPRA); • Sydney University Sport and Fitness Limited (SUSF); • University of Sydney Students' Representative Council (SRC); • University of Sydney Union (USU).
University community	staff, affiliates and students of the University.

University-related conduct	any conduct that is connected to the University. This includes conduct that:
	• refers or relates to the University, its activities, or its staff, affiliates or students in their status as staff, affiliates or students of the University;
	• occurs on, or in connection with, University lands or other property owned by the University;
	• occurs at, or in connection with, a Residential College;
	• occurs at, or in connection with, University owned or affiliated student accommodation;
	• occurs using, or is facilitated by, University ICT resources or other University equipment;
	• occurs during, or relates to, the performance of duties for the University;
	• occurs during, or in connection to, any University-related function or event (whether sanctioned or organised by the University or not) or when representing the University in any capacity;
	• occurs during, or in connection to, any event run by or affiliated with student representative organisations, student clubs or student societies (whether sanctioned or organised by the University or not);
	• occurs during, or in connection to, students' clinical, practicum, internship or work experience placements; or
	• occurs while a University of Sydney student is participating in an overseas exchange, study abroad or other approved program.
University values	the values that serve as guiding principles for behaviour and decision-making at the University. They are:
	• Excellence – pursuing outstanding performance in service to our communities
	• Trust – actively creating an inclusive and collaborative work environment
	• Accountability – owning our successes and failures, both collectively and individually
Viva Engage	the University's enterprise social network.

Part 9   Notes

Recissions and replacements

This document replaces the following, which are rescinded as from the date of commencement of this document:

> (1)   *Public Comment Policy*, which commenced on 1 February 2007

Public Comment and Social Media Policy 2025

Date approved	26 May 2025
Date commenced	2 June 2025
Date for review	2 June 2030
Approver	Vice-Chancellor and President
Owner(s)	Vice-President (External Engagement)
Date last amended	
Related documents	*Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy*
	Brand Policy
	Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy
	Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom
	Privacy Policy
	Recordkeeping Policy
	Staff and Affiliates Code of Conduct
	Student Charter
	University of Sydney (Student Discipline) Rule
	University of Sydney Enterprise Agreement 2023–2026
	Viva Engage Terms of Use
	Brand Style Guidelines

Part 10   Amendment history

Register version	Approved by	Clause	Amendment	Amended