



Eastern Kentucky University

Policy and Regulation Library

Administrative Regulation: 11.2.5ADR

Responsible Office(s): Communications and
Brand Management

Effective: January 18, 2024

Next Review Date: Fall 2028

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Social Media Communications

Statement

Social media are powerful communication platforms that can be used to connect with others including employees, alumni, fans, and the University. However, social media can also have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) has established the following Regulation to clarify how best to enhance and protect the University, as well as personal and professional reputations, when participating in social media. This Regulation should be read in conjunction with University Policy 1.5.7POL, Institutional Viewpoint Neutrality.

Both in professional and institutional roles, employees are expected to follow the same behavioral standards online as they would in the real world. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, patients, alumni, donors, media, and other University constituents apply. If an employee's use of social media violates any of ECU's policies in another forum, it will also violate them in an online forum. Employees are accountable for any institutionally related content they post to social media sites, as well as their personal accounts. When using their own personal social media accounts, employees should always be clear to identify that the views expressed on their personal pages do not reflect the views of the University. Social media posts are far from private, and employees should always be conscious of how their messages can be interpreted by others. Examples of disclaimers and ways to convey this message are discussed in Section IV.

EKU has official social media accounts that are overseen by the Office of Communications and Brand Management (CBM), which follows the sites' specific guidelines regarding appropriate content. These channels are intended to supplement, not replace, the methods the University has in place for announcements regarding events, news, and student and employee communications.

Entities Affected

All employees, departments, and units of the University. This Regulation shall not apply to independent student media.

Procedures

I. Establishing University-Affiliated Social Media Accounts

- A. Notify the University. Departments or University units that have a social media page or would like to start one should consult the CBM website (<https://www.eku.edu/in/cbm/>) and contact CBM as directed to ensure all institutional social media sites adhere to University policy. All institutional pages must have a full-time appointed employee who is identified as being responsible for content. Ideally, this should be the unit head of the department, though it may be another appointee from the department or unit. If an Employee has created an account on behalf of the University without notifying CBM and following the steps detailed above, they should immediately contact CBM to rectify the situation.
- B. Designate Appropriate Administrators. All official ECU social media accounts must be registered with an ECU email address and must have two ECU employees as page administrators. Page administrators must also provide the ECU email address of one of their supervisors or a member of the CBM team as an alternate contact and should consult with CBM for a list of designated alternates.
 - 1) The names and contact information of every University-Affiliated Social Media account must be registered with CBM.
 - 2) Students may not serve as page administrators for University-Affiliated Social Media accounts, though they may serve as account managers so long as they abide by the same guidelines and brand compliance required of all page administrators.
- C. Have a plan. Departments should consider their messages, audiences, and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. CBM can assist and advise you with your social media planning.
- D. Use of photos. CBM can provide approved photos for various areas of the University, if needed, though it is not required. To receive photos in a downloadable format, contact CBM.
- E. Use of University logos. All accounts must comply with branding guidelines. Your University social media presence must use approved logos for your area of the University. CBM can provide approved logos for various areas of the University. To receive logos in a downloadable format, visit the CBM Office. For more information regarding proper use of University logos, see the *ECU Brand Guide*.

II. Use of Social Media on Behalf of the University

If you post on behalf of an official University unit, the following policies apply, in addition to all University policies and best practices:

- A. Link back to the University. Whenever possible, link back to the ECU website. Ideally, posts should be very brief and redirect a visitor to content that resides within the ECU Web environment. When linking to a news article about the University, check first to see whether you can link to a release on ECU Stories instead of to an external publication or other media outlet.
- B. Protect the institutional voice. Posts on social media sites should protect the University's institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. No individual unit should construe its social media site as representing the University as a whole. Consider this when naming pages or accounts, selecting a profile picture or icon, and selecting content to post. Names, profile images, and posts should all be clearly linked to the particular department or unit rather than to the institution as a whole.
- C. Strive for Accuracy. Always check for grammatical and spelling errors, and fact check before posting on social media. If you make an error, correct it as quickly as possible.

III. Institutional Use of Social Media

- A. Discretion Abides in the University. ECU reserves the right to hide or delete comments/posts from its social media channels if the content is inaccurate, inappropriate, libelous or incendiary.
- B. University Response to Social Media Comments. ECU tries to respond in a timely manner within business hours to comments that merit responses and forwards questions to the appropriate offices to facilitate accurate dialogue.

The following guidelines are in response to negative comments or criticisms on social media:

- 1) Inappropriate comments – such as hate speech, derogatory attacks on individuals, profanity, and commercial content/spam – may be hidden or removed from social media, and/or reported.
 - 2) Determinations on whether to respond will be made on a case-by-case basis.
 - 3) Comments that highlight a specific issue requiring attention by a unit or department will be forwarded to the appropriate contacts for direct response or action.
- C. Emergency Communications by the University. The Division of Public Safety is the official voice of the University during emergencies. In the event of an emergency, messaging will be shared via the university's official channels and distribution methods. Follow up messaging will also be shared

as appropriate via those channels. Share original posts from official University channels in their entirety in an emergency situation without embellishment.

IV. Personal Employee Use of Social Media

EKU Employees are encouraged to adhere to the Office of Communications and Brand Management's *Social Media Guide*. Appropriate action will be taken in extreme cases when public safety is threatened.

- A. Refrain from blending personal and institutional voice on all personal social media channels. Employees should refrain from including the University's name or your associated program in the account title or username or attributing personal opinions or views to the University. Employees posting on personal social media platforms should identify their views as their own.
 - a. Example disclaimer: *"The postings on this site are my own and do not represent the views, positions, or opinions of Eastern Kentucky University."*
- B. Adhere to all applicable University policies and procedures. Employees must remain in compliance with EKU's policies and guidelines regarding the use of company-owned computers or other electronic devices. The personal use of social networking sites should be limited to breaks and lunchtimes.

Employees must remain in compliance with EKU's policies and guidelines regarding professionalism, harassment, and discrimination. Users of social media websites are personally responsible for their commentary. Users can be held personally liable for commentary that is considered defamatory, obscene, proprietary or libelous to any offended party.

- C. Understand your words are public. Employees are cautioned not to have expectations of privacy while using EKU equipment, facilities or Internet for any purpose. The University reserves the right to monitor, limit or remove content or access to resources, when it has been determined by the appropriate University official that there is a violation or potential violation of applicable University policies, contractual obligations, or state or federal laws.

Employees shall not use Social Media to disclose any confidential information of or about EKU, its employees, vendors, suppliers, or students.

V. Use of Social Media, Generally

- A. Protect institutional, confidential, and proprietary information. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the University, its students, employees, or alumni. Employees must follow applicable federal requirements, including but not limited to FERPA. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.

- B. Adhere to all applicable University regulations, policies, and procedures. Use Social Media in a manner that complies with all University regulations, policies, and procedures.
- C. Adhere to copyright and fair use law. When posting, do not violate the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the University. Questions about fair use or copyrighted material should be directed to the Office of University Counsel.
- D. Do not use ECU's name to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate. Questions should be directed to CBM.
- E. Do not announce University News. Do not be the first to announce University News on a social media site unless pre-approved by CBM.
- F. Respect University time and property. University computers and time on the job are reserved for University-related business as approved by supervisors and in accordance with University policy.
- G. Be respectful. Thoughtful discussions and online engagement are great ways to build community. When interacting with others online, users should be respectful of the opinions of others and refrain from harassing, threatening, discriminatory, profane, obscene, or sexually explicit comments that disparage others.
- H. Be aware of terms of service. Comply with the Terms of Service of any social media platform used.

For a list of best practices, see CBM's *Social Media Guide*.

Definitions

- **Social media:** Social media is a broad term that includes forms of electronic communication through which users share information, ideas, personal messages, photos, videos, and other content. Examples include, but are not limited to: Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, and Snapchat, and other similar applications.
- **University-Affiliated/Institutional Social Media Account:** Any account administered by an official University department or unit on any social network that is registered with CBM and used in support of the business function or needs of that unit.
- **University News:** Any news or information that would ordinarily be released to the public via official University channels. University News does not include day-to-day departmental information or communications regarding events occurring outside an individual's role as a University employee. For examples of University News, see <https://stories.eku.edu/>.

Responsibilities

- Employees
 - Refrain from blending personal and institutional voices on all personal social media channels. Use Social Media in a manner that complies with all University regulations, policies, and procedures
- Official University Units Posting on Behalf of the University
 - Adhering to all University policies and procedures
 - Adhering to the best practices identified in this Regulation
- Human Resources
 - Coordinate with supervisors and appropriate administration to ensure compliance with this Regulation
- Office of Communications and Brand Management (CBM)
 - Provide resources for appropriate use of Social Media
 - Identify content on official channels that may require further review

Violations of the Regulation

If an employee's use of social media violates any of ECU's policies or regulations in another forum, it will also violate them in an online forum. Non-compliance with this regulation will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, consistent with Human Resources Regulation 8.3.3., Employee Conduct, and may result in any or all of the following:

- A. Limitation or revocation of individual or unit rights to use or administer University-affiliated social media;
- B. Removal of posts or University-affiliated social media accounts; or
- C. Corrective or disciplinary actions and sanctions.

Any concerns about an employee's social media usage can be directed to CBM.

Regulation Adoption Review and Approval

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Entity

University Counsel
President

Action

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Board of Regents
President McFaddin

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