



Social Media Guidelines

Preamble

The popularity of social media has grown rapidly over the last few years, beginning primarily with early-adopters in the tech community and spreading to the youth demographic, who enjoy the medium's capacity to project a specific profile, share music, photos and videos and chat online.

More recently, the 18+ demographic has integrated social media into their lifestyle, as a means of staying connected with friends and family, especially at a distance. Finally, the business, political and not-for-profit world has joined the movement, with public figures, recognizable consumer brands and universities joining the move to social media.

U of T Mississauga maintains a blog and both central and niche social media accounts on:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Flickr
- Google+

Because social media channels are fairly new to many staff and faculty members, we've assembled "best practice" guidelines from respected online and industry sources to help you use these forums effectively, protect your personal and professional reputation, and follow university policies.

These guidelines also apply to students who have permission to post on university social media sites. While these guidelines are not meant to govern personal social media accounts, the general recommendations may provide useful tips.

General recommendations

The keys to success in social media are being honest about who you are, being thoughtful before you post and respecting the purpose of the community where you

are posting.

Maintain confidentiality. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about U of T Mississauga, its students, its alumni, your fellow employees, vendors or business partners. Use good ethical judgment and follow university policies. As a guideline, don't post anything that you would not present at a conference. If you are unsure about whether to post something, ask your supervisor.

Need information on FIPPA? <http://www.fippa.utoronto.ca/site3.aspx>

Be transparent. Be honest about your identity. If you are authorized by your supervisor to represent U of T Mississauga in social media, please identify yourself as a faculty or staff member or student. Never hide your identity for the purpose of promoting U of T Mississauga through social media. If you are using a personal social media account, make clear that your opinions are your own and not that of the University of Toronto Mississauga.

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

Be respectful. The Golden Rule applies in social media, too! Cause no harm--use a civil tone. Don't write something you wouldn't say in person. You are more likely to achieve your goals or sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person. We encourage you to express your opinions, but don't resort to personal attacks, harassment, cultural insensitivity or discrimination in the process.

Check out the U of T HR Guidelines on Civil Conduct:

<http://www.hrandequity.utoronto.ca/Assets/news/civility.pdf?method=1>

Be a valued member. Make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Don't post information about topics like U of T Mississauga events or a book you've authored unless you are sure it will be of interest to readers. Self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from websites or groups.

Consider your audiences. Social media often span traditional boundaries between professional and personal relationships. Use privacy settings to restrict personal information on otherwise public sites. Choose profile photos and avatars carefully. Be thoughtful about the type of photos you upload.

Still not clear? Check out these resources from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada: http://www.priv.gc.ca/information/social/index_e.cfm

Think before you post. There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts years after the publication date. Every tweet is archived.

Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you feel angry or upset about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed.

Copyrighted or confidential material. Make sure you have permission to post any copyrighted or confidential information (e.g., images) to your blog or any online presence, and be careful about posting or linking to items that may contain viruses. Need info? Here's U of T's Copyright Policy:

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/copyright.htm>

(Updated June 2013)