

# Institutional Social Media Accounts for Marketing and Communications Purposes

## University Policy

Applies to: Faculty, staff, student-employees, and other individuals who create and/or maintain institutional social media accounts for university marketing or communications purposes.

### Responsible Office

Office of Marketing and Communications

### POLICY

Issued: 04/15/2019

Revised: 05/09/2025 (minor revision)

The creation and use of **institutional social media accounts** for university marketing and communications purposes are increasingly common. Social media platforms offer significant opportunities for The Ohio State University to raise brand awareness, engage audiences, drive action, and spur advocacy in support of the university's teaching, research, and service missions; the university's administrative functions; and students' campus-life activities. When engaging in **social media** for university marketing and communications purposes, individuals must be conscious of the marketing and communication benefits of such social media use in the broader context of university security, compliance, brand, and reputation and conduct themselves in accordance with university policies.

### Purpose of the Policy

To provide guidance regarding the creation and management of institutional social media accounts for university marketing or communications purposes.

### Definitions

Term	Definition
Account manager	Person with primary day-to-day responsibility over a social media account.
Account take-overs	An occurrence during which individuals who are not account managers are given temporary permission to use an account to drive interest and share new content.
Clickwrap agreement	Legal agreement that can be accepted by clicking "Yes" or "I accept" on a screen icon. Terms and conditions on social media platforms often are agreed to via a clickwrap.
Incident	Per the Ohio State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, an occurrence, natural or manmade, that requires a response to protect life or property. Incidents can, for example, include major disasters, emergencies, terrorist attacks, terrorist threats, civil unrest, wildland and urban fires, floods, hazardous materials spills, nuclear accidents, aircraft accidents, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, tropical storms, tsunamis, war-related disasters, public health and medical emergencies, and other occurrences requiring an emergency response.
Institutional social media account	Accounts for university marketing and communications purposes that meet one or more of the following criteria: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Created to extend the reach of Ohio State content to external audiences beyond university staff, faculty, or students;</li><li>2. Created to extend the reach of Ohio State non-academic content to internal audiences such as staff, faculty or students where content is also visible to external audiences;</li><li>3. Used to comment or publish content in the capacity as a <b>principal administrative official</b> of the university (e.g., President, Provost, Athletic Director, Dean); and/or</li><li>4. Supported by university resources (employees, budget, or tools funded by the university) to reach external audiences beyond university staff, faculty, or students.</li></ol> Institutional social media accounts do not include accounts created by students or student organizations, or accounts used solely for research or teaching purposes.
Primary accounts	Accounts that represent greater opportunity and risk due to the size of their followings or their public profile; criteria outlined in the Institutional Social Media Protocols and Standards.

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Term	Definition
Principal administrative official	<p>University officials who are accountable for personal and professional statements expressed on social media that are perceived publicly as opinions of the university.</p> <p>As set forth in <a href="#">Rule 3335-1-03</a>, the term “principal administrative official” includes the members of the president’s cabinet, the college deans and the dean and directors of regional campuses and their designated staffs, the director of the university libraries, chairs of academic departments, directors of schools and academic centers, and such other administrative officials as determined by the president.</p> <p>Private social media accounts for these individuals that are reserved strictly for personal use – and are in no way supported by university resources – are not covered by the policy.</p>
Social media	<p>Activities on web-based social network platforms that allow individuals to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system,</li> <li>2. Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and</li> <li>3. View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.</li> </ol> <p>Examples of platforms used for marketing and communications at Ohio State include Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, and YouTube.</p>
Social Media Community of Practice	Social media practitioners across campus who participate in knowledge sharing at a recurring forum and/or through ongoing electronic communications.
Terms and conditions	Rules imposed by a social media platform that users must agree to in order to use the service. Also known as “terms of use” and “terms of service.”
Publishing tool	Software or platform used to administer access, settings, publishing, reporting, and other features used in managing social media accounts.
Unit	General term for college, office, department, center, or other organization at Ohio State. Examples include Athletics, Marketing and Communications, Student Life, and Wexner Medical Center.
Unit social media lead	Person acting as the policy expert for account managers within their unit and the primary point of contact for the Office of Marketing and Communications in regard to the policy.

### Policy Details

- I. Institutional Social Media Accounts
  - A. Each institutional social media account must have an associated **account manager** and a **unit social media lead**. In some units, the same individual may serve in both of these roles. These account managers and unit social media leads implement the requirements of this policy and participate in the **Social Media Community of Practice** through electronic communications and regularly-scheduled meetings hosted by the Office of Marketing and Communications (OMC).
  - B. Institutional social media accounts must be approved through a formalized application process. (Accounts created prior to March 15, 2019 do not need to apply.)
  - C. All institutional social media accounts will be audited annually to meet a minimum set of requirements. (Individual units may apply additional requirements.)
  - D. Institutional social media accounts designated as **primary accounts** have additional requirements to mitigate institutional risk.
  - E. OMC and unit social media leads reserve the ability to freeze or close an account if the application process is not followed, audits are not conducted, or minimum requirements are not met.
  - F. OMC, in collaboration with the Social Media Community of Practice, will provide outreach and training on this policy and best practices.
  - G. Information created and stored on institutional social media accounts may be subject to Ohio public records law and public records requests.

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### II. Additional Guidance

- A. Institutional social media accounts also are subject to the following requirements and guidelines to nurture best practices and mitigate risk:
  - 1. [Institutional Social Media Account Protocols and Standards](#) (ISMAPS) (addressing account minimum requirements, primary account criteria, **account take-overs**, account recovery, and account management transitions);
  - 2. [Brand Guidelines](#);
  - 3. [General Records Retention Schedule](#); and
  - 4. [Political Activity Guidelines](#).
- B. All institutional social media accounts are subject to all university rules and policies including, but not limited to, [Responsible Use of University Computing and Network Resources](#), [Institutional Data](#), [Digital Accessibility](#), [Records Management](#), [Information Technology \(IT\) Security](#), and [Public Records](#).

## PROCEDURE

Issued: 04/15/2019

Revised: 05/09/2025 (minor revision)

### I. Creating an Institutional Social Media Account

- A. Units wishing to start an institutional social media account must designate an account manager and identify the unit social media lead. Only current faculty, staff, and student-employees may be designated as account managers and unit social media leads. Non-employees, such as students and volunteers, may assist with institutional social media accounts under the direction of account managers, who remain responsible for the accounts.
- B. All institutional social media accounts must be approved through a formal application process before the accounts may go live. The application process is published in the [ISMAPS](#) and annually reviewed by OMC, in consultation with the Social Media Community of Practice. This application requirement does not apply to accounts created prior to March 15, 2019.
- C. Account managers may not open institutional social media accounts unless the accounts meet the minimum requirements set forth in the [ISMAPS](#).
- D. Account managers may not accept a platform's **clickwrap agreement** until the unit social media lead and OMC approve the application for a new account.
  - 1. OMC will partner annually with the Purchasing Department and the Office of Legal Affairs to review the **terms and conditions**, including clickwrap agreement terms, of the social media platforms in use.

### II. Auditing an Institutional Social Media Account

- A. Account managers must audit their accounts annually for compliance with the current minimum requirements set forth in the [ISMAPS](#).
- B. While accounts representing **principal administrative officials** are not required to complete the annual audit required of **unit institutional social media accounts**, these individual accounts remain subject to policy terms.
- C. Account managers must submit audit results to unit social media leads and OMC by July 15 each year. Minimum requirements not met must be fixed within 10 business days of discovery.

### III. Ongoing Management of Institutional Social Media Accounts

- A. Account managers of primary accounts must enroll primary accounts in a **publishing tool** that is approved by OMC. The pre-approved publishing tool will provide additional layers of security to mitigate institutional risk.

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- B. When managing institutional social media accounts, account managers must follow:
    - 1. The [ISMAPS](#);
    - 2. University policies, including those governing responsible use of university computing and network resources, institutional data, information security, digital accessibility, and records management, as well as state and federal regulations regarding the same; and
    - 3. The [General Records Retention Schedule](#) maintained by University Archives.
  - C. When managing institutional social media accounts, account managers should also reference university [brand guidelines](#) and [political activity guidelines](#) when publishing, liking, sharing, or following on social media and must review the source of the content prior to liking or sharing.
  - D. Ohio State is a public institution. Information created and stored on institutional social media accounts may be subject to Ohio public records law and public records requests. Account managers seeking to remove posted information from institutional social media accounts must contact OMC and the Office of Legal Affairs for consultation prior to removal. This requirement applies to all posted information, whether posted by the unit or by external parties, but does not apply to the immediate removal of unit-created content due to typographical or other posting error.
  - E. In addition to reporting requirements mandated in other university policies, information posted on or to institutional social media accounts about possible crimes, violence, or harassment must be reported by the account manager or unit social media lead as follows:
    - 1. Posted information that threatens violence or harm to a person, property or the university or otherwise threatens the immediate safety of a person, property, or the university must be reported immediately to the Ohio State University Police Division or 911.
    - 2. Posted information about possible discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, and prohibited relationships must be reported to the offices identified in the university's [Non-Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct policy](#). If such posted information contains a threat as described in III.E.1 above, the information must also be reported immediately to the Ohio State University Police Division or 911.
    - 3. Posted information about other possible crimes not described in III.E.1 or III.E.2 above should be reported to the Ohio State University Police Division if the information would lead a reasonable person to believe a crime has occurred or will occur.
  - F. If the Department of Public Safety declares an **incident**, as defined by the [Ohio State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan](#), OMC will notify the Social Media Community of Practice to alert them of the situation, and individual units must consult with Public Affairs within OMC on any planned postings or references to the incident.
  - G. Endorsements or promotions of third party products or services posted from institutional accounts must comply with unrelated business income tax (UBIT) terms and require consultation with the Office of Trademark & Licensing prior to posting. Messages featuring third-party products or services may not conflict with existing university exclusivity arrangements.
- IV. Closing and Recovering Institutional Social Media Accounts
- A. OMC and unit social media leads may freeze or close accounts if the application process is not followed, audits are not conducted, or the minimum requirements set forth in the [ISMAPS](#) are not met.
  - B. For accounts inactive for 30 days or more, OMC will work with the relevant unit social media lead and the account manager to resolve the inactivity, close the account, or merge it with an active account.
  - C. A protocol for recovery of hacked social media accounts is set forth in the [ISMAPS](#).
- V. Transitioning Management of an Institutional Social Media Account
- A. The required protocol for transitioning management of an account is set forth in the [ISMAPS](#).

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- B. Account managers must notify the unit social media lead when account management needs to move to another individual.
- C. Unit social media leads must notify OMC when their responsibilities are transferred to other individuals and when account managers' responsibilities move to other individuals.
- D. The unit social media lead or the new account manager must remove the administrative permissions of prior account managers and unit social media leads.

### VI. Identifying and Classifying Institutional Social Media Accounts

- A. OMC will conduct quarterly scans to identify accounts affiliated with the university. Through such scans and with assistance from unit social media leads, OMC will maintain a master list of all institutional social media accounts. Unit social media leads are responsible for maintaining a list of their unit social media accounts, and corresponding managers, to ensure accuracy of the university's master list. OMC will update and publish this master list annually, at minimum.
- B. OMC will use the primary accounts criteria published in the [ISMAPS](#) to determine which accounts should be classified as primary accounts. OMC will maintain a list of primary accounts.

### VII. Review of the Institutional Social Media Account Protocols and Standards ([ISMAPS](#))

- A. OMC will lead an annual review of the [ISMAPS](#) supporting this policy in consultation with the Social Media Community of Practice and the Office of Legal Affairs.

## Responsibilities

Position or Office	Responsibilities
Account manager	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adhere to this policy in managing institutional social media accounts.</li> <li>2. Notify unit social media leads when account management responsibilities change and remove administrative permissions of prior account managers and unit social media leads.</li> <li>3. Participate in the Social Media Community of Practice.</li> <li>4. Report information posted to institutional social media accounts about possible crimes, violence, or harassment as set forth in the policy.</li> </ol>
Office of Legal Affairs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review terms and conditions of social media platforms.</li> <li>2. Consult on removal of posted information.</li> <li>3. Consult on annual review of ISMAPS.</li> </ol>
Social Media Community of Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consult on annual review of ISMAPS.</li> <li>2. Provide outreach and training on this policy and best practices.</li> </ol>
Unit social media lead	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Act as liaison to OMC.</li> <li>2. Partner with OMC to oversee account registration, management, and audit processes.</li> <li>3. Participate in the Social Media Community of Practice.</li> <li>4. Freeze or close accounts that do not comply with this policy.</li> <li>5. Work with OMC and the account manager if an account is inactive for 30 days.</li> <li>6. Notify OMC when account management responsibilities change for account managers or unit social media leads and remove administrative permissions of prior account managers and unit social media leads.</li> <li>7. Maintain a list of unit social media accounts, and corresponding leads and managers, to ensure accuracy of the university's master list.</li> <li>8. Report information posted to institutional social media accounts about possible crimes, violence, or harassment as set forth in the policy.</li> </ol>
Office of Marketing and Communications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Administer this policy.</li> <li>2. Provide outreach and training on this policy and best practices.</li> <li>3. Lead annual review of ISMAPS in consultation with Social Media Community of Practice and Office of Legal Affairs; publish ISMAPS.</li> <li>4. Freeze or close accounts that do not comply with this policy.</li> </ol>

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	5. Work with the relevant unit social media lead and the account manager if an account is inactive for 30 days. 6. Partner with unit social media leads to oversee account registration and audit processes. 7. Convene the Social Media Community of Practice. 8. Conduct quarterly scans of accounts affiliated with the university. 9. Maintain and publish a master list of institutional social media accounts.

### Resources

#### Governance Documents

Brand Guidelines, [brand.osu.edu](http://brand.osu.edu)  
 Digital Accessibility policy, [go.osu.edu/accessibility-policy](http://go.osu.edu/accessibility-policy)  
 General Records Retention Schedule, [go.osu.edu/retention-schedules](http://go.osu.edu/retention-schedules)  
 Information Technology (IT) Security policy, [go.osu.edu/infosec-itsp](http://go.osu.edu/infosec-itsp)  
 Institutional Data policy, [go.osu.edu/idp](http://go.osu.edu/idp)  
 Institutional Social Media Account Protocols and Standards (ISMAPS), [go.osu.edu/social-media-policy-resources](http://go.osu.edu/social-media-policy-resources)  
 Non-Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct policy, [go.osu.edu/non-discrimination-policy](http://go.osu.edu/non-discrimination-policy)  
 Political Activity Guidelines, [legal.osu.edu/topics/political-activity-guidelines](http://legal.osu.edu/topics/political-activity-guidelines)  
 Public Records policy, [go.osu.edu/public-records-policy](http://go.osu.edu/public-records-policy)  
 Records Management policy, [go.osu.edu/records-mgmt-policy](http://go.osu.edu/records-mgmt-policy)  
 Responsible Use of University Computing and Network Resources policy, [go.osu.edu/responsible-use](http://go.osu.edu/responsible-use)  
 Rule 3335-1-03, [trustees.osu.edu/bylaws-board-trustees-ohio-state-university/3335-1-03](http://trustees.osu.edu/bylaws-board-trustees-ohio-state-university/3335-1-03)

#### Additional Resources

Cybersecurity webpage, [it.osu.edu/security](http://it.osu.edu/security)  
 Frequently Asked Questions, [go.osu.edu/social-media-policy-resources](http://go.osu.edu/social-media-policy-resources)  
 Office of Business and Finance Tax Office, [busfin.osu.edu/university-business/tax-office](http://busfin.osu.edu/university-business/tax-office)  
 Ohio State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, [dps.osu.edu/sites/default/files/cemp\\_2017.pdf](http://dps.osu.edu/sites/default/files/cemp_2017.pdf)  
 Unrelated business income tax (UBIT), [irs.gov/charities-non-profits/unrelated-business-income-tax](http://irs.gov/charities-non-profits/unrelated-business-income-tax)

### Contacts

Subject	Office	Telephone	E-mail/URL
Policy administration; general inquiries	Office of Marketing and Communications		<a href="mailto:socialmedia@osu.edu">socialmedia@osu.edu</a>
Privacy; intellectual property; online agreements; removal of posted information	Office of Legal Affairs	614-292-0611	<a href="http://legal.osu.edu">legal.osu.edu</a>
To report posted information or messages about possible crimes, violence, or harassment	Ohio State University Police Division	614-292-2121	<a href="http://dps.osu.edu">dps.osu.edu</a>
To report posted information or messages regarding discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, and prohibited relationships	Civil Rights Compliance Office	614-247-5838	<a href="mailto:civilrights@osu.edu">civilrights@osu.edu</a>



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Subject	Office	Telephone	E-mail/URL
Guidance on references to incidents declared by the Department of Public Safety; removal of posted information	Public Affairs in Office of Marketing and Communications	614-292-9681	<a href="mailto:osumedia@osu.edu">osumedia@osu.edu</a>

### History

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