



SAINT MARY'S
UNIVERSITY

SOCIAL MEDIA PRINCIPLES & GUIDELINES

SMU Social Media **Principles & Guidelines**

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1.0 Introduction

Join Our Conversation

At Saint Mary's University, our community is both diverse and dynamic, and it shows through our vibrant online community.

As we strive to achieve a digital-first mentality across all forms of communication, we must consider our use of social media across the university, and how to best use it to represent who we are, what we do and what we stand for as an organization.

This document is intended for use by anyone managing a social media channel at Saint Mary's. Whether you are a social media wiz, or stepping into your first communications role at our university, we hope it will help enhance your digital knowledge, achieve your communications goals and join our conversation.



SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

2.0 Strategy

Saint Mary's Digital World

At Saint Mary's, we truly are *one world* – and that goes for our digital world, too. Because of this, we approach our social media channels from a connected point of view – each providing useful information with the user's needs at the forefront.

Instead of looking at each of our channels as having their own separate identities, we aim to leverage each channel for their specific strengths, giving life to our digital world as a whole. Some channels are informative, others are conversational. While some are particularly useful for current students, others are geared for potential students and alumni. But no matter which channel a user is following, we aim to provide them with the best possible experience through our excellence in storytelling, our approachable nature and our informative but relatable tone.

Our Digital Presence

Saint Mary's channels should be identifiable not only by their on-brand look, but also by the story they are telling and the way they are telling it.

Currently, Saint Mary's uses the following social media platforms in an official capacity: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. These platforms will inevitably vary over time as technologies, user habits and other online opportunities evolve.

Here is an overview of the type of channels you'll experience in our digital environment:

University channels: A university social media channel is one that carries the official brand of the university, has been approved by Saint Mary's University's External Affairs department and is recognized as a channel that has a defined owner and assigned resources.

Responsibility for university channels is held by the Associate Vice-President, External Affairs. University channels are managed by Communications Officers and/or Marketing Coordinators. External Affairs must be added as an Administrator on all university Facebook pages and be provided login credentials on all official Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn channels.

Personal channels: Personal channels cannot use university branding or logos. Owners are encouraged to clarify in their description that their channel is a personal account and their views do not represent those of Saint Mary's.

For any questions, feel free to reach out to social@smu.ca.

Dedication & Discipline

Social media requires both dedication and discipline. Managing a social media presence is an investment of both time and talent, and is something we value at our university.

Monitoring and maintaining your channels on a regular basis is an important part of this and helps to create a lively and engaging online presence. To ensure social media success, four key considerations must be made:

1. Social media strategy: When it comes to success on social media, we suggest starting with the end in mind by asking yourself the following questions: **Who** are you talking to? **What** are you saying? **Where, when** and **why** are you saying it? Once you have clearly defined answers, you will be ready for consideration number two.
2. Capacity: Properly resourcing a dedicated member of your staff to manage your social media channels on a daily basis is critical. It is their role to not only post approved content, but manage your pages effectively, monitor activities and engage with your audiences.
3. Content creation: Creating thoughtful content relevant to different platforms is particularly important. At Saint Mary's, we strive to be approachable and informative, while curating content relevant for each channel. Please see the Content Planning section of this guideline document for more on this.
4. Measurement: Unlike other forms of communication, measuring the success of any given social media post can happen on a minute-by-minute basis. Every social media channel has their own analytics tools that can be used (for free) to track how well your content is being received by your audience. It is recommended that every social media manager track their channel's analytics on a monthly basis. This information can be used to see what's been successful, what hasn't been and what type of content your audience responds to.

If at any point you have any questions about these considerations, External Affairs is available to provide guidance and training. Reach out to us at social@smu.ca.

Language & Tone

As with any great story, your language and the way in which you tell it is important. As someone managing a university social media channel, establishing a clear, informative, accessible and approachable tone for your audience to engage with is key.

Although the language and tone you use may change based on the faculty or department you represent, you are still representing Saint Mary's. With that, university channels will not: speak in the first-person, use profanity of any kind, use poor grammar or misspelled words. Remember, you are helping to create the voice of our university and it is something to take pride in.

Channel Creation

Collaboration makes us stronger. If you are considering setting up a social media channel, try thinking about what you are looking to achieve and how social media can help you. Consider the commitment involved to be successful, and whether or not partnering with an existing SMU channel could help you reach your objectives more efficiently. In most cases, departments can take advantage of their already established faculty channels to bolster the reach and engagement of their messaging. External Affairs can help you navigate this situation and identify which channel you can use to leverage your information. Reach us at social@smu.ca.



SOCIAL MEDIA
**OUR SOCIAL
PRESENCE**

3.0 Our Social Presence

Social Media Branding

As a representative of Saint Mary's, all university channels use properly sized, properly branded profile and cover photos. This includes an official logo created by External Affairs, or a properly sized version of the university crest (including the proper amount of surrounding white space). This will help create a more unified presence for our university in the online world. External Affairs is happy to work with you to provide you with the assets you need. Please e-mail your request to social@smu.ca.

Facebook Profile Guidelines (2020):

- Profile photo size: 340 x 340
- Cover photo size: 1200 x 675

Twitter Profile Guidelines (2020):

- Profile photo size: 340 x 340
- Cover photo size: 1500 x 500

Instagram Profile Guidelines (2020):

- Profile photo size: 180 x 180

LinkedIn Profile Guidelines (2020):

- Profile photo size: 300 x 300
- Cover photo size: 1536 x 768

Social media platforms often change the format of how pages are laid out and how content is displayed. Therefore, it is important that you frequently review the look and feel of your page to ensure the formatting is up to date and your information is accurate. An example is information on university summer hours (i.e. have you updated your Facebook page to reflect seasonal hours?)

Consistent social media branding helps all of us put our best foot forward, and ultimately strengthens our online brand as a university.

Hashtag Communities

Hashtags are an integral part of social media use and, when used correctly, can be very effective. Think of them as labels for your content – hashtags help you differentiate your message, while also building an archive of your related posts. They can also help others who are interested in your information quickly find your content.

Three hashtags that are commonly used across campus channels are **#smucommunity**, **#dowhatyoudo** (a translation of our Latin motto – Age Quod Agis) and **#oneworld**. These can be used to join the larger online conversation.

External Affairs have also created two hashtags specifically for information promotion:

- **#smuFYI** is used to promote campus information that could be helpful, but is not time sensitive (e.g. a website update scheduled).
- **#smuALERT** is used for urgent campus information (e.g. campus closure).

It is also common for faculties and departments to develop 'campaign hashtags' to generate conversation. These would likely be used to promote a specific event or initiative (e.g. the Sobey School of Business **#impactwithpurpose** campaign, or the Arts Faculty's **#artswithimpact** campaign).

Faculties are encouraged to differentiate information coming from their respective departments using hashtags (i.e. if the Faculty of Arts is sharing information on behalf of the Department of English, they would use **#smuenglish**).



**SOCIAL MEDIA
CONTENT
PLANNING**

4.0 Content Planning

Content Calendars

Content calendars and editorial planning play huge roles in being strategic on social media. It is all about creating the right content for the right channel for the right time, and content calendars help you do this effectively.

Whether you 'are using an online digital calendar or a simple spreadsheet, a great content calendar will help you plan in advance. Not only does it help you mix topic and media types, but it also allows for effective collaboration and helps to streamline your workflow.

Preparing content in advance means you are not creating regular content 'on the fly'. It saves time and effort, and helps you take a proactive approach to better your brand, reputation and storytelling.

When creating a content calendar, here are the things you want to focus on: **channel, date and time, topic, text, links and visuals**. You can also include editorial notes where needed.

Our Digital Presence

The most successful social media channels use a good mix of pre-scheduled and 'on the fly' content. That said, it is important to understand what works well on different social media platforms in terms of content generation and frequency.

When it comes to Facebook, posting 4-6 times per week will help you build familiarity with your audience without overwhelming their newsfeeds. On Twitter, the amount of times you can post is basically unlimited due to its fleeting nature. As for Instagram, channels should aim to try to post on their walls a few times a week, while taking advantage of their story settings for more informational, less visual information. LinkedIn allows for less frequent posts. However, all channels should try to be consistent regarding what and how often they are posting.

Photos & Videos

Multimedia is perhaps the most important consideration when creating social content. Whether it's brand promotion, photos, videos or news updates, visual content is king. We always want to put our very best visual foot forward, and we have come up with some tips to help you with that.

Photos:

- Do not embed lots of text in social graphics. It is not accessible. Also, Facebook limits your ability to use ad buys when there is lots of text found in an image.
- Use images properly sized for each platform (see content guidelines below).

Videos:

- The shorter the better. If you have a longer video, create a shorter social cut (15-30 seconds)
- Embed subtitles in your video for accessibility. Most videos are watched on mobile devices with the sound off.
- Upload videos as HD MP4 files when possible – this provides a better user experience.

Visual Guidelines

Facebook Content Guidelines:

- Text suggestions: 2-3 lines of well-crafted, informative but approachable text
- Photo size: 1200 x 628 (post image), 1200 x 675 (event cover)
- Link suggestions: Link to a page on the smu.ca website when possible
- Hashtag suggestions: Using 1-2 hashtags on Facebook posts is encouraged

Twitter Content Guidelines:

- Text suggestions: 1-2 lines of well-crafted, informative but approachable text
- Photo size: 1200 x 675 (post image)
- Link suggestions: Link to a page on the smu.ca website when possible
- Hashtag suggestions: Using 1-2 hashtags on Twitter posts is encouraged

Instagram Content Guidelines:

- Text suggestions: 2-3 lines of well-crafted, informative but approachable text
- Photo size: Instagram is unique as it provides photo sizing options:
 - 1080 x 1080 (square)
 - 1080 x 566 (landscape)
 - 1080 x 1350 (portrait)
 - 1080 x 1920 (story)
- Link suggestions: Instagram is unique in that it does not currently support live links. If you are trying to link to something, we suggest leveraging the link option in your page's profile.
- Hashtag suggestions: Using multiple hashtags is encouraged on Instagram (we suggest using them strategically by incorporating some of our university-wide hashtags and some more general, topical ones)

LinkedIn Content Guidelines:

- Text suggestions: 2-3 lines of well-crafted, informative but approachable text
- Photo size: 1200 x 628 (post image)
- Link suggestions: Link to a page on the smu.ca website when possible
- Hashtag suggestions: Using 1-2 hashtags on LinkedIn posts is encouraged



**SOCIAL MEDIA
CHANNEL
GOVERNANCE**

5.0 Channel Governance

Social Media Security

Social media security is a top priority. As such, we have established mandatory channel governance guidelines:

- All Saint Mary's University Facebook pages must add social@smu.ca as an Administrator.
- All Saint Mary's University Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn pages must provide External Affairs with their login credentials. These can be submitted to social@smu.ca.

We also recommend that no more than two internal staff members be given Administrator rights to any given page, with no more than two other internal staff members being given Editor access. At any point during staff turn-over, Administrator or Editor access should be immediately reevaluated and/or revoked.

For more information, see our Social Media Policy.



**SOCIAL MEDIA
GUIDELINES FOR
PERSONAL USE**

6.0 Guidelines for Personal Social Media Use

Conduct & Expectations

Sometimes the lines between personal and professional use of social media can be difficult to distinguish. To help our faculty and staff members understand our expectations, we have outlined a series of guidelines for your use.

As an employee of Saint Mary's, we understand and encourage your right to share personal opinions on social media. This can and should be done using a personal page – not one representing the university. This will help distinguish personal views from communications that represent Saint Mary's University. This includes liking, sharing or retweeting content from a university channel.

Employees should not use a Saint Mary's email account or password, logo, crest or other branding options for personal use.

Employees will not use the Saint Mary's University name to endorse or promote opinions, products, causes or political candidates. Representing personal opinions as institutionally endorsed by Saint Mary's is prohibited.

When it comes to personal posts on personal channels, you may identify yourself as a Saint Mary's faculty or staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your personal views as a member of the higher education community, not as a formal representative of the university. Remember that anything you post on your personal accounts is potentially accessible by other members of your professional community and avoid posting anything that could reflect poorly on you, your colleagues or the university.

Privacy

Prior to personal use, think carefully about what information you share online. Familiarize yourself with privacy settings on any given social media platform. Consider the implications of accepting 'friend' or 'follow' requests as these have the potential to share private information or misrepresent a relationship.

Academic Freedom

Social media can be a powerful way to create discussion, share expertise and enhance knowledge. It can also be a great way to increase your engagement, share your research and connect you with colleagues and other experts.

Because of this, we encourage faculty to use social media, and we do not interfere or restrict academic freedom in any way. As with all communications at Saint Mary's, your right to academic freedom is limited only by the university's respectful environment, harassment and discrimination agreements highlighted in the Collective Agreement document.



SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES

7.0 Resources For Your Use

[Social Media Policy](#)

[Respectful & Inclusive at Saint Mary's](#)

Contact Us

Feel free to contact External Affairs with any social media related questions you may have at social@smu.ca.

Connect With Us

Visit our university channels:



@smuhalifax



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