



The American University of Kurdistan Policy of Social Media

Policy Number: GA009
Effective Date: May 28, 2023

1. **Policy:** This policy establishes the framework governing the use of Social Media in relation to the American University of Kurdistan (AUK), defining clear standards for permissible and non-permissible content and conduct. It promotes transparency, accountability, and responsible communication, while ensuring alignment with the University's mission, values, and institutional objectives. The policy is designed to safeguard the integrity of information shared about the University, strengthen engagement with the AUK community, and support the dissemination of accurate information and opportunities in a professional and ethical manner. The policy shall be published on the AUK website and reviewed periodically to ensure continued relevance. All members of the AUK community are required to comply fully with policies approved by the AUK Board of Trustees (BoT).
 - a. **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to establish clear rules and procedures governing the use of the University's social media platforms in a manner that is legally compliant and aligned with all applicable University policies.
 - b. **Scope:** This policy applies to all members of the AUK community: Faculty, staff, and students.

2. Definition of Terms:

Casual Personal Photography: Photography undertaken by individuals not intended for commercial, promotional, institutional, or professional use. Casual personal photography is typically conducted using smartphones.

Copyright: Copyright is a set of legal rights granted to the author of an original literary, artistic, or scientific work, giving them exclusive authority to use, reproduce, distribute, and benefit from their work for a specified period.

External Communications: Messages and information that the University disseminates to various audiences, whether directly (through telephone calls, emails, letters, newsletters, articles, marketing materials, social media platforms, online and/or press releases) or indirectly through the media and word of mouth. All communication and information shared with AUK visitors and stakeholders, such as trustees, sponsors, partners, supporters, and important suppliers, are included in external communications.

Internal Communications: Any verbal and written messages and information exchanged within the University primarily between staff members, but also between Trustees and staff. Information provided to franchise employees, volunteers and staff members of companies collaborating in AUK projects is included in internal communications.

Professional Photography: Photography conducted for commercial, promotional, institutional, media, marketing, advertising, publication, fundraising, or other professional purposes, whether undertaken by professional photographers, University personnel, students, external organizations, or contractors. Professional photography often involves the use of professional-grade cameras, lenses, lighting equipment, or other specialized photographic equipment.

Social Media: A software system or service provided via the Internet used to communicate and share information between people through interactions with video, audio, text, visuals or multimedia. Examples include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Wikis, Google Plus, Flickr, Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Wordpress, chatrooms, forums and other similar services.

Transparency or Being Transparent: The process of being open, honest, and direct about various arrangements, activities, and initiatives being performed regarding the operations of AUK.

3. Responsibilities:

- a. **Issuing Unit:** Office of Communications (OC)
- b. **Other Stakeholders:** Faculty, Staff, Students, Department Chairs and Directors.

4. Procedures:

a. Responsible Use and Community Expectations

Social media are powerful communications and marketing tools that may have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. As there is not always a clear distinction between personal voice and the institution's voice, AUK has crafted the following policy to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social media.

General Principles

- Social media from the AUK is intended to supplement, not replace, the channels currently in place for press, news, events, announcements, and student communication.
- The OC will enable two-factor authentication for all AUK-affiliated social media accounts through the Office phone and maintain a record of account access. Passwords will be updated annually or as necessary, including in cases of personnel changes.
- The University is committed to fostering an educational environment that allows for freedoms of speech (See Policy of Freedom of Expression – Section 6: Related Documents). However, the University will not tolerate any activity or posting on a social media platform, including the official University social media sites with unlawful, defamatory, or obscene activity or posting. The University reserves the right to remove any such posting without notice. The OC will notify individuals to remove non-compliant content, with serious or repeated violations escalated to direct supervisors and the relevant Vice President, and subject to the Policy of Employee/Student Code of Conduct.
- Both in professional and institutional roles, employees should follow the same behavioral standards online as they would elsewhere. The same laws, professional expectations and guidelines for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media and other university constituents apply online and offline. Employees and students of AUK are personally liable for anything they post to or about AUK's social media platforms.
- When posting, employees and students are encouraged to be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the University. Students and employees are not allowed to post audio or video recorded AUK lectures on any of the social media platforms. The University reserves the right to remove such recordings and take appropriate action in this respect.
- Prohibitions on use (unless confirmation provided by OC by a legal documentation)
 - The use of University logos for endorsement purposes is prohibited.
 - The University logo, name, or any institutional imagery or iconography shall not be used on personal social media accounts or pages.
 - The University's name shall not be used to promote any product, cause, political party, or political candidate.
- All AUK community members are expected to adhere to the following:
 - AUK Code of Conduct, Employee Handbook, and all relevant University policies when using social media in reference to AUK.
 - Exercise sound judgment and ensure that all content shared is appropriate and does not harm the University or its stakeholders.
 - Direct all media or press inquiries related to social media activity to the OC.
 - In situations where online interactions become antagonistic, individuals should disengage politely and seek guidance from their direct supervisor.

All employees/AUK community members' use of social media in relation to AUK shall be conducted in accordance with the following expectations and requirements to ensure professionalism, compliance, and alignment with University standards

- Prohibited conduct includes posting content that is defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous, or that may create a hostile work environment.
- Confidential or non-public University information must not be published, including announcements not yet released through official AUK channels. AUK Community members who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination (See Policy of Employee Code of Conduct – Section 6: Related Documents). Employees/AUK Community members should consult the OC or Legal Office for clarification on what constitutes confidential information.
- Content published on social media must be accurate and carefully reviewed for grammatical and spelling errors; responsibility varies by channel, with the OC overseeing official AUK channels, Department Chairs and Directors accountable for content submitted by their units for publication on those channels, and designated Content Leads responsible for AUK-affiliated channels (e.g., SG, CAPA, Radio, and Student Clubs).
- Casual personal photography by members of the AUK community on campus is permitted. Professional photography on campus requires prior authorization from the OC (See Section 2: Definition of Terms).
- Commercial or marketing use of University imagery by vendors or third parties requires authorization from the OC.
- Personal celebrations and gatherings, including but not limited to graduations, personal achievements, and family-related events or celebrations, that are not officially hosted, organized, or approved by AUK are not permitted on campus. This is to ensure the appropriate use of campus facilities, maintain academic and operational priorities, and uphold the institutional brand.
- Social media use must not interfere with University responsibilities, and University systems are primarily for business use.
- After-hours online activity that violates University policies may result in disciplinary action or termination.
- A disclaimer must be used when posting personal content related to AUK (e.g., “The postings on this site are my own and may not represent AUK’s positions, strategies or opinions.”).
- AUK-related social media accounts should be kept separate from personal accounts.

b. Specific Institutional Social Media Procedures

If AUK Community members post on behalf of an official department or University unit, the following procedures must be followed, in addition to all the policies and best practices listed above:

- Complete the Social Media Account Creation Form (See Section 6: Related Documents) and submit it to the OC for approval. Requests from student clubs or associations with licensed activities requiring separate accounts, Units that require a distinct public identity from AUK, and revenue-generating Units will be reviewed for approval. Once approved, the IT Department will create an AUK email for the account.
- The OC will then create the social media account and share the credentials with the requester. The requester is responsible for operating the account in accordance with the procedures below and the Social Media Guidelines. The OC will retain account ownership and monitor it in compliance with AUK policies and branding guidelines.
- The Content Lead should consider their message, audience and goal, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media platforms up-to-date. The OC will add all AUK-affiliated social media Content Leads to the Social Media Committee to assist and advise with social media planning, discuss content strategies, align messaging with AUK narratives
- The OC must create a Telegram group-chat with the Content Lead and OC’s staff. All content created by the requester must be reviewed and approved by the OC. For major campaigns and events, the OC will provide resources for content creation to the Content Lead.
- Whenever possible, link back to University’s social media sites. Ideally, posts should be very brief; redirecting a visitor to content that resides within the University web environment. When linking to a news article about the University, check first to see whether it can link to a release directly from AUK’s website (auk.edu.krd).
- Any content that is posted without prior approval from OC will be deleted immediately.

- All AUK-affiliated social media accounts will be assigned Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) based on relevant social media metrics. Account performance will be reviewed annually by the Office of Communications to determine whether the account will be maintained, optimized, or archived.
- Passwords for all AUK-affiliated social media accounts must be securely maintained by the OC. The OC will update passwords annually or as necessary, including in cases of personnel changes involving individuals with account access.
- Posts on social media sites should protect the University’s institutional voice by remaining professional in tone and in good taste. No individual University 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.
- Entering an event or program of AUK constitutes consent to be photographed, filmed, or otherwise recorded and to the release, publication, exhibition, or reproduction of all recorded media of the appearance, voice, and name for any purpose whatsoever in connection with AUK and its initiatives, including use on websites, in social media, news and advertising. The entry to the premises of any program/event is a declaration of waiving any claims related to the above. If an AUK member, including students, alumni, employees and AUK Community does not agree to the foregoing, it is required to notify the OC by email before attending any AUK-organized event at least 24 hours prior (one working day) to the event.

5. Timeline and Communication/Implementation Plan:

Activity	Responsible Party	Timeline	Communication Channels	Details
Policy Revision Announcement	Communications	May, 2026	University website, email to staff and faculty, separate email to Unit with social media accounts	Announce the revision of the policy, assessment metrics & objectives
Feedback Collection	Communications	June, 2027	Suggestion form sent via email and feedback collected from the Social Media Committee	Gather feedback from AUK community on the policy’s effectiveness, challenges & areas for improvement
Periodic Reviews and Updates	OIEP, University Leadership, Communications	As necessary	University website, email	Review the policy & its enforcement mechanisms & procedures annually or as necessary to ensure continued relevance & compliance

6. Related Documents:

- [Social Media Account Creation Form](#)
- [Social Media Guidelines](#)
- [Policy of Communications](#)
- [Policy of Freedom of Expression](#)
- [Policy of Use of University Name](#)
- [Policy of Employee Code of Conduct](#)
- [Policy of Student Code of Conduct](#)

7. Ways to Measure Success:

- Compliance Rate:** Percentage of social media activity aligned with policy requirements.
- Engagement Quality Rate:** Level of meaningful and appropriate interactions on official university channels.
- Community Engagement Rate:** Level of meaningful interaction with local and regional audiences through social media channels.

8. Policy History

- a. **Approved by:** Board of Trustees
- b. **Adopted:** May 28, 2023
- c. **Revised:** April 30, 2026