



## The American University of Kurdistan Social Media Policy

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### I. INTRODUCTION

- a. **Authority:** The Board of Trustees (herein referred to as “Board”) at The American University of Kurdistan (herein referred to as “AUK” or “University”) is authorized to establish rules and regulations to govern and operate the University and its programs.
- a. **Purpose:** The purpose is to set forth a policy to define the rules and procedures for the use of social media platforms, including the official University social media platforms that is both legal and ethical, and in compliance with University policies. This policy also provides a source document for educating students and employees on using social media platforms in the particular study and work environment and protects the University from uninformed (and often unintended) misuse of social media published contents to the detriment of the University.
- b. **Scope:** This policy applies to all departments, university units, staff, faculty, students, programs and AUK Community members.

### II. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- b. **Responsible Executive:** President
- c. **Responsible Administrator:** Director of Communications
- d. **Responsible Office:** Office of Communication
- e. **Policy Contact:** Director of Communications

### III. DEFINITIONS

- a. **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.
- b. **Copyright:** A form of intellectual property law protecting original works of authorship including literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works. A copyright does not protect facts, ideas, systems or methods of operation – only the way these objects may be expressed.

### IV. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY STATEMENT

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.

- a. Social media from the AUK is intended to supplement, not replace, the channels currently in place for press, news, events, announcements, and student communication.
- b. The University is committed to fostering an educational environment that allows for freedoms of speech. 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 University also reserves the right to refer social media activity to the applicable social media platform and/or appropriate authorities for appropriate action.
- c. 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.
- d. **Protect confidential and proprietary information:** The AUK community is prohibited from posting confidential or proprietary information about the University, students, employees or alumni. Employees must follow and adhere to all applicable University privacy and confidentiality policies. AUK Community members who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination.
- e. **Respect copyright and fair use:** When posting, 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.

- f. Prohibitions on use (unless confirmation provided by Communications Office by a legal documentation): Do not use University logos for endorsements: Do not use the University logo or any other university images or iconography on personal social media sites. Do not use University's name to promote a product, cause or political party or candidate.
- g. Terms of service: Comply with the terms of service of any social media platform employed.

## **V. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICE**

The following principles and best practice apply to the professional use of social media on behalf of AUK as well as personal use of social media when referencing AUK.

- a. Employees/AUK Community members need to know and adhere to the AUK's Code of Conduct, Employee Handbook, and other University policies when using social media in reference to AUK.
- b. Employees/AUK Community members should be aware of the effect their actions may have on the image of the University as well as their own. The information that employees/AUK Community members post or publish may be public information for a long time.
- c. Employees/AUK Community members should be aware that AUK may observe content and information made available by employees/AUK Community members through social media. Employees/AUK Community members should use their best judgment in posting material that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to AUK, its employees/AUK Community members, or customers.
- d. Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous, or that can create a hostile work environment.
- e. Employees/AUK Community are prohibited from publishing a post or releasing any information that is considered confidential or not public (this includes announcements related to AUK which have not been public by AUK's official digital media channels). For clarity on what is considered confidential, employees/AUK Community members should refer to the Office of Communications or the Legal Office.
- f. Employees/AUK Community members should strive for accuracy before publishing items on social media. Employees/AUK Community members are required to review content for grammatical and spelling errors. This is especially important if posting on behalf of the University in any capacity.
- g. Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content may generate press/media attention or raise legal questions. Employee/AUK Community members should refer these inquiries to the Manager of Communications' Office.
- h. If employees/AUK Community members encounter a situation while using social media that threatens to become antagonistic, employees/AUK Community

members should disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner and seek guidance from their direct supervisor.

- i. Employees/AUK Community members must have permission from the relevant parties directly involved when referring to or posting images of current or former employees, members, vendors or suppliers. Additionally, employees/AUK Community members should get appropriate permission to use a third party's copyrights, copyrighted material, trademarks, service marks or other intellectual property.
- j. Social media use should not interfere with employees'/AUK Community member's responsibilities at the University. AUK's computer systems are to be used for business purposes only. When using AUK's computer systems, use of social media for business purposes is permitted (ex: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, blogs and LinkedIn), but personal use of social media networks or personal blogging of online content is discouraged and could result in disciplinary action.
- k. Subject to applicable law, after-hours online activity that violates the AUK's Code of Conduct rules or any other University policy may subject an employee/AUK Community member to disciplinary action or termination.
- l. If employees/AUK Community members publish content after-hours that involves work or subjects associated with AUK, a disclaimer should be used, such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and may not represent AUK's positions, strategies or opinions."
- m. It is highly recommended that /AUK Community members keep AUK related social media accounts separate from personal accounts.

## **VI. SPECIFIC INSTITUTIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA PROCEDURES**

If employees/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:

- a. Notify the Communications Office: In the event the Head of a Department wants to create a social media page, they shall refer to the Office of Communications. Once confirmation is provided, the page/group will be operated by the requestor and owned and monitored by the Office of Communications to ensure that the page/group is in compliance with AUK's policies and branding guidelines.
- b. Have a plan: Departments or University units should consider their messages, audiences and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping information on social media sites up-to-date. The Office of Communication can assist and advise with the social media planning.
- c. Link back to the University: 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 ([www.auk.edu.krd](http://www.auk.edu.krd)).

- d. 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 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.
- e. Crowd release – Notice of filming and photography: 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 program/event premises, is a declaration of waiving any claims related to the above. If an AUK member including students, alumni, employees and AUK Community members does not agree to the foregoing, it is required to notify the Office of Communications by email before attending any AUK organized event at least 24 hours prior (one working day) to the event.

## VII. POLICY HISTORY

- a. **Approved by:** Board of Trustees
- b. **Adopted:** May 28, 2023