



Social Media Policy and Best Practices

Introduction

Social media continues to serve as the primary means by which key audiences of Assumption University obtain and share news and information. These audiences include alumni and their families, current students and their families, prospective students and their families, faculty, staff, friends of the institution as well as citizens of the greater Worcester community. To effectively engage through this medium, Assumption encourages responsible communication through social media channels.

Many members of our community are active on University-affiliated social media channels that support efforts to share favorable news and information about the institution with targeted audiences. These channels advance efforts to disseminate information that shares the story of Assumption: its mission, values, contributions to the community, achievements of faculty and students, etc. However, if misused, social media content can negatively impact the reputation of the institution.

Personal Use of Social Media Accounts

For the purpose of this policy, “social media” includes, but is not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, TikTok, and Twitter. This policy, effective June 1, 2019, also applies to Vimeo and YouTube.

If, in a personal social media profile, employees identify themselves as an Assumption employee, employees must make it known that the content they post represents their views, are theirs alone and does not represent the position of the institution. When an individual identifies themselves as an employee of Assumption in their personal profile, disclaimers must be included in the profile such as, *“The views expressed in this [posting, blog, site, account, etc.] are my own and do not represent the views of Assumption University nor the Augustinians of the Assumption.”* Upon termination of employment, such individuals who identify as employees of Assumption in their personal social media profiles must remove information that affiliates said individual with the institution.

The Assumption University logos and seal, whether separately or combined, are prohibited from use on personal social media accounts. Also, University titles may not be used in personal account names that would connect the individual to the institution such as @AU_Science_Faculty, @AU_Football_Coach; @AU_Deans; etc. The exception to this rule is if said account is used exclusively for professional, institution-specific purposes and is not used to share personal views or information.

With regard to personal and institution-affiliated social media channels, channel administrators are personally responsible for all content. Content posted to University-affiliated social media channels must conform to the institution’s [Code of Ethics for Faculty, Administrators and Staff](#). Posting content or engaging in an online discussion that attacks an individual, disseminates false information or defames the institution may result in revocation of administrative rights of an Assumption-affiliated channel and/or disciplinary action.

Creating an Assumption-affiliated Social Media Channel

The University fully supports and encourages student, faculty and staff efforts to share news and information about the institution on social media. However, before creating an Assumption-affiliated social media channel, students, faculty and staff must first consult the Office of Integrated Marketing, then examine several key questions that will assist in the development of the channel. These include:

1. Determine your goals – why are you creating this channel?
2. Identify the targeted audience – with whom do you intend to connect?
3. Which platforms are the most effective for engaging with your targeted audience?
4. Can you create content to sustain such an endeavor? (Regular posting is required to sustain a successful social media presence.)
5. Is there a similarly existing Assumption-affiliated channel?
6. Will the social media channel support institutional goals of raising the academic profile of Assumption or efforts to support retention and increase enrollment?
7. Who will serve as the primary administrator of the channel? (Once this is determined, please inform the Office of Integrated Marketing so the new channel may be added to a comprehensive database of Assumption-affiliated channels.)
8. How often will content be posted to the channel? (Different platforms require different frequency of posting. Consult the Office of Integrated Marketing if you have any questions.)

Employees are invited to collaborate with Assumption University's Integrated Marketing team to identify and select profile photos and develop profile content and strategy. All Assumption-affiliated social media channels must be created using an official @assumption.edu email address and in consultation with the Office of Integrated Marketing.

Personal email addresses may not be used to create an Assumption-affiliated social media channel. In addition, usernames and passwords of Assumption-affiliated social media channels must be shared with the Office of Integrated Marketing – Maureen Halley, Chief Marketing Officer and David Pepin, Marketing Content Creator.

When and if social media channel passwords are changed, the new passwords must be provided to the Office of Integrated Marketing. (Please do not share your email password, rather, the password for the social media channel.)

The purpose of this policy is to ensure continuity of the social media channel in the event of a change in employment or enrollment status of the primary administrator; prevent hacking; provide technical support; and/or to delete dormant social media channels. The term "dormant" is defined as no activity (posts, comments, etc.) for 90 days. Upon change in employment status, administrative rights will be revoked and transferred to another member of the Division.

Managing an Assumption-affiliated Social Media Channel

Management of social media channels include posting content using best practices provided by the Office of Integrated Marketing; responding to inquiries made through social media channels; responding to public comments and inquiries; monitoring the channel for obscene or inappropriate comments and subsequently deleting such comments.

Social media channel administrators are encouraged to:

- When appropriate, use hashtags associated with the University
 - I.e. #AUAchieves, #AssumptionUniversity, #HoundNation, #GoHounds
- Post content that will raise the academic profile of the institution
- Post content that showcases the achievements of students and faculty
- Post content that showcases academic programs
- Post content that positively showcases the Assumption student experience
- Post content and captions using the full “Assumption University” name

Social media channel administrators for Assumption-affiliated channels MAY NOT:

- Post content relative to legal matters regarding the institution
- Endorse a particular product or business
- Endorse a candidate for public office or political party
- Share personal opinions
- Develop and disseminate policies for the institution
- Respond to media inquiries made through social channels or engage with members of the media. (Media inquiries must be directed to the Office of Integrated Marketing)
- Comment on crisis situations
- Violate an individual’s privacy
- Post copyrighted information or use copyrighted photos without permission
- Alter the University’s official logo
- Respond to negative or inappropriate comments without first consulting the Office of Integrated Marketing (see last page for contact info)
- Request or accept any form of payment, including monetary, from another social media account, person, or organization in exchange for a social media post

The administration reserves the right to delete any post or comment and revoke administrative rights from employees at any time, for noncompliance of these guidelines.

Best Practices for Maintaining an Assumption-affiliated Social Media Channel

In an era where many are skeptical of the news they read on social media, it is critical that content posted to Assumption-affiliated social media channels is genuine and accurate.

Spelling and Grammar Check

Prior to posting, spellcheck all content and ensure proper grammar is used. Content posted to an Assumption-affiliated channel reflects upon the integrity of the institution.

Analyze Content and Audience Behavior

Once established, most social media channels will provide “insights” or other tools to determine when your followers are most active and the types of content with which they most engage. Schedule or post content during those times of increased traffic and post content of interest to your audience.

Monitor Comments and Conversations

Individuals may choose to comment on content posted to an Assumption-affiliated social media channel. Engagement on social media indicates content of interest however, it is not always positive. It is the responsibility of the administrator of the social media channel to carefully monitor conversations while also fulfilling their primary duties and responsibilities. Comments that contain inaccurate information should be respectfully corrected. (If needed, please consult the Office of Integrated Marketing with assistance in crafting a response.) Comments that include profanity, or variations thereof, must be deleted immediately. Comments that attack an individual or defame the institution should be deleted and the individual banned from the page. Some may use the comment area to advertise a product or business or advocate for a political candidate, party or cause. These comments should also be deleted as such could be interpreted an endorsement of the University.

Social media is popular due to the instant gratification and immediate results it offers users. With regard to prospective students and their families, communication habits among these groups expect near-instant responses. For instance, many will use social media messaging services or the comment areas to post a question about the institution or a particular program. Is it critical that these inquiries receive a response within an hour. Failure to respond within such a timeframe could result in a lost inquiry for the University.

Be Authentic

Avoid exaggeration or content that could be interpreted as a sales pitch. Tell a story using a student or member of the faculty as the focal point and when possible, tease content on social media, but link to additional content on the Assumption website.

Moderation

When an individual has followed or liked the social media channel you created, they have demonstrated an interest in what you have to share. Ensure that there is a constant and steady flow of timely content posted to the channel. Do not inundate your followers with posts as such will result in lost followers. If you have questions about the frequency of posting, please contact the Office of Integrated Marketing.

Photos Support Engagement

A simple measurement of the effectiveness of a social media post is quickly realized through the number of likes, shares, comments, retweets, etc. it generates. Images increase engagement rates, so be sure to include a relevant photo or graphic when posting to Facebook, Twitter and of course, Instagram. (Always obtain permission from the subject in a photo before posting to social media; do not use copywritten material) Photos must not be blurry or pixilated and should tell a story.

Short-Form Video Content Trends

Social media content is a continuously evolving entity. The emergence of short-form video (TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, etc.) has become one of the most popular and engaging ways to present content to your audience. Social media accounts affiliated with Assumption University are encouraged to take advantage of popular “sounds” and trends to boost their reach and engagement. HOWEVER, when following a trend on an Assumption University-affiliated account, admin MUST ensure that sounds used and trends followed are free of all expletives, harmful and/or suggestive topics/themes, and any other language and/or actions that may be harmful to the reputation and image of the University.

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