



SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION

VPA Circular No. 2024-21
AY 2023-2024

DATE : 10 MAY 2024

TO : SMU STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

RE : SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

Attached is the revised **Social Media Policy and Guidelines for Students** to serve as a guide for the safe and responsible use of social media for the protection of students and the University.

A similar guideline with some modifications is being prepared as the Social Media Policy and Guidelines for Employees to be issued later.

Please be guided accordingly.

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SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

1. Policy statement

1.1

Saint Mary's University is a Catholic missionary educational institution aimed at inculcating the values of mission and excellence among its students. The University is not only concerned about the academic formation but also the character formation of its students. Thus, it requires the highest behavioral propriety in students' academic and non-academic life.

1.2 Saint Mary's University recognizes the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring as a tool in pursuing its educational objectives. It can be used to share news, information, keep the school community abreast with important announcements and promote healthy academic interactions among its students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni and external stakeholders. Social media is also a platform for freedom of self-expression. There is, however, an inherent risk involved in using social media, in that, it is an instantaneous and far reaching form of communication and inappropriate use thereof can greatly impact the school operations and the reputation of the University or its stakeholders like students, employees, alumni, parents, guardians, etc. The exercise of freedom of expression comes with a responsibility and a duty to protect the rights of others.

1.3 This policy provides information and guidelines for all students in all levels to observe and follow as to the appropriate use of social media or when directly or indirectly referencing Saint Mary's University. It likewise provides corrective actions for violations of the guidelines. This policy aims to encourage a legal, ethical, productive, responsible, safe and friendly use of social media.

2. Scope of the policy

2.1 For the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as any online interactive tool which encourages participation, interaction and exchanges. It further refers to computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas and other forms of expressions, and content via social media platforms and virtual networks. There are many forms of social media with new ones being developed regularly such as, but not limited to Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Tiktok, Telegram, and Twitter (X) , as well as email, blogs, discussion forums, instant messaging and any website which allows public commenting or posting.

2.2 This policy applies to all students and to any of their published institutional or personal communications using any social media platform which directly or indirectly reference Saint Mary's University as an institution, its officers, faculty, employees, students and other



SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION

stakeholders. It does not cover students' online activities that are not related to the statement above.

2.3 This policy applies to social media communications made at any time, whether privately or publicly, and from anywhere, including in or away from campus and on university, personal or other devices, whether to an individual, to a limited group or to the public.

2.4 The University recognizes that students may use social media in their private lives and for personal communications. Personal communications are those made on, or from, a private social media account, such as a personal page on Facebook, messenger, Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube or a personal blog, email, etc. In all cases where a private social media account is used which identifies Saint Mary's University, it must be made clear that the account holder is identified as a student at the University to avoid the impression that views expressed on or through that social media account are made on behalf of the University.

2.5 Social media content refers to anything students share on social media, such as but not limited to user-generated content, text update, photo, graphic, video, comments, quotes, podcasts, live streams, articles, infographics, webinars, customer testimonials, audience questions, eBooks, guides, memes, polls, industry research & findings, short-form videos, educational content, product promotion, Ask Me Anything (AMA), share trending topics, GIFs, Influencer collaborations, stories (Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn), post collabs, carousels, text posts, links to website content, shoppable content, AI generated content, etc.

2.6 The term 'students' refers to persons enrolled as learners in Saint Mary's University in all levels from pre-school, grade School, junior high school, senior high school, college, graduate school and law.

2.7 The terms *University*, *Institution*, *SMU*, *Marian* used in this policy refers to Saint Mary's University of Bayombong.

3. Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

3.1 Nothing in this policy is intended to have the effect of limiting either freedom of speech or academic freedom, provided that such freedom is exercised within the bounds of the law.

3.2 By virtue of the student's enrollment in the University, he/she agrees to abide by the rules and regulations of the University in line with its academic freedom and other laws and regulations governing educational institutions in the Philippines.



SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION

4. Using social media as a teaching and learning tool

4.1 Where social media is used as a teaching and learning tool through official SMU websites and accounts, all students must read, understand and agree to the terms of use of the social media website and the University's terms and conditions relating to the appropriate use of social media in this context before accessing and posting content on social media in a teaching and learning context.

4.2 The use of social media as an aid in the teaching and learning process (e.g. class group chats) must still adhere to the guidelines set hereof. Content of discussions within the class GC should be kept within the class members.

5. Social media use and personal responsibility

5.1 The University requires that all students using social media adhere to the standard of behavior as set out in this policy and other relevant policies, including the Student Handbook. It must be borne in mind that the lines between private and public, personal and professional, are blurred on the internet. By virtue of being a Marian student and member of the online community, one should ensure that all online content associated to him/her is consistent with the University student handbook and all expectations befitting a Marian student.

5.2 Students of SMU must be aware of their association with and responsibilities to the University, and ensure that their institutional and personal social media profiles and related content are consistent with the University policies, including but not limited to, data privacy, data security, child protection, dignity, proper behavior, etc.

5.3 Students should also be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything which is posted online.

5.4 Marians should also be aware that any digital material that is posted online could reach a wider audience. Once digital content has been created and shared, the author of the material posted will have limited control over its permanence and its audience. Even if privacy settings are posted appropriately and shared only with select people, posts can still be captured via screenshot, printed, or copied and pasted into social media and shared beyond one's intended audience.

6. Expected standards of behavior

6.1 SMU has well-established channels for students to raise any dissatisfaction or concerns that they may have. The said student grievance procedure can be found in the SMU Student Handbooks. Student concerns must be raised through said channels and platforms for it to be properly addressed or resolved by the school and not openly discussed or aired in the social media.



SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION

6.2 Students are personally responsible for what they communicate on or through social media and they must adhere to the standards of behavior expressed in the applicable SMU Student Handbook based on the educational level of the pupil/student

6.3 Communications on social media must always be respectful and in accordance with this policy. Use of social media must not infringe on the rights, or privacy of other students, or administrators, faculty or staff. Students must not make malicious comments about other students, administrators/faculty/staff or third parties.

6.4 The following non-exhaustive list of content posted in social media may, according to the circumstances, be considered as **prohibited overt acts**:

- a. Personal information content about another individual, including contact information, private online conversations, photos, videos, password, etc. without their expressed permission for it to be posted;
- b. Confidential information (which may include, private information about fellow students or staff or personnel matters, non-public or not yet approved documents or information);
- c. details of complaints, administrative proceedings, and/or legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving the University, its students, or employees;
- d. content and comments posted using fake accounts or using another person's name without their consent;
- e. content, including text, audio or images, that is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile, whether directed towards or referring to any individual, entity, or to SMU;
- f. any content or comment that malign, demean, or shame others;
- g. any content that compromises the safety or reputation of employees, students, and stakeholders of SMU;
- h. any content one would not wish to be seen in the public domain (e.g. Telephone/ Cellphone number, Name, Address, Signature, Private Photos, Passwords, Medical Records, Bank Records, School ID, Government-issued IDs and the like);
- i. any statement that the student would not be willing to say personally to the face of another individual;
- j. any sexually explicit content, nudity, and very revealing outfit that may immediately have a negative impact or effect on the person or reputation of the person or of the University or can later come back to haunt the student in the future;
- k. trolling, lying, threatening violence, making fun of someone, posting negative opinions or rants against the University, employees, students, parents or other stakeholders;
- l. any content or action that constitutes cyber bullying;
- m. anything illegal like drugs, violence, or any sort of stealing or damaging of property.
- n. Any content that constitutes a criminal offense or felony;
- o. other contents or actions analogous to the foregoing.



SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION

7. Cyber-Bullying via social media sites

7.1 SMU values a clean, healthy, safe, friendly and peaceful educational environment. All members of the school community, which includes students, parents, guardians, faculty, staff and SMU Administration should be aware of the negative effects that bullying can have on its victims. As such, the University will do whatever is reasonably necessary and possible within its authority in creating safe physical and online communities favorable for its students and employees and prevent the occurrence of cyber-bullying in all its forms.

7.2 The following behaviors displayed through social media communications are **forms of cyber-bullying**:

- a. maliciously spreading rumors, lies or gossip;
- b. trolling, threatening, intimidating or aggressive behavior;
- c. vulgar, lewd, offensive or threatening comments or content;
- d. posting comments, photos and memes deliberately mocking an individual which can expose them publicly to ridicule, shame and humiliation.
- e. any form of sexual harassment or violation of the Safe-Spaces law or Child protection laws;
- f. any behaviors analogous to the foregoing.

7.3 Cyber-bullying may also take place via other means of electronic communication such as email, calls, text or instant messaging.

7.4 Any student who is experiencing cyber-bullying from another student or school employee will have the full support of the University in resolving grievances and complaints.

8. Intellectual Property

8.1 All students must ensure that they have sought permission to share any third party materials, including all images, photographs, text and videos, before uploading them to or linking to them via social media and, where sharing is permitted, should ensure that such materials or shared links are credited appropriately.

8.2 Students must check the terms and conditions of a social media account and/or website before uploading any material to social media accounts and/or websites to prevent the student from releasing ownership rights and control of the content. For this reason, they must exercise caution in sharing any information.

8.3 Saint Mary's University is not responsible for, nor does it hold any ownership, of any content posted by its students.



SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION

9. Brand and Usage of School Name and Logos

9.1 The Institution's name, identity and logo may only be used in accordance with SMU Branding Guidelines.

9.2 All SMU logos, sub-logos and associated marks are official art files and should not be altered in any way (Never Stretch or Distort the Logo, Never Rearrange Elements of the Design, Never Use the Design on Similarly-Colored Backgrounds, Never Stray from the Color Palette, and Never Switch the Colors)

9.3 Students should not use the name of Saint Mary's University and its schools, colleges, departments or offices, its logos, sub logos, and associated marks, trade names, etc. unless they have prior consent of SMU management which has supervision over the student such as the Dean, Principal, Head of Office, Vice president or University President.

9.4 Students who use the name of Saint Mary's University and its schools, colleges, departments or offices, organizations, its logos, sub logos, and associated marks, trade names, etc. for commercial purposes must have prior written approval of the SMU Vice President for Finance & Treasurer.

10. Duties and Obligations

Students are obliged to follow these steps for them to maintain their good image, reputation and upright social media standing among their peers and communities where they belong, as follows:

- a. Ensure that any use of available social media resource is carried out in line with this guideline and other relevant school policies on student conduct and discipline;
- b. Seek permission, verify information and secure proper clearance from relevant officers of the Institution when a social media account administered by SMU is to be used or mentioned in a post;
- c. Seek relevant authorization/ permission for sending out official post prior to its posting or publication;
- d. Regular monitoring, updating and managing content to ensure accuracy, truthfulness and timeliness of information;
- e. Regular monitoring by students authorized to administer or manage the authorized SMU social media sites (e.g. FB page of the Student Central Council and school organizations, The Marian, etc) to ensure that comments adhere to this SMU Social media Policy & Guidelines, and if necessary, remove or delete comments or block persons who do not adhere to the said guidelines;
- e. Adding an appropriate disclaimer to post before the content whenever the University or its offices is named;
- f. Reporting to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or the Prefect of Discipline any incidents or concerns in connection with violations of this policy.



SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION

11. Monitoring

11.1 SMU reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review within the law, without further notice, student activities using the University's IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings, to ensure that its rules are being complied with and such activities are for legitimate purposes and in accordance with the mandate of the law. For instance, the University may delete comments or block users in the SMU social media platforms who do not adhere to these guidelines.

11.2 SMU reserves the right to deactivate or block student accounts (e.g. SMU corporate email accounts of students) that do not adhere to this and other university policies.

12. Data Privacy and Protection

12. 1 The Data Privacy Act applies to social media as it does in other contexts. Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act, is a law that seeks to protect all forms of information, be it private, personal, or sensitive. It is meant to cover both natural and juridical persons involved in the processing of personal information.

12.2 "Processing" as defined in the Data Privacy Act, "refers to any operation or any set of operations performed upon personal information including, but not limited to, the collection, recording, organization, storage, updating or modification, retrieval, consultation, use, consolidation, blocking, erasure or destruction of data."

12. 3 Being an Institution of basic and higher learning, SMU is very much active in the processing of personal information of all its stakeholders from the time of their enrollment until they graduate based on legitimate purposes as an educational institution.

12.4 Students are bound by the SMU Data Privacy Guidelines and circulars issued by the University. Students should not share on social media the personal information, including photographs, videos, CCTV footages, screenshots of online meetings, classes, and discussions without the consent of the individual or group to whom it relates or unless authorized by the University in pursuit of legitimate and lawful purposes.

12. 5 Students should be discerning and mindful of the information they transmit especially when they did not secure prior consent from its sources especially those that put other persons, organizations or the University in a bad light.

12.6 In case a student posts or shares any material/content (ex. photo, video, text, etc) that is found to be offensive by others, the student must immediately take steps to remove the post to minimize the damage. This does not absolve the student from sanctions that may be meted out on the violation committed but may be considered as a mitigating factor as determined by the disciplining authority.



SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION

13. Incidents and response

13.1 Where a breach of this policy is reported, the University will review the circumstances and decide on the most appropriate and proportionate course of action, which may include referring the matter to other lawful entities.

13.2 Where students are in receipt of any content considered to be in breach of this policy, this should be reported first to their respective Associate Dean of Student Affairs or the Prefect of Discipline in their level who shall then investigate the matter.

14. Consequences of a breach of this policy

14.1 Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action categorized under Major or Minor Offenses under the latest edition of the SMU Student Handbook applicable to that educational level. The disciplinary action shall be determined by the appropriate disciplinary officer or committee tasked by the University. The penalties are:

FREQUENCY	MINOR OFFENSES	MAJOR OFFENSES
1ST Offense	Written Reprimand	Suspension
2nd Offense	Suspension	Non-readmission
3rd Offense and Subsequent Offenses	Non-readmission	Exclusion

14.2 Any disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the procedures outlined in the SMU Student Handbook and other prevailing guidelines from SMU, DEPED or CHED applicable to the level of the student (Grade School, Junior High School, Senior High School, tertiary, etc)

14.3 Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of when the violation is committed and regardless of whether any SMU equipment or facilities are used in committing the breach.

14.4 Where conduct may involve or be connected to an illegal criminal offense, SMU reserves the right to coordinate with the appropriate law enforcement agency and may report the matter to them.

14.5 Although it is the option of any student, parent or guardian, teacher, employee or third party to pursue legal action against the violator, if they choose to do so, it is strongly suggested as a Christian community that they first avail of the administrative remedies within the University including Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms.

15. Reporting

15.1 Any alleged reports of violation received under this policy will be carefully documented and will be treated with utmost confidentiality by the relevant body constituted by the University to hear and decide on the merits of the case after due process based on the applicable SMU Student Handbook and other applicable university rules and regulations.



SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION

16. **Severability.** If the court finds any provision of this Policy and Guidelines invalid or unenforceable, such court decision shall not affect the remainder of this Guidelines and shall be interpreted to the best interest of the University.

17. **Effectivity**

The provisions of this updated **Social Media Policy and Guidelines for Students** shall take effect on May 13, 2024.

Sources: SMU Administrators/Student Handbooks
Emilio Aguinaldo College
University of the Philippines Manila
University of North Georgia

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