

StudentsNS Social Media Guidelines

Social media is becoming an increasingly large part of a person's self-expression and Internet identity. Posting information, jokes, opinions, photographs, and links is such a natural part of daily life it is frequently done naturally and casually. With this in mind, it is important to review the behavior expected of StudentsNS staff and members when sharing information, especially online where it can spread fast and be immortalized.

For the purpose of this document, some examples of social media are:

- **Networking websites** (Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace)
- **Blogging** (Tumblr, Blogger, Wordpress, personal blogs)
- **Microblogging** (Twitter, Instagram, Vine)
- **Wikis** (Wikipedia, subject specific wikis)
- Almost any website or app that involves publishing information now has a social component to it

When in doubt if something falls under 'social media', consider:

- **The intended use of the platform.** Is it designed to house, spread, and promote the content that is uploaded?
- **How can the information spread?** Is this a private email with a legal disclaimer? Is this the appropriate venue for a conversation?
- **The permanency of the information.** Are you comfortable knowing that even if the comment can be edited or deleted at a superficial level, caches allow it to be rediscovered at a later date?

With this understanding of social media in mind, guidelines for use of social media can be established.

Guidelines

- **Behave professionally.** Social media can certainly be a place for jokes and fun. Behaving in a professional manner does not mean your tweets should read like a CV; it's about being respectful of the direct and indirect messages that are implied in the content that you are putting out there. Racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination and intolerance will not be accepted.
- **Be open and transparent.** Whether or not you choose to include your employer in your social media bio is up to you, but if someone asks if you

have a connection to StudentsNS you must reveal your position to ensure transparency and background. This does not entitle you to speak on behalf of StudentsNS and if you are discussing matters that revolve around policy but not your work here (examples: health policy, sexism in the media) you should be clear your opinion does not reflect the organization.

- **Respect copyright laws.** Credit appropriately when using other's work.
- **Uphold all of the rules and values of StudentsNS.** Being online is no excuse to not reflect any existing codes of conduct. In fact, because things posted online are so permanent it is exceedingly important to follow these codes now. Do not speak contrary to StudentsNS positions or behave in a manner that would reflect poorly on the organization, even if it were done on a personal account.
- **Consider media attention.** If approached by a member of the media on social media for commentary on an issue the same protocol applies as traditional media. Consider communicating with StudentsNS for help with messaging if you are in a position where it is appropriate for you to comment.
- **Use your best judgment.** Sometimes, best judgment includes consulting StudentsNS staff and board if you are unsure if a behavior is appropriate. In addition to clarifying an issue, it could help create stronger guidelines to answer others' questions.

Positive uses of Social Media

- **Sharing public information about a StudentsNS campaign.** Posting a petition on Facebook, expressing happiness in an accomplishment, and tweeting about changed policy helps inform the public and build morale. Feel free to include your own opinions as long as they do not contradict the StudentsNS position, it is clear that these are your opinions, and the information you are sharing is already accepted as public information.
- **Using appropriate privacy settings.** Do you have the right settings on your social media accounts? Many websites will even allow you to change settings for different information. Keep in mind that despite these settings screen captures, pictures, and changes in Internet infrastructure does not ensure the information is ever completely secure. Privacy settings can complement what you feel comfortable sharing but cannot mask inappropriate behavior.

- **Correcting information.** When correcting information (example: a misunderstanding about a policy from a friend) consider if it should be done from a professional or personal account. If personal is the best option, self identify your role with Students NS, provide relevant public information, and remember to remain polite and keep other guidelines in mind if you wish to engage in debate.

Examples of acceptable talk about work:

Tweet: *So great to get to Wolfville with @StudentsNS today! What an awesome farmer's market!* (Although work is acknowledged work, there are no inappropriate details revealed.)

Facebook post: *Did you know that the average Nova Scotian student graduates with \$30,000 in debt? Working on this campaign was really eye opening, you should check it out! [LINK]* (There are personal details that would not be included on the StudentsNS Facebook page, but they meet all guidelines)

Instagram: *Getting 'er done! @boardmember @staffmember @StudentsNSpeople [PICTURE]* (If the picture is appropriate and those in it consent to its taking there is no problem sharing.)

Negative uses

- **Revealing information that you are not permitted to.** When in doubt, consult the Executive Director.
- **Criticizing StudentsNS policies or anything else that breaks other StudentsNS guidelines.**
- **Reference to illegal activities, even if your friends, not you, are committing them.** (drug use, vandalism.)
- **Comments that reflect poorly on StudentsNS.** Anything discriminatory, derogatory, or overly dismissive.
- **“Trolling” or other abusive online behavior including libel.**

Examples of unacceptable posts:

Tweet: *Well folks, wish I had better news for you but the Minister was being bitchy #nspoli* (Sexist, inappropriate language, potentially revealing private information.)

Instagram: *getting on 'er tonight!* [PICTURE OF MARIJUANA] (Illegal activity, reflects poorly on StudentsNS)

Conclusion

Social media can be used in both professional and lighthearted ways. Consider the intent and possible perception of messages before you make them public, no matter how private your account may seem.

Part of the appeal of social media is how quickly information can be spread and everything changes. As the medium develops, consider these document guidelines to model behavior on and update as need be. If there is ever concern about protocol, do not hesitate to consult and get clarification.

Used in Reference:

- **Communications Nova Scotia Social Media Guidelines:**
<http://novascotia.ca/cns/guidelines-employee-social-media.asp>
- Federal government
- **Federal Government Social Media Guidelines:** (Internal guidelines, used with permission but no content taken or referenced)
- **Ford Social Media Guidelines:**
<http://www.slideshare.net/opinionwatch/ford-social-media-guidelines-scoot-monty>
- **IBM Social Computing Policy:**
<http://www.ibm.com/blogs/zz/en/guidelines.html>

More information:

- **Social Media Training is now Mandatory.**
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2012/10/31/social-media-training-is-now-mandatory/>
- **Think you don't need a social media policy? Think again.**
<http://business.financialpost.com/2013/09/23/what-do-you-mean-you-dont-have-a-social-media-policy-yet/>