



University of
South Australia

Social Media Guidelines for Students

UniSA Allied Health and Human
Performance Unit

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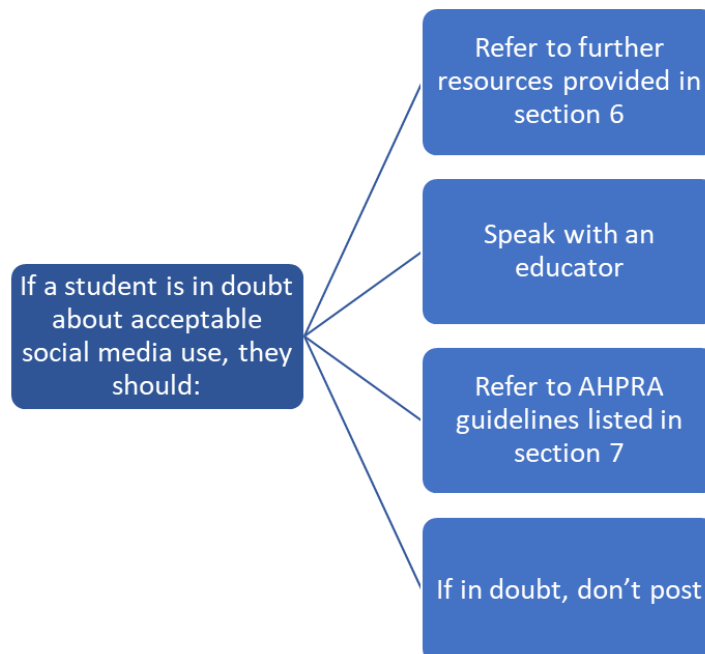
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1. Purpose

The University of South Australia's (UniSA) Allied Health and Human Performance Academic unit ('the Unit') recognises that social media and social networking are valuable tools for interpersonal communication; however, use of these platforms **may create legal and ethical dilemmas** if on-line behaviour is offensive, unprofessional, or unlawful. These guidelines inform students of expected standards of use, and the consequences of inappropriate use when engaging with social media and social networking in relation to your status/enrolment at UniSA in the Unit. This aims to protect students, patient/client privacy, placement sites and supervisors, the Unit's, and UniSA's corporate image and reputation. **Students must be mindful that items posted on the internet are in the public domain and may be permanent.** These guidelines will assist students to recognise their obligations to:

- Comply with confidentiality and privacy obligations
- Comply with relevant regulatory and/or professional bodies requirements (e.g. ESSA, AHPRA)
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Communicate professionally and respectfully
- Discuss and share appropriate and/or reliable information

(Adapted from AHPRA social media guidelines 2019)




2. Scope

These guidelines apply to all enrolled students where social media or social networking content


relates to their studies or experiences associated with UniSA. These guidelines should:


- be read in conjunction with UniSA Policies and Procedures which relate to social media use (see Section 6),
- adhere to Policies and Procedures of external organisations where relevant (e.g. Work-integrated Learning/Placements), and those directed by regulatory bodies (e.g. AHPRA, SA Health).

These guidelines do not detract from a student's overarching duty to comply with UniSA's Student's Code of Conduct, or to refrain from acting in a way that may cause damage to UniSA, or risk harm to the health or safety of other students, the public, or members of the UniSA community.



A medical radiation student posts 'Just finished my placement at WCH in obstetrics, learned so much and loved specialising in neonate imaging'.

 The terms 'specialist' and 'specialising' in relation to registered health professionals are protected titles (by AHPRA) and cannot be used without appropriate specialist registration. This is one of the most common breaches made by practicing health professionals.

 An acceptable alternative might be:
'Just finished my placement at WCH in obstetrics, learned so much and loved the experience of neonate imaging'

Example 1: Breaching regulatory body codes of conduct

3. Definitions

Social media: 'Social media' includes websites and applications used for social networking. Web-based and mobile technologies allow interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information in virtual networks. Common social media applications include but are not limited to sites such as Facebook and Snapchat, blogs (personal, professional, and those published anonymously) and microblogs such as Twitter, content sharing websites such as YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, and TikTok, and discussion forums and message boards.

Social networking: The use of dedicated websites and applications to communicate with other users, or to find people with similar interests to one's own. (Oxford Dictionary)

Student: These guidelines seek to direct students using social media and social networking when in relation to their status/enrolment at UniSA in the Unit only. For the purposes of these guidelines, the term student/s refers to anyone enrolled as, or otherwise representative of, a UniSA ALH student.

Work-integrated learning: This may include clinical placements, fieldwork or practice education.

Educator: this may include lecturers, tutors, practical instructors, field worker, clinical educators, and clinical supervisors.

Personal Use: [of social media] means private use, that does not occur at the direction of the University or placement provider. It includes, for example, posting on a personal Facebook 'wall', writing and sharing a blog post from a personal blog, and/or sharing photographs taken with a personal device that do not relate to university learning or clinical placement activity. Students registered with a regulatory board (e.g. Podiatry Board of Australia, Occupational Therapy Board of Australia) should be advised that APHRA specifies:

"Where relevant, National Boards may consider social media use in your private life (even where there is no identifiable link to you as a registered health practitioner) if it raises concerns about your fitness to hold registration. While you may think you are engaging in social media in a private capacity because you do not state you are a registered practitioner, it is relatively easy and simple for anyone to check your status through the register, or make connections using available pieces of information" (Social media: How to meet your obligations under the National Law. APHRA. November 2019).



*A physiotherapy student comments on their personal Facebook page:
"Working with children with Autism is so rewarding, however it has really
opened my eyes to the risk of vaccinations for young children"*



A health practitioner or registered student who publicly comments or shares information that contradicts evidence based practice or public health advice may give legitimacy to that information and breach their professional responsibilities. AHPRA may question your fitness to hold registration.



As registered health professionals and health students it is important to consider how you share and interact with information online. Sharing information that is not supported by available scientific evidence and put you at risk of breaching the social media guidelines.

Example 2: Raising fitness to hold registration concerns

Professional Use: [of social media] means use in an official capacity as a representative of the University, or at the direction of the University or placement site, or with the University's or placement site's consent. It includes, for example, LinkedIn, or where students offer an opinion as a representative of the Unit via social media channels maintained by the Unit, or the Communications and Marketing Unit.

4. Guidelines

- 4.1 When students represent or are associated with UniSA their personal and professional interactions must be professional at all times.

Use respectful language. People may interpret written information differently to how it was intended. Take time to consider different interpretations before you post. Consider if materials that might be triggering to others are appropriate for you to post in connection with UniSA.

- 4.2 Students shall not participate in social networking activities which use language (text or audio) or images which portray or can be interpreted to portray the following:

Illegal activities, harassment, profanity, obscenity, pornography, abuse of people or animals, defamatory or libellous matter, threats, chain letters, infringement of intellectual property rights, invasion of privacy, hate, discrimination, embarrassment to any person or entity, or matter otherwise injurious, objectionable, or inhospitable to professionalism or the image of UniSA.



A speech pathology student posts a picture with another student on placement outside Flinders Medical centre captioned "Very excited to start my final placement today with this bitch!" Clearly visible in the background are a UniSA OT student also on placement and a father and child entering the hospital.



The visibility of other students and potential clients in the background of this post is problematic. The language in the caption may be offensive to some readers and is not professional. Such language could damage UniSA's reputation. The students future employers may also not consider it favourably.



FMC is a public building that can be easily googled. It has many departments, so posting a photo of the outside of the building does not automatically identify the placement educator or clients the student will be seeing. The student needs to be aware of who is in the background of the photo.

Example 3: Considerations of language and privacy

- 4.3 Students should not send or accept "friend" requests (i.e. Facebook) from patients/clients through their personal social media accounts. This behaviour can blur professional-patient boundaries. If students need to communicate electronically with their patients/clients they should use facility-approved mechanisms that use encryption and password protection to ensure privacy protection.



A podiatry student posts (on Facebook) a picture of a child who they made orthotics for, expressing "how adorable" the child was and sending "best wishes to the family".



Without written client/carer consent, this is a clear violation of our legislated requirements around patient confidentiality. Furthermore it suggests the student has 'friended' the family, which breaches this code.



An acceptable alternative may have been:
"Dispensed orthoses today for a child with hypermobility- I think I sent a bit of my heart home with them as well. Loving paediatrics!" without a photo attached.

Learning point: The caveat to this example is that if you were the practice owner, adding a photo of the child's feet in orthoses would be acceptable as long there were no identifiable features within the photo and you had the parent/carer's consent. The use of photographs of this nature does not breach legislation, however, if a student were to post this it would breach the social media guidelines for our unit as per 4.6. Students may not always be aware of the placement site's policy on social media use and may, unwittingly, breach their preferred standards.

Example 4: Considerations of confidentiality and student/client relationships

- 4.4 Students and Educators should avoid "friending" on personal social media sites as this can blur the student-educator relationship. Students should communicate electronically with their Educators via University mechanisms that use encryption and password protection to ensure privacy protection or through closed sites or professional networks such as LinkedIn that have been developed to facilitate professional networks.
- 4.5 Students may not discuss their placement activities on-line in a manner that could potentially identify their patients/clients, their Educators or placement site. This includes posting pictures from within a placement site, regardless of the intent or content of the picture. Nor should

students use social media as a forum for feedback relating to placement experiences. This applies to both positive and negative comments on placement experiences. As an example, this includes posting to “closed” social media groups with other students within the same course cohort and/or professional groups designed to provide professional case support.



A Clinical Exercise Physiology student tweets "just finished an assessment on a guy with CMT, first time I've seen it! Crazy how bulked his thighs were on skinny calves".



Firstly, the patient may be identifiable from the post. Other posts by the same student could indicate their current clinical placement, leading to circumstances that indirectly identify the patient by naming a rare condition. Secondly despite the emphasis being on the student's experience, reporting someone's condition as "crazy" is not respectful.



An acceptable alternative may have been:

"Saw an interesting case today and realised how much impact neurological function has on form - just mind-blowing!"

Example 5: Potential confidentiality and professional language concerns

Positive comments may be deemed to be testimonials which are not allowed under APHRA and self-regulated profession advertising guidelines. Negative comments expose the student to the risk of civil legal action. Photographs, even when taken with care, may allow other students or users to recognise placement sites and may inadvertently breach the placement site's policy or preference for social media use.



An OT student has just finished their 9 week placement and shares a reel on Instagram with the #bestplacementever!. The reel includes short video's of the placement site. In the background of a video there is a whiteboard with clients names and therapy plans on there.



Although accidental, this post has shared confidential consumer information on a public form. This is in breach of the AHPRA confidentiality standards and the UniSA Student Code of Conduct.



It is great to see enthusiasm about a placement experience. However this situation could have been avoided if the student had checked the video with their placement supervisor or agency or ensured no confidential information was shared.

Example 6: Raising confidentiality and Code of Conduct concerns

- 4.6 Students should protect the privacy of other UniSA students by not posting images of students on-line, whilst in the capacity as a student, as it can identify people who may not consent to be identified at that time and place, or in connection with that activity. Students should protect their own privacy by not divulging personal facts or information that may compromise personal and professional privacy.
- 4.7 All students are required to seek approval to video or record any learning activities. Refer to [University of South Australia policy no.: A-56.0](#).
- 4.8 Students should take care when participating in on-line study groups. The material contained within must have proper attribution (to avoid copyright and plagiarism dilemmas). Criticism of study materials, educators or facilities should be of an academic nature, not defamatory.



*A Public Health Student posted to a private chat:
"This lecture is sooooo boring! And what's with Professor Bloggs shirt?!?
How many buttons do you want undone dude! #gross"*



This is not an appropriate forum to comment on teaching practices/ability or to identify a member of university teaching staff. It is never appropriate or professional to comment on the appearance of teaching staff and would potentially cause embarrassment to the university staffer.




There are legitimate and confidential mechanisms for raising concerns about teaching quality. It is never appropriate to comment on staff or student appearance on social media. It is important to consider the professionalism of critique and the avenue for reporting appropriately.


Example 7: Considerations of defamation


- 4.9 Students may not use, or attempt to use, another person's username, password or mailbox without authorisation.
- 4.10 Students must not share or repost to the internet material (in any format) provided to them by their Educators, placement site or other students without the express consent of the Educator, placement site or student to do so. This includes work developed by students in collaboration with Industry or based on information provided to them by Industry/placement partners. Permission must be sought and you must appropriately cite sources when sharing or reposting.
- 4.11 Students must report any misuse or breach of data or physical security, including theft of mobile devices, as soon as possible to the IT Help Desk (phone: 8032 5000, email: ITHelpDesk@unisa.edu.au)
- 4.12 Students who post in professional groups designed to provide professional support must clearly identify themselves as a student and should not exploit groups of this nature to complete University assessment pieces.

- 4.13 Images of the deceased (e.g., cadaveric specimens, skeletons, prosected specimens) are not to be posted on the internet or shared via digital means with any persons. Exceptions to this rule include peer-reviewed journal articles or conference presentations (where Unit or Educator approval is required prior to submission for peer-review).



A sonography student is confused about the different muscles of the arm. They take a picture of a dissected forearm from their UniSA anatomy workbook, highlight it and post it on an open sonography Facebook group asking "Can someone help me? Is this the Flexor Carpi Radialis or the Palmaris Longus muscle at this point?"

 The student has taken a picture of a cadaveric specimen which has been donated to UniSA and posted it on the internet. The workbook clearly states that the images in it are UniSA intellectual property and cannot be shared electronically.

 Find a picture on the internet with a Creative Commons license and use that image instead.

Example 8: Considerations of seeking professional feedback

- 4.14 Students who create blogs or webpages should add the following disclaimer as a footnote to every page: "The views expressed on this [blog; website] are my own and do not reflect the views of the University of South Australia".
- 4.15 All posts to social media must be culturally respectful. Many health inequalities are perpetuated by systemic barriers and the privileging of white knowledges within the health system. Students must make sure that their posts do not, either intentionally or inadvertently, reinforce these barriers. (SPA, 2022).
- 4.16 Students should pause and reflect before posting/emailing/texting. Messages or images that are libelous or defamatory put the writer at risk of civil legal action (amongst other potential penalties, including university disciplinary action and failure to secure employment).



A human movement student tweets a photo of their workshop group undertaking an exercise test and comments that the laboratory equipment they are using should have been replaced years ago and is unreliable.



The public disclosure of such information increases the liability for the UniSA and is clearly unprofessional.



In the first instance the student should discuss concerns about the quality of facilities with the educator and consider the confidential UniSA mechanisms that exist for providing feedback.

Example 9: Unprofessional discussions of placement experience

4.17 Students must consider the safety of the public when posting health information. Students must not post or share posts that promote unsubstantiated health information / non-Evidence Based Practice. Students should not post health treatment information that requires oversight by a health professional. (SPA, 2002)



An exercise and sports science student tweets 'the cotton ball diet when dipped in a protein shake is the best approach to cutting weight whilst not losing muscle mass'.



This post is promoting unsubstantiated information that is not supported by evidence-based practice. Further to this, a post is providing advice to members of the public that would fall beyond the professional scope of an exercise scientist.



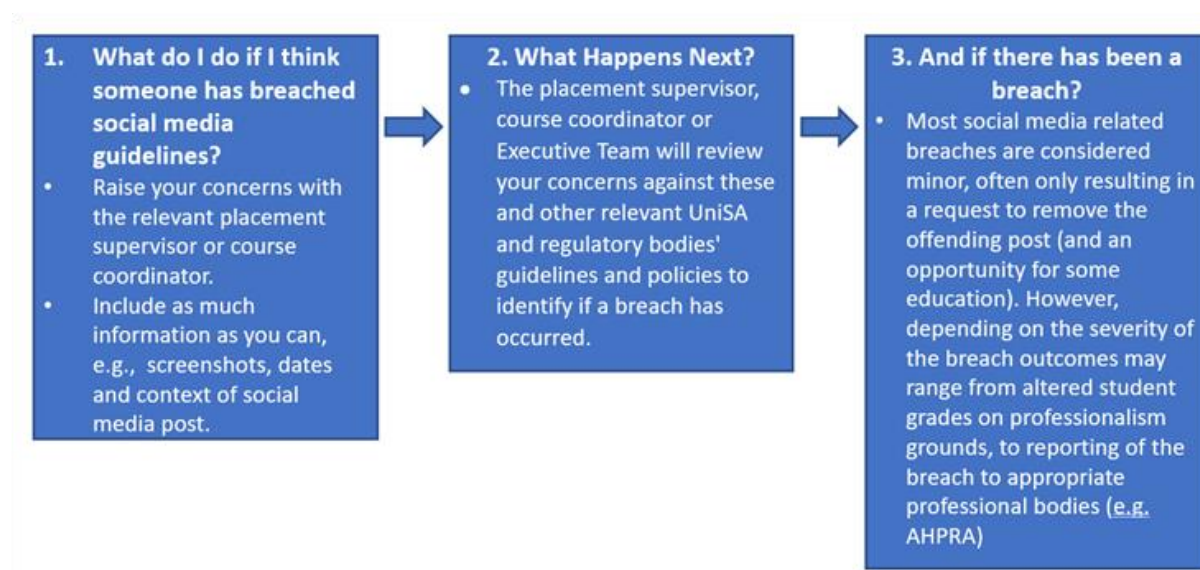
Promotion and education of the general public should focus on encouraging people to seek the appropriate professional advice for guidance rather than presenting information outside of the professional scope of practice

Example 10: Practicing outside of best practice concerns

5 Disciplinary Action

Students in regulated professions are held to the same standards of professionalism as registered professionals. In addition to disciplinary action from UniSA, students may face disciplinary action from their relevant regulatory body or association (e.g. Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (APHRA))

Disciplinary action will be congruent with the policies and procedures pertaining to the [Code of Conduct for Students](#), the [Assessment Policies and Procedures](#), or any other relevant University Policy. Actions can be as severe as expulsion from the University.



6 Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines, and Forms

- University of South Australia [Social Media Guidelines](#)
- University of South Australia [Code of Conduct for Students](#)
- University of South Australia [Guidelines for Students on Use of IT Facilities including Email and the Internet](#)
- University of South Australia, online module [Using Social Media in Professional Contexts](#)
- Any applicable documents which define or outline Professional Behaviour, Personal Behaviour, Ethical Behaviour or Conduct established by the University of South Australia or organisations hosting students on placements.

7 References and Resources

AHPRA, [Code of Conduct](#)

AHPRA, [Social Media Policy for Registered Health Practitioners](#)

Speech Pathology Australia Social Media Posting Checklist (2022). *Speak Out*. Pp. 36-37.



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