

Policy for Internet and Social Media Use

Responsible Office(s) Human Resources, Provost, Office of Communications

Policy

Overview

The use of the internet and social media can provide engaging and rewarding ways to connect with family, coworkers, and friends worldwide. The rapid growth and pervasiveness of digital technologies combined with ease of use make them attractive communication channels. However, for entities such as universities with various departmental and program-related accounts, it is critical to differentiate between personal voice and institutional voice in employee posts and be mindful of how all content reflects the institution.

Converse University has adopted the following policies to help employees engage online in respectful, relevant ways that protect both the University and its employees and follow the letter and spirit of the law. The same professional expectations for interacting with students, parents, alumni, donors, media, and other University constituents apply online just as they do in the workplace. Employees are accountable for their posts to social media sites, regardless of whether they intend to speak on behalf of the University.

This policy sets forth the University's expectations regarding employee use of the internet and social media for the official business of Converse University, regarding the University, its schools, departments, offices, and University alumni, students, faculty and staff. For purposes of this policy, "social media" includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, whether or not associated or affiliated with Converse University, as well as any other form of electronic communication. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Disciplinary actions for faculty are administered in accordance with the policies contained in the Faculty Handbook.

Policies for All Employees Regarding Use of Internet and Social Media

Personal Use During Work Hours

Personal use of social media should not conflict with work responsibilities, and thus employees should refrain from using social media and the internet for personal purposes during working time (the time an employee is expected to be working, which does not include rest, meal, and other authorized breaks). Use that interferes with employee performance or that is done during working time is prohibited. Employees may use social media for business purposes during their work hours. Please refer to the University's Acceptable Use Policy in the Employee Handbook for further reference.

Think (and Pause) Before Posting

Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Be aware that posts are or can easily be made available by forwarding or copying to the public at large, including prospective students, current students, your supervisor, colleagues, and your peers. Additionally, search engines can display posts years after they are created (and even deleted). Consider the impact your post may have on members of the University's constituent groups and how it may reflect on you before publishing. Remember that the University's policies related to workplace behavior and comments are equally applicable to an employee's behavior online. Comments that are discriminatory, harassing, vulgar, obscene, malicious, or threatening in nature are unacceptable, even if the comments are personal and unrelated to Converse's business. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, you can always ask your supervisor for guidance or contact the Office of Communications.

Share Content Effectively

Maximizing positive visibility for Converse University on the internet and social media is integral to the University's marketing efforts. Employees are encouraged to share University news and events that are a matter of public record with their family and friends and engage with Converse University social media channels by liking, commenting, and sharing. Linking straight to the information source or sharing directly from official Converse University channels are the most effective ways to share news and direct users back to the Converse.edu website. This also allows Converse to track the reach of posts made to official Converse channels.

Maintain Confidentiality

Use good ethical judgment and follow the University's policies and federal requirements, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), when posting online content. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Converse University, its students, its alumni, or your fellow employees. "Confidential or proprietary information" means (1) competitively sensitive information, (2) of importance to Converse, (3) that is kept in confidence by Converse, (4) that became known to Employee through his or her employment with Converse."

Respect Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights

When posting, comply with all copyright and intellectual property rights laws. Be mindful of the copyrights and intellectual property rights of others and the University.

Be Accurate

Verify that information is correct before posting it on social media. Review for grammatical and spelling errors, and make sure you have appropriate permissions if writing about or sharing images of people or organizations. This is especially important if you are posting on behalf of the University.

Seek Guidance for News Media Interaction

Social media content may generate interest from the news media (print, television, radio, online). If the media contact you about a University-related posting and the media is seeking information or a statement on behalf of the University, contact the media relations director in the Office of Communications immediately for guidance before responding.

Maintain Transparency

The line between professional and personal business is sometimes blurred, which is inherent to the nature of social media. The best approach is to be thoughtful about your content and potential audiences. Be clear about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a Converse faculty or staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your views as an individual, not as a representative of Converse University. If you identify yourself as a member of the Converse community, ensure your profile and related content are consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues, just as you would in any other public arena. Never post information or content expressly or impliedly on behalf of the University without the express permission to do so from the media relations director in the Office of Communications.

Be Thoughtful in Making Social Media Connections

Be thoughtful in your decision to "friend," "like," "follow," or "connect," or before accepting such requests. It is important to recognize that there is the potential for misinterpretation of relationships such as faculty-student, supervisor-subordinate, and staff-student in social interactions. If you are in doubt, please contact Human Resources.

Follow Terms of Service

Obey the Terms of Service of any social media platform you use.

Policies for Employees Contributing to Social Media on Behalf of Converse University

Employees who use social media on behalf of Converse University in any capacity must adhere to the following guidelines in addition to all guidelines above.

Posting to social media on behalf of Converse is an important responsibility. Employees with administrative or editorial access to Converse-related usernames are content creators that immediately and directly reflect on the University. Discuss with your supervisor the circumstances in which you are empowered to respond directly to users and when you may need approval.

Converse University Official Accounts

The University's primary, official online channels, including www.converse.edu, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and any other online presence established with the sole name of "Converse University," is maintained by the Office of Communications. Social media accounts representing Converse offices, departments, schools, etc., should bear the name of the specific program or department (e.g., "Converse University MFA"), with graphics and content that are clearly related to the particular department rather than the institution as a whole. Please reference the Branding & Visual Identify Guide on the Communications section of my.converse.edu.

Managing Administrative Access and Transitions

All University-affiliated social media accounts must grant administrative privileges to the Office of Communications. This does not involve sharing access to your personal social media account, even if you are the creator of the Converse-related account. Sharing administrative rights with the Office of Communications does not mean that Communications will manage or contribute to the account in any way; rather, this provides security in maintaining and transitioning ownership of the account in the future.

Administrative roles must be updated immediately when employees who have editorial or administrative access to social media accounts no longer require access to these accounts. Be mindful of the roles attributed to student workers, employees transitioning to new roles on campus, and those who have left the University.

Process for Creating a Converse University Social Media Presence

To ensure that your social media efforts adhere to the branding and policy standards of Converse University (find the Branding & Visual Identity Guide in the Communications section of My.Converse.edu), new University-affiliated social media accounts must be created in collaboration with the Office of Communications. To initiate this process, contact communications@converse.edu.

Plan, Commit, and Engage Your Audience

- Assign a member of your team to regularly monitor postings and content.
- Create a **content calendar** with pre-planned content for slow periods. Aim for high traffic times for postings and updates.
- Consider managing social platforms with a free **Hootsuite account** to communicate with multiple administrators and monitor communications from students and/or the public.
- While the recommended minimum frequency for posting is twice a week, be sure not to overload your followers with updates.
- Keep it conversational—post or share content that engages your audience to communicate back with you and with one another.
- Social media can be a powerful tool to drive audiences to the Converse.edu website for more information. Whenever possible, link back to a specific post or page on the Converse website (a news story, academic page, calendar event, etc.).

Compliance with University Policies

Communication on social media sites for University purposes must comply with all applicable University policies. Converse University has the right to deactivate any University-affiliated account based on violations of the Policy for Internet and Social Media Use.

Stagnant Accounts

The Office of Communications may disable or temporarily unpublish any University social media accounts that are dormant (no posts, no activity) for more than six months, as such stagnancy reflects poorly on the University. Your department will be notified before a page you manage is disabled.

Things to Consider When Planning to Create a New Social Media Account on Behalf of Converse University

- **How can social media help my department meet its goals?**
 - What is your objective for using social media? Is it to inform, share information, gain feedback, and/or engage with your audience? Knowing your goals will help you decide where to establish accounts, what information to share, and who you will reach.
 - It may be easier and more effective to meet social media goals in many cases by contributing to a related, established account within the Converse community.
- **Who are our audiences? Is social media the appropriate channel for reaching them?**
 - Are there other channels that might be more effective? It's important to first determine where and if your audience is active on social media channels.
- **Do we have the resources for content development, execution, and maintenance?**
 - Consider the time and personnel you will need to maintain social media efforts beyond the initial start-up phase. What you share on social media will reflect on your department or unit and influence how others see you, so be prepared to share relevant and consistent content and respond to users often.
 - If you're not able to maintain an engaging social media presence, consider developing relevant content for Converse University accounts with established audiences already in place (e.g., departmental sites).

The Office of Communications is available to support and assist you in your social media efforts on behalf of Converse University. For questions or help with your Converse-related accounts, contact communications@converse.edu.

Version History

Sun, 08/13/2023 - 21:29