Arab Open University

Social Media Policy for Students and Staff

Policy Title:	Social Media Policy for Students and Staff
Version Number	1
Approving Authority	University Council # 83-March 2025
Policy Review:	Quality Assurance Accreditation, Academic and Institutional Standards Committee (QAAAIS)
Policy Implementation:	AOU HQ and AOU Branches
Policy Monitoring and Compliance:	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Units at AOU Branches Students Affairs Offices Human Resources Department Communication
Next Review Date	March 2027

<u>Note:</u> *A policy may be reviewed before the designated review date should there be a need to.*

Arab Open University's   Social -Media Policy for staff and Students

Policy Statement

The AOU acknowledges and embraces the benefits and opportunities that social media can offer. Social media platforms serve as valuable tools to enhance educational experiences and improve student engagement. Additionally, it can be utilized to disseminate information, celebrate achievements, and foster constructive debate. Nonetheless, the use of social media entails inherent risks, and improper utilization may adversely impact the reputation of the university, its students and staff. The policy should be interpreted and implemented within the legal framework of each host country of the AOU, in conjunction with any applicable accreditation standards.

Policy Objectives

The policy intends to provide a framework around the use of social media by the AOU community in any form of interaction. The policy communicates the responsibilities of the university community members (students, staff and other beneficiary groups) when using any social media platforms. It provides information on the appropriate use when directly or indirectly referencing the university or any member of its community.

Policy Scope

The policy applies to all students and staff and to any personal communication within a social media platform which directly or indirectly refers to the university or any member of its community.

It also applies to social media communication made at any time, whether privately or publicly, and from anywhere, including on and off campus locations, use of personal or university devices.

Policy Framework

The policy addresses the following:

- Academic Freedom
- Social media use in learning and teaching
- Guiding Principles
- Responsibilities
- Cyber bullying
- Breach of the policy

Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech

This policy does not intend to limit academic freedom or freedom of speech in any way if freedom is exercised within the university rules and regulations and the local regulatory frameworks in each university campus. Both students and staff are encouraged to use social media to engage in academic exploration and dialogue.

Using Social -Media as a learning and Teaching Tool

Social media may be used as a learning and teaching tool through official university websites and platforms. Students and staff must be aware of the relevant terms and conditions. They must comply with this policy and any additional rules or protocols set by the university.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of this policy are designed to maximize the opportunities presented by social media as a communication channel while concurrently ensuring that students and staff engage in safe and responsible interactions. All communications conducted via social media must comply with the policy.

All uses of social media must comply with the university's policies in relation to:

1. AOU Code of Professional Conduct
2. Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures
3. Equal Opportunity& Respect for Diversity Policy
4. AOU Data Protection policy
5. AOU Confidentiality Policy
6. AOU Policy for Addressing Harassment and unacceptable behaviour

7. AOU Policy on Intellectual Property Rights
8. AOU Information Security policies

1. All staff and students are responsible for their own communication on social media. They are expected to take extra care when they can clearly be identified as university staff or students.

University community members must:

- Obtain approval from the university's IT manager through the Campus Rector before creating an account that represents the university.
- Ensure that only university issued accounts are used for university activities.
- Personal accounts must not be used to represent the university or manage university services.
- Preserve the integrity of the university's brand, reputation, and image by adhering to this policy and all relevant policies and regulations.
- Monitor, update and managing content they have posted.
- Report and escalate any issues and concerns as needed.

2.All members of the university community must abstain from posting:

- Restrictive/classified information
- Details on any legal proceedings involving the university.
- Personal information about others
- Information using fake accounts
- Illegal, threatening, discriminatory, obscene or indecent text/posts or comments.
- Contents/posts that compromise the safety or the reputation of the university or its community members.

The following details are examples of content that are considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be posted:

(a) any confidential information about the University and its students,

research and collaborative partners, suppliers and customers;

(b) confidential or sensitive information such as data or software code, non-public or not yet approved documents, minutes of meetings , news or information or other information which it is clear is confidential;

(c) official material that has not first appeared on the University website, in public emails, or main University social media channels;

(d) the work of someone else without obtaining permission to do so and, where appropriate, crediting the author;

(e) intellectual property or plans for innovation or commercialization;

(f) details of legal proceedings;

(g) details relating to formal complaints that are under active investigation by the University;

(h) personal or confidential information about another individual (students and staff), including contact information;

(i) material that could be deemed to be threatening, harassing, discriminatory, or illegal towards any individual or entity.
(j) comments posted in breach of the terms of use of the platform, including using names or accounts that may mislead other users of social media about an individual identify or association with the University or another organisation.

 Staff and students should be aware that any communication they make may not remain private and should not be assumed as such.

Cyberbullying

The AOU considers cyberbullying to be any of the following activities that occur through social media and other online communications e.g. emails, forums, instant messaging e.tc.

Spreading rumours, gossip or lies.

 Posting offensive content

 Posting threatening comments

Hate speech

 Posting photos or Content that intend to harass or humiliate any individual.

Addressing Cyberbullying:

The following applies for both students and staff:

Students and staff members are advised to escalate their concerns about any post or content that is considered unacceptable to the respective authority. They are also entitled   or file a formal complaint against offenders to ensure that they will be fully protected, and that bullying and unacceptable behaviours are not entertained or tolerated by the university.

Breach of the Policy

The University reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review the activities of staff and students that utilize its IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings.

 AOU Senior Management has the overall to designate dedicated staff members for monitoring, intercepting, reviewing or removing appropriate content.

The monitoring may occur without further notice for legitimate purposes, such as investigating alleged illegal or inappropriate online behaviour or addressing

reported potential violations of this policy or any other relevant university policy.

As a result, any use of the university's IT facilities and systems including access to social media, may be subject to monitoring by the university.

If personal use of social media during working hours is suspected of interfering with job responsibilities, the university may take further action

Consequences of a breach of this policy

Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary measures according *to AOU Internal Regulations for Staff* or the respective *Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures for students.* These may include dismissals for staff members or the withdrawal/termination of registration for students.

The University has the right to request the removal of content from an official social media account if it is reasonably deemed such content breaches this policy.

Review and reporting

This policy will be reviewed initially within one year of implementation and thereafter will be reviewed and updated every three years.