

## Social Media Guidelines: Guidelines for the use of Social Media at the University of Freiburg

Legally binding requirements, as well as advice and recommendations

### 1.1. Preamble

Social media offer the University of Freiburg many opportunities to exchange knowledge efficiently and represent its own diversity, particularly in open and direct dialogue with various target audiences. Social media are being used increasingly often in many areas of our work and private lives; this leads to the need for regulation.

These guidelines are intended to help you make the most of your social media opportunities, while reducing uncertainty and minimizing risk in the use of social media in a work context.

The guidelines apply to all members of the University who use social media as part of their professional function or office or on behalf of the University or of an organizational unit of the University. The guidelines are in two parts. Part A defines binding requirements which take into account current law or the University's elementary interests and which protect the University. It also sets out rules for use of social media by members of the University as part of their work. Part B contains recommendations and examples of social media use.

The use of social media is the subject of much debate, and in many ways, it confronts us with unanswered questions. In particular, many legal problems have yet to be conclusively addressed. The University aims to support its members with these guidelines by providing binding quality goals and recommendations for online behavior.

The guidelines will have to be reviewed at regular intervals due to the dynamics and changeability of social media.

When social media are used, there must be a clear distinction between work use and private use. And particular care must be taken in using such forms of communication.

### 1.2. General

When you use social media, you should be aware that social media providers are outside of the University and in many cases outside of Germany's jurisdiction. You may well have no influence over the use of the information you make available or the profile data created by your use of social media. Therefore, exercise all due caution.

Take care not to upload any sensitive data onto social media. Personal data in particular need to be protected.

For this reason, you must not click on official social media buttons such as the Facebook "like" button, because this transmits data you are not allowed to divulge. The only sharing function in line with our data protection provisions is via a link image, such as in the example given on the University's Office of University and Science Communications pages ([https://kommunikation.uni-freiburg.de/the\\_media/social-media](https://kommunikation.uni-freiburg.de/the_media/social-media)). Please also note the legal assessment by ZENDAS (see 1.3.).

In your own interests and in the interest of the University of Freiburg, be aware of your responsibility for the content you post.

If you are unsure or have questions, please consult the social media coordinator of the University of Freiburg's Office of University and Science Communications: [socialmedia@zv.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:socialmedia@zv.uni-freiburg.de).

## **A. Binding Requirements**

### **1. Copyright, Public Service Law, Data Protection, and Corporate Identity**

- 1.1. You must obey all valid laws – such as copyrights, public service law, data protection law – also when using social media.
- 1.2. Unlawful statements, comments which are sexist, racist, xenophobic, and insults are also banned within the framework of social media use and will be pursued by the University.
- 1.3. In cases of doubt and/or differences of legal opinion in the area of data protection, the ZENDAS legal assessment is valid (see e.g. <http://www.zendas.de/themen/facebook.html> or <http://www.zendas.de/themen/GruppenSozNW.html>). Please note that the ZENDAS site can only be fully accessed from the University's network.
- 1.4. Public service obligations must be met, particularly the principle of confidentiality regarding the University and with regard to colleagues. The University is obliged to maintain political, religious, and ideological neutrality.
- 1.5. Organizational units of the University (e.g. [central] services, professorships, research projects, institutes) which use social media must correctly use the University's corporate design for the purpose of identification (see <https://cd.uni-freiburg.de/>).

### **2. Opening, Transferring, and Deleting Accounts**

- 2.1. An account in the name of a University organizational unit may only be opened or deleted with the consent of the head of the relevant organizational unit. Within the central administration, particularly when it comes to accounts in the name of the University, this can only be done with the consent of the responsible member of the Rectorate.
- 2.2. Accounts opened in the name of the University or one of its organizational units belong to the University. When a member of the University of Freiburg leaves, he/she is obliged to transfer the administration rights to his/her account to his/her superior. This is particularly true of accounts which are linked to personal accounts (as is currently the case with, e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn).
- 2.3. Accounts opened by members of the University as private individuals belong to those private individuals alone.

### **3. Use of Social Media for Work Purposes**

- 3.1. All University services which use social media for work purposes should do so in the name of the University or of an organizational unit of the University. If such social media use is conducted using a personal account, the fact that it is for official work purposes (e.g., in individual posts or in the metadata) must be made clear, and posts marked in this way must be in accordance with official instructions.
- 3.2. The use of social media is voluntary. Insofar as the use of social media is explicitly a part of a University member's official tasks, he/she may require the opening of an official account in the name of his/her organizational unit. The use of a personal account for work purposes is voluntary. Professional neutrality must be strictly observed.
- 3.3. The time, volume, and purpose of social media use for work purposes (e.g. information exchange, maintenance of contacts, further training, consultation, etc.) must be agreed with the University member's superior and/or set out in the University member's employment contract.

### **4. Responsibility for Content**

- 4.1. Each member of the University who uses social media for work purposes is responsible for the content he/she publishes. As the person authorized to issue directives, please be aware that you are responsible

for the published content as soon as you have agreed on it with your employee and have authorized its release.

- 4.2. You must always make clear in which function a member of the University makes a statement.
- 4.3. Objectivity must be maintained at all times.
- 4.4. Official opinions or assessments by the University must be kept clearly separate from personal opinions (e.g. by the use of “we” or “I”). The Office of University and Science Communications’s basic areas of responsibility remain unaffected.
- 4.5. If you as a member of the University become aware of statements about the University of Freiburg which violate the law or which are capable of causing lasting damage to the reputation of the University, inform your superior if appropriate, and inform the social media coordinator in any case ([socialmedia@zv.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:socialmedia@zv.uni-freiburg.de)), so that countermeasures may be taken if necessary.

## 5. Responsibility for Content

- 5.1. When an organization or institute sets up a profile on Facebook, X, Youtube, or a similar platform, a corresponding legal notice (Impressum) – as on the relevant website – is mandatory. It is sufficient to link to the website legal notice.

## B. Recommendations

### 1. Comply with the Practices and the Netiquette of the Social Media Provider

- 1.1. Take the time to familiarize yourself with the practices and the netiquette of the provider before using a social media service.
- 1.2. Contact experienced users of social media at the University if you do not fully understand the practices or if you are uncertain as to what is appropriate language.

### 2. Ensure the Quality of Your Publications

- 2.1. Consider carefully whether social media are the right forum for certain discussions. Avoid using social media as a forum for resolving personal conflicts; resolve such conflicts directly. We recommend that you seek a second opinion from within your department or from colleagues before posting long items (e.g. blog posts) or statements on controversial topics.
- 2.2. If misunderstandings or other difficulties arise during your use of social media, contact the social media coordinator of the University of Freiburg to develop a communication strategy: [socialmedia@zv.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:socialmedia@zv.uni-freiburg.de).

### 3. Pursue a Respectful Dialogue and Deal Constructively With Criticism

- 3.1. Keep your communications constructive and respectful.
- 3.2. Respond politely and objectively to criticism; do not delete it from the relevant platform.
- 3.3. Have the courage to admit mistakes and to reconsider your statements if appropriate.

### 4. Examples of Accounts at the University of Freiburg

- 4.1. The University invites you to peruse its central social media accounts: [https://kommunikation.uni-freiburg.de/the\\_media/social-media](https://kommunikation.uni-freiburg.de/the_media/social-media).

### 5. Availability / Communication

- 5.1. Social media are – as already indicated by the name – not just a means of disseminating information; they also provide feedback from users. Take your users seriously when they come to you with a question, for instance on Facebook, regardless of whether it is in a comment or a direct message: Answer directly and as soon as possible or redirect the question to the relevant office.

- 5.2. In order to observe user activity on your page and to see and respond quickly to any legal infringements – for instance against copyright – you need to monitor your page regularly. As soon as you become aware of legal violations or infringements of the netiquette, you must take action to stop them. If you need support, please contact the social media coordinator: [socialmedia@zv.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:socialmedia@zv.uni-freiburg.de). The coordinator may call on the University's Legal Advice Office.

## 6. Discussion / Criticism

- 6.1. In discussions concerning the University of Freiburg, you may identify yourself as a member of the University; however, you must make it clear that you are expressing your own personal opinion.
- 6.2. If criticism of the University appears in social networks, official responses in the name of the University may be made by specially authorized persons only. In such cases, inform the social media coordinator: [socialmedia@zv.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:socialmedia@zv.uni-freiburg.de) at the Office of University and Science Communications and please also report the criticism to your superior.
- 6.3. Similar procedures apply to specialist questions of an organizational nature such as applying for a degree programme. The University has specialists whose job it is to answer such questions. To avoid liability issues, redirect the query as appropriate, or inform the user of the responsible office.

Both documents are available in German and English. In cases of doubt, the German version shall be legally binding.

Updated: August 2023

Web: [https://kommunikation.uni-freiburg.de/the\\_media/social-media](https://kommunikation.uni-freiburg.de/the_media/social-media)