

ECP Student Social Media Policy

Thoughtful and intentional engagement on social media can serve as an important complement to academic and professional development. Accordingly, students are strongly encouraged to determine how they can best balance the benefits of sharing, self-disclosure, and community engagement with the potential adverse consequences of violating the privacy of others, breaching codes of conduct, or having your beliefs and opinions misrepresented online. The goal is to communicate online as thoughtfully as we communicate in person.

1. Thoughtful professional engagement.

Students who use social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of online communication should be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by colleagues, faculty, professional organizations, and the public. Each student should make every effort to minimize sharing text or visual content that may be deemed inappropriate by the university and one's professional associations. Simply taking a few seconds before posting to re-read, edit, or save for later posting (e.g., after consultation) can help you better spot potentially problematic content and avoid adverse repercussions.

2. Professional vs. personal accounts.

Social media and networking sites can be valuable to establishing a professional development network. Creating separate accounts for personal and professional use is strongly recommended for students in professional degree programs. However, as nothing posted online is ever truly private (e.g., screenshots being reposted by others), students are strongly encouraged to think about how posts from personal accounts may affect them professionally. Students should exercise reasonable caution when posting on personal accounts to not violate McGill policies for student conduct and not risk employment or professional complications with affiliated organizations.

3. Reviewing privacy settings.

Students in all programs are strongly encouraged to review the privacy settings for their social media accounts to ensure they are aware of what content is visible to others and who specifically is permitted to view their content (e.g., posts, images). Students should avoid posting information, photos, or using language that could jeopardize their academic standing and may wish to set their security settings to "private" (e.g., Facebook) to increase protections for personal information shared (e.g., family photos). Caution is also recommended when posting on anonymized or personal accounts given the potential for unintentional self-identification or identification by others (doxing).

4. Developing professional vs. personal voices.

Social media can be an excellent tool for building a professional network and personal brand as well as provide a meaningful connection to online communities of support and shared interests. Creating separate accounts (e.g., on separate platforms) may be helpful in allowing you to tailor content on a specific account to a specific audience. Sharing separate content to your professional vs. private online communities can often help to avoid oversharing and facilitate creating more meaningful interactions with each community.

Professional voice: Professional accounts are useful for conveying content that is primarily reflective of your professional endeavors and consist of communities (followers, accounts you follow) having a shared interest in this content. Such accounts may be used to convey academic or professional interests and avoid nonprofessional content including, but not limited to, politics, family, religion, relationships, and hobbies that may be more suitable to personal or anonymous accounts. As these topics may result in academic or professional conflicts when posted on public self-identified accounts (e.g., via screenshots), students are strongly advised to develop clear guidelines as to the types of content to be addressed (and not addressed) on one's professional account (e.g., as informed by professional association guidelines). Although discussions of socially important issues (e.g., politics, public policy) can be a meaningful avenue for engagement on professional accounts, students are advised to limit their online participation concerning such issues to topics related to their disciplinary expertise and consider their postings to reflect their documented professional opinion on the topic.

Personal voice: Private and anonymous accounts are typically less restrictive with respect to content (e.g., politics, family, religion, relationships, hobbies, and work) and tend to consist mainly of communities with similar nonprofessional interests, family, and friends. However, it is important to remember that content posted on a personal account may nonetheless reflect on you as a student and professional if the content becomes public. Personal accounts may often convey information about yourself (accurate or otherwise) due to content that is shared by members of the community (e.g., posts/pictures in which you are tagged by a friend). Even if you did not share it, online content can still reflect on you professionally. To build a community of consent, please ask others' permission before tagging them in online posts and review your privacy settings as they apply to being tagged by others.

5. Consider power dynamics.

When serving as a teaching assistant, instructor, supervisor, researcher, or practitioner, you are in an unequal power dynamic with others. An opinion you share about another student or research participant thus can have significant implications for both yourself and these individuals. It is your responsibility to consider this power differential in your social media use. When serving in a position of power in affiliation with the university, social media posts about other students or those over whom you have influence is not permitted. Students are also discouraged from using personal accounts to follow or interact with students whom they currently teach or supervise in a personal capacity on social media (i.e., beyond academic engagement as outlined in approved curricula). *Please note that failure to follow the above social media guidelines can place a student in violation of ethical or conflict of interest standards for McGill policies and/or professional associations and may result in disciplinary action or program dismissal.*

NOTE: For social media policies specific to ECP students in professional programs (School Psychology, Counselling Psychology), please refer to the corresponding professional program handbook.