



Inspiring Excellence

UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS POLICY & GUIDELINES

Approved by the Board of Trustees: 28 April 2024

1. BACKGROUND

BRAC University (“**University**”) upholds the value of diverse perspectives, free expression, and individual freedom of speech. Recognizing the impact of communication on the well-being and reputation of individuals and the University community, it is imperative to establish a comprehensive communication policy for representing the University across all media/communication channels.

2. PURPOSE

This Communications Policy and Guidelines (“**Policy**”) aim to provide clear guidance on communication by students, faculty, and staff of the University across various media channels. It seeks to mitigate potential risks that could adversely affect the well-being of individuals and the University's reputation.

3. SCOPE

Applicable to all faculty, staff, and students, this Policy extends to communication and Communication Content in any Media including mass media, social media, digital platforms, and other outlets. It covers personal and organizational capacities, including social media associated with the University clubs, societies or groups.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1. **Media:** Communication channels encompassing mass media, social media, digital platforms and others.
- 4.2. **Communication Content:** Encompassing written, verbal, visual and video communication.
- 4.3. **Crisis/Risk Situation:** Any situation, behaviour, comment, or activity that could threaten the University's reputation or community security if published in the Media.
- 4.4. **Authorized Officers for Media:** Designated personnel officially authorized by the University to represent it in the Media, including the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar and the Director of Communications.
- 4.5. **Office of Communications:** means the Office of Communications of the University.

5. COMMUNICATION POLICY

- 5.1 **Respect and Responsibility:** The University values freedom of speech and expects responsible communication and sharing of Communication Content in a responsible manner, emphasizing mutual respect and adherence to all policies including this Policy.
- 5.2 **Authorized Communication:** Apart from the senior designated officers (ie the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar and the Director of Communications) only University personnel who are authorized by the Office of Communications are permitted to engage with the Media as spokespeople on behalf of the University as an institution, providing official interviews, comments, or statements on University policy.

5.3 Conscious Reputation Management: Individuals representing the University should uphold the University's values, adhering to the applicable codes of conduct and policies including, without limitation, data protection policy and confidentiality policy, when making official statements to the Media and not bringing the University into disrepute.

5.4 Legal Compliance and Policy Adherence in Communication: All faculty, staff and students of the University must adhere to the Digital Security Act 2018 and/or any relevant amended or new legislation at all times with regard to any form of communication or Communication Content including, but not limited to, social media and public platforms. It is also mandatory to comply with the applicable University policies concerning prevention of harassment, bullying, ragging and abuse during communication and in any Communication Content and to adhere to other applicable codes of conduct and policies at all times.

5.5 Prohibition of Offensive Comments: Making racial/hateful/defamatory comments is strictly against the University's policies and must be avoided in all forms of Media communication and Communication Content. All faculty, staff and students of the University must also avoid responding to any derogatory, defamatory, or offensive statements in any communication or Communication Content.

5.6 Truthful Representation: All faculty, staff and students of the University must refrain from representing themselves or the University falsely. All statements must be factual and substantiated.

5.7 Media Access Approval: Journalists or unauthorized persons seeking Media content/video/social media live from the University campuses must obtain approval from the Office of Communications.

5.8 Internal Communication Channels: Faculty, staff and students must use University-approved internal communication channels for feedback, avoiding public media for internal issues.

5.9 Confidentiality Compliance: Sharing exclusively internal/confidential information/privileged information outside the organization is strictly prohibited for all faculty, staff and students of the University, unless approved in writing by the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor or the Registrar.

5.10 Personal Communication Clarification

- i. Personal communication or Communication Content in/through any Media is considered individual activity and must not appear in any manner to represent the University officially.
- ii. All faculty, staff and students of the University, when expressing any personal opinion on any Media, must identify themselves clearly upon issuing a disclaimer stating that any/all opinions stated are their own and do not in any way represent that of the University.

5.11 Individual Responsibility

All faculty, staff and students shall be individually responsible for their personal opinions or views; the University shall not be liable in any way for their personal opinions, views or contents shared through any Media.

5.12 Brand Asset Protection: The University's logo, name, and tagline are exclusive brand assets of the University and must not be used by any faculty, staff or student of the University in any personal communication or Communication Content, unless with specific written approval from the Office of Communications with the agreement of the Registrar.

5.13 Political Neutrality: The University is politically neutral; the use of University resources by the faculty, staff and students of the University for any political purpose or activity is prohibited.

5.14 Press Release Protocol: The Office of Communications manages press releases on behalf of the University, and will approve all releases in writing before dissemination.

6. GUIDELINES FOR MASS MEDIA ENGAGEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSITY

6.1 Do

- i. Ensure only authorized personnel speak to mass Media.
- ii. Politely redirect Media inquiries to the Office of Communications.
- iii. Obtain approval from the Office of Communications for public forum representation on behalf of the University.
- iv. Immediately inform the Office of Communications in crisis situations.
- v. Promptly report to the Office of Communications regarding negative news about the University.

6.2 Don't

- i. Avoid representing personal views as the University's position.
- ii. Refrain from engaging aggressively with Media representatives.
- iii. Avoid using mass media to express internal matters.
- iv. Share 'exclusively internal' communication or Communication Content on mass Media.

7. GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA / PUBLIC PLATFORM

7.1. Guidelines for faculty and staff of the University who use social media and other public platforms in a professional capacity:

- i. When using social media or other public platforms in a professional capacity, it is important to ensure that the University's interests are considered; All faculty and staff of the University, whilst using social media or any public platform in a professional capacity, must ensure the following:
 - a. Validate and authorize the professional Communication Content before sharing on social media or other public platform and properly credit the source.
 - b. If in doubt, see advice from the Office of Communications.
 - c. Correct or remove any false or misleading information as soon as possible.
 - d. Promptly inform the Office of Communications about negative news regarding the University on social media or other public platform.
 - e. Contact the Office of Communications in potential social media or other public platform crisis situations.

- f. Avoid using social media or other public platforms to express views on internal University issues.
 - g. Do not share 'exclusively internal' communication on social media or other public platforms.
- ii. Faculty and staff of the University using social media or other public platforms as part of their jobs are representing the University. Faculty and/or staff of the University, as applicable, should, therefore, make it clear that they work for the University, use their real names, and be clear about their roles. The lines between public and private, personal and professional may become blurred in online social networks and public platforms. If faculty or staff of the University are identified as employed by the University, they need to ensure that their communication, Communication Content and tone are consistent with their roles at work.
 - iii. Faculty and staff of the University are also responsible for the Communication Content they publish in a personal capacity, whether on a blog, social media platform, or any other form of user-generated media. Faculty and staff should be mindful that what they publish will be permanent and it is very difficult and often impossible to remove.
 - iv. Faculty and staff may make reasonable and appropriate use of personal social media and the internet from the University's computers or mobile devices, provided that this usage does not hinder or interfere with their contractual or professional duties.

7.2. General Guidelines for faculty, staff and students of the University who use social media, other public platforms and the internet in general in a personal capacity:

This Guideline applies when faculty, staff and students of the University use social media, other public platforms and the internet in general in a personal capacity in their own time and on their own devices.

- i. Faculty, staff and students of the University should be aware that their conduct outside work may affect their employment or enrolment if their conduct could be said to bring the University into disrepute.
- ii. If faculty, staff and students of the University using social media and other public platforms in a personal capacity and disclosing their association with the University, any views should be presented as personal views and not representative views of the University as an institution.
- iii. Faculty, staff and students of the University are advised not to use social media or other public platforms to express any discontent about work, colleagues or student related issues. This is not an appropriate or constructive route to resolve such dissatisfaction. If a faculty or staff member has an issue concerning his/her work or colleagues, he/she is encouraged to discuss this with their manager and thereby facilitate informal resolution, where appropriate. Similarly, if a student has an issue concerning his/her studies, University facilities, etc., he/she is encouraged to discuss this with a relevant faculty or staff member of the University or with the University administration.
- iv. Faculty, staff and students of the University must refrain from posting derogatory or slanderous comments about the University, faculty, staff, administration, and/or other

students on social media or other public platforms. They should use respectful language when communicating through videoconferencing, email, phone, text, and social media in general.

- v. Sensitive information and data are to be respected and no faculty member, staff or student of the University should share any information or data that are not public knowledge or may result in harm (financial, reputational, physical, legal, regulatory, etc.) to individuals, partner institutions, and/or the University.
- vi. When using University electronic resources for personal social media use, faculty, staff and students of the University must adhere to applicable University policies and guidelines.
- vii. The University logo and/or name must not be used by any faculty, staff or student of the University in any personal communication or Communication Content, unless with specific written agreement from the Office of Communications on the approval of the Registrar.
- viii. Faculty, staff and students of the University must refrain from posting any audio or video recordings or comments about other students, faculty or staff of the University on social media sites or other public platforms without valid permission from the individual. This includes but is not limited to, comments that are threatening, harassing, profane, obscene, sexually explicit, racially derogatory, express personal bias or are otherwise offensive.
- ix. **Notwithstanding the above conditions, staff and students of the University are free to express their views about the University as long as they:**
 - send communications from a personal perspective and the communication or Communication Content is not offensive or otherwise inappropriate.
 - Ensure that the statements are true and can be substantiated, and there is no breach of confidentiality or other legal obligations.
 - are mindful of personal and University image on social media and other public platforms.
 - respect University policies while using social media and other public platforms.
 - never post abusive, offensive or discriminatory communication or Communication Content.
 - never make any racial/hateful/defamatory comments on any person/institution/group/race/ethnicity/sexual orientation.
 - abide by the University's applicable policies on prevention of harassment, bullying, ragging, and abuse.
 - refrain from representing oneself or the University falsely on social media or other public platforms.
 - do not represent personal views as the University's position.

8. Website

- 8.1. The Authorised Officers for Media are responsible for publishing, reviewing, and updating the contents of the University's official website ("**Website**").
- 8.2. No offensive content or photos will be published on the Website.

- 8.3. Feedback from the faculty and staff members will be received with a view to improving the information available on the site.

9. COMPLIANCE

- 9.1. Failure to comply with this Policy may result in initiating disciplinary proceedings according to the University's applicable rules, regulations, policies and codes of conduct.
- 9.2. If a faculty or staff member or student of the University expresses views through any Media that are not compliant with the Policy, the University may collect such evidence and may take steps to remove the material quickly including by asking them to do so. Disciplinary action may also be initiated by the University, where appropriate.
- 9.3. Under certain circumstances, activities such as bullying or cyberbullying (e.g. bullying that is carried out through an internet service such as email, social networking sites/platforms, discussion groups, instant messaging, or websites), harassment, ragging, abuse etc., which may potentially constitute a criminal offense, may be reported by the University to the police or other relevant government authority for taking appropriate action.

10. REVIEW

Periodic reviews will be conducted to ensure the ongoing relevance and effectiveness of this Policy.

11. CONTACT

For any queries, the University staff, faculty members and students may contact the Office of Communications at communications@bracu.ac.bd.