

Policy Number	UME.AC.108
Policy Title	Social Media Use Policy and Guidelines
Effective Date	06/20/2018
Last Revision Date (if any)	07/15/2025
Scope	All UME Students
LCME Element(s) (if any)	N/A

Social Media Use Policy and Guidelines

I. BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

Social media communications can have a significant impact on personal, organizational, and professional reputations, both positive and negative. Because there may not necessarily be a clear distinction between personal voice and institutional voice, this document outlines policy and expectations, and offers guidance to students on how to participate on social media without jeopardizing the professional, ethical, and legal standards expected of them due to their affiliation with the medical profession and the Perelman School of Medicine (PSOM) at the University of Pennsylvania.

Students entering the medical profession must recognize that their behavior on social media is subject to a higher degree of scrutiny. It is important for those who choose to participate on social media to understand this policy and the guidelines, which are intended to cover, but are not limited to posts related to: 1) any ongoing or future social media communications about their training, 2) peers and colleagues, 3) patients and their families, or others they encounter through their studies, work at clinical or non-clinical sites, research on- or off-campus, and/or on their own time.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to undergraduate medical education students.

The term “social media” is broad, and students should think critically before interacting in or posting on any internet public forum, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, LinkedIn, Doximity, YouTube, Reddit, Snapchat, TikTok, Discord, GroupMe, Threads, blogs, comment sections of news sources, and similar online social media and/or networking sites. Postings and discussions on student-run class websites and school-sponsored Canvas websites also apply. There are other similar platforms, and new ones will emerge in the future, thus this document does not attempt to name every possible platform and will apply to all existing and future social media platforms.

III. POLICY

In connection with their use of social media, students must adhere to all laws and policies related to patient right to privacy and student professionalism, including, but not limited to, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), copyright laws, and applicable student conduct policies. Students must also comply with the University’s [Guidelines for the Use of Social Media at Penn](#).

- [HIPAA](#): Sharing protected health information is strictly prohibited. Clinically associated scenarios and/or photographs may be identifiable. As such, posting of any images/clinical information without explicit, informed consent is prohibited and may be subject to academic, professional, and/or legal implications.
- [Use of Name Policy](#): Use of the Perelman School of Medicine and/or University of Pennsylvania and/or Penn Medicine’s name and/or logo are prohibited unless pre-approved. Students should

use caution when naming and/or tagging their social media accounts and posts and consider that wearing PSOM or University apparel in social media posts is an identification of the institution.

- All posts must comply with all Penn and Penn Medicine policies, including but not limited to:
 - [Acceptable Use Policy on Electronic Resources](#)
 - [Confidentiality of Student Records](#)
 - [Guidelines for the Use of Social Media at Penn](#)
 - [Penn Medicine Social Media Handbook](#)
 - [Policy on Unauthorized Copying of Copyrighted Media](#)
 - [Policy Prohibiting Workplace Violence](#)
 - [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
 - [University of Pennsylvania's Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Statement](#)

Concerns about potential violations of applicable policies will be addressed according to the review process detailed in the specific policy implicated.

Use of social media sites or blogs may also have regulatory compliance and legal ramifications. Respect for the perspectives and preferences of patients, their families, and other PSOM and Penn Medicine employees and how they may view the social media activities of PSOM students, residents, faculty, and fellows is of paramount importance.

Students are personally responsible for the content they publish on their own social media sites and the sites of others, and social media postings that violate University or PSOM policies may be subject to disciplinary action. In addition, inappropriate postings (including video materials) could result in civil and/or criminal liability. Laws regarding copyright infringement, defamation, privacy of patient and other individual's personal information, proprietary information, and obscenity are among the legal issues that could be implicated. Students are responsible for monitoring their own social media site(s) and for deleting posts that do not adhere to this policy or legal requirements.

How to report suspected violations

PSOM strives to create a learning environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. If you believe there has been a violation of any component of the policy, or you have seen or read something online that may result in harm to an individual, organization, and/or University of Pennsylvania and/or Penn Medicine property, apply the same judgement as though you had overheard or witnessed the event in person and contact the Division of Public Safety at (215) 573-3333 and/or email the [Academic Programs Chief Operating Officer](#), Anna Delaney.

IV. GUIDELINES

When interacting on social media, students should think critically about how they would like to be perceived publicly and consider that their posts may be seen by a broader audience. Asking questions like, "would I want my coworkers, faculty, future residency program directors, or patients to see this?" before posting is a helpful exercise.

Avoid engaging in conduct that could be viewed by others as defamatory, harassing, or an infringement of the rights of others. This includes not only content the student creates but also that which others create that a student may re-post or post on their own or other's social media sites.

Students must use caution when referencing on social media their experiences in, or events associated with, the medical school or with patient care. It is important to be transparent. Students should always make it clear that their posts are their own opinion unless the student has been authorized to speak on behalf of PSOM and/or the University of Pennsylvania, e.g., *"The views expressed on this [blog; website] are my own and do not reflect the views of the Perelman School of Medicine or the University of Pennsylvania."*

Comments made regarding care of patients or that portray yourself or a colleague in a manner that may be deemed unprofessional may be used in legal and/or administrative proceedings, such as by the State Board of Medicine (the licensing board) and may violate federal and state privacy laws and PSOM, UPHS, Penn Medicine, or University of Pennsylvania privacy and security policies.

It is the student's responsibility to make sure that terms of the social media site are suitable for the work they are doing and/or posts they are making. Take the time to read terms and conditions. Social media is a public forum. Be aware that social media privacy settings should not be construed as guaranteeing confidentiality. There is no such thing as a private or personal media site. Remember that all content posted or published on social media sites and other online locations becomes immediately searchable and can be immediately shared. For example, some sites will respond to government requests for data and information without notifying the user; some sites may store data in foreign countries where privacy standards are different than our own.

Students should use their best judgement, be cautious, and confer with the Penn Medicine Communications Department if needed by calling (215) 662-2560 or filling out this [form](#).

V. POLICY AUTHOR(S)

The Policy Committee

Undergraduate Medical Education Leadership Team

Division of Information Security (University of Pennsylvania)

VI. REFERENCES

[Acceptable Use Policy on Electronic Resources](#)

[Confidentiality of Student Records](#)

[Guidelines for the Use of Social Media at Penn](#)

[HIPAA](#)

[Penn Medicine Social Media Handbook](#)

[Policy on Unauthorized Copying of Copyrighted Media](#)

[Policy Prohibiting Workplace Violence](#)

[Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)

[University of Pennsylvania's Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Statement](#)

[Use of Name Policy](#)

VII. GOVERNING BODY

Undergraduate Medical Education Committee

VIII. POLICY HISTORY

Date	Change
06/20/2018	Created & Approved
06/10/2019	Revised & Approved
12/01/2022	Revised & Approved
07/15/2025	Revised & Approved