

Media Engagement, Government Relations and Public Statements Policy

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1. Purpose

- a. Flinders University supports and encourages members of its community to contribute to public discussion in areas of their academic and professional experience, thereby enriching and contributing to a more informed society.
- b. The University seeks to uphold its reputation, ensure consistency in official communications, and support its community in navigating public, media and government engagement in a manner that reflects the University's values and strategic objectives.
- c. This policy outlines the rights and responsibilities associated with such engagement, providing clarity on:
 - i. the distinction between official University representation and professional or personal commentary
 - ii. the authorities for official media and government communication
 - iii. expectations and guidance for broadcast channels and responsible social media use in official and personal contexts, and
 - iv. supporting academic and intellectual freedom in media engagement.

2. Scope

- a. This policy applies to all members of the University community in all official communications, public, media and government engagement, broadcast channels and social media use for and on behalf of Flinders University, or where there is an identifiable connection with the University.
- b. In the event of a critical incident, communications will be managed in accordance with the [Critical Incident Management Procedures](#).
- c. Enquiries and requests for information from the media and members of the public about the use of animals in research and teaching are to be handled in accordance with the [Animal Use: Public Enquiry Procedures](#).

3. Definitions

Account owner	any person who is accountable for the ownership of a social media account. Account owners are usually those who work in a role with primary responsibility to monitor, moderate and post content on a particular social media account.
Administrator	the Marketing and Student Recruitment team who oversee account owners and creators' access to a social media account. For Flagship accounts, this also includes a nominated member of the Media and Communications team, who must be granted administrator access to support coordinated media and communications activities and issues management.
Brand	as outlined in the Brand Policy and the brand guidelines .
Broadcast channel	means a digital communication channel intended primarily for one-to-many dissemination of information. Broadcast channels include, but are not limited to, podcasts, livestreams, recurring video or audio series, as well as other evolving digital broadcast formats.
Established expertise	in the case of academic staff, expertise has been established through the process of peer review. In the case of professional staff, expertise has been established through an appropriate process of professional experience and/or recognition. This could include, for example, leadership of a relevant national body.
Flagship account	refers to a social media account that is managed by Marketing and Student Recruitment and represents the University as a whole institution, rather than any individual organisational unit, such as a College, Institute, Centre, club or other entity. The current flagship accounts are: - Facebook (@flindersuniversity) - X (@flinders) - Instagram (@flindersuniversity) - LinkedIn (Flinders University) - YouTube (@flindersuniversity) - TikTok (@flindersuniversity) - Threads (@flindersuniversity) - BlueSky (@flindersuniversity) - Snapchat (@flindersuniversity) - Reddit (u/Flinders-University)
Flinders-related social media account	refers to any social media account that references Flinders University or an organisational unit, academic College, Institute, Centre, club or other entity of Flinders in either its title or profile including a Flagship account.

Flinders-affiliated broadcast channel	refers to any broadcast channel that references Flinders University or an organisational unit, academic College, Institute, Centre, club or other entity, program, or initiative of the University, or that is created, hosted, produced or substantially contributed to by one or more members of the University community acting in a professional capacity or on the basis of their University role, title or expertise.
Government and External Relations team	forms part of the External Relations and Communications function, under the direction of the Senior Director, External Relations and Communications in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor.
Media	includes all publicly broadcasted information, including television, printed news and magazine publications, radio and online/web media, including blogs, social media and new emerging mediums.
Media Relations team	forms part of the External Relations and Communications function, under the direction of the Director, Media and Communications in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor.
Peer review	impartial and independent assessment of expertise by others working in the same or a related field.
Social media	refers to digital platforms and services that enable online social interaction and the creation, sharing, and exchange of user-generated content. These services allow end-users to connect with others and post or engage with content, and are typified by platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, Threads, Snapchat, Bluesky, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc.
University community	for the purposes of this policy, University community includes, to the extent they are involved in University business: • Flinders students, including cross-institutional students and students on exchange from another institution • employees and seconded staff • employees of controlled entities, Centres and Institutes, and affiliated clubs and associations • contractors and consultants performing work on University sites or on behalf of the University • visiting academics or persons with academic status • the Council and its committees • any volunteer in the workplace and study environment.

4. General principles

In all official communications, public, [media](#) and government engagement, and official [broadcast channels](#) and [social media](#) use, the University expects members of the [University community](#) to:

- a. comply with the requirements of this policy, including not acting as an official spokesperson for the University unless authorised to do so
- b. uphold the University values of respect, integrity and professionalism
- c. act in accordance with the [Code of Conduct](#) for staff and the [Student Code of Conduct](#), [Academic and Intellectual Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy](#), [Acceptable Use of Digital Assets Policy](#), [Privacy Policy](#), and the [Copyright Compliance Procedures](#), as applicable
- d. represent themselves and the University truthfully and accurately, avoiding unsubstantiated claims, or false or misleading representations
- e. limit their engagement to areas in which they have [established expertise](#) and where their input is relevant and valuable
- f. communicate in a professional manner and refrain from engaging in personal disputes or arguments
- g. not publish malicious, abusive, threatening, discriminatory, defamatory, racist or obscene content
- h. comply with copyright and intellectual property laws and provide proper attribution when sharing content that is not their own intellectual property
- i. not disclose confidential information or misuse University information and knowledge
- j. not affiliate, or appear to affiliate, the University with any company, social group, political belief, product, or individual unless properly authorised. This includes not using the University's name or logo to endorse products or in any third-party advertising without prior approval from the Vice-Chancellor or a Senior Executive Team delegate.

5. Official University statements and communication with media

- a. Only an [authorised delegate](#) may act as official spokesperson for the University.
- b. Official statements in the name of the University must be approved by an [authorised delegate](#).
- c. It is the day-to-day responsibility of the [Media Relations team](#) and Director, Media and Communications to act as official University media spokespersons, working with the knowledge and approval of the Vice-Chancellor.
- d. Requests to act as an official University spokesperson in specific or ongoing media engagement must be made through the Director, Media and Communications.
- e. Members of the [University community](#) are not permitted to act as spokespersons for the University unless authorised to do so.

6. Communication with government

- a. The Office of the Vice-Chancellor retains overall responsibility for government relations on behalf of the University.
- b. Only an [authorised delegate](#) may convey the official views of the University to a Minister, Member of Parliament, or senior officer in a government (federal, state or local) agency or department. Official views are positions or representations expressed on behalf of the University as an institution, including

in relation to advocacy, policy matters, funding or institutional interests with strategic, reputational or political implications. Views expressed in a professional or personal capacity do not constitute official views of the University.

- c. Other members of the [University community](#) must consult with the [Government and External Relations](#) function in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor prior to engaging in such communications.

7. Professional public comment

- a. Staff are encouraged to take pride in their professional achievements and contribute to discussion in their professional field.
- b. Staff who engage with the public or media in their professional capacity in relation to their [established expertise](#) do not need to seek prior approval for such engagement.
- c. While prior approval is not required, staff are strongly encouraged to liaise with the [Media Relations team](#) prior to engaging with media for advice and guidance, including in relation to messaging, media approach and the assessment of any reputational or media-related risks. Media training courses are regularly offered by the Media Relations team.
- d. In situations where prior consultation with the Media Relations team is not possible, staff are requested to inform the Media Relations team of the media engagement as soon as possible after the engagement.
- e. When participating in professional public comment, staff may use their Flinders title and credentials to establish subject matter expertise and must take reasonable steps to:
 - i. make it known they are expressing their professional viewpoints and that they are not speaking for or on behalf of the University, or representing the official views of the University
 - ii. not represent or imply that the University will (or will not) take any action or initiative and must not commit the University to taking any action or initiative, and
 - iii. not represent or imply that the University is affiliated with a company, social group, political affiliation, product or individual unless they have actual knowledge and confirmation of such affiliation.

8. Broadcast channels

- a. Any new [Flinders-affiliated broadcast channel](#) must receive prior approval from a Responsible Officer(s) for this policy (or their delegate) before being created, published or promoted.
- b. Approval may be declined where the proposed broadcast channel:
 - i. poses an unacceptable reputational, legal, or communications risk
 - ii. lacks appropriate governance, moderation or editorial controls
 - iii. is inconsistent with University brand, values or strategic objectives
 - iv. does not demonstrate a clear purpose, intended audience, or strategic value for the University, or
 - v. duplicates or conflicts with existing University communication channels.
- c. Approved Flinders-affiliated broadcast channels must:
 - i. comply with this policy and all applicable University policies, including the [Brand Policy](#)
 - ii. clearly identify ownership, editorial responsibility and contact details

- iii. maintain appropriate content oversight and moderation arrangements, and
- iv. be recorded in the central register of approved Flinders-related digital channels maintained by Marketing and Student Recruitment.
- d. Flinders-affiliated broadcast channels created without approval, or operated in a manner inconsistent with this policy, may be required to be amended, suspended, or discontinued at the direction of a Responsible Officer(s) (or their delegate).
- e. Approved Flinders-affiliated broadcast channels will be periodically reviewed to ensure they remain effective, relevant and aligned with their approved purpose, intended audience and the University's strategic objectives.
- f. Where a broadcast channel no longer demonstrates ongoing relevance, effectiveness or strategic value, it may be consolidated with other channels, amended, or discontinued at the direction of a Responsible Officer (or their delegate).

9. Social media engagement

9.1. Official Flinders social media accounts

- a. [Flagship](#) and [Flinders-related social media accounts](#) are created to engage and promote the University online, such as creating and sharing content, promoting research, engaging in communities, fostering social connections and communication, and facilitating information dissemination.
- b. The Marketing and Student Recruitment team has day-to-day responsibility for creating, curating, and monitoring the University's Flagship social media accounts.
- c. To support coordinated management of official University messaging and reputational risk, a nominated member of the Media and Communications team must be granted, and must maintain, administrator-level access to all Flagship social media accounts at all times, in addition to the administrator access held by Marketing and Student Recruitment.
- d. Any new Flinders-related social media account must receive prior approval from a Responsible Officer(s) for this policy (or their delegate) before being created, published or promoted, except for social media accounts for clubs which are established with the approval of FUSA.
- e. Members of the [University community](#) must use Flagship and Flinders-related social media accounts in a responsible, respectful, and appropriate manner, and in accordance with the requirements of this policy.
- f. Flagship and Flinders-related social media accounts must adhere to the [Brand Policy](#) and [brand guidelines](#).
- g. Flagship accounts are proactively monitored by Marketing and Student Recruitment, including:
 - i. responding to posts/queries in a timely manner: the initial response should occur within 1 working day of receipt of a post
 - ii. removing posts submitted by others if they are inaccurate, abusive or misleading
 - iii. regularly reviewing performance of the social media account against success measures and refining content based on audience interest and engagement levels
 - iv. alerting the [Media Relations team](#) of any issues management risks arising from activity on social media accounts.
- h. An approver may decline the creation of a Flinders-related social media account if:

- i. the content is inappropriate or poses an unacceptable reputational, legal, or communications risk
- ii. lacks appropriate moderation, governance or review arrangements, or
- iii. is inconsistent with University brand, values or strategic objectives
- iv. does not demonstrate a clear purpose, intended audience, or strategic value for the University, or
- v. duplicates or conflicts with existing University social media accounts or communication channels.
- i. [Account owners](#) of a Flinders-related social media account must maintain clear boundaries between their personal and professional use of social media platforms.
- j. [Account owners](#) are responsible for ensuring the account remains active with regular posts, upholds a standard of relevant content and is regularly monitored.
- k. All Flinders-related social media accounts must have a minimum of two administrators with full access at all times. Where an administrator leaves the University, an alternative administrator must be assigned. Accounts on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn must be added to the centrally-managed Flinders University Business Manager.
- l. If requested by Marketing and Student Recruitment, a member of that team or nominee must also be granted administrative access to a Flinders-related social media account. Equally, if requested by the Media and Communications team, a member of that team or nominee must also be granted administrative access to the relevant Flinders-related social media account.
- m. Marketing and Student Recruitment will establish and maintain a central register of approved Flinders-related digital channels.
- n. Social media accounts created without approval, or operated inconsistently with this policy, may be required to be amended, suspended or removed at the direction of a Responsible Officer (or their delegate), or reported to the relevant social media platform for removal.
- o. Approved Flinders-related social media accounts will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain effective, relevant and aligned with their approved purpose, intended audience and the University's strategic objectives.
- p. Where an account (including a social media account for a club established with the approval of FUSA) no longer demonstrates ongoing relevance, effectiveness or strategic value, it may be consolidated with other channels, amended, or discontinued at the direction of a Responsible Officer (or their delegate).

9.2. Professional public comment using social media

- a. Members of the [University community](#) are encouraged to take pride in their professional achievements and use social media to contribute to public discussion in areas of their [established expertise](#).
- b. When acting in a professional capacity on social media, staff may refer to their Flinders title or credentials to establish expertise, but must not misrepresent their identity, role, or authority, or present themselves as speaking on behalf of the University. Professional use of social media must comply with applicable University policies, relevant laws and platform terms of service.
- c. In addition, members must observe the following principles when engaging professionally on social media:
 - i. consider the content and tone of messages in light of the intended audience. While social media encourages a more informal style, a professional or formal tone may be appropriate in certain contexts

- ii. be mindful that social media functions as a global, permanent record and that content posted online cannot be reliably withdrawn or corrected once shared
- iii. recognise that all social media content, including direct messages and private communications, may be shared or become public
- iv. engage respectfully with others and their views, even where there is personal disagreement.

10. Statements made as private citizens

- a. All members of the [University community](#) have the right to express their views publicly on any matter of public interest as private citizens.
- b. Personal opinions must be expressed in a manner that avoids confusion or misinterpretation as representing the views of the University. When expressing personal opinions, University community members must not suggest University endorsement, or that they speaking on behalf of the University and should avoid creating the impression that they are speaking in their professional capacity.
- c. Where University affiliation is publicly visible on social media profiles, users must include a disclaimer that views expressed are personal and not those of the University.

11. Breach of policy

Failure to comply with this policy may:

- a. in the case of a social media account or social media platform, result in immediate removal of access
- b. be regarded as misconduct and dealt with under the relevant University processes
- c. result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment, contract, or enrolment
- d. in the case of serious breaches, civil or criminal proceedings, or referral to relevant Government or professional regulators, tribunals or accrediting bodies.

12. Responsibilities

Director, Media and Communications	a. Ensure consistency of media messaging and oversee media evaluation and support. b. Nominate a member to hold, and maintain, administrator access to Flagship social media accounts to support issues and crisis management.
Media Relations Manager	c. Operational management of media interaction, staff media training and guidance.
Senior Director, External Relations and Communications	d. Support liaison with government and external stakeholders.
Chief Marketing and Growth Officer	e. Oversight of brand alignment across media and communication platforms.
Digital Marketing Manager and Social Media Lead	f. Operational management of the University's Flagship accounts. Ensure the Media and Communications

	team's nominated administrator access to Flagship accounts is established and maintained.
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13. Authorities

Delegate	Authority
Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor or Senior Executive Team member nominated by the Vice-Chancellor	a. Authorise official statements in the name of the University.
Vice-Chancellor (or nominee)	b. Make statements that represent the view of the University conveyed to a Minister, Member of Parliament or senior officer in a government (federal, state or local) agency or department.
Senior Executive Team members	c. Act as official University spokesperson.
Director, Media and Communications	d. Authorise official University statements, in liaison with relevant authorised delegate or nominee. e. Authorise staff requests to act as an official University spokesperson in a specific or ongoing media engagement.
Senior Director, External Relations and Communications Director, Media and Communications Chief Marketing and Growth Officer (or delegate)	f. Approve any new Flinders-affiliated broadcast channel or Flinders-related social media account. g. Direct that a Flinders-affiliated broadcast channel or Flinders-related social media account created without approval, or operated inconsistently with this policy, be amended, suspended, or discontinued h. Direct that a Flinders-affiliated broadcast channel or Flinders-related social media account that no longer demonstrates ongoing relevance, effectiveness or strategic value, be consolidated, amended, or discontinued.

Approval Authority	Chief of Staff
Responsible Officer	Senior Director, External Relations and Communications Director, Media and Communications Chief Marketing and Growth Officer
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