



Social Media Policy

April 2025

Our Values

The United Methodist Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia (UCASA) values all personnel who contribute to the work of UCASA and believes that all interactions should be approached through a lens of justice and fairness, care and safety, intentional growth and encouragement and accountability. In this way, the UCASA strives for excellence in stewardship of its people and seeks to value each individual and the unique skills, gifts and talents they possess.

Overview

This policy provides guidance and sets expectations to all personnel regarding the appropriate use and sharing of information on social media platforms.

Scope

This policy applies to all personnel appointed by UCASA to provide services (paid or voluntary). Presbyteries, Congregations and other Church Body councils are encouraged to adopt this policy for their workplaces.

This policy replaces all previous versions.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Church Body	As per the definition of Body in the Uniting Church's Constitution, includes council, committee, department, college, board, agency or other institution within the bounds of UCASA, which means: Synod (Pirie St Office); Yarthu Apinthe (Synod Brooklyn Park College Campus), Uniting Venues SA; Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC); Presbyteries, Congregations and Faith Communities.
Employee	Any person directly employed by the UCASA, or employed by a Church body on behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia, who is remunerated for the work they undertake for their employer.
Executive Officer	An individual who is appointed to lead a UCASA ministry centre by the Synod or its Standing Committee, usually a person who has been delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the UCASA, and is accountable for the delivery of outcomes for a department, function or program within their ministry centre, and reports to the General Secretary.
Manager (Leader/Supervisor)	An individual appointed by an employer or governing council of a Church body, temporarily or permanently, to a supervisory role i.e. has work performance and workplace behaviour oversight of other personnel.
Member	For the purposes of this policy, includes any Member, Confirmed Member, Member in Association, or Adherent as defined in the Uniting Church 'Constitution' and 'Regulations'.
Personnel	Any person commissioned, employed and or engaged in, or contributing to the planning/management/delivery of, or is involved or participates in any functions, programs or activities associated with a Church body (includes Ministry Agent, Employee, Volunteer, Contractor, Member, Visitor, and Guest).
Social media	Means any facility for online publication and commentary, including but without limitation; web pages, blogs, wikis, forums / online communities, social networking sites and applications.
UCASA (the Synod)	Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia
Uniting Church (the Church)	The Uniting Church in Australia
Volunteer	Either a formal or informal volunteer.
Formal Volunteer	A formal volunteer, an individual recognised by the governing council of a Church body, who has actual capacity to influence and control, and who willingly provides work or performs a service to benefit the mission and objectives of the Church or Church body and receives no payment as a result of their work.
Informal Volunteer	An informal volunteer may not necessarily fit the definition of 'worker' (but rather 'other person') under the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA) as they may not be performing the work of the Church body but rather working for their own religious purposes or values and for the good of the Church body. Meaning an informal volunteer donates their time to support the activities of their Church body through voluntary acts of helping and kindness in local communities.
Worker	As per the definition under Section 7 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA), a worker is a person who carries out work for the Church body, including work as an employee, a contractor, a subcontractor, a self-employed person, an outworker, an

Term	Meaning
	apprentice or trainee, a work experience student, an employee of a labour hire company placed with a 'host employer', or as a (formal) volunteer. By this definition, a Ministry Agent who carries out work in any capacity directly for a Church body entity as a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (the PCBU) is considered a worker for that entity for the purposes under the WHS Act. The term 'work' is not defined in the model WHS laws and has its ordinary meaning.
Workplace	A workplace is a place where work is carried out for the Church body and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work. Generally this means in the context of the Church body, but may not be restricted to: • any place of worship within the bounds of UCASA • any UCASA property used by the Church body • any other property owned by The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (S.A.) any other location or workplace (as defined by Section 8 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 – SA) where approved Church body work, activities or functions are being conducted.

Policy Principles

UCASA is committed to ensuring that all its internal and external communication through social media is responsible, respectful and lawful.

Unless specified otherwise, this policy applies regardless of where or when personnel post or communicate information online. It applies to posting and online activity at work, home or other locations, inside or outside of work hours, and regardless of whether personnel are using their own property, others' property or the property of UCASA.

UCASA reserves the right to monitor and access any information or data that is created or stored using UCASA's technology, equipment or electronic systems, including without limitation; emails, internet usage, storage drives and other stored, transmitted or received information. Personnel should have no expectation of privacy in any information or data,

- (i) placed on any UCASA computer or computer related system, or
- (ii) viewed, created, sent, received or stored on any UCASA computer or computer-related system, including, without limitation, electronic communications or internet usage.

It will be considered a breach of acceptable conduct to post on any public or private website or other forum, including but not limited to discussion lists, newsgroups, listservs, blogs, information sharing sites, social media sites, social or business networking sites or any other electronic or print communication format, if personnel are not adhering to the conditions outlined in this policy.

Purpose of Policy

UCASA recognises that its personnel engage in social networking platforms and maintain other online presences. This participation may be for professional or personal purposes. UCASA respects the right of personnel to have an online presence using both UCASA's resources and their own.

The primary purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for how personnel should conduct themselves online. Since an individual's online activity can reflect on UCASA's activities, image, and reputation, it is essential to recognise that words, images, posts, and comments, whether shared inside or outside the work environment, can be attributed to UCASA and therefore may impact its reputation.

Power of social media

Social media can be a very powerful and positive way for the UCASA to communicate. Social media presents opportunities to engage with congregations and the wider community. This form of communication enables the UCASA to be more active in relationships with personnel, congregational members, volunteers, communities, partners and associated organisations, as well as increasing the frequency and speed of engaging with the public. Therefore, the use of social media is encouraged within the parameters set out in this policy.

While social media does not replace other forms of communication, it can be used to engage and inform key interest groups, for example in public relations activities, research initiatives, awareness-raising campaigns and education activities. When using social media, it is important to choose the most appropriate tool to achieve the intended purpose. Personnel of UCASA must be mindful when using electronic media, even when it is in personal time, to be responsible and respectful to others.

Overview of areas requiring particular care

Because personal online comments and postings have the potential to impact on UCASA, UCASA personnel must be aware of this when participating in social media and other forms of internet use. Social networking activities for private purposes should not be undertaken during work hours.

Identifying as personnel of UCASA through social media is not prohibited, and indeed transparency and honesty are encouraged. However, once identified as personnel of UCASA, or if known to be personnel of UCASA (regardless of whether this has been declared or not), any content posted online may be connected with UCASA (which includes any persons associated with UCASA). Personnel need to assume that others may be aware of their connection with UCASA. Therefore, any content associated with personnel must be consistent with UCASA's policies, values and ethos. This applies regardless of whether personnel are participating in social media inside or outside of working hours (unless specified otherwise), and whether using their own property, the property of others or the property of UCASA.

Conditions of publishing or commenting via social media:

- That the reputation of the UCASA is not brought into disrepute
- That no disparaging, discriminatory, bullying, sexualised or harassing comments are made
- That no person is defamed
- That media authorisation processes apply in relation to making any kind of statement or comment on behalf of UCASA
- That compliance is maintained with relevant legislation including copyright, privacy and anti-discrimination legislation
- That information which is not in the public domain is not published (refer to [Uniting Church SA Confidentiality Policy](#))
- That social media is used in accordance with UCASA's Code of Conduct.

Personnel endorsing UCASA's services and activities must disclose their relationship with UCASA (for example employment, volunteer etc.), and must ensure that endorsements do not contain representations that are deceptive or cannot be substantiated. Personnel must clearly identify themselves when they are speaking about content related to the activities or services of the UCASA, or speak in the first person and issue a disclaimer to make it clear that the views expressed are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of UCASA.

Personnel are requested to use the following principles as they undertake their online activities:

Developing a social media channel

Before engaging in work-related social media, all personnel must consult with the UCASA Manager, Engagement (or delegate) to outline the steps to be taken including setting up of accounts, objectives and strategy for such activities.

Use of disclaimers

As stated above, unless personnel specify that their comments are not associated with the UCASA (see below), they should assume that this association will be made. Therefore, if personnel feel there is a risk of potential misrepresentation of the UCASA or individuals or groups within the UCASA, they should declare in their post that the views are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of UCASA.

Protection of privacy

Personnel need to be mindful of posting information and commentary that they would not want the public to access. In all communications, personnel must apply common sense in conjunction with the conditions of publishing as outlined in this policy. One easy test of this principle is to consider whether personnel would be comfortable with their Manager, other Workers or the Executive Team reading their commentary.

When using social media, personnel must respect the privacy of all persons associated with UCASA. Personnel must not discuss others without their permission, and must ask permission before posting pictures of others. Social media should not be used for internal communications between personnel.

Respect confidentiality

Personnel may discuss their work outside of the workplace, and have a dialogue with various communities. However, it is not acceptable to publish or disclose confidential information. Personnel must take care not to deliberately or inadvertently disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to UCASA. The privacy of all representatives of UCASA needs to be respected. If personnel are unsure about the confidentiality of particular information, they should consult their Manager or Manager, Engagement before publishing on social media.

Personnel must also refer to the UCASA Confidentiality Policy and Agreement signed at the commencement of their employment with UCASA.

Personnel are not to publish or disclose information or comment on any matters that contradict or are in conflict with the UCASA website or its policies.

Communicate respectfully

Personnel are expected to use social media in a way that is respectful. This includes not only matters that could be deemed discriminatory (for example those areas covered by Equal Employment Opportunity or Human Rights legislation and regulations) but also consideration of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory.

Respect Intellectual Property laws

It is critical that personnel show respect and adhere to the laws governing intellectual property. This includes the UCASA's own copyrights and branding. To avoid plagiarism, personnel must always reference or attribute written work to the original author and source. If personnel are unsure of the potential intellectual property risk, they should consult their Manager and the Engagement Ministry Centre before publishing on social media.

Pseudonyms and false screen names

Personnel may wish to use pseudonyms or false screen names for personal social media accounts, to protect their professional identity and increase security of personal information. However, regardless of the pseudonym or false screen name used being used, this policy in its entirety still applies to personnel. Personnel should be prudent about protecting themselves and their privacy. Online material is retained and remains discoverable even after it has been deleted so content needs to be considered carefully and caution taken about disclosing personal details.

Password protection

Personnel are responsible for maintaining the integrity of their system password. System access is based on a username. Personnel will be held accountable for any social media attributed to their username. Personnel are not to use another person's password without UCASA approval.

Controversial issues

If personnel read misrepresentations made about UCASA in the media and wish to bring to the attention of an Executive Officer or their Manager, they must do so respectfully, presenting the facts. If personnel speak about others, they need to ensure the information is factual and does not disparage another person(s).

Personnel should also be aware that political expressions are likely to be regarded as controversial by some readers of social media posts. Examples would include any information relating to elections, political parties, etc. Personnel should make it clear that this type of information is presented in their capacity as private citizens.

Unacceptable use

Regardless of whether Personnel are using social media in a personal capacity or as part of their UCASA role, any posts should be consistent with the values of the Synod. Unacceptable use of social media may lead to disciplinary action. Examples of unacceptable use includes:

- distribution of offensive material, including but not limited to, items of pornography or any inappropriate materials that have the potential to offend another person or group of people;

examples of inappropriate material would include naked people or people involved in inappropriate acts that are likely to offend a reasonable person, including AI generated images

- distribution of information with the potential to harass or cause harm to any other person. Examples would include discriminatory material in the form of comments, jokes, pictures or photos etc.

Personnel using social media for any unlawful purposes will be subject to the full extent and penalty of the law.

Responsibilities

The **Executive Officer, Resources** is responsible for:

- approval of, and amending, this policy, in consultation with the Manager, Human Resources and Executive Officers
- ensuring that this policy will be periodically reviewed to maintain their relevance and integrity in line with appropriate legislation
- ensuring that the contents of this policy are understood and applied by all employees.

Manager, Human Resources is responsible for:

- periodically assessing compliance with this policy and procedure to ensure consistency of application across all ministry centres.

Managers are responsible for:

- ensuring they and personnel for whom they are responsible are aware of and comply with this policy and procedure.

Failure to comply with the policy

Personnel should be aware that failure to comply with the policy, including any arrangements which are put in place under it, will be investigated and may lead to disciplinary action being taken. This action may include and is not limited to:

- Temporary or permanent revocation of access to some, or all, computing and networking resources and facilities
- Disciplinary action including possible termination of engagement, employment or contract;
- Where inappropriate use constitutes a breach of any law, legal action may be taken in accordance with that law by UCASA or third parties concerned.

Issue Resolution

Refer to the UCASA Grievance Policy procedures for further information.

- [UCASA Grievance Policy](#)

Dissemination of policy

A copy of this policy will be made available to all UCASA employees and other persons where required.

The intent of the policy will be explained to each new employee at their induction and to other persons as necessary.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with legislation changes and policy review procedures.

Related legislation and documents

- [UCASA Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- UCASA Computer, Internet and Email Use (UCASA Synod Intranet only)
- [UCASA Confidentiality Policy](#)
- [UCASA Handheld Information and Communication Device Policy](#)
- UCASA Information Technology Code of Ethics (only relevant to UCASA Synod IT&T employees and volunteers)
- [UCASA Media Communications Policy](#)
- UCASA Privacy Policy
- [UCASA Remote Internet Access Policy](#)

Approval Authority

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Executive Officer, Resources
Advisory Committee to Approval Authority	Human Resources and Remuneration Committee
Administrator	Manager, Human Resources
Next Review Date	2028 (recommend 3 years)

Feedback

Employees may provide feedback about this Policy and Procedure by emailing resources@sa.uca.org.au or humanresources@sa.uca.org.au

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