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Communications Policy

Policy Information

Oversight Body: Vice President, Internal

Date Passed by Council: July 16, 2020

Date of Next Review: July 2022

Title of Related Policies, Bylaws, Legislation: Equity Policy, Bylaw 5

Definitions

Brand: A composition of everything tangible and intangible that serves to evoke an overall experience when an individual hears about or interacts with it. This can include a visual identity, auditory sounds, mental concepts, or an organizational promise.

Business day: A day on which the University is open and in session, not including any Saturday, Sunday or statutory holiday in the province of Nova Scotia. For the purposes of this policy “day” should be taken to mean “business day” where not otherwise specified.

Official DSU Channel: A medium of communication used to represent the voice of the DSU.

Union: The Dalhousie Student Union.

University: Dalhousie University.

Visual identity: The visual aspect of a brand such as logo designs, fonts, photos, and any other visuals which act to convey the brand.

Purpose

The transparency and promotion of work done by the Union are fundamental characteristics of a democratic and well-functioning organization. Diverse and well-reasoned ideas, approaches, and experiences are also essential parts of inclusion and equity. As such, the Union is committed to the respectful exchange of ideas. This policy serves to establish the authorities and parameters with which the Union will carry out its communications, ensuring a consistent, clear and professional presentation of information.

Scope

The following procedures apply to any communications involving the Union, including:

- Use of the DSU logo
- Press releases and official statements
- Marketing strategies and promotional materials for DSU services and events
- Electronic communications
- University and external lobbying campaigns
- Internal communications initiatives
- Societies and constituencies wishing to use DSU images, messaging, and/or official channels

Policy Statement

1. General Regulations

- 1.1. As Official Spokesperson for the Union, the President will be first informed of any requests for interviews and before issuing any public statements on behalf of the DSU.
- 1.2. No other Executive Officer, staff member, or volunteer with the DSU shall make public statements on behalf of the DSU without previous consultation and written approval from the President.
- 1.3. The Executive Committee shall have the right to publish and distribute press releases, membership advisories and all other communication materials to the membership as it deems necessary and in accordance with all current bylaws and policies.
- 1.4. Previous to the release of any materials, statements, appearances for an interview, or DSU protests or demonstrations, the Communications and Outreach Coordinator for the Union should be consulted for guidance and feedback.
- 1.5. The Communications Team members are:
 - 1.5.1. The Vice-President, Internal;
 - 1.5.2. The Communications and Outreach Coordinator;
 - 1.5.3. The Graphic Designer and Campaigns Coordinator.
- 1.6. The Communications Team shall be responsible for:

- 1.6.1. Promoting the mission, vision, and goals of the DSU;
 - 1.6.2. Coordinating official responses of the DSU;
 - 1.6.3. Advising appropriate roles and departments on possible, or actual, media responses and public responses;
 - 1.6.4. Establishing and maintaining a coherent brand for the DSU, its departments, services, and offices;
- 1.7. Business of the Union, including any official decisions or requests, shall only be conducted through “@dal.ca” email accounts to ensure information can be securely conveyed, appropriately archived, and reliable.
- 1.8. Agreements and/or partnerships with third parties to join campaigns or regularly share visual assets are to be made in a written agreement on the nature and goals of the relationship, the implications of said relationship to DSU membership, and brought forward to Council for approval, where appropriate.
- 1.8.1. One time use of third party materials, including electronic materials, must have written permission from the third party acknowledging its use and for what purpose.

2. Oversight

- 2.1. The Communications Team shall oversee the development and use of the following:
- 2.1.1. A DSU Visual Identity Guide, which will be the primary document outlining the appropriate use of images, fonts, key colour palettes and sub-palettes, and all logos associated with the DSU;
 - 2.1.2. A DSU Brand and any subsidiary brands;
 - 2.1.3. An annual engagement strategy
 - 2.1.4. An annual consultation strategy
 - 2.1.5. The Official DSU Channels
 - 2.1.6. Advertising and Sponsorship
 - 2.1.7. Emergency Response Communications Plans
- 2.2. All communications initiatives and projects that fall under this policy shall be created and planned in conjunction with the Communications and Outreach Coordinator.
- 2.3. Those individuals, groups, services, or business’ wishing to have promotional materials distributed/displayed through Official DSU channels will submit the relevant materials to the Communications and Outreach Coordinator a minimum of five business days prior to the desired date of distribution to be considered for promotion.

3. Official DSU Channels

3.1. The DSU will use, but is not limited to, the following mediums for marketing and communication purposes:

- 3.1.1. Print Media
- 3.1.2. Student Union Building Screens
- 3.1.3. Official DSU Website
- 3.1.4. Social Media
- 3.1.5. E-mail
- 3.1.6. Campus poster boards
- 3.1.7. Radio
- 3.1.8. Television and video
- 3.1.9. Tabling
- 3.1.10. Mobile App

4. Website/Social Media

- 4.1. Social media platforms are key spaces for engaging with members and gathering feedback on the Union's work. In posting communications to Union-owned social media accounts, the Union is bound to all the regulations for official channels laid out in this policy.
- 4.2. Unlike e-mail or print mediums, social media allows for the immediate and public sharing of replies, comments and posts from DSU members and community members. Social media is not only a place where the Union communicates with members, but also one where members communicate with the Union and with each other.
- 4.3. Any new website or social media account meant to represent the DSU, or one of its departments/services/offices, must be approved by the Communications Team and contain appropriate branding.
- 4.4. Each DSU website or social media account must have one single designated account manager, with no more than two designated account managers, who will be held responsible for adherence to DSU Bylaws and Policies as well as copyright regulations.
 - 4.4.1. Account access, including administrative privileges, to Official DSU Channels must be granted to at least one of: the Communications and Outreach Coordinator or Vice-President, Internal.

4.4.2. Account managers must meet annually with the Communications Team. 4.5 Just as discrimination and harassment are not tolerated at in-person events of the Union, these behaviours will not be tolerated in comment sections and other discussion spaces located on DSU-owned social media pages and accounts. To protect against the harm caused by harassment and discrimination, the Union shall maintain an Online Code of Conduct (Appendix A).

4.4.2.1. The Online Code of Conduct may be amended as part of the Communications Policy, following regular procedures for policy review.

4.5. The communications team shall review all comments and replies to Union social media posts within three (3) business days, and will:

4.5.1. Forward comments or replies that provide substantive feedback on the work of a particular department, executive member, committee or staff person to the appropriate individual or body.

4.5.2. Respond to comments or replies that request specific information, or that raise concerns which could be mitigated with clarification, by providing said information or connecting the member to other resources.

4.6. The Union is not obligated to respond to comments and replies that are inflammatory, irrelevant, offensive, or disruptive; to any comments and replies posted by non-Union members; or to comments and replies that violate the Online Code of Conduct.

4.7. The Union reserves the right to hide or delete comments that violate the Online Code of Conduct.

4.8. Members who feel that the Online Code of Conduct has been violated, and the violation has not been adequately addressed, should bring their concerns to the Vice President, Internal.

4.9. Members who feel that their comment or post was removed in error should bring their concerns to the Vice President, Internal.

4.10. Societies or student organizations governed by the DSU Constitution or Society Policy may use the DSU Online Code of Conduct for online spaces they manage.

5. Print and Media Screens

5.1. All approved print and media screen imagery that represents a DSU event, service, office, campaign, or initiative must adhere to the DSU Brand or, if relevant, its subsidiary brand.

5.2. All print materials meant to represent the DSU, including but not limited to member guidebooks, the Handbook, media advisories, and written statements, shall abide by the DSU Brand, and be approved by the Communications Team.

5.2.1. Long-standing materials, such as the Handbook, will be decided on by the Communications Team in consultation with the DSU Executive Committee.

6. Advertising

6.1. All advertising relationships the DSU enters will:

6.1.1. Outline a review process for measuring advertising outcomes;

6.1.2. Outline an appropriate content review and approval process;

6.1.3. 6.1.3 Contain conditions regarding exiting an agreement if these conditions are not met.

7. E-mail

7.1. All e-mail accounts of the DSU will contain a designed signature in accordance with the relevant DSU Brand and will include:

7.1.1. The staff or volunteer's name;

7.1.2. The position title;

7.1.3. The department, service, or office;

7.1.4. Contact information

7.2. E-mail accounts are the property of the DSU and should not be viewed as personal accounts.

7.3. Membership wide e-mails should be restricted to no more than once per week, with the exception of events that require immediate or frequent attention.

7.4. It is the responsibility of the Communications and Outreach Coordinator to make the appropriate arrangements for Membership wide e-mails through the Student Affairs Office of the University.

8. Restrictions

8.1. Official DSU Channels will not be made available for personal use.

8.2. The creation, transmission, publication, or distribution of material or comments which are obscene, racist, discriminatory, defamatory, fraudulent, or otherwise illegal or that is likely to create any liability or cause harassment, is deemed to be unacceptable use of Official DSU Channels.

8.3. 8.4 It is prohibited to attempt to conceal or falsify the authorship of any form of communication.

8.4. The DSU shall own materials commissioned for DSU use, including by not limited to: graphic design, photography, video and multimedia, and audio assets.

- 8.4.1. All materials should be accompanied by appropriate licenses, release forms, and/or written permission from the content creator for publication.
- 8.4.2. The DSU should be the sole branding present on published materials, excluding where agreements and/or partnerships are present, in writing, where appropriate.
- 8.5. Commentary that does not abide by DSU Bylaws and Policy is subject to removal, at the discretion of the Communications and Outreach Coordinator in collaboration with the Communications Team.
- 8.6. Commentary deemed inappropriate can be archived and removed, and a public post, where appropriate, is to be made to clarify why particular commentary has been removed.

9. Branding and Visual Identity

- 9.1. The DSU will maintain a consistent logo and visual identity in identifying itself to its Membership, University Administration, in government relations, and to the public.
- 9.2. Each department, service and office of the DSU will have its own visual identity under the broader DSU Brand.
 - 9.2.1. When establishing a department, service or office visual identity, a comprehensive visual identity guide must be proposed prior to any individual elements being approved and implemented.
- 9.3. Each department, service, and office of the DSU must adhere to its own visual identity.
- 9.4. All materials, including electronic materials, distributed using Official DSU Channels must be approved by the Communications Team.
- 9.5. All visual identity elements may not be altered without written permission of the Communications Team.
- 9.6. DSU Branding and visual identity elements may be used by external organizations, student societies, University departments and community groups, in materials, including electronic materials, with written permission from the Communications and Outreach Coordinator and/or a mutual agreement on appropriate DSU Brand usage.

10. Style Guidelines

- 10.1. Information distributed through any channel should be presented consistently, clearly, and at minimum, meet accessibility standards for that platform.

Appendix A: DSU Online Code of Conduct

The Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) will not tolerate discriminatory remarks or harassment in any form.

Discrimination means the act of making a distinction, whether intentional or not, based on a characteristic, or perceived characteristic, that has the effect of imposing burdens, obligations or disadvantages on an individual or a class of individuals not imposed upon others or which withholds or limits access to opportunities, benefits and advantages available to other individuals or classes of individuals in society.

In online spaces, prohibited discriminatory remarks and harassment include but are not limited to:

- Remarks or images that are based on racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, colonial, or otherwise oppressive sentiments;
- Hate speech, meaning comments that seek to demean, humiliate or threaten any individual or group based on who they are, in other words based on age; race; colour; religion; creed; sex; gender identity or expression; sexual orientation; disability; ethnic, national, or Indigenous origin; family status; marital status; source of income; political belief, affiliation, or activity; or association with another individual(s) having characteristics referred to in previous group; and
- Defamatory or libelous statements against any individual or group;

Comments or posts that do not comply with these rules will be removed.

Users who disregard the code of conduct may be removed and/or blocked from online spaces owned or operated by the DSU.

Users who are removed from an online space owned or operated by the DSU or a DSU-affiliated group, may also be removed or blocked from other online spaces owned or operated by the DSU or DSU-affiliated societies and student groups.

Instances of harassment, threats or other criminal behaviour may be reported to the University, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, or any other regulatory body deemed appropriate in the circumstances.