

# Psychological Society of South Africa Social Media Policy

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## Introduction

The Psychological Society of South Africa (hereafter referred to as 'PsySSA') is the nationally representative professional body for psychology<sup>1</sup>. Recognised internationally, PsySSA is committed to the transformation and development of South African Psychology to serve the needs and interests of all South Africa's people. As a Society that operates in conjunction with individuals and branches from around the country as well as MOU partners, worldwide, social media networks - such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. - provide valuable reporting and promotional tools. As a result, online social media platforms are fundamentally changing the manner in which PsySSA Council and its members engage with one another as well as with the public.

PsySSA is increasingly exploring how online discourse through social media can empower members as global professionals, innovators and citizens. Through these interactions, the expertise of PsySSA's members can be shared on an accessible platform with one another as well as with the public. Therefore, it is in PsySSA's interest to be cognisant of and participate in this sphere of information, interaction and idea exchange.

This social media policy provides the foundation for PsySSA's guidelines on social computing utilised by its members. The same principles and guidelines that apply to PsySSA's activities in general, as found in the Constitution<sup>2</sup>, apply to PsySSA's activities online. This includes forms of online publishing and discussion, including blogs, wikis, file-sharing, user-generated video and audio, virtual worlds and social networks.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.psyssa.com/about-us/what-is-psyssa/>

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for these guiding principles.

## **PsySSA's Social Media Guidelines**

### **1. PsySSA supports open dialogue and the exchange of ideas**

PsySSA supports and encourages dialogue among Council, its Executive Committee and members and the general public. We believe that social media users can both derive and provide valuable benefits through the exchanges of perspective.

### **2. Self-identification**

When discussing topics relevant to PsySSA's online posts, it is suggested to use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify your affiliation with PsySSA, should this, at all, be appropriate and relevant. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, it may be necessary to point it out. It is also important to be conscious about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish online will be around for a long time therefore you should consider the content carefully and be judicious in disclosing personal details.

### **3. Be thoughtful about how you present yourself in online social networks**

The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in online social networks. By virtue of identifying yourself as a PsySSA member within a social network, you are now connected to your fellow members, colleagues, clients and the general public. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with the principles stated in the Constitution of PsySSA.

### **4. Use a disclaimer**

When PsySSA wishes to communicate publicly as a Society, whether to its members, the marketplace or to the general public, it has well established means to do so. Only those officially designated by PsySSA have the authorisation to speak on behalf of the Society. If you publish content online relevant to PsySSA in your personal capacity it is best to use a disclaimer and make it clear that what you say there is representative of personal views and opinions and not necessarily the official views and opinions of PsySSA. Speak in the first person, thus maximally using your own voice and bringing your own personality to the forefront.

### **5. Respect copyright and fair use laws**

PsySSA fully respects the legal rights of our members and collaborative partners in all countries in which we operate. For PsySSA's protection as well as your own, it is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, as they may have legal implications. You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's copyrighted work and in accordance with accepted academic practice, be sure to duly acknowledge all sources. It is also important to take care to understand a site's terms of service.

**6. Protecting confidential and proprietary information**

Social computing blurs many of the traditional boundaries between internal and external communications. Be thoughtful about what you publish, particularly on external platforms. You must make sure you do not disclose or use PsySSA confidential or proprietary information in any online social computing platform. Do not misuse PsySSA logos or trademarks and only use them if you have the authority to do so. Also, do not post information about a person or another Society or company unless you have the right to do so, taking into account intellectual property and privacy concerns. For example, ask permission before posting someone's picture in a social network.

**7. Protect PsySSA's members and relevant parties**

PsySSA Council, its members, and staff should not be cited or referenced without their approval and do not discuss confidential details of an engagement. Furthermore, be thoughtful about the types of information that you share, which may inadvertently lead others to deduce which individuals you are referring to. This might include travel plans or publishing details about your current location or where you are working on a given day. Furthermore, your blog or online social network is not the place to conduct confidential business.

**8. Respect your audience**

Remember that PsySSA is a Society which represents psychology professionals from a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Do not be hesitant to be yourself, but do so respectfully. Do not be discriminatory or prejudice in your engagements. Refrain from personal insults and obscenities as well as other inappropriate or unprofessional conduct. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy. As a Society, PsySSA trusts and expects its members to exercise personal responsibility whenever they participate in social media. This includes not violating the trust of those with whom they are engaging.

**9. Add value**

PsySSA's identity is best represented by its members and everything you publish online reflects upon it. Social networks that are hosted on PsySSA-owned domains should be used in a way that adds value to the Society. It is best to stay within your sphere of expertise, and whenever you are presenting something as fact, ensure that it is factually correct. Keep the PsySSA office informed of relevant social media engagements. If you see misrepresentations made about PsySSA in any social media platform, you may certainly use your own social media or add comments on the original discussion to point out any misrepresentation. Always do so with respect, stick to the facts and identify your appropriate affiliation to PsySSA. However, avoid unnecessary or unproductive arguments. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end and you may negatively affect your own, and PsySSA's, reputation in the

process. Do not attempt to settle scores or goad competitors or others into inflammatory debates.

**10. Be the first to respond to your own mistakes**

Social media concerns require immediate intervention. If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly, as this can help to restore trust. If you choose to modify content that was previously posted, make it clear that you have done so. If an issue arises that requires intervention from PsySSA directly, the Executive Director<sup>3</sup> ought to be alerted without delay who in turn will refer the matter to two members of the PsySSA Profile and Visibility sub-committee. In instances in which these individuals are unavailable, the matter will then be transferred to the Chair of this sub-committee.

**11. Use your best judgment**

Remember to always use good judgment and common sense in deciding what you publish. If you are unsure regarding whether or not something you would like to post is appropriate, and it is related to PsySSA, feel free to discuss it with the PsySSA Profile and Visibility sub-committee<sup>4</sup>. Ultimately, however, you have sole responsibility for what you post to social media and please bear in mind that deviation from the Constitution and Rules of the Society or its structures or bringing the Society into disrepute may lead to a disciplinary enquiry.

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<sup>3</sup> Ms Fatima Seedat ([fatima@psyssa.com](mailto:fatima@psyssa.com); 011 486 3322)

<sup>4</sup> In 2016, the Chair is Prof Juan A Nel ([nelja@unisa.ac.za](mailto:nelja@unisa.ac.za); 083 282 0791). Alternatively, Dr Ewald Crause can be contacted ([ewaldcrause@gmail.com](mailto:ewaldcrause@gmail.com); 084 941 3203).

## **Appendix A**

### **CONSTITUTION of the PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **Article 2: Principles**

##### **WHEREAS**

We acknowledge psychology's historical complicity in supporting and perpetuating colonialism and the apartheid system, and mindful of the history and principles underlying the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, we commit ourselves to:

- 2.1. Transforming and redressing the silences in South African psychology to serve the needs and interests of all South Africa's people;
- 2.2. Developing an organisational structure for psychology that reconciles historically opposed groups, gives a voice to hitherto excluded users of psychological knowledge and skills, and ensures transparent accountable governance of the Society to serve the democratically expressed wishes of its membership;
- 2.3. Ensuring that the Society remains an organ of civil society without an overt or covert loyalty to any political party;
- 2.4. Advancing psychology as a science, profession and as a means of promoting human well-being;
- 2.5. Actively striving for social justice, opposing policies that deny individuals or groups access to the material and psychological conditions necessary for optimal human development, and protesting against any violations of basic human rights;
- 2.6. Promoting rigorous research and encouraging the application of research findings in the advancement of public well-being;
- 2.7. Establishing and maintaining the highest standards of ethics, conduct and lifelong education of psychologists;
- 2.8. Engaging in policy development processes that are relevant to social enhancement and psychological practice in South Africa;
- 2.9. Promoting the rendering of and advancing mental health services to all in South Africa.