

EXTERNAL COLLEGE COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE

This procedure is governed by its parent policy. Questions regarding this procedure are to be directed to the identified Procedure Administrator.

Functional Category:	Operations
Parent Policy:	College Communications Policy
Approval Date:	October 5, 2020
Effective Date:	October 5, 2020
Procedure Owner:	Vice President, External Affairs and Brand
Procedure Administrator:	Director, Brand

Overview:

As a public college, NorQuest has a responsibility to satisfy public accountability, legislation, and expectations while safeguarding the college's brand and reputation. Regardless of the medium being used, employees must ensure their statements and actions support and positively promote the college's reputation and brand. The college respects the freedom of academic expression and this procedure is not intended to curb or infringe on individual freedom of expression. This procedure clarifies who may speak on behalf of the college and the ways in which the views of the college may be represented.

Authority to establish this procedure is derived from the [NorQuest College Board of Governors Policy No.5](#), which delegates authority to the President and CEO to establish policies and procedures for the college's management and operation.

Procedures:

Media and Public Relations

NorQuest College respects the media's role in delivering information to the public and acknowledges that meeting their deadlines is crucial to effective media relations. NorQuest's Brand division is responsible for planning, facilitating, and coordinating all media and public relations for the college to ensure consistent messaging, accessibility, accuracy, and timeliness. This includes producing and distributing key messages, news releases, media advisories, online communications, and official college documents such as annual reports. The Brand division will also research, write, and submit print media articles, opinion editorials, and advertorials for the college, and provide support to Executive, faculty, and staff for speaking engagements.

The Brand division will coordinate media access and may provide consultation and support to college staff and faculty who may be asked by the media to comment on issues within their expertise. The Brand division must be informed of requests for NorQuest staff and faculty to comment on issues when the staff or faculty is providing comment in their role as a college employee.

Social Media

NorQuest College recognizes that social media sites are important and influential communications channels for our staff, students, alumni, stakeholders, and community and encourages the use of and participation as brand ambassadors in social media, blogs, and websites that support the college's vision, strategies, and objectives. The Brand division may choose to post college-related social media content generated by staff, faculty, and students on the college's internal and external websites and social media accounts, as appropriate. As social

media evolves over time, this procedure will be adapted to reflect needed modifications accordingly.

Social media users communicating in their capacity as college personnel must communicate in a manner aligned with their specific roles and responsibilities, and the authority which corresponds with their specific roles and responsibilities. College employees must not use the NorQuest logo or any other element of the NorQuest brand as a profile picture, background image or social media handle in any personal social media account to avoid being mistaken as an official representative of the college. No employee shall engage with the media through social media in the event of a crisis or emergency and will direct all media inquiries to the External Relations Consultant.

Speaking or posting on behalf of the College:

- The Board Chair is the official spokesperson on matters of Board Policy and topic/decisions in the *Post-secondary Learning Act* that reside with the Board.
- The President and CEO, or an approved designate, is the official spokesperson on all matters dealing with the operation and management of the college.
- The Members of the Executive are the official spokespeople on matters dealing specifically with their areas of operation.
- The Vice President, External Relations and Brand is the official spokesperson on day-to-day college matters. The External Relations Consultant is the alternate.
- Any news media or media inquiries must be immediately shared with the External Relations Consultant using the contact information available on the college's website.
- Other employees may be asked to serve as spokespersons where they have specific expertise, a designated role, or to provide profile for a program or activity. These employees will be identified by the Executive, the President and CEO, or the Board Chair.
- All employees authorized as spokespersons, regardless of media, will receive media training prior to being asked to act as spokespersons.

Actions:

For all external communication on behalf of the college, regardless of the medium, college employees must:

- **Be transparent:** If you speak or communicate externally, participate in, or maintain a social media or other online presence on behalf of the college or post about the college on your personal time, you must readily and clearly acknowledge your connection to NorQuest College. Be honest about who you are and your role at the college. If you are not speaking on behalf of the college, make it clear you are not an authorized representative, but are sharing your own personal or professional views as part of a community.
- **Be accurate:** Ensure the information you communicate is accurate, complete, and factual. Do not speculate or estimate, as it could be misconstrued as fact and repeated. As a post-secondary institution, we are held to a higher standard for spelling and grammar than others, so please proofread content before publishing and adhere to relevant college procedures. If in doubt, do not speak or post. If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly.
- **Be respectful:** Communicate in a constructive, civil, and respectful manner. Respect the interests and privacy of your colleagues and

students. Add value to the conversation and share only content you are sure will be of interest to others in that forum. Refrain from engaging in emotionally-charged, disparaging or inflammatory dialog, especially related to the college, colleagues, supporters, customers, other institutions, or government. Please think before you speak or post.

- **Be careful:** Before you speak or post, be sure you know how your contribution could be used or interpreted. Your words or interview could be edited for content by the media. Observe the social media site policies and be observant about how your content can and will be used by the site and others. Comments made in the public domain, regardless of relevance to your role at the college, can affect your and the college's reputation, so take care to consider the potentially harmful ways in which they could be used. Comply with all applicable college policies and procedures and provincial and federal laws and regulations, especially regarding privacy, conflict of interest, copyright, intellectual property, confidentiality, and ethics. Please note and familiarize yourself with the Related Procedures and Related Information. You are legally liable for what you say in public or post online, so act, speak, and post responsibly.
- **Be responsive:** If you are authorized to speak or post on behalf of the college, be accessible and available, and respond in a timely manner to maintain positive public and media relations both online and offline. Establish, monitor, and maintain your online presence and visitor contributions regularly and consistently. Remove or do not approve for publishing comments that are spam, use offensive language, or violate applicable laws and college policies and procedures.
- **Be approved:** You must be authorized by the college to speak or post on behalf of the college or as a representative of the college to provide approved information that falls within the college's mandate or represents the college's position or views. Some college employees will be authorized to speak or post for the college as part of their role as outlined in this procedure; if you are not, you must receive permission from your Member of the Executive and notify the External Relations Consultant prior to speaking or posting. If you may be mentioning the college using online and social media in your personal life or your connection to the college may be mentioned in media, advise the External Relations Consultant.
- **Refer news media and media inquiries to Brand:** All media contacts must be referred to the Brand division for coordination and guidance. Authorized spokespersons should consult with the External Relations Consultant before responding to any media inquiry or request. All news releases and media advisories must be written and/or reviewed and released by NorQuest's Brand division.

You may not, regardless of the medium:

- Discuss, disclose, or speculate on internal policies and procedures, operations, financial information, plans, or legal issues unless expressly and officially authorized to do so on behalf of the college.
- Discuss, disclose, or post confidential or proprietary information about the college, employees, students, faculty, alumni, supporters, or others except as allowed and defined under the relevant college policies and procedures.
- Use the college's name, wordmarks, logos, or other images on any external communication, online, and social media sites, to promote

or endorse any product, cause, or political party or candidate unless expressly and officially authorized to do so.

Other considerations:

The college will remove content from its official online properties if a request is received from a person directly affected by the content if the content violates provincial laws, federal laws, and/or college policies and procedures. The college cannot guarantee cached copies of the content will not be preserved online by third parties or individuals.

The college reserves the right to remove content and comments from its official online properties that are spam, use offensive language, or violate applicable laws and college policies and procedures.

Definitions:

College online properties and presence: include internal and external websites, official social media sites, feeds, streams, and official pages on other public websites.

Employee: includes a person who is engaged by NorQuest College to perform a service in accordance with existing terms and conditions of employment, employment contracts or collective agreements.

Freedom of Expression: is one of the Fundamental Freedoms protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 2(b) of the Charter protects "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication."

Media relations: is the relationship the college has, initiates, develops and nurtures with the media, in all its forms, to promote the college through clear communications to the public.

Public relations: is the strategic management of relationships between and organization and its diverse publics through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest. (*Source: Flynn, Gregory & Valin, 2008 – official Canadian Public Relations Society definition*).

Social media: refers to online tools and services that allow any Internet user to create, share, repurpose and publish content; collaborate, communicate and interact with content and other users; and participate in personal and professional networking.

Related NorQuest College Information:

- [Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- [College Branding Procedure](#)
- [College Communications Policy](#)
- [Digital Security Policy](#)
- [Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment Policy](#)

Related External Information:

- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)
- [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)
- [Post-Secondary Learning Act](#)

Next Review Date:

December 2024

Revision History:

June 2012: new (replaces Standard Practice 4.21: Media Relations Protocol)
August 2013: update for document links and branding
November 2014: update for document links
December 2015: reviewed and updated
August 2019: Compliance Office template & reorganization update
September 2020: reviewed and updated