VIU Social Media Guide

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Social media

Social media is a powerful tool for sharing VIU news, stories, events and other information. Following best practices and guidelines for the appropriate use of social platforms will support the VIU brand and help faculties, programs, departments and areas engage with the audiences they wish to reach.

Getting started

The first question to ask when you are considering creating a social media presence for your department, program or initiative at VIU is whether you have the resources and time to do so successfully. A poorly run or rarely updated account is much worse than not having one at all. Your social media page will be your online representation (along with your website) and you should make sure you have the tools in place to represent yourself well. Note also that the Communications team is happy to help you in an advisory role, but does not have the capacity to run your page for you.

If your mind is made up and you're ready to get started, contact *Strategic Marketing* at *strategic.marketing@viu.ca* to discuss branding guidelines and training.

To help you build a successful social media platform, here are some helpful tips and best practices to get you on your way.

Social media basics

Once you've decided to launch a VIU social media presence, you need to decide which social media platforms to use.

VIU focuses its social media efforts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Snapchat. We would suggest focusing on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to start. Depending on the amount of resources you have dedicated, you might want to start with one platform and then expand from there. Each platform has its own strengths and limitations:

1. **Facebook** has a diverse audience, allows for longer-form content, and is a great place for strong visuals and engaging posts.
2. **Twitter** is effective in communicating with your audience quickly and immediately and for posting links to stories, events and important information.
3. **Instagram** is a visual platform that is extremely effective for programs/departments that have strong visuals to share.

When creating your new social media account, you will need to dedicate someone (or several people) in your area as account administrators. They will be in charge of posting and answering questions. We always suggest having more than one person as administrator and ensure that login credentials are shared among your team to ensure that access to the page is never lost or delayed.

Success

To have a successful social media presence, you need a strong, long-term strategy on how the page will be run (whose job it will be, who is responsible for what), and what kind of content you will publish (events, success stories, deadlines, photos, videos). Content should be focused on the audience you want to reach with your posts. Ask yourself: Is your audience prospective students or current students (possibly both) and what things do each of these groups care about and want to see on your page?

Very rarely are social media pages instant successes. It takes a long time to build an audience.

For inspiration, check out other university social media pages and look at what they do well.

Best practices

Here are some best practices to follow while acting as administrator for a social media page. Following these guidelines will help you increase your followers and engagement.

Be authentic
The golden rule of social media is to be authentic, real and honest. Use casual, simple language (rather than overly academic) and make your posts and interactions more like a conversation among friends. Be transparent about your role at VIU and represent yourself the way you would in the classroom or on campus. When you make mistakes, just admit them, correct them and move on. Answer questions to the best of your ability or direct people to the person who can answer the question best.

Common sense
Making choices on social media is no different than making choices when sending an email to a student, speaking in front of a classroom or conversing with people face-to-face. If something would be considered inappropriate or offensive offline, it is definitely the same online (possibly worse). If you aren't sure if you should post something that might be considered inappropriate, don't. It's always better to be safe than sorry.

Interactions

Engaging with your followers is the most important thing you can do on a social media platform. How you do so will represent your department and the University. In all interactions, be professional, courteous, kind and helpful.

Sometimes, people will post complaints or issues to your page. Don't delete negative comments or criticisms, as long as they don't single out individuals, incorporate hate speech in any way or don't appear to be trolling your page (posting just to be hateful and get a reaction). Any other criticisms should be replied to. Critical comments are an opportunity to correct a problem or give an explanation where one is possible. No matter what, don't lose your temper or reply in an angry/negative way. The best way to deal with critical comments is to be helpful and kind. If you can take that interaction offline by suggesting a phone call, email or an in-person conversation, that is ideal. Always proceed with caution – do not get involved in every discussion. Sometimes, not saying anything (but still closely monitoring the discussion) is the best course of action.

If comments single out individuals or groups, incorporate hate speech or spam your page (with items for sale or other information unrelated to VIU), feel free to delete them. If you aren't sure how to deal with a critical comment or interaction, please contact us. We are happy to help.

Regular posting

Nothing kills a social media presence faster than pages with no updates. If you were looking up a program at a university and saw they hadn't updated their Facebook page in two years, you might immediately form an opinion about that program. Update regularly. VIU's main Facebook page posts 3-6 times a week every week. A smaller department page should strive to post at least once a week. In the summer, when things are much quieter, content can be found in the form of relatable links, articles and photos. Regular posting is key to a growing and engaged audience. Give your audience all the sunlight you can and watch them grow with you.

Formatting

Use link shorteners to keep your social media posts looking clean and tidy (and to save space). Sites like *bitly.com* (which we often use) will shrink your long URLs into something smaller and cleaner looking.

A long URL like this:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTy9f44Yye8&feature=youtu.be

Looks better when shortened to this:

http://bit.ly/2HrTssY

After writing a post, double check for typos. When your post goes live, check it again to ensure there are no mistakes and all links you post are correct.

Photos and video

Nothing drives engagement more than great photos and videos. When posting to either Facebook or Twitter, always include a photo. Posts with photos receive twice as much engagement as those without. Whenever possible, include a photo with your post, even if it is a generic photo of the university. Short videos will also be very popular, so look for someone in your department who has skills in shooting and editing video or find the necessary training. Reposting photos and videos from VIU's main social media accounts is encouraged.

(For more information on choosing photos and video for your social feeds, see the *Photography* and *Videography* sections in *VIU's Brand Standards* document.)

Diversity of posts

Ensure you publish a diverse selection of posts. A diverse page that provides all kinds of information (news, events, success stories, photos, videos, articles) will inspire more engagement than if you use your page only to post one kind of content (events listings, for example). Mix it up and give your audience lots of reasons to engage with your page.

Track your results

Facebook and Twitter have extensive analytics that will show you who is following your page and which posts are getting the most engagement. Use that information to guide your social media plan going forward.

Naming your page

Always name your social media page beginning with "VIU" in caps, followed by your program, department or area, possibly abbreviated. Here are examples:

- VIUEnglish
- VIUNursing
- VIUMCP (Masters in Community Planning)

Keeping a consistent format for all VIU page names helps identify your page as an official VIU social media page.

Evaluate

Social media best practices and strategies change all the time, and you should be prepared to evaluate the work you've done annually or more frequently to determine what changes you can make to keep up with a constantly shifting landscape. Do you need to post more or less? What was your most engaging content and how can you increase that kind of content going forward?
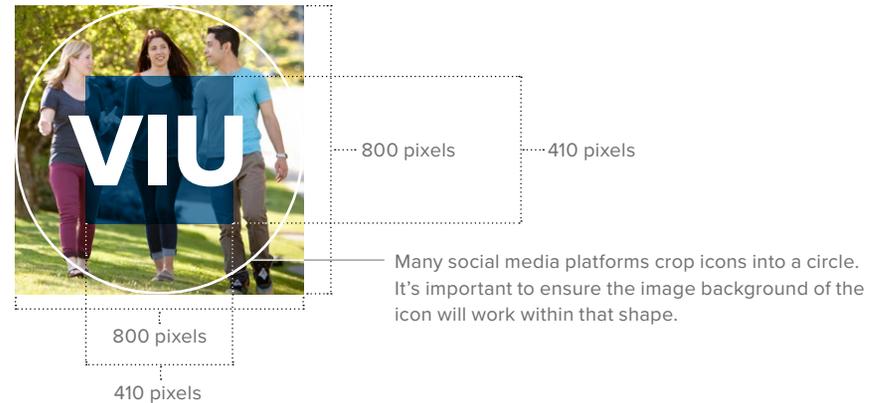
Social media icons

Social media icons serve as a quick visual reference to help users identify content from your account in their feeds. The icons always appear in close proximity to your account's title and therefore do not need to feature that information. An icon is not intended to serve as a logo and should not be used for anything other than this specific social media purpose.

VIU communications on social platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram offer an opportunity to present a unified brand. The use of consistent social media icons across all VIU social media pages helps strengthen our brand, provide a clear connection to VIU, and increase engagement with social media audiences.

As the use of the VIU logo as a social media image is reserved for only the main VIU and VIU News & Events accounts, a new solution for use by VIU program areas, departments and faculties was required. The following social media icon system will help VIU social media pages retain a unique identity, and maintain a connection to the brand.

Technical specifications

To ensure that the imagery works across a variety of platforms, the default size for the social media icon is 800 by 800 pixels. Centered in the frame is VIU, in the brand font Proxima Nova Extra Bold, 290 point. The blue square behind the text contains two layers set to the blending modes Colour and Multiply at 100% and 65% opacity, respectively. These elements should stay consistent and not be modified or changed.


800 pixels   410 pixels

800 pixels

410 pixels

Many social media platforms crop icons into a circle. It's important to ensure the image background of the icon will work within that shape.

When choosing photos for the background, try to pick an image that represents your area or department. See the *Photography* section (section 11) of *VIU's Brand Standards* document regarding photo selection. Do not use the VIU logo, or icon in the background image. It's important to stay consistent, so please use the same social media icon and image across all social media accounts managed by your department or area.

The social media icons presented here are designed for the current (as of May 2019) specifications for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This framework may change or require adjustment as social media platforms change and evolve.

There are some instances where a different solution for a social media icon may be required. Contact *Strategic Marketing* to ensure your social icon meets VIU's brand standards. Social icons that fall outside this new system will be assessed and granted approval on a case by case basis.

## Examples of social media icons in use
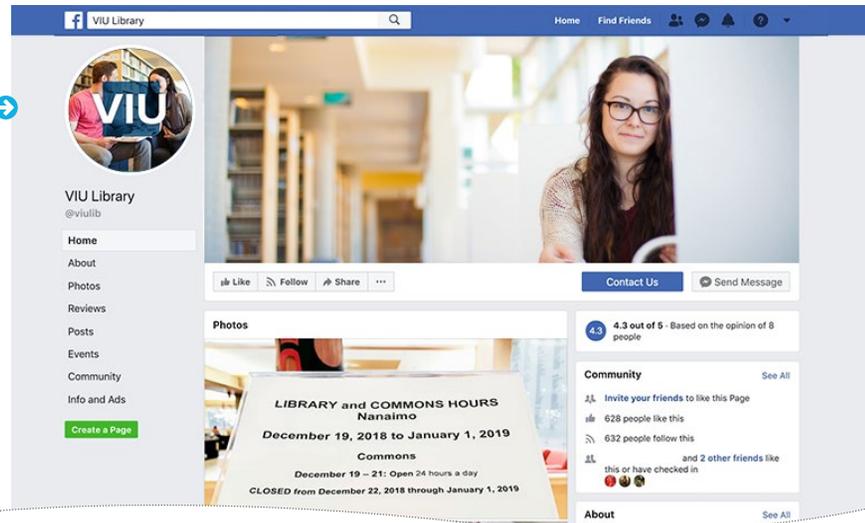
Here, a possible icon for the VIU Library is shown in context on Facebook on a desktop computer.
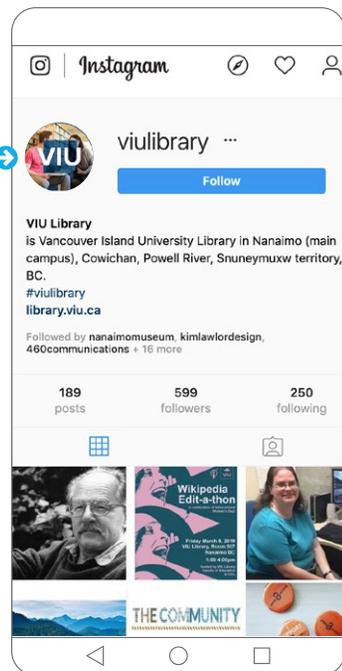
Left: a possible icon for the VIU Library is shown on Instagram on a mobile device

Right: The new social media icon style is shown for several VIU accounts in Facebook search results on a mobile device. Also shown are the VIU main account as well as the Alumni, Students' Union and Mariners' accounts that each have separate branding.
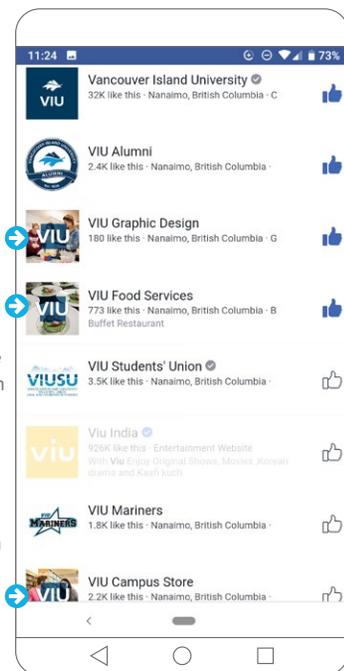
How do I get a social media icon?

To get a social media icon for the VIU social media page representing your program area, department or faculty, contact *Strategic Marketing* for more information or complete a *Job Request*. If you require assistance with sourcing an image to use in your icon, or have suggestions, please include these in the job request.

Personal accounts

The line between professional and personal social media usage can be easily blurred. Be conscious about mixing your personal and professional social media accounts. Be aware of keeping your own opinions separate from the professional account you administer. Everyone is responsible for what they say online in the same way they are responsible in person. The *VIU Employee Code of Conduct* still applies for what you do online.

Questions?

For help with getting started or enhancing your social media efforts, please contact *Strategic Marketing* at *strategic.marketing@viu.ca*. We can meet with you or your employees and help with training or creating long-term social media strategies.