

Social Media Best Practices Guide

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Author	Digital Strategy Department (digitalstrategy@laurentian.ca)

Purpose

This document serves as a practical reference for using social media effectively, with platform specifications, content best practices, and recruitment-focused strategies.

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1. Core Principles

Before diving into platforms and specs, three principles guide everything in this document:

1.1. Social media is the hook, not the destination.

The job of social media is to **grab attention and prompt an action**, usually clicking through to a webpage where the real conversion happens (form fill, RSVP, inquiry, application). Treat your social posts like movie trailers, not the full film.

1.2. Less information has more impact.

Dense, text-heavy posts get scrolled past. People come to social media to be entertained, inspired, or quickly informed, not to read a brochure. Save the detail for the landing page they click through to.

1.3. The web page does the heavy lifting.

Use social media to spark curiosity and drive traffic. Once a prospect is on a Laurentian web page, you have far more flexibility to present detailed information, collect lead data, and guide them toward the next step. Always include a clear, trackable link either in the post caption where the platform allows this alternatively in your bio and instruct the user on where they can find the link.

2. Platform Quick Reference Table

Platform	Primary Audience	Best For	Worst For	Posting Frequency
Instagram	18-34, visual-first	Student stories, campus life, program highlights, behind-the-scenes	Long-form text, complex info	3-5 posts/week + daily Stories
Facebook	30-65+, alumni, parents	Events, community building, news, longer captions	Reaching prospects under 25	3-5 posts/week
LinkedIn	22+, professionals	Faculty achievements, research, alumni outcomes, career outcomes	Casual content, undergrad recruitment	2-4 posts/week
TikTok	16-24 primarily	Authentic short-form video, student takeovers, trending audio	Polished marketing content, links in feed	3-7 posts/week
X (Twitter)	25-45, news-followers, journalists	Quick announcements, news, real-time updates, media engagement	Conversions, visual content as primary strategy	1-3 posts/day if active

3. Detailed Platform Specifications

3.1. Instagram

3.1.1. Best uses for recruitment

- Student life imagery and Reels
- Program highlights with strong visuals
- Campus and Sudbury location content
- Event promotion (Reels and Stories)
- Behind-the-scenes content (faculty labs, athletics, residence life)

3.1.2. Post types and dimensions

Format	Dimensions	Aspect Ratio	Notes
Feed post (vertical)	1080 × 1350 px	4:5	Best for feed , takes up more screen space
Feed post (square)	1080 × 1080 px	1:1	Most versatile; works everywhere
Stories	1080 × 1920 px	9:16	Keep critical content in center 1080 × 1420 px area (leave 250 pixels both on top and bottom to allow for platform's text overlays)
Reels	1080 × 1920 px	9:16	Same safe zone as Stories
Carousel (multi-image post)	1080 × 1080 or 1080 × 1350	1:1 or 4:5	Up to 10 images; great engagement

3.1.3. Video specs

- Reels: 15-90 seconds optimal
- Feed video: up to 60 seconds (longer goes to Reels feed)
- Format: MP4
- Captions always burned in (sound is often off)

Recruitment tip: Reels reach significantly more non-followers than feed posts. Use them to grow audience.

3.2. Facebook

3.2.1. Best uses for recruitment

- Event creation and promotion (Open House, info sessions)
- Reaching parents and influencer audiences
- Longer-form storytelling (alumni features, student stories)
- Community engagement and discussion
- Paid advertising, Facebook's ad targeting remains very strong

3.2.2. Post types and dimensions

Format	Dimensions	Aspect Ratio	Notes
Feed image	1200 × 630 px	1.91:1	Standard landscape
Feed image (vertical)	1080 × 1350 px	4:5	More mobile screen space
Stories	1080 × 1920 px	9:16	Same safe zone as Instagram
Reels	1080 × 1920 px	9:16	Same as Instagram
Event cover	1920 × 1005 px	~1.91:1	Critical for event pages
Cover photo (Page)	851 × 315 px	~2.7:1	Top of Page

3.2.3. Video specs

- Feed video: 1-90 seconds optimal

- Format: MP4
- Captions burned in

Recruitment tip: Use Facebook Events for things like Open House, virtual sessions, and on-campus events. Co-host with relevant Laurentian sub-pages to expand reach.

3.3. LinkedIn

3.3.1. Best uses for recruitment

- Promoting graduate programs and continuing education (ABQ/QBA, MBA)
- Faculty research and achievements
- Alumni success stories
- Career outcomes data
- Employer partnership content
- Recruitment for international and mature student audiences

3.3.2. Post types and dimensions

Format	Dimensions	Aspect Ratio	Notes
Feed image (square)	1200 × 1200 px	1:1	Most versatile
Feed image (landscape)	1200 × 627 px	1.91:1	Older standard
Feed image (vertical)	1080 × 1350 px	4:5	Maximum mobile screen space
Page cover	1128 × 191 px	~6:1	Top of company Page
Personal profile banner	1584 × 396 px	4:1	Personal profiles only

Document post	PDF, multi-page	Various	Carousel-style; great engagement
Article (long-form)	N/A	N/A	Up to 125,000 characters

3.3.3. Video specs

- Native video: 3 seconds to 10 minutes
- Format: MP4
- Captions burned in

Recruitment tip: Document posts (PDF carousels) get exceptional engagement on LinkedIn. Use for "Top 5 Reasons to Choose [Program]" type content.

3.4. TikTok

3.4.1. Best uses for recruitment

- Reaching 16-24 demographic (your prospective undergrad applicants)
- Authentic, less-polished content
- Student takeovers
- "Day in the life" videos
- Trending audio + Laurentian content
- Sudbury location content

3.4.2. Post types and dimensions

Format	Dimensions	Aspect Ratio	Notes
Standard video	1080 × 1920 px	9:16	Full-screen vertical

Profile photo	200 × 200 px	1:1	Round crop
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3.4.3. Video specs

- Length: 15 seconds to 10 minutes (15-60 seconds performs best)
- Format: MP4 or MOV
- Captions: Use TikTok's built-in caption tool for accessibility and engagement
- Audio: Trending sounds significantly boost reach, use them where appropriate

Recruitment tip: TikTok's algorithm rewards authenticity over polish. A handheld iPhone video from a student often outperforms a professionally produced one. Don't over-edit.

Important caveat: Links in TikTok posts/captions don't work, only the single "link in bio" is clickable. This makes lead capture harder than other platforms. Use TikTok for awareness; drive traffic via consistent "link in bio" CTAs (Call-to-Action).

3.5. X

3.5.1. Best uses for recruitment

- Quick announcements and news
- Engaging with journalists and media
- Real-time event coverage
- Replying to prospective student questions
- Government/policy engagement
- Athletics results and live updates

3.5.2. Post types and dimensions

Format	Dimensions	Aspect Ratio	Notes
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Feed image (single)	1200 × 675 px	16:9	Standard
Feed image (multi-image)	1200 × 675 px each	16:9	Up to 4 per post
Header image	1500 × 500 px	3:1	Profile top
Profile photo	400 × 400 px	1:1	Round crop

3.5.3. Post specs

- Character limit: 280 characters (free accounts), up to 25,000 (premium)
- Video: 0.5 seconds to 2 minutes 20 seconds (free); longer for premium
- Format: MP4

Recruitment tip: X has limited utility for direct undergraduate recruitment in 2026, the platform's user base has shifted older and more news/politics-oriented. Use it for institutional voice, media relations, and engaging with educational policy conversations rather than primary recruitment.

4. Content Best Practices for Recruitment

4.1. What works on social media

4.1.1. Lead with the hook in the first 3 seconds.

Whether it's a video, image, or post caption, the first impression has to grab attention immediately. Don't bury the interesting part.

4.1.2. One idea per post.

Trying to communicate three things in one post means none of them land. Pick one message, one image, one action, and link to a webpage for everything else.

4.1.3. Show, don't tell.

"Our nursing program has excellent placements" is forgettable. A 15-second clip of a nursing student in their hospital placement, with one sentence on screen ("From classroom to hospital floor in semester three"), is shareable.

4.1.4. People over places.

Posts featuring people (students, faculty, alumni) consistently outperform posts featuring buildings, logos, or abstract imagery. Faces, especially smiling ones, increase engagement significantly.

4.1.5. Authenticity beats polish.

A genuine student perspective filmed on a phone often outperforms a professionally produced ad. This is especially true on TikTok and Instagram Reels.

4.1.6. Use trending formats and sounds (when appropriate).

Platforms reward content using trending audio, formats, and themes. Watch what's working and adapt it to a Laurentian context.

4.2. What doesn't work

4.2.1. Dense text-heavy content.

If someone has to read more than a sentence to understand what your post is about, they'll scroll past. Move detail to the landing page.

4.2.2. Generic stock imagery.

Generic photos of "happy diverse students" that could be from any university read as fake. Use real Laurentian content, your campus, your students, your faculty.

4.2.3. Pure information dumps.

"Application deadline is February 1. Apply at laurentian.ca/apply. GPA requirements vary by program. Visit our website for details." This is a webpage, not a social post. Translate it into something with a hook.

4.2.4. Posts without a clear next step.

Every recruitment-focused post should have a clear action: visit the link, register for an event, message us a question, follow for more. Don't leave the viewer wondering what to do.

4.2.5. Inconsistent branding.

Random fonts, colors, and tones across posts make your account feel disorganized. Use a consistent visual identity.

5. Driving Action, The Recruitment Funnel

Social media's job is to **move prospects from awareness to action**. Here's how each stage looks:

5.1. Stage 1: Awareness (Top of Funnel)

Goal: get people to notice Laurentian exists and is worth considering.

What works:

- Reels and TikTok videos of campus and student life
- Story content showing day-in-the-life of students
- Faculty/research highlights that signal credibility
- Sudbury location content (it's a strong differentiator)

Metric to watch: Reach, video views, follower growth

5.2. Stage 2: Interest (Middle of Funnel)

Goal: get them to engage and learn more.

What works:

- Program-specific content (e.g., "What you'll actually do in Mining Engineering")
- Student testimonials and quotes
- Alumni outcomes (where graduates work, what they earn)
- Open House promotion
- Q&A content addressing common prospect questions

Metric to watch: Engagement (likes, comments, shares, saves), profile visits, link clicks

5.3. Stage 3: Conversion (Bottom of Funnel)

Goal: get them to take a measurable action on your website.

What works:

- Direct CTAs to "Connect with Us" forms
- Event registration drives (with specific event details)
- Retargeting ads to people who've visited program pages
- Time-sensitive messaging ("Apply by [date] for early consideration")

Metric to watch: Click-through rate, form submissions, RSVPs, applications

Always link to a webpage where you can:

- Capture lead information (name, email, program of interest)
 - Provide detailed program information
 - Trigger automated follow-up (email sequences, recruiter outreach)
 - Track behavior with analytics (GA4, Meta Pixel)
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6. Image Content Development

6.1. Best practices for images

6.2. Resolution and quality

- Always upload at the platform's recommended dimensions
- Never upload below 1080px wide on any platform
- Export at high quality but keep file sizes reasonable (under 500 KB for static images is ideal)
- Use sRGB color space

6.3. Composition:

- Subject centered or following rule-of-thirds
- Plenty of negative space (cramped images don't read well at thumbnail size)
- Faces in focus and well-lit
- Backgrounds clean and on-brand

6.4. Text on images

- Use sparingly, under 30% of image area
- Large, readable fonts (test by viewing at thumbnail size)
- High contrast between text and background
- Brand-consistent fonts and colors

6.5. Accessibility

- Always write descriptive alt text (required under AODA for institutional accounts)
- Avoid relying on color alone to communicate meaning
- Ensure text contrast meets WCAG AA standards (4.5:1 minimum)

6.6. Where to source images

- Original Laurentian photography (best, authentic and unique)

- Approved institutional photo library
- Approved stock photography services (only when no original exists)
- User-generated content (with documented consent)

6.7. Never use

- Random stock photos that look generic
- Photos of identifiable students without consent
- Copyrighted images from web searches
- AI-generated images of "students" (these read as fake and can damage brand trust)

6.8. Image production checklist

Before posting any image, verify:

- Correct dimensions for the platform and placement
- On-brand colors and typography
- Faces in focus, well-lit
- Text (if any) under 30% of image, readable at thumbnail
- Alt text written
- No copyrighted/unlicensed content
- Consent obtained for any identifiable individuals
- File compressed for web (under 500 KB ideal)

7. Video Content Development

Video is the most important format on social media in 2026. Reels, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts dominate discovery, and video posts consistently outperform static images on every major platform.

7.1. Best practices for video

7.1.1. Length

- **Stories/Reels/TikTok:** 15-30 seconds optimal; 60-90 seconds maximum
- **Feed video (Instagram/Facebook):** 30-60 seconds
- **LinkedIn:** 30 seconds to 2 minutes
- **YouTube (full):** 5-10 minutes for deeper content; Shorts are a separate format

7.1.2. The first 3 seconds are everything.

People decide whether to keep watching within 3 seconds. Open with:

- A surprising visual
- A direct question to the viewer
- The most compelling moment of the entire video
- Bold on-screen text stating the hook

7.1.3. Captions are mandatory.

- 85%+ of social video is watched without sound
- Always burn captions into the video itself (don't rely on platform auto-captions)
- Captions also help accessibility compliance

7.1.4. Vertical orientation for mobile-first platforms.

- TikTok, Instagram Reels, Facebook Reels, Instagram Stories: 9:16 (1080 × 1920)
- LinkedIn and X feed: 16:9 still works (1920 × 1080)
- Never post horizontal video on TikTok or Reels, it gets letterboxed and looks bad

7.1.5. Audio strategy

- Use trending audio on TikTok and Reels when contextually appropriate
- Original audio (e.g., a student speaking) is also strong, gives algorithms unique content
- Background music should be licensed or platform-provided (commercial use of copyrighted music gets posts muted or removed)

7.1.6. Pacing

- Cut every 2-4 seconds to maintain attention
- Avoid long static shots
- Movement (motion in the frame, camera movement, or zoom) holds attention

7.2. Video production approaches

7.2.1. For high-quality polished video

- Professional camera or recent iPhone/Android
- Proper lighting (natural light or basic ring light)
- External microphone for any speaking content
- Stable shots (tripod or gimbal)
- Edited in Adobe Premiere, DaVinci Resolve, or Final Cut

7.2.2. For authentic phone-shot content

- Latest-generation phone camera is plenty
- Good natural lighting (face windows)
- Quiet environment for audio
- Edited in CapCut, InShot, or platform-native tools

7.2.3. For TikTok specifically

- Phone-shot content often performs better than polished video
- Edit within TikTok using their tools where possible
- Trending sounds, effects, and transitions signal algorithm-friendliness

7.2.4. Video production checklist

Before posting any video, verify:

- Correct aspect ratio (9:16 for Reels/TikTok/Stories; 1:1 or 16:9 for feed)
- Strong hook in first 3 seconds

- Burned-in captions
 - Audio levels balanced (voice clearly audible)
 - Music licensed appropriately
 - Length appropriate for platform
 - Clear call-to-action at end ("Link in bio," "Visit the link," etc.)
 - Consent obtained for any identifiable individuals
 - Brand elements visible (logo, colors, fonts) but not overwhelming
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8. Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **Posting the same content identically to all platforms.** Each platform has different audiences, formats, and conventions. A LinkedIn post shouldn't read the same as a TikTok caption.
 - **Treating social media as a billboard.** It's a conversation. Reply to comments, engage with other accounts, share community content.
 - **Posting and ghosting.** If you post but don't respond to questions or comments, prospects notice and lose interest.
 - **Chasing vanity metrics.** Follower counts matter less than engagement, click-throughs, and actual leads generated.
 - **Ignoring analytics.** Every platform provides data on what's working. Review monthly and adjust strategy accordingly.
 - **Inconsistent voice and visuals.** Build templates and brand guidelines so anyone posting from the account maintains consistency.
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9. Where to Get Help

For questions about brand assets or brand guidelines, contact:

Marketing Department (marketing@laurentian.ca)

For social media and content strategy support, contact:

Digital Strategy Department (digitalstrategy@laurentian.ca)