

Student Media Code of Conduct

Last updated: 14th August 2014

1. General and interpretation

- (a) This Code of Conduct applies to all Student Media Outlets, their Heads and all students involved in them, and all content produced by them, at all times.
- (b) Complaints may be made against any content published by Student Media for breaching this Code of Conduct. Complaints will be heard in accordance with the Complaints process set out in the Student Media Bye-Law.
- (c) Where references occur in this Code of Conduct to a public interest test, or a requirement that behaviour should be strictly in the public interest for it to be permissible, this means that such behaviour must be shown to be justified on grounds that it:
 - (i) Detects or exposes crime, serious impropriety, misconduct or other wrongdoing;
 - (ii) Protects public health and safety;
 - (iii) Prevents the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.

2. Obtaining information

- (a) All information should be obtained in an ethical, proportionate and justifiable manner.
- (b) In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively.
- (c) Except where strictly in the public interest, content must not be produced through clandestine means or subterfuge, including by the use of secret cameras or recording devices, or by accessing, copying or removing information, documents or photographs when not authorised to do so.
- (d) Student Media must protect all confidential sources of information.
- (e) Payment or offers of payment for stories, pictures or information, which seek to exploit a particular crime or to glorify or glamorise crime in general, must not be made.
- (f) Payments must not be made to convicted or confessed criminals where pertaining to their crimes.
- (g) Information must not be obtained by approaching Students' Union employees for comment, except for Sabbatical Officers or any employee authorised by the General Secretary to speak to the press generally.

3. Accuracy

- (a) Student Media must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information, including pictures.
- (b) Student Media must not fabricate stories or quotations, and must not plagiarise the work of others.
- (c) All content must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.
- (d) A fair opportunity for reply to inaccuracies must be given when reasonably called for.
- (e) A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion once recognised must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence. Where appropriate an apology must also be published.

4. Privacy

- (a) Everyone is entitled to respect for their private and family life, home, health and correspondence, including digital communications.

- (b) Intrusions into any individual's private life without consent must be strictly in the public interest.
- (c) Photographing individuals in private places without their consent is prohibited.

5. Harassment

- (a) Journalists must not engage in intimidation, harassment or persistent pursuit.
- (b) They must not persist in questioning, telephoning, pursuing or photographing individuals once asked to desist; nor remain on their property when asked to leave and must not follow them. If requested, they must identify themselves and whom they represent.
- (c) Heads of Media Outlets must ensure these principles are observed by those in the Media Outlet and take care not to use non-compliant material from other sources.

6. Suicide

- (a) Caution must be exercised when referring to the methods and context of a suicide. In particular, content must:
 - (i) Avoid giving too much detail about any suicide method;
 - (ii) Take extra care when reporting the facts of cases where an unusual or previously unknown method has been used;
 - (iii) Be produced mindful of the fact that there is a risk of copycat behaviour when details of suicide methods are reported;
 - (iv) Never say that any suicide method is quick, easy, painless, immediate, easy to imitate or certain to result in death, or make use of similar language.
- (b) Content should avoid over-simplification of the causes or perceived triggers of a suicide, steer away from melodramatic depictions of a suicide or its aftermath, and aim for non-sensational coverage.
- (c) Careful consideration must be given to the placement or illustration of reports of any suicide.

7. Children

- (a) The production of content involving any individual under the age of 18 is prohibited unless they are a public figure or a custodial parent or guardian, or similarly responsible adult, has given their consent.
- (b) No content which mentions or makes reference to any individual under the age of 18 will be published unless they are a public figure or a custodial parent or guardian, or similarly responsible adult, has given their consent.

8. Reporting of crime

- (a) Relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime should not generally be identified without their consent, unless they are genuinely relevant to the story.
- (b) Particular regard should be paid to the potentially vulnerable position of children who witness, or are victims of, crime. This does not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.
- (c) Student Media must not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification.
- (d) When referring to cases of sexual assault, care must be taken to ensure that content does not imply that the victim was at fault.
- (e) Content must not be published that incites or encourages illegal activity.

9. Equality and Discrimination

- (a) Student Media must not make prejudicial or pejorative references to an individual's race, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability. This includes the use of images to demean someone on the basis of any of these characteristics.
- (b) Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story.
- (c) Student Media must not promote views that are sexist, homophobic, racist, transphobic, disablist or otherwise discriminatory on the basis of a protected characteristic.

10. Students' Union employees

- (a) Employees of the Students' Union, except Sabbatical Officers, must not be named in any content without the express permission of the General Secretary and Union Director.
- (b) Every employee of the Students' Union is entitled to dignity at work and employees should not be the subject of unfounded allegations.
- (c) Sabbatical Officers should be given reasonable time to provide comment in response to requests from Student Media.

11. Integrity of journalists

- (a) Students involved in Student Media have an obligation to behave with integrity in their conduct.
- (b) No person involved in Student Media should endorse any commercial product or enterprise for personal financial or other gain, or take unfair personal advantage of information gained in the course of their duties before the information is public knowledge.
- (c) There must be a clear distinction between advertising or other paid-for content and all other content produced by a Media Outlet.
- (d) Students involved in Student Media must resist threats or inducements to influence, distort or suppress information.