



POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR ON-CAMPUS MEDIA

1. Policy Statement

1.1. Policy Principles

The University embraces the principles of freedom of expression as outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), hereafter the Constitution. Accordingly, “everyone has the right to freedom of expression which includes freedom of the press and other media”. However, also consistent with the Constitution, the University does not extend such freedom of expression to “propaganda for war; incitement or imminent violence; or advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm”.

1.2. The Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets out the practical ways in which the University will ensure the practice of freedom of expression.

1.3. Policy Definitions

The Media Policy and Procedures will apply to all media publications and broadcasting associated with the University.

1.3.1 Media Publications

Media publications may be generated by the University staff/entities and/or by students/student entities and include documents, statements, brochures, pamphlets, posters, postings on the approved graffiti walls, and advertisements produced in hard copy or electronically to make information generally known.

1.3.2. Broadcasting

Broadcasting refers to any information that is generated by the University structures and/or by students and is transmitted by radio, television or the Internet.

1.4. Policy Parameters

The Media Policy and Procedures apply to all staff and students at the University, as well as external groups that would like to distribute media publications or broadcast information at the University (see section 4 below).

1.5. The Code of Media Ethics

The Media Policy and Procedures are inextricably linked to the Code of Media Ethics (Annexure A), hereafter the Code. This Code shall apply to all material produced by staff and students for members of the University community, whether in print, by way of radio or television broadcast or on the Internet. External bodies wanting to distribute material at Wits will be required to accept the terms of the Code. The names and contact details of producers of material (called ‘publishers’ in this Code) must appear on the material as they will be held responsible for any violation of the Code.

2. Policy Implementation

2.1. The Remit of the Media Board

The Media Board will assume responsibility for implementing of the Media Policy and Procedures. Additionally, the Media Board will communicate the policy to the University community; review the effectiveness of the policy; and secure any resources (e.g. nominal printing costs) associated with the implementation of the policy.

The Media Board will review the media and broadcasting landscape at the University at least every six months and make recommendations with regard to the improvement of the same. Moreover, the Media Board will meet on an ad hoc basis to review cases of non-compliance with the policy and/or procedures for media publications at the University. Where sanctions are necessary, the Media Board will work closely with the Legal Office or the Industrial Relations Office to ensure that the correct disciplinary procedures are followed.

2.2. The Composition of the Media Board

The Media Board will consist of at least twelve members. A quorum at any meeting of the Media Board will be at least four members. The Media Board will comprise:

1. One student elected by the SRC.
2. One student elected by the Postgraduate Students’ Association.
3. The Head of Journalism Studies at the University or nominee.
4. An academic elected by the Senate Academic Freedom Committee.
5. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or nominee.
6. The Registrar or nominee.
7. The Dean of Students or nominee.
8. The Legal Adviser of the University or nominee.
9. An external media or broadcasting expert.
10. The Head of the Central Printing Unit.
11. The Head of Wits TV or nominee.
12. The Head of Marketing or nominee.

The term of office of the Media Board members will be three years, save for ex-officio appointments. The Media Board will be chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or his/her nominee. In cases where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and his/her nominee are not available for a meeting of the Media Board, the Registrar or the Dean of Students or the Legal Adviser of the University or their nominees may chair the meeting.

If a conflict of interest is evident with any of the Media Board members, he or she must recuse him/herself. If the member is not willing to recuse him/herself, the chair must insist on the recusal and ensure that it takes place.

3. Procedures for Posters

Every poster and notice must bear an approved authority's stamp and the date of such approval. The schools/departments/disciplines/units authorized to grant such approval are listed in Annexure B, together with the corresponding subject matter and the maximum number of posters permitted to be stamped by that entity.

Specific procedures related to posters include:

- a) Posters and notices may only be placed on the notice-boards provided for such use. Posters may not be placed on pillars, walls, doors or windows anywhere on Campus, or in lecture theatres. Any poster or notice displayed on any surface other than a notice-board will be removed and destroyed.
- b) During SRC election campaigns the above rules are partially relaxed in that posters may be displayed on walls provided that they are affixed in such a way that no damage is caused. Adhesive tape (e.g. masking tape) or adhesive putty (e.g. Prestik) may be used to affix posters to walls during SRC election campaigns. However, transparent adhesive tape (e.g. Sellotape) and brown, parcel tape may not be used.
- c) Should a club or society wish to erect a banner anywhere on campus, permission must be sought from the Dean of Students.
- d) Posters and notices are expected to conform to a high standard of grammatical accuracy and to be set out in such a way that they enhance the image of the University. Posters and notices will not be stamped for display if they do not meet these standards and will be returned for reworking.
- e) Posters are only valid until the day of the event they are advertising and should be removed the following day. Posters, which provide information or are not tied to a specific event, have a maximum validity of 30 days. The following information should routinely appear on a poster that is to be displayed (it could be in small type at the bottom of the poster) name of the group, division or person under whose auspices the poster is to be displayed and the expiry date. Posters without this information will not be stamped.

4. The Distribution of Publications by/from External Groups

External groups that would like to distribute student-related media publications or broadcast information at the University (which are not advertisements) must obtain written permission from the Dean of Students and must agree to abide by the University's Code of Media Ethics (Annexure A). Similarly, if students wish to disseminate media publications or broadcast information that is sourced from external groups then prior permission from the Dean of Students is necessary.

External groups that would like to distribute staff-related media publications or broadcast information at the University (which are not advertisements) must obtain written permission from the Deputy Registrar (Academic Administration) and must agree to abide by the University's Code of Media Ethics (Annexure A). Similarly, if staff wish to disseminate media publications or broadcast information at the request of an external group and where such media is either not directly related to academic activities or intended for commercial gain, prior permission from the Deputy Registrar (Academic Administration) must be obtained.

Written permission from the Dean of Students or the Deputy Registrar (Academic Administration) is purely an administrative step. Permission may be refused if the applicant refuses to abide by the University's Code of Media Ethics or the material does not include the name and contact details of the publisher. If a request by an external or internal group to distribute media publications or broadcast information at the University is declined by the Dean of Students or the Deputy Registrar (Academic Administration) then an appeal can be made by the applicant to the Media Board.

Only under exceptional circumstances will advertisements of external, commercial products or services be approved. Advertisements of external, commercial products or services will be strongly regulated and may be incorporated into sponsorship or other legal agreements with the University, as is the case with sponsorship agreements entered into by the Dean of Student Affairs and corporate sponsors during the orientation week.

5. Disclaimers

While all publications and broadcasts may not explicitly state so, it will be assumed that the views and opinions expressed in any publication or broadcast associated with the University will not "purport to be those of the (management), Council or Students' Representative Council of the University" (SRC Media By-laws, 1987).

6. Complaints Procedures

A complaint can be laid if the University's Code of Media Ethics has been breached. The written complaint must be sent to the Dean of Students whose responsibility it is to screen the complaint and decide whether to accept or reject the complaint. If there is a conflict of interest in the Dean of Students reviewing the complaint then it must be sent to the Office of the Deputy Registrar (Academic Administration).

If the Dean of Students or Deputy Registrar (Academic Administration) decides that complaint warrants further attention, it will be referred to the Media Board. If the Media Board finds that the University's Code of Media Ethics has in fact been breached then it may direct that an apology be published. Where sanctions are necessary, the Media Board will work closely with the Legal Office or the Industrial Relations Office to ensure that the correct disciplinary procedures are followed. In exceptional cases, the Media Board may invite external media or broadcasting experts to serve on its disciplinary or appeal committee; or it may constitute a separate group of external media or broadcasting experts to assist as necessary.

If the Media Board finds that the complaint does not constitute a breach of the University's Code of Media Ethics, the complainant may appeal to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or the Vice-Chancellor. If the complaint is unsuccessful at the latter stage then an appeal can be lodged with the Council of the University.

7. Members of the Media Policy and Regulations Working Group

Head: Student Development and Leadership Unit
Head: Communications
President: Students' Representative Council
Representative: SRC Media
Deputy Registrar: Academic Administration (Chair)
Representative: University Legal Office
In attendance: Media Working Group Coordinator

References Consulted:

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, No. 108 of 1996
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Students' Representative Council – Media By-laws (C87/265), 1987
The South African Press Code (2007)
The Code of Conduct for the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (2007)
Constitution of the Students' Representative Council, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (2007)

CODE OF MEDIA ETHICS¹

PREAMBLE

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right of the press and other media. Specifically excluded from constitutional protection is propaganda for war; incitement of imminent violence and advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

The right of the press and other media is derived from the rights of individuals to freely express themselves and to freely receive and disseminate information and opinions. These are precious, hard-won rights. Freedom of expression lies at the foundation of a democratic South Africa and is one of the basic pre-requisites for this country's progress and the development in liberty of every person. Freedom of expression is a condition indispensable to the attainment of all other freedoms.

In recognition of the close connection between academic freedom and media freedom, the University of the Witwatersrand embraces these principles, and resolves to maintain an environment in which campus media can contribute effectively to the building of an intellectually vibrant university community. While recognizing that the University community is subject to all relevant national laws and provisions, the university adopts this Code to additionally guide campus media.

1) APPLICATION

1.1 This Code shall apply to all material produced by staff and students for members of the University community, whether in print, by way of radio or television broadcast or on the Internet. External bodies wanting to distribute material at Wits will be required to accept the terms of the Code. The names and contact details of producers of material (called 'publishers' in this Code) must appear on the material as they will be held responsible for any violation of the Code.

2) INTERPRETATION

2.1 In the interpretation and application of this Code, regard shall always be towards the substance and spirit of the Code rather than a technical or literal understanding of its provisions; as well as the principles contained in the preamble, which are the basis of every guideline and principle in this Code.

2.2 The guidelines and principles contained in this Code may be deviated from only where justified by an overriding public interest; and only to the extent necessary to fulfil the public interest.

2.2 (a) The public interest includes, but is not limited to –

- detecting or exposing crime or serious misdemeanor;
- detecting or exposing serious anti-social conduct;
- protecting public health and safety;
- preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action of an individual or organisation;
- detecting or exposing hypocrisy, falsehoods, double standards or corrupt behaviour on the part of public figures or institutions and in public institutions.

3) TRUTH AND ACCURACY

3.1 Information must be reported accurately and truthfully. Publishers and journalists are therefore required to guard against inaccuracies, carelessness, bias or distortion through emphasis, omission or technological manipulation. Where accuracy is uncertain, facts must be verified. Where this is not

¹ This document is based on the Code of Conduct for the South African Press and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, as well as contributions from students and staff members at the University.

possible or is impracticable, this must be mentioned in the report. Where a report is based on supposition, opinion, allegation or rumour, this should be made clear.

3.2 Any errors or inaccuracies must be acknowledged and corrected as promptly and prominently as the circumstances require. Where justified and practicable, apologies must be made to persons unjustifiably criticised or misquoted and such persons should be afforded the right of reply. Errors or inaccuracies must not be concealed.

3.3 Images shall not misrepresent or mislead, nor be manipulated in order to do so.

4) BALANCE, FAIRNESS AND SOURCES

4.1 The views of the subject of critical reporting must be sought before publication. This does not apply where justified by the circumstances, for example where there are reasonable grounds for believing this will result in intimidation of persons, the destruction of evidence or the prevention of publication.

4.2 Information must be obtained by straightforward, honest and fair means. This includes explaining the purpose of their approach when seeking information. This requirement may only be breached in cases of strong public interest, when no other method will secure the required information, and then only to the degree necessary.

4.3 Any undertaking to protect a source's identity shall be upheld, regardless of any threats or inducements.

4.4 Special care shall be taken when interviewing or reporting on vulnerable members of society, including children, disabled people and victims of sexual and other crimes.

4.5 Plagiarism is unacceptable, and care should be taken to ensure the source of information and material is clearly indicated.

5) IMPARTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS, GIFTS, PAYMENT FOR INFORMATION

5.1 Information shall be presented in an impartial and balanced manner, having regard to context and importance. Journalists shall therefore avoid practices likely to conflict with their ability to report and present news fairly, accurately and in an unbiased manner. In particular, journalists should not cover an event or issue in which they have a personal, financial, family or any other kind of interest. An unavoidable conflict of interest must be disclosed to readers.

5.2 There must be no payment for information. No deals should be cut with sources to present information in a certain way in exchange for a benefit.

6) OPINION AND COMMENT

6.1 Publishers are justified in strongly advocating their own views on controversial topics, as long as comment and criticism are made fairly and honestly, without any malicious or dishonest motive, and must take account of all available facts.

6.2 Fact, opinion and comment must be clearly distinguishable.

7) HEADLINES

7.1 Headlines and captions shall accurately reflect the contents of the report or image in question.

8) PRIVACY

8.1 Publishers must exercise particular care and consideration in matters involving the private lives and private concerns of individuals, bearing in mind that the right to privacy may be overridden by a legitimate public interest.

9) LANGUAGE AND SENSITIVE ISSUES

9.1 The University is a tolerant environment. However, publishers should display due discretion, and take the sensitivities of the audience into account when contemplating the use of material that contains

- Obscene language;
- Blasphemy;
- The depiction of nudity and sex; or
- The depiction of violence

9.2 Such material can only be used if there is sufficient public interest - gratuitous usage is unacceptable.

9.3 Child pornography may never be published or broadcast.

9.4 Where appropriate, publishers should make use of audience advisories (in broadcast), or placement of material (further inside a newspaper, e.g.) to mitigate offence.

9.5 Accidents and other disasters should be covered accurately, sensitively and without sensationalism or causing further distress. Those grieving or in distress should not be pressurised into giving interviews.

9.6 Suicide must be reported sensitively.

9.7 Survivors of rape and other sexual crimes, including incest, underage intercourse, child abuse and indecent assault must not be identified without their informed consent.

9.8 The names of those who have been killed, seriously injured or are missing should be withheld until their next-of-kin have been informed. There may be exceptions for prominent public figures.

10) HATE SPEECH AND DISCRIMINATION

10.1 Publishers are reminded of the constitutional provisions on hate speech. Even where this extreme form of speech is not in question, publishers should be careful in their handling of language or depiction that could be seen as discriminatory. They should only refer to people in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, colour, religion, sexual orientation, disability, belief, culture, HIV status or age where relevant to the report, where necessary to report fairly and truthfully, and where such references are not denigratory. Stereotypes and stigmatization should be avoided.

Annexure B

DEPARTMENTS/UNITS AUTHORIZED TO GRANT POSTER APPROVAL

(including corresponding subject matter and the maximum number of posters permitted to be stamped by that entity)

MAIN CAMPUS		
Subject matter of poster/notice	Authorized Entity	Maximum No. of Posters
SRC, clubs, societies, etc ²	Students' Representative Council (SRC) - Matrix	100
Textbooks for sale, etc	Student Development and Leadership Unit (SDLU) - Matrix	100
Students' Sports Clubs	Sports Administration (Reception)	100
Staff General Notices	Human Resources Office (SH9026)	50
Trade Unions/Staff Associations	University Industrial Relations Director (SH9021)	50
Accommodation offered	Office of Residence Life (SH045) or WEC (Room 10, Highfield House)	20
Employment offered	Careers and Counselling Development Unit (West Campus)	100
Maintenance or building related Office of Manager	PIMD (West Campus)	30
University Research Seminars	Research Office Senate House 10 th Floor (10001) or appropriate research entity	50
Academic/Non-Academic or Research Activities in the Faculties	Relevant Head of School, Department, Discipline, Centre or Entity	50
General Events	Marketing and Communication	30
MEDICAL SCHOOL		
Student notices	Medical Students' Council & must be approved by the Assistant Dean (Student Affairs) MS4th level	50
Staff notices	Administrative Officer & must be approved by the Assistant Dean (Student Affairs) MS4th level	30
WITS EDUCATION CAMPUS		
Student notices	Deputy Faculty Registrar (Admin Bldg)	50
Staff notices	Office of the Head of School (Admin Bldg)	30
WITS MANAGEMENT CAMPUS		
Student notices	Office of Deputy Faculty Registrar	50
Staff notices	Office of the Head of School	30

² Where a potential breach of the Code of Media Ethics could exist the SRC will confer with the SDLU before approving a poster.

