

Media Engagement Procedure

1 Purpose

To outline the requirements for University Members and Students in dealing with interactions with the Media as provided in the Media Engagement Policy.

2 Scope

This procedure applies when a University Member or Student:

- is authorised to represent the University in the Media for University business purposes; and/or
- makes reference to the University when interacting with the Media in a personal capacity.

Exclusions:

This procedure does not apply to personal interaction with:

- the Media, where a University Member or Student makes no reference to University related issues
- internal University publications.

3 Procedure Overview

This procedure outlines the processes to be followed when interacting with the Media.

4 Procedures

4.1 Media contact

The Director (Media and Strategic Communications) will be notified of University Members or Students authorised by the Vice-Chancellor to comment on University management issues in advance of comment being made.

Authorised University Members or Students must attend appropriate Media training as arranged by the Director (Media and Strategic Communications).

4.2 Categories of Media comment

Media comment will generally fall into three categories:

- University comment
- Academic and expert comment
- Private individual comment.

4.2.1 University comment

A University Member or Student may make comment as an authorised University representative on the general state of the University, including its strategies, policies, offerings, and other institutional matters.

The purpose and intent of this category of comment is to ensure that accurate and consistent information is provided to the Media on matters relating to the management of the University.

Examples of these matters include but are not limited to:

- University policies and higher education policies as they relate to the University;
- budget issues;
- security and emergency issues;
- work health and safety issues;
- news about Enrolments;
- appropriate Student-related issues;
- capital works;
- academic and teaching developments or innovations;
- research issues;
- cultural or environmental issues;
- organisational change;

- industrial relations matters; or
- the securing of major grants or sponsorships.

No University Member or Student is permitted to make comment on behalf of the University without approval from the Vice-Chancellor. Comments may be inappropriately taken as representing the University's view or may bind the University in some circumstances.

Any University comment must not endorse, either directly or indirectly, any product or political campaign or candidate.

Any University comment must not directly endorse any commercial arrangements/sponsorships.

Any Media inquiry or request for University comment relating to the University's policies, procedures or institutional activities is to be directed in the first instance to the Director (Media and Strategic Communications). The Director (Media and Strategic Communications) will subsequently consult with the Vice-Chancellor and provide advice, as required, to the spokesperson authorised by the Vice-Chancellor to respond to the inquiry.

4.2.1.1 Official University spokespersons

The Vice-Chancellor is the official spokesperson of the University. This role may be delegated to an appropriate University Member or Student by the Vice-Chancellor, depending on the particular issue.

4.2.1.2 Media release approval

All Media releases are to be approved by the Director (Media and Strategic Communications), or authorised representative, unless otherwise authorised by the Vice-Chancellor. This is to ensure that:

- the content of the Media release is written in a professional and consistent style and tone;
- information is conveyed in an appropriate manner;
- the Media and Strategic Communications Office is aware of all editorials that are released and can arrange appropriate on-site spokespersons; and
- the Media and Strategic Communications Office can consider the timing of Media releases in the broader context of the University's strategic objectives.

Media releases may be distributed by University Members or Students to personal Media contacts, but only after release has been approved by the Director (Media and Strategic

Communications) or authorised representative.

4.2.2 Academic and expert comment

A University Member or Student may identify as a member of the University community and make academic and expert comment in an area of expertise and responsibility when:

- participating in public debates
- expressing opinions about issues and ideas related to discipline/specialist areas or higher education issues more generally
- initiating and responding to any Media issues that may arise within an area of expertise.

University Members and Students must not purport to represent or speak on behalf of the University community unless authorised to do so by the Vice-Chancellor and the Director (Media and Strategic Communications).

University Members or Students may be approached by the Media and Strategic Communications Office or the Media directly, seeking comment on:

- an area which falls within their professional expertise;
- an area pertaining to higher education; or
- an issue of public interest.

Where comments are offered in the Media by academic or professional Employees it is expected that such comment will normally lay within their field of expertise.

Subject to applicable laws and University policies, members of the University community are free to contribute to public debate. The University is committed to maintaining intellectual freedom and enquiry, and in this regard, Employees are free to speak to the Media, or in any other forum, in their capacity as academic or professional Employees.

For any University Member or Student making a comment identifiable as a University Employee or Student, it is important to consider how comments will reflect on the reputation of peers and the University. Authorised University Members or Students must therefore contact the Director (Media and Strategic Communications) and consult with their relevant peers, as appropriate, before commenting to the Media, or as soon as practicable when direct approaches by the Media have been made.

While University Members or Students are free to speak, they may wish to avoid comment. The freedom to speak does not mean a University Member or Student is required to speak.

The right to speak is subject to the law, including the laws of defamation and discrimination, laws regulating harassment, vilification and obscene speech and the provisions of the *Information Privacy Act 2009*, the *Corporations Act 2001* and other legislation as provided in Section 7 of this procedure.

Any academic or expert comment must not endorse either directly or indirectly any political campaign or candidate, although comment on political or government policy within the area of expertise of the University Member or Student is acceptable. In those instances where a University Member or Student is running for public office, comment may be appropriate to their role at the University, provided that the involvement does not conflict with this role/ duties at the University.

4.2.3 Private individual comment

The right to freedom of opinion is the right to hold opinions without interference, and cannot be subject to any exception or restriction. The right to freedom of expression extends to any medium, including written and oral communications, the Media, public protest, broadcasting, artistic works and commercial advertising. The right is not absolute. It carries with it special responsibilities, and may be restricted on several grounds. For example, restrictions could relate to filtering access to certain internet sites, the provocation of violence or the classification of artistic material.

A University Member or Student may make private individual comment and freely express opinion in a private capacity if it is consistent with the principles of the University's Code of Conduct Policy, particularly Section 4.2 in relation to acting with integrity and impartiality when dealing with Employees, Students, external organisations and members of the community, and the Student General Conduct Policy. This includes comment as provided at Section 4.2.1.1 (above).

Public comment by University Members or Students in their capacity as private individuals is permitted provided that any such comment makes it clear that the view expressed is their own and not necessarily the view of the University. When commenting in this capacity University Members and/or Students must not identify themselves in any way as representative of the University.

It is not the intention of this procedure to restrict such rights of any University Member or Student.

It is not the intention of this procedure to restrict Media usage by any University Member or Student when used in a private manner, unless the University Member or Student is making reference to the University, its people or services, in which case the provisions of this policy apply.

4.3 Media and information releases

The Media and Strategic Communications Office is primarily responsible for drafting, editing and distributing Media releases on behalf of the University. University Members or Students may,

however, also supply draft releases to the office for final editing and distribution.

While the author of the draft release is responsible for the accuracy of the content, the Media and Strategic Communications Office will edit this material to improve its news value, readability or reader comprehension. All edited releases will be returned to the author for final endorsement before distribution.

Approval of Media releases is as provided in Section 4.2.1.2 of this procedure.

4.4 Dealing with the Media

The outcome of any Media engagement (with the exception of advertising) is a process that is controlled by the Media and not by the University or any of its members. Any University Member or Student dealing directly or indirectly with the Media, Media agencies and platforms must be aware of how the University is perceived and represented.

All comments made to the Media will be considered as 'on the record', regardless of any commitment given by a member of the Media that a comment is 'off the record'.

Media enquiries will be responded to as soon as practicable, being respectful of Media deadlines and responsive to requests from the Media, without breaching the University's policies and procedures or compromising the University's reputation, image or brand.

4.5 Responsibilities

To ensure the University is represented consistently and cohesively, the Media and Strategic Communications Office will coordinate all University engagement with the Media for the purposes of official University comment.

Where there is not a clear contact person on a particular matter, an authorised spokesperson will be determined by the Director (Media and Strategic Communications), in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor or nominee.

University Members or Students must advise the Director (Media and Strategic Communications) of likely or possible University announcements, on a confidential basis if necessary. This allows for sufficient planning for the University to either maximise the potential for positive coverage of important or strategic developments or minimise any potential negative impact.

University Members or Students must also provide advance notice to the Director (Media and Strategic Communications) of any issues which are likely to negatively impact the University's image and reputation.

4.6 Media issues

All dealings with any member of the Media, Media agencies and platforms must be conducted

with courtesy. Should a University Member or Student have a concern or grievance against any section of the Media in their capacity as a member of the University community, they must inform the Director (Media and Strategic Communications), not the Media.

The Director (Media and Strategic Communications) will decide what, if any, action will be taken. In making this decision, the Director (Media and Strategic Communications) will, dependent upon the nature of the complaint and the parties involved, liaise with other relevant sections of the University. The nature of action taken will be decided on a case by case basis and according to the severity of the case.

4.7 Crisis communication

Should an event occur, or be likely to occur, which may have a significant detrimental impact upon the reputation of the University (such as serious assault, Student demonstration, building collapse, financial situations, or any occasion on which the emergency services are called onto a campus of the University), interaction with the Media will be as provided in the Crisis Communications Plan and the Crisis Management Plan (under development).

4.8 Breaches of this procedure

To engage with the Media in any activity or comment which is malicious or deliberately damaging to the University, or which represents a personal viewpoint as a viewpoint held by the University will be considered a breach of this policy and may also be deemed a breach of the Code of Conduct Policy or the Student General Conduct Policy.

University Members other than Employees and Students who do not comply with this policy may have their association and/or Enrolment with the University terminated, or have their right of access to University services, facilities or infrastructure revoked.

Relevant breaches may also have consequences for University Members and Students under criminal or civil jurisdictions.

5 References

Nil.

6 Schedules

This procedure must be read in conjunction with its subordinate schedules as provided in the table below.

7 Procedure Information

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Accountable Officer	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement)
Responsible Officer	Director (Media and Strategic Communications)
Policy Type	University Procedure
Policy Suite	Media Engagement Policy
Subordinate Schedules	
Approved Date	23/8/2019
Effective Date	23/8/2019
Review Date	15/1/2029
Relevant Legislation	Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 Corporations Act 2001 Corporations (Queensland) Act 1990 Defamation Act 2005 Evidence Act 1977 Health Act 1937 Human Rights Act 2019 Information Privacy Act 2009 Integrity Act 2009 Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010 (Qld) Public Health Act 2005 Right to Information Act 2009
Policy Exceptions	Policy Exceptions Register
Related Policies	Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy Acceptable use of ICT Resources Policy Business Continuity Policy Code of Conduct Policy

	<p>Conflict of Interest Policy (under development)</p> <p>Enterprise Risk Management Policy</p> <p>Handling Personal Student Information Policy and Procedure</p> <p>Intellectual Property Policy</p> <p>Privacy Policy</p> <p>Public Interest Disclosure Policy</p> <p>Research Code of Conduct Policy</p> <p>Right to Information Policy</p> <p>Student General Conduct Policy</p>
Related Procedures	<p>Commercialisation of Intellectual Property Procedure</p> <p>Disciplinary Action for Misconduct or Serious Misconduct Procedure</p> <p>Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Complaints against Employees Procedure</p> <p>Employee Conflict of Interest Procedure</p> <p>Intellectual Property Procedure</p> <p>Prevention of Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Procedure</p> <p>Right to Information Procedure</p>
Related forms, publications and websites	<p>Crisis Communications Plan (under development)</p> <p>Crisis Management Plan (under development)</p> <p>Right to freedom of opinion and expression guidance sheet</p>
Definitions	<p>Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary</p> <p>Employee</p> <p>A person employed by the University and whose conditions of employment are covered by the Enterprise Agreement and includes persons employed on a continuing, fixed term or casual basis. Employees also include senior Employees whose conditions of employment are covered by a written agreement or contract with the University.</p>

[Enrolment](#)

The process of admitting Students to one or more Courses for the current Academic Year.

[Media](#)

All print, radio, television and electronic Media including the internet and allied distribution channels. Includes social Media which are works of user-created video, audio, text or multimedia that are published and shared in a social environment, such as a blog, podcast, forum, wiki, or video hosting site. More broadly, social Media refers to any online technology that enables people to publish, converse and share content online.

[Student](#)

A person who is enrolled in a UniSQ Upskill Course or who is admitted to an Award Program or Non-Award Program offered by the University and is: currently enrolled in one or more Courses or study units; or not currently enrolled but is on an approved Leave of Absence or whose admission has not been cancelled.

[University](#)

The term 'University' or 'UniSQ' means the University of Southern Queensland.

[University Members](#)

Persons who include: Employees of the University whose conditions of employment are covered by the UniSQ Enterprise Agreement whether full time or fractional, continuing, fixed-term or casual, including senior Employees whose conditions of employment are covered by a written agreement or contract with the University; members of the University Council and University Committees; visiting, honorary and adjunct appointees; volunteers who contribute to University activities or who act on behalf of the University; and individuals who are granted access to University facilities or who are engaged in providing services to the University, such as contractors or consultants, where applicable.

[Vice-Chancellor](#)

The person bearing the title of Vice-Chancellor and President, or as otherwise defined in the University of Southern Queensland Act 1998, including a person acting in that position.

	Definitions that relate to this procedure only
Keywords	Media, social Media, public relations, press release, corporate information, communication standard, communications standard
Record No	15/286PL