



MEDIA POLICY 2018

On the recommendation of the Senate, the Council of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, as the governing authority of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, by resolution adopts the following policy.

Dated: 20.09.2018

Last amended: Not applicable

Signature: Signed

Position: Vice Chancellor, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

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1 Name of policy

This is the Media Policy 2018

2 Commencement

This policy commences on 01.10.2018

3 Policy is binding

Except to the extent that a contrary intention is expressed, this policy binds the University, staff, students and affiliates.

4 Overview

The Wayamba University of Sri Lanka often attracts considerable interest from media. Media attention has the potential to enhance, as well as detract from, the overall reputation of the University. It is important, therefore, to manage the University's engagement with the media positively, constructively and professionally. The overall responsibility for the University's media relations rests with the Communication Team appointed by the Vice Chancellor.

Given the size and complexity of the University and its operations, it is important for staff to share an understanding of, and commitment to, the systems and processes which have been developed for the positive management of media relations for the University.

The Media Policy sets out the principles which underpin the University's approach to media relations, and the procedures for coordinating and managing media relations. This document outlines the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka (WUSL)'s communication policy in a range of specific areas: internally, communication with stakeholders, and with the media. It outlines the approach taken with communications to a variety of audiences, through a variety of channels and advises staff on the WUSL's communications approach, requirements and protocols.

5 Application

The Policy recognizes that staff may have occasion to interact with the media in three primary capacities:

- as a private individual, or
- as an academic or professional expert, or
- as an official spokesperson of the University.

All of these roles, and the responsibilities associated with them, are addressed in the Policy. This policy applies to all staff and to all types of media (including, press, radio, television, social media etc).



6 Policy Principles

- (1) The WUSL is a public institution that is accountable for its actions.
- (2) The University responds promptly to media enquiries and is always truthful when dealing with the media.
- (3) The University is proactive in developing a wide media coverage allowing it to communicate with the community it serves, build positive image, enhance its reputation and support for its core objectives.
- (4) The University responds quickly to avoid potential damage to the University caused by adverse or incorrect media coverage.
- (5) The University has an obligation to protect itself and its staff and students from unfair intrusion by the media.

7 Communication and Engagement

- (1) A team is established for WUSL's communication and engagement across a range of communication disciplines. The breadth of its responsibilities means that while it provides quality advice and strategic assistance, communications cannot always be solely responsible for the delivery of communications activities and products. It requires the assistance of staff across the University to help identify opportunities in a timely manner, in order to leverage them successfully. The same applies to timely notification of issues that may affect the University's reputation. These notifications can be made to the communications team for further guidance.
- (2) The Communication Team is comprised of the following members.
 - Director, External Affairs
 - Director(s) of ICTC
 - Representative from each academic Faculty/Unit/Division
 - Representative of the Registrar

8 General Guidelines

- (1) University letterhead and logo
Staff should exercise caution when using the University's letterhead and logo. If writing or communicating in the capacity of an individual rather than on behalf of the University, a University letterhead or logo must not be used. If in doubt, check with guidelines provided by the Communications Team.
- (2) Email
All staff must display appropriate email etiquette and best practice when writing emails. This is important to prevent privacy breaches or reputational issues for the University.
- (3) Social Media
Staff should exercise caution when using social media. When acting in his or her individual capacity rather than on behalf of the University, a member of staff must state that his or her 'opinions are my own' in content introductions or online profiles. Staff wanting to set up online profiles on behalf of the University must first contact the communications team for advice and permission.
- (4) WUSL's approach is to work with stakeholders as often as possible for mutual benefit. This includes regular meetings with key partners, and communications to a broad range of stakeholders. The University communicates with



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neighbouring residents/businesses as necessary to update them on matters of mutual interest, and sends a stakeholder update newsletter to the groups mentioned above.

(5) Communicating with the Media

- (i) WUSL aims to help staff manage and maximise the opportunities of external engagement with the media, while also helping manage the risk to themselves, and to the University.
- (ii) Staff are encouraged to work with communication team to promote their teaching and research, and University-related achievements. Student societies may also contact communication team for additional assistance should communications or media advice is desired.
- (iii) A news release and media contact service is available, as are media clips, broadcast recording and transcript services. In-house media and communications training are available to University staff and student societies on request.
- (iv) Director, External Affairs monitors, analyses, and reports on media coverage of the University to the senate.

(6) Speaking Publicly as an 'Expert'

- (i) Academic staff are encouraged to speak to the media in their area of expertise, consistent with the role of a University as critic and conscience of society. The views of academic staff expressed in this capacity do not necessarily represent the views of the University. They should not be construed as official comment.
- (ii) Academic staff must contact the Director, External Affairs following media interviews to ensure a greater collection of media clips and to monitor media response to these interviews.

9 Official University Comment

- (1) Official University comment is the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor, the Senate or their authorised representative. Director, External Affairs is authorised to provide comment on the University's behalf when appropriate.
- (2) Where a media enquiry concerns a particular Faculty, Department, Unit or Division, it should be referred to the relevant Heads of such Units who may speak if they have delegated authority, or refer it to the relevant Senate member for comment.
- (3) If any members of staff are approached on a matter that may be sensitive or on an issue that could be considered to be contentious and they are unable to contact the Head of Divisions or Units, they should immediately contact the Director, External Affairs or a member of the communications team who can either advise them or refer the matter to the appropriate authority.
- (4) Staff not authorised to talk to the media should not purport to represent the University in media, publications, or correspondence (including email). Letters and articles in newspapers should only make reference to the writer's position within the University when the content of the letter/article is within the writer's area of expertise or responsibility.



10 Media Enquiries

- (1) When the media request information from WUSL, the Director, External Affairs will manage the response. Any academic staff who are contacted directly by the media for comment should inform the Director, External Affairs.
- (2) Urgent assistance from other parts of the University is often needed in order to respond to media enquiries. Teams and academic staff are asked to respond with urgency to requests for such assistance. This will help reflect well on the University, the College and the Department/Unit concerned.
- (3) Staff Members
 - If approached by the media for comment on a departmental matter, please refer the enquiry immediately to your HOD and to the Director, External Affairs. Note the reporter's name, organisation, contact details, what they wish to talk about, and what (if any) deadline they may have.
 - Be especially aware of 'cold calls'. Do not offer information but take the reporter's details as above and pass them on to the Director, External Affairs or a member of the communications team.
 - If approached by the media for comment on University-wide matters, please refer the enquiry to the External affairs coordinator or a member of the communications team.
 - News releases should be referred to communications team for review, a decision on when and how to release, and for consideration for posting on the University website and social media channels.
- (4) Heads of Departments/Units/Divisions
 - Ensure your staff are aware of this policy.
 - If the enquiry relates to a matter of sensitivity, contact the External affairs coordinator or a member of the communications team for advice.
 - Please contact the External affairs coordinator or a member of the communications team at any time for advice on media relations and other communication issues.

11 News Releases

- (1) All University news releases must be referred to communications team for review prior to release, and for consideration for posting on the 'University News' section of the University website. Communications are able to assist in the drafting and distribution of news releases if they fit the policy criteria and are in the University's overall best interests.
- (2) The involvement of academics from other institutions does not void the opportunity for a proactive press release, but these need to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- (3) Proactive media releases will be assessed for release against the following criteria:
 - Does the release tell a good University story?
 - Can it be told simply, in a way a 12-year-old would understand?
 - Is it timely, useful and relevant to the media? – does it have 'newsworthiness'?
 - Will it help benefit the Sri Lankan public?
 - Will the media release potentially assist in helping the University's goal of increased student recruitment?



An opportunity will not always result in a press statement, but media can be advised that the opportunity exists.

(4) Distribution of News Releases

News releases may be distributed to several media or to a tailored list, determined on a case-by-case basis. Some media opportunities may be offered to solitary media organisations, also on a case-by-case basis, but without damaging the University's overall positive relationship with media due to perceived favouritism.

From time to time, holding statements for specific issues may be prepared for release if comment is likely to be sought from the University. These responses may be released proactively or reactively – to solitary media organisations or several.

12 Academic Freedom and Media Interaction

The University values freedom of expression and acknowledges the right of staff and students to voice honestly held and well-considered opinions. Some academic staff choose to engage directly with the media. Others do not. Whether to engage with the media or not is always a personal choice.

There is an expectation that academic staff engaging with the media directly

- will only comment in their area of expertise;
- do not purport to represent the views of the University;
- will ensure that the University is appropriately acknowledged; and
- will advise the Communications team of each engagement (including when and where it will occur). This allows better measurement of the University's media activities.

13 Issues Management

From time-to-time, issues can arise that require a response to be coordinated from across the University (An example may be a serious issue potentially impacting on staff or student health and wellbeing.) In these cases, communications team will manage and respond to the issue including the communications for it. This often involves the appointment of a University spokesperson for that issue.

Communications will lead the communications component, which will include informing University staff and students about the situation, what is being done to resolve it, and when it is resolved.

A key success factor in such instances is quick notification to Communications that a serious issue exists, with as many details as possible. This allows the appropriate communications actions to proceed.

Timely notification is **vital**.

This notification should be made through the External affairs coordinator or a member of the communications team.



Notes

Media Policy 2018

Date adopted: 20.09.2018

Date commenced: 01.10.2018

Administrator: Vice Chancellor / Communication Committee

Review date: 30.09.2023

Rescinded documents: Not applicable

Related documents:

AMENDMENT HISTORY

Provision	Amendment	Commencing
	Not applicable	