

Loughborough Students' Union Media Editorial Guidelines



VERSION 1.2
Effective June 2020

1. EDITORIAL PURPOSE

- 1.1. LSU Media's output exists to inform and entertain the members of Loughborough Students' Union.
- 1.2. Critical journalism is encouraged within LSU Media so that students can be given access to editorially independent, non-pacified facts and opinions that help them develop their understanding of the factors that affect their student experience.
- 1.3. If a piece of LSU Media output brings an individual or organisation into disrepute in any way, it must automatically be escalated to at least the next level up in the Editorial Chain of Command.
 - 1.3.1. LSU Media Members should be aware of the legal implications, ramifications and safeguards that come with creating the content they produce for the Students' Union.
 - 1.3.2. LSU Media members should also be aware of the IPSO Editor's Code of Practice and the NUJ Code of Conduct (if a member of the NUJ), and abide by these guidelines in their work.
- 1.4. Any individual who feels they have been portrayed negatively in LSU Media content has the right to request escalation above the original creator.
 - 1.4.1. An editorial decision made from this escalation must still be made according to the policies within this document. Action should not be taken simply because an individual has complained, however complaints must be taken seriously.
 - 1.4.2. Care must be taken regarding defamation and slander laws in this case.

CRITICISM

Critical journalism is a core part of student publications. Criticism does not have to be opinionated, but if it is, Clause 6 should be referred to.

IPSO & NUJ

The IPSO Editor's Code of Practice and NUJ Code of Conduct are new additions for 2020, and help ensure the quality of our journalistic work.

NUJ Membership is recommended for all members who wish to conduct journalistic work, and will protect them against attempts to prevent publishing stories and investigations. In return, they must abide by their Code of Conduct.

2. EDITORIAL CHAIN OF COMMAND

- 2.1. The Editorial Chain of Command is to be used when there is sufficient doubt regarding compliance with the Editorial Guidelines and ensures editorial responsibility

falls correctly.

2.1.1. If a member is unsure on a piece of output and have consulted the Editorial Guidelines, they are advised to escalate any issues to their direct superior.

2.1.2. The Media Chair has editorial control over LSU Media's output, which is delegated to the LSU Media Section Heads.

2.2. Editorial decisions can be made democratically. It is at the discretion of the relevant section head to decide if a committee/group consensus is necessary for a decision.

2.2.1. A group consensus is recommended when content is particularly divisive, or a precedent is likely to be set based on the outcome.

2.2.2. The person who made the decision to allow a group consensus is still ultimately responsible for the action that is taken and accountable to the member(s) above them in the editorial chain.

2.3. The Media Chair may choose to liaise with relevant LSU Staff and receive advice regarding particularly contentious pieces of content.

BEST JUDGEMENT

Best judgement should be used by the students producing & editing content. Advice can be sought, but final decisions should lie with students, unless there are legal reasons for the Board of Trustees to intervene.

3. OBTAINING INFORMATION

3.1. For LSU Media to maintain its reputation for fair, balanced, critical journalism, it is important that journalistic integrity is maintained when obtaining information for output.

3.1.1. No information for LSU Media output may be gained by illegitimate access. This includes any activity considered illegal by UK law (such as phone-tapping and hacking), but also includes abuse of access that may have been granted accidentally.

3.1.2. No information for LSU Media output may be gained by breach of formal confidentiality that exists in a committee or group that the journalist is a part of.

3.1.3. No information for LSU Media output may be gained by abuse of personal trust. If a journalist wants to gain information from a personal conversation, it must be made clear to the person disclosing the information that the conversation is on-the-record.

3.2. If a journalist gains information in any of the means outlined above but feels that the information is worthy

PUBLIC INTEREST

Obtaining information through possibly illegitimate means as outlined in 3.2. should continue when abide by the following IPSO guidelines on the public interest:

- Detecting or exposing crime, or the threat of crime, or serious impropriety.
- Protecting public health or safety.
- Protecting the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.

of broadcast, it is recommended that they follow it up by asking questions with a legitimate on-the-record answer.

- 3.3. The only exception to the guidelines regarding obtaining information, is if information gained illegitimately is important enough that a failure to report it would be unfair on the student population. This judgement is at the discretion of a group discussion at the appropriate level (usually the LSU Media Executive Committee).
- 3.4. Individuals disclosing information should always be encouraged to agree to be named as a source. Unnamed sources are sometimes necessary in sensitive output, but they should be avoided wherever possible.

- Disclosing a person or organisation's failure or likely failure to comply with any obligation to which they are subject.
- Disclosing a miscarriage of justice.
- Raising or contributing to a matter of public debate, including serious cases of impropriety, unethical conduct or incompetence concerning the public.
- Disclosing concealment, or likely concealment, of any of the above.

4. IMPARTIALITY

- 4.1. Whilst individual LSU Media members are encouraged to contribute their opinions and comments, the organisation and its subsidiaries must remain neutral.
- 4.2. LSU Media, any of the four sections or any part of the organisation above individual level cannot collectively offer support to any campaign, cause, political party, candidate, team or any other partisan entity.
 - 4.2.1. LSU Media and its constituent bodies may not take a partisan editorial stance.
 - 4.2.2. No journalist may claim that LSU Media or any of its constituent bodies are in support of a partisan entity.
 - 4.2.3. Where possible, those with editorial control should encourage LSU Media Members to contribute with a range of stances so the net stance on a particular topic is impartial.
- 4.3. When contributing as LSU Media Members rather than representatives of external bodies, LSU Media Members must be mindful of the language they use when referring to a group to which they belong.
- 4.4. When contributing opinion-based content, LSU Media Members must disclose any conflict of interest that may see them benefit from conveying that opinion.
 - 4.4.1. If they are a member of a particular group that supports the opinion that is conveyed in the content, it should be made very clear at the beginning of the content.
 - 4.4.2. If they have declared that they are contributing as

a member of an external group, the above does not apply as they are not contributing content as an LSU Media Member.

5. OPINION IN LSU MEDIA CONTENT

- 5.1. The consumer of content made by LSU Media should be made aware if they are consuming an opinion-based piece of content. Where possible, the content creator should try to include alternative points of view.
- 5.2. If opinion is worked into a fact-based piece of output, a clear distinction must be made between the two.
- 5.3. Where an opinion is critical of an individual or individuals, it is vital that they are allowed the right of reply within the output itself.
 - 5.3.1. The individual must be offered a reasonable amount of time to offer a response before the output is released. The LSU Media Member must make a genuine attempt to contact the individual through several methods.
 - 5.3.2. Once output is released, the individual or individuals concerned must still be allowed the right of reply, even if they didn't exercise that right at first. The LSU Media Member must publish any response after the output is released wherever possible.
 - 5.3.3. If the individual or individuals concerned have been contacted but haven't offered a response, this should be stated in the output.

MAKING OPINION CLEAR

Making opinion-based content clear is easy! Make sure to include it in the title of your work, or categorise it as such on the Media website.

OPINION DURING ELECTIONS

Making opinion clear during Elections (whether within LSU or externally) is extremely important to ensure the impartiality of LSU Media. Giving time for a response is good practice.

6. INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

- 6.1. In industry, the use of inappropriate content (IC) is closely regulated in terms of when and where it may appear.
- 6.2. LSU Media's content is almost exclusively aimed at over-16s, meaning that – live TV and radio aside – regulation on IC, in practice, is not to avoid exposure to children. However, it is still an important editorial consideration for producers of content within LSU Media. This is more to do with the image of LSU Media and LSU as a professional and articulate organisation and the respectability that comes with it.
- 6.3. Inappropriate Content is used to describe any content that would be considered may offend or otherwise reflect badly upon the Loughborough Students Union and/or LSU Media.

- 6.3.1. IC includes, but is not limited to: offensive language, nudity, sexual depictions, violence or violent depictions, gore or gory depictions and championing of alcohol and recreational drugs.
- 6.3.2. It is an all-encompassing requirement that all uses of IC that are not hidden by removal/audio/visual obscuring must be approved by escalating the decision to at least the next level up on the Editorial Chain of Command.

6.4. **Inappropriate content in on-demand content**

- 6.4.1. IC may only be approved for on-demand content if it adds a specific and worthwhile contribution to the content.
- 6.4.2. IC may only be used in programs or features with a brand identity that would lead an audience to expect it.
- 6.4.3. Any piece of output containing approved IC may only do so if the audience is made clear that they should expect it when consuming the content. This should be done both alongside the post and at the start of the content itself.
- 6.4.4. In printed content, a warning for what IC to expect must be displayed clearly at the top of the content.

6.5. **Inappropriate content in live content**

- 6.5.1. If unplanned IC is broadcast live, the content producer must make a decision on whether it was clear and obvious enough for the majority of the audience to have noticed it.
 - 6.5.1.1. If the producer decides that the majority of the audience would have noticed the IC, a deliberate and sincere apology to anyone who may have been offended must be made as quickly as possible during the broadcast.
 - 6.5.1.2. If the producer decides that the majority of the audience would not have noticed the IC, they may continue without interruption.
 - 6.5.1.3. However, if there is a complaint from a member of the audience, an apology must be offered.
- 6.5.2. If it becomes clear that any person taking part in a live broadcast is likely to use unplanned IC, that person must be removed from the broadcast at the earliest appropriate time. This decision may be made by the Producer.
- 6.5.3. Appropriate action must be taken if the perpetrator requires discipline.

RELEASING CONTENT

It is good practice to check shows which are notorious for IC (such as Nights programmes) through multiple members of the Committee (or two editors) before release.

IC FROM BROADCAST TEAM

If a member of the broadcast team brings LSU Media into disrepute by creating IC during a live broadcast, they could be referred to the LSU Discipline Committee for an Activities Ban.

REVISION HISTORY

Any changes to the editorial guidelines should be recorded here.

Editorial Guidelines 1.0
March 2016
Bryn Wilkes (Vice President Media)

Editorial Guidelines 1.1
December 2018
Jasmine Jefferies (Media Executive Officer)

Editorial Guidelines 1.2
June 2020
Christopher Leroux (Media Chair)

FIND OUT MORE

Want to find out more about our governance documents?

Feel free to email the Media Chair at media@lsu.co.uk, or come into the office weekdays between 10 and 5 to inquire in person.