

## Policies and Procedures

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### Media Relations Policy

<b>Policy Number:</b>	<b>1.6.4.02</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>Director Marketing &amp; Communications</b>
<b>Policy Editor/ Contact:</b>	<b>Director Marketing &amp; Communications</b>
<b>Approving Authority:</b>	<b>Executive Committee</b>
<b>Date Approved:</b>	<b>21 July 2022</b>
<b>Effective Date:</b>	<b>21 July 2022</b>
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#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 To ensure that the University's response to any media enquiry is well coordinated, professional, and accurate, timely, and clear.
- 1.2 To define the difference between academic staff's responses to the media about their academic areas of specialty and staff's responses to the media regarding matters relating to the University's operations.
- 1.3 To offer advice to staff on how to manage enquiries from the media regarding the University's operations.<sup>1</sup>

#### 2. Objective

To provide guidance on the handling of media matters at the University.

#### 3. Definitions

- 3.1 **Media:** All references to “the Media” in this document should be understood to describe the broad spectrum of Media organisations and representatives including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, online publications, television, blog sites, radio and credible social Media pages.
- 3.2 **Academic Freedom:** Refers to the freedom of academic staff and students to engage in intellectual inquiry, to express their opinions and beliefs, and to contribute to public debate, in relation to their subjects of study and research.

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<sup>1</sup> *Policy for Managing News Media Enquiries*, University of Otago

#### **4. Scope**

This Policy applies to all members of staff across USP member countries (full-time, part-time or temporary) Council Members and students at The University of the South Pacific.

The USP Students Association and the USP Staff union are independent bodies and are not subject to this Policy.

#### **5. Policy**

- | USP staff members have the same rights as any citizen to air their views in public debate, and to use their private resources for such purposes.
- 5.1 As USP staff members, they are encouraged, as part of their academic responsibilities, to engage with the public and participate in open debates in areas which they have academic expertise.
- 5.2 The USP seeks to establish and maintain cordial relations with all sections of the media in its member countries, regionally and internationally.
- 5.3 The USP respects and operates within the laws of its member countries and supports freedom of the press.
- 5.4 The USP has supported and will continue to support the growth and development of the media in the Pacific Islands.
- 5.5 The USP recognises the power of the media in terms of its portrayal of the University and seeks to engage with it professionally and constructively so that its work, achievements, and role and that of its staff, students, and alumni are reflected accurately.
- 5.6 The USP engages proactively with the media to further its institutional aims and because that a robust and flourishing media supports just and equitable societies.
- 5.7 This Policy explains how these principles and values will be reflected in USP's engagement with the media. Its implementation will ensure that USP's policies, activities, and positions are effectively communicated to the Media. This policy will help to ensure that USP's communication with the media is accurately reflected, consistent and clear. In all its dealings with the media, USP seeks to ensure that its image and reputation are upheld.
- 5.8 The Vice-Chancellor and President (VCP) is the USP's primary spokesperson. The VCP addresses the media on major issues that concern the University.
- 5.9 The Director Marketing and Communications may act as spokesperson when the Vice-Chancellor and President is not available unless the VCP delegates this responsibility to a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT).

- 5.10 The USP's Communications Unit is responsible for the writing, approval and distribution of all University media releases, as well as liaising with relevant journalists, and is available to assist with media liaison.
- 5.11 The University engages transparently with the media, providing information on its activities and scholarly analysis of events in its member countries and the region. It welcomes new and emerging modalities and seeks to ensure USP's presence across a wide spectrum of print, broadcast, and online media.
- 5.12 Media enquiries concerning the governance of the University or any other Council matters should in the first instance be referred to the Manager Public Relations and Communications. The Manager Public Relations and Communications will liaise with the Council and Senate Secretariat for appropriate action/response. Only the Chair of Council and/or appointed Council member upon the approval of the Council Chair may speak to the media on behalf of the University Council.
- 5.13 The Chair of Council and or USP Council may request the Division of Marketing and Communications to provide guidance on handling all media queries, organising media conference, sending press releases, interviews and any other media related requests.
- 5.14 Academic freedom is fundamental to the life of the University. The University affirms its right to academic autonomy and its responsibilities in relation to ensuring the rights of academic staff and students to exercise their academic freedom.
- 5.15 Staff members may comment publicly in an academic, official, or private individual role provided it be within the ambits expanded in the Media Relations Guideline.
- 5.16 Staff members who liaise with the Media on matters relating to their area of expertise may use the University's name and address and give the title of their University appointment in order to establish their credentials.
- 5.17 In making written or oral comments which purport to represent the views or authority of the USP, and which might reasonably be expected to become public, staff members have a responsibility to ensure that they hold proper authority to make such public comments, and that such authority has been given to them by a person holding actual authority on behalf of the University.<sup>2</sup>

## **6. Rationale**

- 6.1 This Policy is designed to ensure that the University's (including the institution and its staff) communication with the media is clear and consistent. The application of this Policy will safeguard USP's reputation as a trusted, credible, and reliable source of information. It clarifies the responsibility of the Communications Unit.

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<sup>2</sup> University of Canberra

6.2 Whilst the Communications Unit directs media relations activities, distributes information, and facilitates media requests, other sections and staff can interact with the media concerning their academic specialisms. Clarity on the flow of information is provided in the attached Procedures/Guidelines.

6.3 USP is a large regional organisation, with many campuses and centres and staff who are exposed to different media environments. This Media Relations Policy provides a guide to engaging with the media that is relevant to all staff in all USP member countries and increases the likelihood that all interactions with the media will result in the University's viewpoint being accurately portrayed. This policy sets out the rights and responsibilities of USP staff members.

## **7. Individuals Affected by the Policy**

7.1 This Policy applies to all staff members across USP member countries (full-time, part-time or temporary) and Council Members of The University of the South Pacific.

## **8. Exclusions**

8.1 The independent USP Students Association and the USP Staff union are independent bodies and are not subject to this Policy.

8.2 Individual students are not subject to this Policy but should be mindful that scholarship providers, sponsors, and organisations with which the student may have formal links may have their restrictions or policies on engagement with the media.

8.3 Students must not portray themselves as speaking for the University when engaging as individuals with the media. If they do so, they may be subject to disciplinary action for misrepresentation.

## **9. Responsibilities**

9.1 University staff are free to engage in public debate, and political, professional, interest group and charitable activities, provided such participation does not impede the staff member's University duties.

9.2 Staff members who become aware of issues or potential issues that could lead to adverse commentary about the University or impact the University's reputation negatively must contact the Communications Unit as soon as possible.

9.3 Any issue related to the operation of the University are handled by the Communications Unit with relevant senior staff commenting as appropriate.

9.4 University staff are discouraged from discussing information pertaining to a case that is in litigation.

9.5 The Communications Unit is responsible for ensuring that this Policy is up-to-date, relevant, useful, accessible, and is responsible for the overall implementation of this Policy at the

University. It arranges for periodic reviews of the Policy, in conjunction with, but not limited to, regular reviews of management and administration.

- 9.6 The Director Marketing and Communications is responsible for the oversight of Policy implementation. The final decision on all media relations matters rests with the Vice-Chancellor and President.

## **10. Related Policies and documents**

This Policy shall be read together, but not limited, with the following:

- Academic Freedom cited in the Policy 5.22.01 Code of Professional Conduct for Academic Staff
- [Media Relations Guidelines](#)