Using the media:
A guide for staff

Liz Cass
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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Why work with the media?
3. Dealing with an approach
4. Be media savvy
5. Training
6. Facilities
7. Brand
8. Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom
9. Expected standards of behaviour
10. Incidents and complaints
1. Introduction

The following document aims to offer guidance and direction on staff interaction with the media while employed by the University of Nottingham. Media is an effective tool for raising your profile and can result in offers of collaboration, funding, increased citations, increased student applications and a greater public understanding about your work. It is not without its risks and staff should be mindful of the impact speaking to the media can have on themselves, fellow staff members, students and the University’s reputation. It advocates using media for profile raising, but encourages a considered approach, while outlining the standards of conduct expected from employees at the University.

When using this guidance staff should be aware of wider University policies and procedures including:

- The Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics
- The Information Security Policy
- The Dignity at Nottingham Policy
- The Disciplinary Procedure for Staff
- The Grievance Procedure
- The Social Media Policy for Staff

This guidance should also be read alongside the guide; ‘Why Working with the Media Works’ which offers valuable tips for dealing with a media request. Please also be aware of External Relations’ ‘Filming Guidelines’ which offer advice and assistance with requests for filming and documentary work.

2. Why work with the media?

When you’ve worked with the media for most of your career it can be easy to forget how daunting it can be for some to see their name in print, appear on camera or even speak to a journalist.

In my opinion, and heading up the Press Office I am a little biased, the benefits of stepping out of your comfort zone and engaging with my team, and the media, are exponential.

Working with the media is essential if, as a team, the University is to meet its strategic aims. We need to showcase our vision and how we are meeting it.

We need to show what we are doing to attract the best students, capturing their imaginations and developing their careers.
One of the best, most recent, examples of this is the story of Jeremy the lovelorn garden snail.

The story began with Dr Angus Davison in Life Sciences wanting help to find rare snails with shells that coiled to the left.

The press office stepped in to suggest giving a name to Dr Davison’s lefty snail and putting out a plea via BBC’s Today programme. Suitor snails were found but when they mated with each other, rather than Jeremy, the story went viral. Snail babies and Jeremy’s eventual death provided more opportunities for coverage with the serious science message still being conveyed. In total the stories reached 1.9 billion people.

Dr Davison said: “The story has had a massive impact, at all different levels, from individual to institutional. For instance, Dr Anne Glover, the former Chief Scientist to the EU said: "Wonderful piece from @angus_davison on this morning’s @BBCr4today - honest, engaging and true". That will probably be on my CV for ever.

“One of the interviews was picked up to lead on BBC R4’s ‘Pick of the Week’ - I only found out about this because of tweet from a senior scientist at Sheffield forewarning me.

“Recently I received a thank-you card from the students at Cassius College New York - my research findings had been incorporated into their class teaching.

“Last year several of the PhD applications that I received were certainly as a result of the publicity.

“It is difficult to know for certain whether this media work will lead to increased citations. However, it has certainly led to more page imprints, because of links between the press release and the paper, and by secondary blogs and newspaper articles to the paper.

“The media has also raised the profile of the work in general. Although it has not led to any direct offers of funding (if only), I now have plenty of material to include in the Impact Statement or Knowledge Transfer section that every grant application seems to require.”

People sometimes believe that having their work recognised by their fellow academics is enough.

But put this on a global platform and you’re opening yourself up to more citations, funding sources, a reputation as an expert in your field, collaborations and even more engaged students who get a reminder of the value of their research. Think about what you want to achieve and talk to us if you think we can help.

Every day in the Media Relations Team we have requests from journalists and broadcasters who are looking for academic expertise on a host of topics.

If you watch the news and can see how your research or area of expertise could be used to provide a comment on the issue of the day then we want to hear from you.
If you are unsure how much you want to get involved then please get in touch. It could be that you start with a blog on The Conversation or perhaps using social media.

We can provide the help and guidance you need to meet your own objectives.

3. Responding to an initial approach

Staff at the University may be contacted by members of the media to talk about;

1. the institutional view on a subject or
2. their research/area of expertise

It is essential that all enquiries about our institutional position or response are dealt with by the Press Office in External Relations. Please direct journalists accordingly.

It is also very helpful if you let us know if you get requests to speak about your research or area of expertise.

This enables us to inform senior members of the university, capture coverage of media appearances and to offer support, training and guidance as required.

If you have any concerns please speak to Head of News (Liz Cass liz.cass@nottingham.ac.uk +44 (0) 115 74 84734 m: 07739147695 or the Media Relations Manager assigned to your Faculty

For UNNC or UNMC please liaise with Joan Chen (Joan.Chen@nottingham.edu.cn) or Diana Chee (Diana.Chee@nottingham.edu.my) respectively.

4. Be Media Savvy

Please ensure you have read a copy of ‘Why Working with the Media Works’ before engaging with media.

Each request is different and should be considered on its own merit. A member of the Press Office will be able to discuss this with you and help with any concerns.

If the media ask for an interview don’t be afraid to ask the following questions:

- Purpose of the interview – what is the **overall objective**? And of Nottingham’s part? Will it show the university in a positive light? Is it likely to be offensive or controversial?
• Make sure you know whether the interview is for TV, radio or the print media. Also get the name of the caller, the organisation they work for and their contact details – telephone numbers and email address. Ask who will be asking the questions and what sort of areas they want to cover. You won’t get a precise list of the questions but you have a right to know the context of the interview.

• Find out if the story just about you or if it will form part of a broader story or debate.

• If it is for TV or radio then make sure you know if the interview will be live or recorded. Radio stations often like to interview people in person live in their studios. TV often do interviews on location but on occasions they too like to do interviews live in their news rooms or studios.

• If it is for print they may want to take photographs. If a reporter asks for pictures these will need to be good quality images in their original format – jpeg or tiff. Otherwise they may send their own photographer along.

• If TV want to talk to you make sure you know how much filming they will need to do – even if they ask for an interview be prepared for them to ask for additional footage of you and your team at work. This is important to know in advance as it can be time consuming and difficult to arrange at the last minute. However, it is worth the effort as it can sometimes be the difference between coverage and no coverage at all.

Additional considerations

• If it is for TV do the media require members of staff and academics to be part of the filming? If so do you have willing volunteers? Has head of school/faculty given approval? Have you considered the best location for filming i.e. labs, teaching rooms etc...

• Will there be a wider impact from the interview- regionally, nationally, internationally? Will you need to let partners in the City know about our involvement?

• Does this interview or my research contradict any other roles I hold (in or outside of the university?)

Where will your interview be seen?

You can’t always control this but if there is time it is useful to do some research about the organisation and the programme so you know their audience. This will help you pitch your story in the right way.
Beware – if you are interviewed by the BBC TV your interview could end up on any of their TV channels or BBC radio. Once you have been interviewed there can be a snowball effect as good stories attract the attention of other media outlets.

**Have a strategy**

Keep to your message and find a few ways of saying the same thing. What are the two main points you would be looking to get across in your interview?

Don’t use jargon, abbreviations or anagrams – they confuse. Challenge any assumptions.

Assert your authority but do not be tempted to speculate or patronise. Keep it simple.

**In a crisis**

Do not panic. Judge whether a response will be to your advantage but give the media as much information as you can. If you do agree to be interviewed remember your key messages – three will do – and do not be drawn in to speculation.

**Afterwards**

Never contradict what you said in the interview and do not drop your guard until the cameras and journalists have gone.

**A few final handy hints**

Don’t over prepare but think about what you want to say and how you want to say it. Avoid using notes – looking down makes you appear shifty and look as though you don’t know your subject. Check your appearance – first impressions count.

**5. Training**

It is advisable that all staff undertake some form of media training before conducting an interview. This can range from practicing some questions over the phone with a Media Relations Manager, attending a workshop held by the Press Office or undertaking bespoke sessions on a one:one level. Please speak to a member of the team who can advise further.

**6. Facilities**

The Media Hub at University Park offers facilities to accommodate both live and pre-recorded television and radio interviews through an in-house fixed camera system and industry-standard ISDN line. It is managed by the Press Office in External Relations.

**The GlobelynxCam TVready camera system** offers a dedicated 24/7 on-campus TV studio through which the University can showcase the expertise of its academics on a wide range
of topical issues — from British politics and flu outbreaks to climate change and US gun control.

Broadcasters can search the Globelynx database and/or our Media Guide to Expertise to find the details of the relevant University of Nottingham expert or by speaking to the Press Office. The University's Media Guide to Expertise currently features more than 500 experts from across our campuses in the UK, China and Malaysia. To sign up as expert simply complete this form.

The ISDN-line enables University staff to take part in down-the-line radio interviews without the need to physically travel to a broadcaster’s own studio.

The facility offers broadcast industry-standard equipment that can provide a high-quality and reliable telephone link.

There are three ISDN-lines set up in the UK campuses:

- B12 in the Pope Building on University Park (also known as the Media Hub)
- B35C in the Exchange Building on Jubilee Campus
- A8 in the Main Building on Sutton Bonington Campus

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7. Brand
The University's name, identity and logo may only be used in accordance with the University’s brand guidelines.

8. Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

Nothing in this guidance is intended to have the effect of limiting either freedom of speech or academic freedom, subject to that freedom being exercised within the law.
9. Expected standards of behaviour

Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate through the media and they must adhere to the standards of behaviour set out in this policy and any related policies as set out in the introduction.

Communications must be professional and/or respectful at all times and must not infringe on the rights or privacy of staff or students. Interviews given as a representative of the University of Nottingham must not include information that is in conflict with the University's interests or inconsistent with an individual's contractual duties to the University.

The following non-exhaustive list may, according to the circumstances be considered to be of an unacceptable nature:

- any confidential information about the University and its associated entities, including subsidiary companies;
- any commercially confidential information (which may include research not yet in the public domain, indications of forthcoming developments or funding bids, data or software code, information about colleagues or personnel matters, details of unresolved grievances, non-public or not yet approved documents, minutes, news or information);
- business strategy, intellectual property or plans for innovation;
- trade secrets;
- details of legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving the University;
- personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission;
- promotion of a commercial product;
- material, including images, that is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile towards any individual or entity;
- anything which may bring the University into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of colleagues, former colleagues, students and those connected with the University.

The University has well-established ways for staff to raise any dissatisfaction or concerns that they may have, including the Grievance Procedure or the Dignity at Nottingham Policy. Concerns must be raised through such procedures and not by other means.

10. Incidents and responses

Where staff wish to make a complaint under the Dignity at Nottingham Policy, they should contact the relevant Dignity Adviser listed on the Dignity Advisers within the Nottingham Network (DANN) contact list.
If staff wish to raise a complaint related to this guidance under the Grievance Procedure, they should inform their immediate supervisor/manager. Where reputational damage to the University is suspected due to a breach of these guidelines, staff members should inform their supervisor/manager who may escalate this to an appropriate senior manager. Any disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with The Disciplinary Procedure for Staff.