



1. The Policy

1.1 This policy has been created with the aim to provide a range of guidelines and procedures for best practice to all media groups affiliated with the University of Stirling Students' Union.

1.2 The Union believes that all its affiliated media groups have the right to exercise freedom of expression in a way that is representative of students, whilst observing ethical and professional principles, the UK law, and policies of the Students' Union as outlined below. All members should adhere to the guidelines set out in the NUJ (National Union of Journalists) Code of Conduct:

[National Union of Journalists \(NUJ\): Code of conduct](#) and specifically for newspapers and magazines, [The IPSO Code](#)

More specifically, this policy is founded on the following core beliefs:

- Publications and broadcasts must adhere to the University of Stirling Students' Union Constitution and [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(E,D&I\) Policy](#).
- Publications/broadcasts must not contain material that is illegal or potentially libellous.
- Publications and broadcasts must only reproduce images, audio, text and video with permission of the person/company that holds the copyright, or ones that are copyright free. Relevant sources MUST be credited for copyright purposes.
- All members of the University of Stirling Students' Union media are required to abide by the Professional & Ethical Principles and Practices outlined in this policy.
- The Union will always endeavour to respect the editorial autonomy of its affiliated media groups as to allow and facilitate representation of the student voice and freedom of speech, whilst providing support and guidance.
- All media presence must make clear that the views expressed in all content are those of the contributors and not necessarily the views of the Union.

The next sections will outline procedures and guidelines on the following:

- Autonomy & Approval of Content
- Training
- Brig – Publication procedures
- Air3 Radio – Broadcasting procedures
- AirTV – Broadcasting procedures
- Professional principles
- Further Reading & Resources

2. Autonomy & Approval of Content

2.1 The Students' Union provides guidance to Air3, AirTV and Brig, ultimately holding liability for these groups. It will therefore advise on content where possible to ensure the following:

2.1.1 Publications/broadcasts do not contravene Union policy as outlined in Section 1 of this policy, paragraph 1.2

2.1.2 The Media Societies remain unbiased in their coverage of elections and referenda. Elections guidance will be issued to the media heads ahead of all elections and referenda with the option of a meeting with the Democracy & Representation Coordinator ahead of Union elections and any other political events considered appropriate.

2.1.3 Publications/broadcasts do not contain material that is illegal or potentially libellous.

2.1.4 There is an action plan (Appendix 1) in place should a piece be identified as potentially litigious and includes when material should be referred to lawyers or an independent journalist and confirms process for which agreement on publication/broadcast would be sought.

2.2 Noting that the Students' Union may wish to bring its activity to the attention of the Media Socs (an example being engagement in the Union elections), editorial control of content rests with the respective societies who are under no obligation to print/broadcast Union activity.

3. Training

3.1 All media societies must provide a training plan and evidence of the training which their committee and society members will receive and a record of when this has been provided. This must cover all of the contents of this policy and meet the conditions of the specific practices relevant to their society e.g., IPSO, Ofcom. If there are gaps in the training which the society have received based on the compulsory elements outlined in the Students' Union's insurance this must be addressed by the Union, through discussion with the society and every effort made to provide this training to anyone in the society who will participate in print or broadcast. It may be appropriate but not compulsory for the sabbaticals, trustees and other relevant Union staff to attend training being run by societies which cover the key elements of media law to ensure that all relevant staff, sabbaticals and trustees are equipped to review media content and deal with complaints/claims of potentially litigious content. Where it is not possible or appropriate for this attendance, the Union must provide the training and extend an invitation to the media societies if appropriate.

4. Complaints

4.1 All media societies should include on their website, the process for making a complaint both informally to the media society itself and/or through the Union's official complaints procedure found on the [Union website](#). All complainants must be advised of their right to utilise the Union's official complaints process in the initial stages of making the complaint even if the issue is being attempted to be resolved informally by the society. Guidance to resolve the complaint can always be sought from the Students' Union by the society even if the official complaints process is not/has not yet been utilised.

4.2 Each media society should have a 'take down' request section and process detailed on their website. No media society is obliged to remove anything unless identified as being of concern under 2.1.4 (in which case the Action Plan should be followed). Where the complainant is not satisfied by the outcome of a 'take down request' this should be referred to the Union's Complaints procedure as outlined in 4.1. There should also be a process in place to request the take down of social media content. Creators of all content (articles, broadcasts, social media content, etc.) will be made aware of the process to follow should they wish to request that their **own** works be taken down. This request should generally be honoured but is at the discretion of the committee. If a request to 'take down' is denied and

the member/former member of the society wants to escalate this as an official complaint, the complaints procedure in 4.1 should be used

5. Brig Publications – Procedures

5.1 Whilst autonomous in regulating content, the Brig Editor is responsible for ensuring the professional principles outlined in this code are observed by Brig members when undertaking activity on behalf of Brig.

5.2 Due to the nature of Brig's activity (both print and online), the content approval process for articles will work on a complaint basis. Any complaints received should be dealt with as outlined in Section 4 of this policy.

5.3 The Brig Editor is responsible for seeking advice from the Union prior to publication/broadcast when contentious matters or content which may raise legal concerns are concerned. With any sensitive material, if in any doubt, advice should be sought from the Students' Union before the material in question is published. This may be referred to the Union's or University's Communications teams for further guidance.

5.4 Brig must inform the Union of print publication dates a minimum of 2 weeks prior. It is reasonable for this date to vary slightly due to deadlines or unforeseen circumstances and Brig should keep everyone up to date with any changes as much as possible. The date for print should be sent to the VP Communities and Activities & Volunteer Coordinator with the Editor in Chief and Deputy Editor included. This will allow the Students' Union to assist with payment and delivery procedures.

5.5 Brig should have a corrections procedure in place e.g., Brig will provide details of a correction on an online article by posting a comment with the correction on the original article post on both Facebook and Twitter. Brig will provide a statement at the bottom of the article which will have been published on the website stating the correction e.g. This article was amended on **(insert date)** including the details of the correction. For print, there should be a 'Guardian-style' corrections panel (page two is a good place), where any correction and/or apology can be detailed.

5.6 Any section where comment from third parties is enabled must be stated as not being the views of the Media Society, the University of Stirling Students' Union or the University of Stirling and it should be stated that the specific media head or committee will be able to remove anything which is considered offensive or inappropriate. This can be requested directly with the Media Society or through the Students' Union's Complaints procedure, outlined in section 4.

6. Air3 Radio Broadcasts – Procedures

6.1 Whilst autonomous in regulating content, the Air3 Radio Station Manager is responsible for ensuring the professional principles outlined in this code are observed by Air3 Radio members off and on air when undertaking activity on behalf of Air3 Radio.

6.2 Due to the nature of Radio as a broadcasting medium, the content approval process will work on a complaint basis. Any complaints received should be dealt with as outlined in Section 4 of this policy.

6.3 The Air3 Radio Station Manager is responsible for seeking advice from the Union prior to publication/broadcast when contentious matters or content which may raise legal concerns are concerned. With any sensitive material, if in any doubt, advice should be sought from the Students' Union before the material in question is published. This may be referred to the Union's or University's Communications teams for further guidance.

7. AirTV Broadcasts – Procedures

7.1 Whilst autonomous in regulating content, the AirTV Station Manager is responsible for ensuring the professional principles outlined in this code are observed by AirTV members when undertaking activity on behalf of AirTV.

7.2 Due to the nature of TV as a broadcasting medium, the content approval process will largely work on a complaint basis. Any complaints received should be dealt with as outlined in Section 4 of this policy.

7.3 The AirTV Station Manager is responsible for seeking advice from the Union prior to publication/broadcast when contentious matters or content which may raise legal concerns are concerned. With any sensitive material, if in any doubt, advice should be sought from the Students' Union before the material in question is published. This may be referred to the Union's or University's Communications teams for further guidance.

8. Professional & Ethical Principles and Practices

A) Accuracy

- The University of Stirling Student Media must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information, including images.
- A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion once recognised must be corrected promptly and with due prominence, and – where appropriate – an apology published.
- Content must distinguish clearly between opinion, comment, conjecture and fact.
- When reporting involves comment/analysis of an individual or an organisation, it is customary good practice to provide parties involved an opportunity to provide a response to ensure balance and fairness in reporting.
- A fair opportunity for reply to inaccuracies must be given when reasonably called for. The more serious the criticism or allegations we are reporting the greater the obligation to allow the subject the opportunity to respond.
- Given that the University will be a focal point of many of the broadcasts and news items of the Media societies, the Communications Team at the University should aim to introduce themselves and their roles and outline the best ways in which to work together during the year and confirm appropriate channels for comment/approach.

B) Freedom

- The University of Stirling student media should at all times uphold and defend the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed.

C) Impartiality

- The University of Stirling Student Media should aim for impartiality when reporting news and **must** remain impartial when reporting on Students' Union elections, as aforementioned in Section 2.1.2.

- However, the University of Stirling Student Media should also be a place whereby debate, comment and opinion are welcome.

D) Privacy

- Everyone is entitled to respect for their private and family life, home, health and correspondence, including digital communications.
- Editors will be expected to justify intrusions into any individual's private life without consent. Account will be taken of the complainant's own public disclosures of information.
- It is unacceptable to photograph individuals in private places* without their consent. (*Note – Private places are public or private property where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy).

E) Harassment

- Members must not engage in intimidation, harassment or persistent pursuit.
- They must not persist in questioning, telephoning, pursuing or photographing individuals once asked to desist; nor remain on their property when asked to leave and must not follow them. If requested, they must identify themselves and whom they represent.
- Editors/Station Managers must ensure these principles are observed by those working for them and take care not to use non-compliant material from other sources.

F) Intrusion into Grief or Shock

- In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings, such as inquests.

G) Reporting on death

- Reporting on death (suicide, sudden death, accidental death, death from illness, etc.) has its own sensitivities and guidelines and these must be fully considered and adhered to.

H) Suicide

- Journalists are asked to exercise particular care in reporting suicide or issues involving suicide, bearing in mind the effect this may have on others. This should be borne in mind both in presentation, including the use of pictures, and in describing the method of suicide. Any substances should be referred to in general rather than specific terms if possible. When appropriate a helpline number should be given (e.g., Samaritans 08457 90 90 90). The feelings of relatives should also be carefully considered.
- When reporting suicide, care should be taken to avoid excessive detail about the method used.
- When reporting on suicide, details of the Counselling and Wellbeing service available at the University of Stirling should be provided.
- Further guidance on reporting on suicide is available on the NUJ website (detailed in **Further Reading and Resources**).

H) Hospitals

- Journalists must identify themselves and obtain permission from a responsible executive before entering non-public areas of hospitals or similar institutions to pursue enquiries.
- The restrictions on intruding into privacy are particularly relevant to enquiries about individuals in hospitals or similar institutions.

I) Reporting of Crime

- Reporting of crime is covered by the [Contempt of Court Act](#) which has strict restrictions on what can or cannot be reported.
- In addition, relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime should not generally be identified without their consent, unless they are genuinely relevant to the story.

J) Victims of Sexual Assault

- University of Stirling student media must not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification unless there is adequate justification, and they are legally free to do so. When appropriate a helpline number should be given and both the victim/discloser of Sexual assault as well as anyone who will come into contact with the material (e.g. journalist, interviewer, readers, etc) should be referred to the Students' Union website and the [#erasethegrey](#) partnership between the University and the Union.

K) Clandestine Devices and Subterfuge

- The University of Stirling student media must not seek to obtain or publish material acquired by using hidden cameras or clandestine listening devices; or by intercepting private or mobile telephone calls, messages or emails; or by the unauthorised removal of documents or photographs; or by accessing digitally held private information without consent.
- Engaging in misrepresentation or subterfuge, including by agents or intermediaries, can generally be justified only in the public interest and then only when the material cannot be obtained by other means.
- Social media- Members are reminded that photos and videos will be subject to copyright law and their source should be clearly stated.

L) Confidential Sources

- Members must protect confidential sources of information.

M) Copy Approval

- The general rule is that no one should be given the right to copy approval. In certain circumstances we may allow people to see copy or quotes, but we are not required to alter copy. University of Stirling student media should avoid offering copy approval as a method of securing interviews or co-operation.

N) Direct Quotations

- Quotations should not be changed to alter their context or meaning.

O) Payment

- University of Stirling student media should not pay for stories, except from bona fide freelance sources.

P) Plagiarism

- The University of Stirling student media must not reproduce other people's material without attribution. The source of published material obtained from another organisation should be acknowledged including quotes taken from other newspaper articles.

Q) Language

- No swearing is to be used in front facing content whereby a person has not actively engaged in consuming the content, such as on the cover of any printed material on public display, an outside broadcast or headlines that could appear on the www.stirlingstudentsunion.com home page.
- As a general point, consideration should be given by Editors/Managers of each media group on the context the language is being used in and the strength of the words used. For consistency we will refer to [OFCOM guidelines](#) on use of potentially offensive language when making these decisions.
- All language used in all forms of media **must** adhere to the Students' Union's [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion \(E,D&I\) guidelines](#).
- The only exception would be when a quotation is being provided and usually the subject of the news/media piece would be to highlight and report on the non-adherence to E,D&I.

R) Legal & Copyright

- All content must adhere to all aspects of UK law, paying particular attention to the restrictions on freedom of speech and also licensing issues and laws when broadcasting content.
- There is very specific legislation detailing reporting of crime and prosecutions which is covered by the [Contempt of Court Act](#).
- The Brig Editor and Air3/AirTV Station Managers have a responsibility to alert their respective sub-editors and producers about content which could fall outside of the law, who will seek guidance in line with the Action Plan (Appendix 1).
- Publications and broadcasts must only reproduce images, audio, text and video with permission of the person/company that holds the copyright, or ones that are copyright free.

Further Reading and Information

NUJ Guidelines

Responsible Reporting on Mental Health, Mental Illness & Death by Suicide
[NUJ guidelines for reporting mental health and death by suicide](#)

Channel 5 media law guidelines [Legal and compliance - Channel 5](#)

BBC editorial guidelines: [The BBC's Editorial Values and Standards - Editorial Guidelines](#)

Article on BBC Guidelines on use of potentially offensive language (warning: contains potentially offensive language) [BBC guidelines on offensive language | BBC | The Guardian](#)

Contempt of Court Act <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/49>

University of Stirling Students' Union Constitution and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
<https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/aboutus/governanceandplanning/>