



## SUSU Media Code of Conduct

Version 0.95

### General code

1. SUSU Media shall consist of the media departments as defined by Media Committee bye-laws. Currently "Surge Radio" (radio station), "SUSUtv" (television station), "Wessex Scene" (magazine), and "The Edge" (entertainment magazine).
2. Members of SUSU Media shall consist of all SUSU members who have completed a media contract as described by Media Committee bye-laws.

### ***Members of SUSU media are required to abide by the following professional principles:***

#### **Accuracy**

SUSU media must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information, including pictures.

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 comment, conjecture and fact.

*"The voice of opponents no less than of friends has a right to be heard. It is well to be frank; it is even better to be fair"* (CP Scott, 1921). The more serious the criticism or allegations we are reporting the greater the obligation to allow the subject the opportunity to respond. We must always seek to give a right to reply especially in cases involving the Students' Union or University.

#### **Privacy**

Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private and family life, home, health and correspondence, including digital communications.

Editors will be expected to justify intrusions into any individuals 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.*

## **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/Producers must ensure these principles are observed by those working for them and take care not to use non-compliant material from other sources.

## **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.

When reporting suicide, care should be taken to avoid excessive detail about the method used.

## **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.

## **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.

## **Clandestine devices and subterfuge**

SUSU 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.

Personal content from Facebook, such as photos or quotes, can only be used if in the public interest and if the content is set to public. If a user has closed privacy settings then content cannot be used.

Twitter is in the public domain, therefore content from here can be used. Members are reminded that photo's and video's will still be subject to copyright law.

### **Victims of sexual assault**

SUSU 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.

### **Discrimination**

SUSU media must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individuals race, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.

Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story.

### **Confidential sources**

Members have a moral obligation to protect confidential sources of information.

### **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. SUSU Media should avoid offering copy approval as a method of securing interviews or co-operation.

### **Direct quotations**

Should not be changed to alter their context or meaning.

### **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.susu.org](http://www.susu.org) home page.

Aside from front facing content, the Wessex Scene, The Edge, Surge and SUSUtv will each have their own

individual policies on use of harmful or offensive language based on their differing audiences and the way in which these audiences consume content.

As a general point, consideration should be given by editors/managers of each department on the context the language is being used in and the strength of the words used. For consistency across departments we will refer to the BBC Guidelines on use of potentially offensive language when making these decisions.

These guidelines can be found at [www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/page/guidelines-harm-language](http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/page/guidelines-harm-language)

### **Payment**

SUSU media does not pay for stories, except from bonafide freelance sources. A list of current subscriptions is kept in the appendices of this policy

### **Plagiarism**

SUSU Media students 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. By-lines should be carried only on material that is substantially the work of the by-lined journalist. If an article contains a significant amount of agency copy then the agency should be credited.

### **Suicide**

Journalists are asked to exercise particular care in reporting suicide or issues involving suicide, bearing in mind the risk of encouraging 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 (eg Samaritans 08457 90 90 90). The feelings of relatives should also be carefully considered.

### **Freedom**

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.

### **Legal**

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 legalisation detailing reporting of crime and prosecutions which is covered by the Contempt of Court Act. Editors and producers have a responsibility to alert their respective Student Leader Editors and Station Managers about content which could fall outside of the law, who will seek guidance from the Editor in Chief. (See appendix for outline of main legal considerations).

## Constitutional

All members of SUSU Media must adhere to the Students' Union Constitution in all of the work they do. Whilst editorially SUSU Media is independent in most cases, there are a small number of Students' Union policies which restrict what the media departments can cover. All new policy proposals should explicitly state when they intend to restrict what the media departments can cover.

Currently editorial is restricted by:

- Elections Committee and the election rules set down by it.
- Staff Student Protocol Agreement: <http://blogs.susu.org/policy/2011/09/02/staff-student-protocol-agreement/#content>

Regarding the Staff Student Protocol, similar considerations should be given to University staff and any requests for interviews, quotes etc should be directed through the appropriate channels, for example the University's press team.

If in any doubt, advice/permission should be sought from the Union President before material in question is published.

## Impartiality

SUSU Media should aim for impartiality when reporting news and **must** remain impartial when reporting on Students' Union elections.

However SUSU Media should also be a place whereby debate, comment and opinion are welcome. Opinion pieces must be clearly marked as so, and the following disclaimer used at the base of the piece "This article is opinion only, and in no way reflects the view of the entire editorial team or of SUSU as an organisation."

## SUSU Elections

SUSU Media must adhere to rules for reporting as set down by SUSU Elections Committee. Disagreements between Elections Committee and Media Committee should be resolved in a pragmatic manner and if this is not possible they will be resolved through Union Council.

## The Public Interest

There may be exceptions to the clauses outlined above, where they can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.

1. The public interest includes, but is not confined to:

- i) Detecting or exposing crime or serious impropriety.*
- ii) Protecting public health and safety.*

*iii) Preventing the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.*

2. There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself.

3. Whenever the public interest is invoked, the Editor in Chief will require editors to demonstrate fully that they reasonably believe that publication, or journalistic activity undertaken with a view to publication, would be in the public interest.

4. The Editor in Chief will consider the extent to which material is already in the public domain, or will become so.

### ***Ensuring SUSU Media acts responsibly***

Editorial decisions shall lie with the Editor or Station Manager of the relevant department. The Editor or Station Manager shall follow the above professional principles in any editorial decision that they take. The Editor or Station Manager will be responsible for ensuring all committee members and other students adhere to the professional principles before their work is published or broadcast.

The Editor in Chief or Director General (currently Vice President Communications) is responsible for final approval of all material published or broadcast. They can prevent publication or broadcast of all material which they judge breaks the professional principles and in doing so will have final interpretation of the professional principles.

The Editor or Station Manager may challenge the ruling of the Editor in Chief at Media Committee. To do so they must submit a complaint in writing (physical or email) to the Secretary of Media Committee, who will then place it on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting or at an emergency session if called for by over 50% of the voting members.

If the Editor in Chief is also the chair of Media Committee they will step down for the duration of the debate and vote.

Media Committee will hear from both sides and then take a vote on whether the content falls outside of the professional principles as above. In making their decision members of the committee will only consider an item acceptable if all of the above principles are met.

If the committee finds that the Editor in Chief was in error when restricting the publication they will issue an apology to the Editor/Station Manager concerned.

## House Rules of the Media Departments

### *Students using SUSU media resources will adhere to the following conditions:*

- Ensure that all equipment is used responsibly and correctly, for its intended purpose, and that it is left in a condition that you would expect to receive it.
- Ensure that anything found not to be in working order is reported to a member of the relevant committee.
- Any member shall be responsible for the conduct of any guest on air or being interviewed.
- Any member shall not go on-air at any time (for Surge and SUSUtv) or publish online content (all departments) without the prior approval of a member of a relevant committee member.
- Any member shall not promote or endorse excessive drinking, nor any illegal activity such as drug taking or theft.
- The collection and return of studio keys to and from the Students' Union reception shall be solely borrowers responsibility. Any member who loses a key will be required to pay a replacement charge of £10.
- All content produced using Student Union equipment or published on a Student Union held website shall be sole property of SUSU and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License
- Members participating in a Surge Radio FM or AM broadcast certify that "I am not disqualified under the Broadcasting Act (1996) from participating in a licensed radio service."

Students should also note that each department has an individual code of conduct and set of rules that must be adhered to.

### ***Discipline***

Any disciplinary action taken as a result of this code of conduct, or individual department codes of conduct, being broken are to be agreed at media department committee level except in cases of a serious breach where cases may be escalated to Media Committee/ Disciplinary Committee.

### ***Complaints***

Any Complaint received will be immediately forwarded to the department Student Leader (Editor/ Manager) as well as the Vice President Communications (Editor in Chief / Director General).

Complaints will be reviewed alongside these guidelines to determine the nature of the complaint and whether it should be upheld.

Once a resolution is reached, it will be shared with the relevant parties and Media committee. If a complaint is upheld an apology should be issued if deemed appropriate. If there is no resolution the matter will be taken to Media Committee

Each website and physical publication will have at minimum, contact details for Vice President Communications and Editor or Station Manager, and information stating that complaints should be addressed to them.



### ***Appendix 1 - Payments for News***

SUSU Media currently pays for news services provided by IRN (Independent Radio News) for the purpose of providing hourly news updates for Surge Radio broadcasts.

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