

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Media Policy

This policy is to be used by Macquarie staff in their dealings with the media and to meet their obligations under the Code of Conduct. (See the Macquarie University Enterprise Agreement 2003–2006, Attachment 7 Code of Conduct.) It stands alongside, but does not exclude or replace, the rights and obligations of staff under common law.

The policy applies to public speaking engagements, comments in the media, and views in letters to the press, or in books, journals, or notices, where it might be expected that the publication or circulation of the comments will spread to the community at large.

The University seeks to speak with a strong voice on all matters relating to its operations and values, and to promote its reputation in the community as Australia's innovative university.

University staff have many allegiances: to their discipline or profession, to the University, and to the community at large. These allegiances are not always in harmony. A staff member must weigh the importance of these allegiances in each particular set of circumstances.

The University recognises and protects the concept and practice of academic freedom as essential to the proper conduct of teaching and research and the pursuit of scholarship. While academic freedom is a right, it carries with it the duty of staff to use the freedom in a manner consistent with a responsible and honest search for knowledge and truth, grounded in scholarly evidence. Within the ambit of academic freedom lies the traditional role of the university in providing informed comment on societal mores and practice and in challenging held beliefs, policies and structures.

It is not acceptable for staff to engage with the media in any activity or comment which is designed to bring the University into disrepute.

Where public comments are offered by staff as members of Macquarie University, it is expected that the comments will relate directly to their individual expertise and the specialised area of their appointment. In that case, staff members may use the University's name and give the title of their University appointment in order to establish their credentials. This does not restrict the right of a staff member to freely express opinions in their private capacity as an individual member of society, but statements made in this context should not include the University's name, or the title of the staff member's University appointment.

Members of staff should refrain from representing themselves as spokespersons for the University unless authorised to do so. Official statements in the name of the University must be authorised by the Council, the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, or the Registrar and Vice-Principal, or a member of the University acting under the authority of one of those named officers.

Staff have an obligation to act appropriately when a conflict arises between their own self interest and their duty to the University. Where such conflict does or may arise, the issue should be disclosed to an appropriate officer of the University and, wherever possible, the staff member should play no role in any decision-making that might be associated with that issue.

The University respects the rights of individuals to seek redress or remedy in accordance with relevant legislation. The University welcomes 'whistle-blowers' and provides appropriate mechanisms through its grievance procedures or through reference to the NSW Ombudsman to handle such issues. (See the Macquarie University Human Resources Policies, Section 24.13 Protected Disclosures.) Recourse to the media should be seen as a last resort and the University expects staff to seek other remedies first.

All media liaison will be handled through the Public Relations and Marketing Unit. The Unit is able to assist with media liaison and will be responsible for preparing and distributing all press releases. Staff who have contact with the media which is not initiated by the Unit, other than in a private capacity and unconnected with the University, are required to advise the Unit of the details.

Breaches of this policy may be deemed breaches of the relevant provisions of the Code of Conduct and the obligations of staff as employees, and will be investigated through the misconduct provisions in the Enterprise Agreement to assess if disciplinary action needs to be taken by the University.

Endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor's Management Committee
29 July 2005

John Loxton
28 July 2005