



COMMUNICATION POLICY

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COMMUNICATION POLICY

Preamble

Against the background of the dream to be an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness and an ethic of care, the council of the North-West University has adopted this policy on 28 March 2018.

This policy replaces all previous versions of media and communication related policies that were followed by the NWU or any of its components.

1 Interpretation and application

1.1 This policy must be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the –

- 1.1.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- 1.1.2 Higher Education Act, No 101 of 1997,
- 1.1.3 The Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2 of 2000 (PAIA)
- 1.1.4 Protection of Personal Information Act, 4 of 2013
- 1.1.5 Related policies of the NWU, in particular the Alumni Policy, Brand Policy & Stakeholder Framework and
- 1.1.6 Statute of the North-West University (2022).

1.2 The following documents are integral components of this policy and must be read in conjunction with one another and with the paragraphs below:

- *NWU Media Protocol (Addendum 1)*
- *Crisis Communication Plan (Addendum 2)*
- *Social Media Framework (Addendum 3)*
- *Online Publications Framework (Addendum 4)*

2 Definitions

In this policy –

“**media contact**” includes the following activities involving the popular or “mass” media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, news websites, and social/digital media platforms:

- providing information via media releases or statements
- letters to the editor of a publication
- responding to media enquiries by telephone or email
- conducting interviews
- arranging a briefing
- disclosing and discussing information on social/digital media platforms
- media activities related to events
- releasing reports, and
- conducting a launch,

but excludes communication with scientific or academic journals and other publications.

“proactive media contact” means instances in which employees or a component of the university wish to obtain media coverage of a matter of public interest; and

“reactive media contact” means enquiries by members of the media on a university-related matter.

3 Policy statement

3.1 Orientation of media contact

In its media contact it is the policy of the NWU that:

- the overall strategy of the university and its current positioning goals be supported
- the optimal relationships with the media, both in South Africa and internationally be maintained
- the branding and promotion of the university's public image must facilitate its ability to be successful in its core business, and
- the university's relations with the media be managed to enhance its public image

3.2 Principles of media contact

This policy is based on a number of fundamental principles, namely:

- respect for freedom of expression, a plurality of diverse views, academic freedom, and critical thinking
- rejection of any form of advocacy of discrimination on the basis of race, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation or other grounds of discrimination prohibited under South African law
- prevention of incitement to violence, to cause harm and advocacy of hatred
- encouragement of transparent contact with the media by internal stakeholders
- recognition of the media as an important role-player in an increasingly competitive Higher Education (HE) sector generally, and in influencing public attitudes towards and perceptions of the NWU, in particular
- acceptance of the increasing importance of the management of the flow of information and the optimisation of media relations in the ever-changing, technology-driven, and instant communication society as a challenging aspect of advancing the university
- honest, open, timely and accurate communication
- the building of sound, irreproachable interpersonal relationships with members of the media
- professionally accountable facilitation of the promotion and positioning of the NWU and its achievements in the public domain; and
- presentation in a consistent, accurate and professional manner of the dissemination of current, informative, and engaging material

3.3 First point of referral

- The Director: Corporate Communication (*'the director'*) is the first point of referral for all enquiries from the media concerning institutional, strategic and university policy matters
- As a general principle employees and students of the university are required to refer media enquiries about institutional, strategic and university policy matters to the office of the director

4 Official spokespersons and approved media liaison staff

4.1 Categories of media liaison

- 4.1.1 The respective media liaison officials of the university are responsible for media liaison in the following categories:
- institutional/strategic/university policy matters
 - university operational matters
 - campus matters
 - faculty matters
 - academic/research/discipline-specific matters
 - student matters.
- 4.1.2 In circumstances determined by the university management committee (UMC), the Crisis Communication Plan (Addendum 2) is implemented.
- 4.1.3 In the event of managing a crisis, all internal role-players must be sensitised to be mindful of broadcasting views that could be misinterpreted or sensationalised by the media.

4.2 Mandated spokespersons

Taking into account the roles and responsibilities set out in 4 below, the mandated spokespersons of the NWU are the following:

4.2.1 For institutional, strategic and university policy matters:

- The vice-chancellor (VC) is the lead media spokesperson of the university, but the VC may nominate or appoint another person to serve as spokesperson in a particular instance
- The chairperson of the Council of the NWU
- The executive director: corporate relations and marketing (EDCRM)
- The director, who may nominate or appoint another person to serve as spokesperson in a particular instance

4.2.2 For operational matters, the relevant member of the UMC, who may nominate or appoint another person to serve as spokesperson in a particular instance.

4.2.3 For campus specific matters, the campus deputy vice-chancellor operations (CDVC) concerned.

4.2.4 For faculty matters, the executive dean concerned.

4.2.5 For academic and discipline-specific matters, the relevant expert topic-specific academic employee.

4.2.6 For general or institutional enquiries on student matters, the executive director: student life, who may nominate or appoint another person to serve as spokesperson in a particular instance.

For specific student matters, the SRC chairperson or the appointed SRC spokesperson.

5 Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Chairperson of the Council

The chairperson of the Council is the official spokesperson of the NWU on all Council-related matters, but in the event of the chairperson's absence or incapacity, or at the request of the chairperson, the vice-chancellor may perform this function.

5.2 VC and members of the UMC

5.2.1 In all but Council-related matters the VC is the primary spokesperson of the NWU, but in the event of the VC's absence or incapacity the director may perform this function.

5.2.2 Members of the UMC form a second tier of respondents to engage with the media on matters related to their respective portfolios.

5.3 Director: Corporate Communication

5.3.1 The director is responsible for implementing the NWU media strategy under the supervision of the Executive Director: Corporate Relations and Marketing.

5.3.2 The director must channel media enquiries to the appropriate spokesperson and monitor whether the matter receives the required attention.

5.3.3 The director is responsible for media monitoring across the university.

5.4 Campus DVC's Operations

A CDVC is the official spokesperson on campus specific matters.

5.5 Academic experts

5.5.1 The academic employees of the university must be encouraged to engage in public debate and to provide expert commentary on matters falling within their area of expertise.

5.5.2 The director must capture the details of academic employees in a list of experts, which may be provided to the media who wish to promote their media exposure.

5.5.3 For the purposes of ensuring effective coverage and the limitation of possible negative publicity, the director must provide advice to academic employees regarding the release of controversial information that may reflect on the university

5.6 Complaints to the Press Ombudsman

Only the EDCRM may, after consultation with the office of the vice-chancellor and the university's legal services department, lodge a complaint with the Press Ombudsman on behalf of the university.

6 Scope of application

- 6.1 This policy applies to official interaction with the media by all components, employees and students of the university.
- 6.2 Instances of disclosures (or "whistle-blowing") protected by legislation are not subject to this policy.

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