

## MEDIA COMMENTARY POLICY

<b>Section</b>	Public Affairs and Communications
<b>Contact</b>	Executive Director, Public Affairs
<b>Last Review</b>	July 2020
<b>Next Review</b>	July 2021
<b>Approval</b>	SLT 20/08/116

### Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the University's expectations of both academic and professional staff with respect to media and public comment, including social media, where there is an identifiable connection with the University.

The University upholds its responsibilities as critic and conscience of society, fostering and encouraging the testing of received truths and the creation of new knowledge, and the dissemination of these views with integrity and respect. The University firmly supports the exercise of academic freedom, which includes the right to undertake research, to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state opinions even if they are controversial or unpopular. The University also encourages staff to demonstrate civic leadership through public debate and media comment in their areas of expertise or specialisation.

### Policy:

The University encourages staff members to engage with the media and the public in order to promote civic leadership on matters of interest nationally and internationally and in particular on the social, economic, cultural and environmental issues faced by Aotearoa New Zealand, including those that affect tangata whenua.

The Policy on Staff Conduct requires a staff member to ensure that he/she does not bring the University into disrepute, defined as either willfully or deliberately discrediting the University publicly, through his/her conduct, when acting on University business or when claiming affiliation with the University.

### Professional or personal capacity

Staff must make clear whether their public commentary contribution is made in a professional or a personal capacity. Where a staff member is contributing to a subject which is within their range of professional expertise in the media, it is appropriate for the staff member's University position/title to be given.

However, if a staff member's contribution (in any format) is provided with no greater expertise or informed opinion than that of a member of the general community, then no indication of association with the University should be given. In such circumstances, it should be made clear by the staff member that the views expressed are those of them as an individual, and in no way represent the position or views of the University.

### University commentary and position

The Vice-Chancellor is the University spokesperson on matters of policy, management and organisational issues. Views on behalf of the University may only be expressed by the Vice-Chancellor, or another University spokesperson where specifically authorised.

### **Spokesperson in a crisis situation**

The following people are authorised to speak to the media in relation to an incident or emergency:

- The Vice-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor's nominee, or
- A member of staff nominated by the University Crisis Management Team Leader (usually the University Communications Team Leader).

Any media enquiries or request for comment should be directed to the University's communications team in the first instance.

### **Academic staff commentary**

Academic staff are encouraged and supported, as part of demonstrating positive civic leadership and ensuring impact from their research and scholarly endeavors make submissions to local or national government, or to public inquiries or consultation opportunities within their areas of academic or professional expertise. Support from the communications team is available to staff making expert commentary and opinion.

Where asked to provide commentary and/or opinion in a public forum within a particular area of expertise, staff are expected to adhere to a high standard of conduct appropriate to their role and responsibilities, by:

- promoting informed evidence-based, inclusive public debate that is grounded in research and scholarship
- respecting diversity of views and opinions
- ensuring that he/she does not act in a way that is discriminatory, violent, abusive, bullying, harmful or threatening to others
- not misrepresenting their expertise or experience
- ensuring their comments and actions do not bring the University into disrepute as per the Policy on Staff Conduct.

Where a staff member has been invited to participate in a forum that will require them to express an opinion on a broad range of subject matter, possibly including but not limited to their field of expertise, then due care should be taken to adhere to the standards of conduct outlined above.

### **Media enquiries to staff**

All media enquiries to staff other than those inviting academic staff to comment on their area of expertise must be referred in the first instance to the University's communications team. This includes requests by and invitations to media to visit Massey University campuses or events, including filming on campus.

Corporate press releases on behalf of the University may only be distributed by the communications team.

The University's communications team is available to assist with media liaison, and the writing, approval and distribution of Massey University media releases where academic staff is commenting on their area of expertise.

### **Use of Massey identity and brand**

The Massey University name and/or brand in full or in part, may not be used as part of a public persona such as username, personal email address or social media handle.

Use of the Massey University logo or images on third party social media platforms is not permitted. In addition, staff and students permitted to use the University's name should not use it to promote or endorse any product, cause, political party or candidate.

Requests to use the Massey University identity, name or brand must be referred in the first instance to the Director, Marketing and Recruitment and the Executive Director, Public Affairs.

### **Use of social media**

The University recognises the value of staff participation in social media to facilitate discussion, collaborate, exchange and contribute information and ideas, to advance research impact, connect with our students, staff and communities, and to demonstrate civic leadership.

Material posted on official Massey University social media sites and platforms has the same status as any public communication from the University, and staff using these sites should adhere to the guidelines of usage in place and comply with the requirements of this Policy.

Use of other social media by Massey University staff, where accessed using University systems or equipment, or where there is a clear affiliation between the staff member and the University on the site, should also adhere to this Policy and the expectations of conduct as outlined in the Policy on Staff Conduct, including taking care not to bring the University into disrepute.

Further guidance on social media usage is provided in the Social Media Policy.

### **Definitions**

**Academic freedom:** Academic freedom, in relation to an institution and per section 161 of the Education Act 1989, means—

- (a) the freedom of academic staff and students, within the law, to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular opinions:
- (b) the freedom of academic staff and students to engage in research:
- (c) the freedom of the institution and its staff to regulate the subject matter of courses taught at the institution:
- (d) the freedom of the institution and its staff to teach and assess students in the manner they consider best promotes learning:
- (e) the freedom of the institution through its chief executive to appoint its own staff.

**Handle:** a username on a social media site, e.g. Twitter.

**Media:** means all forms of print, radio, television, online, digital and social media.

**Social media:** refers to the channels used for the distribution and exchange of content in an online setting, such as, but not limited to, blogs, micro-blogs, media sharing sites, social networks and virtual worlds.

### **Audience:**

This policy applies to all staff and should be read in conjunction with the related policies and procedures below. This policy does not apply to the personal use of media or social media where there is no identifiable connection with the University.

### Relevant Legislation:

**The Human Rights Act 1993** prohibits Massey University and its employees from discriminating against any employee, job applicant or contractor on the grounds of sex, marital status, religious belief, colour, race, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, political opinion, employment status, family status or sexual orientation.

**New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990** prescribes that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief, including the right to adopt and to hold opinions without interference; and to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and opinions of any kind in any form.

**The Education Act 1989** requires Massey University to recognise and exercise academic freedom, which includes the rights to teach and assess students in the manner that academic staff consider best promotes learning, to undertake research, to question received wisdom and to put forward or state ideas even if they are unconventional or unpopular (Part 14, Section 161).

**The Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015** aims to deter, prevent and lessen harmful digital communications, including any form of electronic message, including texts, emails, photos and recordings. Harmful digital communications include cyber bullying and harassment, for example sending or publishing threatening or offensive material, spreading damaging rumours, or sending or publishing sensitive personal information.

### Related Procedures:

[Policy on Academic Freedom, Free Speech and Freedom of Expression](#)

[Policy on Staff Conduct](#)

[Code of Student Conduct](#)

[Brand Guidelines](#)

### Document Management and Control:

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Under consultation with staff and unions