



## **MEDIA POLICY (STAFF)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS (UTP) is a prominent institute of higher learning and as a consequence it often attracts considerable interest from local and national media. Media attention has the potential to enhance, as well as undermine, the overall reputation of the University. It is important, therefore, to manage the University's engagement with the media positively, constructively and professionally.

The overall responsibility for the University's media relations rests with the Head of Corporate Communications.

Given the size and complexity of the University and its operations, it is important for staff to share an understanding of, and commitment to, the systems and processes which have been developed for the positive management of media relations for the University.

The Media Policy sets out the principles which underpin the University's approach to media relations, and the procedures for coordinating and managing media relations.

### **SCOPE**

The Policy recognises that staff may have occasion to interact with the media in three primary capacities:

- as a private individual, or
- as an academic or professional expert, or
- as an official spokesperson of the University.

All of these roles, and the responsibilities associated with them, are addressed in the Policy.

Media Policy covers any form of electronic and print media such as television, radio, newspaper, magazines as well as social media.

### **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- PETRONAS Code of Conduct and Business Ethics
- UTP Staff Code of Conduct and Discipline
- PETRONAS Whistleblowing Policy
- Personal Data Protection Act 2010

## **PART 1 – PRINCIPLES**

1. UTP is an institute of higher learning that is accountable for its actions.
2. The University responds promptly to media enquiries and is always truthful when dealing with the media.
3. The University is proactive in developing positive media coverage to allow it to communicate with the community it serves, build support for its core objectives and enhance its reputation.
4. The University responds quickly to limit potential damage to the University caused by adverse or incorrect media coverage.
5. The University has an obligation to protect itself and its staff and students from unfair intrusion by the media.
6. In order to sustain its harmonious community, the University shall avoid any stand regarding political, racial and religious issues.

## **PART 2 - RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF TO THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE UNIVERSITY**

6. Notwithstanding the rights of individuals to freedom of speech within the law, staff of the University have an obligation, expressed in UTP Staff Code of Conduct and Discipline, to act in the best interests of the University at all times.
7. Staff are expected to participate fully in University consultation and decision-making processes on any official University matters and to refrain from debating opinions on such matters through the media.
8. Staff must not
  - (1) express views and opinions in the public domain with the intention of discrediting the University.
  - (2) express views on behalf of the University unless authorised to do so by the Vice Chancellor.
9. In circumstances where a staff member considers there to have been serious wrongdoing by the University, he or she is advised to follow internal procedures for the proper investigation and resolution of such matters, as provided under UTP Staff Code of Conduct and Discipline, PETRONAS Code of Conduct and Business Ethics and PETRONAS Whistleblowing Policy.

## **PART 3 - CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA BY STAFF MEMBERS AS PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS**

10. The University affirms the right of staff to interact freely with the media as private individuals.
11. When staff members discuss with the media, or write about, matters outside their areas of work, they must make it clear that they are speaking as private individuals and not as staff members. The use of University position titles, letterhead or postal addresses is prohibited in this context.

12. When staff members speak to the media on their own behalf, or on behalf of organisations not associated with their work at the University, University property must not be used as a backdrop for filming or photographic purposes.

#### **PART 4 - CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA BY STAFF MEMBERS AS ACADEMIC OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTS**

13. UTP Staff Code of Conduct and Discipline and PETRONAS Code of Conduct and Business Ethics expand on the responsibilities associated with this media policy.
14. Besides Academic staff, this policy may also apply to general staff, many of whom are also recognised as having professional expertise in particular areas.
15. The University affirms the right of staff members to interact with the media as academic or professional experts.
16. In exercising this right, staff must ensure that they do not claim or imply that they speak on behalf of the University, or express views on other official University matters (see Part 7 below).
17. While academic debate over research findings, theories or viewpoints is encouraged, personal attacks on other members of staff or students, or disparagement of any area of the University through the media, are contrary to the provisions of UTP Staff Code of Conduct and Discipline and PETRONAS Code of Conduct and Business Ethics.
18. The University may be held liable for defamatory comments or libelous statements made by a staff member. Staff must therefore take the utmost caution to ensure any comments and statements do not have legal consequences for the University.

#### **PART 5 - MEDIA ENQUIRIES ABOUT AREAS OF ACADEMIC EXPERTISE**

21. Academic staff members are encouraged to respond to media enquiries related to their areas of academic expertise and are not required to seek permission before doing so. However, staff are requested to inform the Corporate Communications when they have had contact with the media, so that the resulting media coverage can be monitored.
22. Staff are encouraged to consult the Corporate Communications for advice or assistance in dealing with media enquiries. (The media guidelines as per **Appendix I** are intended to assist staff in dealing with the media.)
23. Some media enquiries about an academic matter might also relate more broadly to the University (for example, a request for a finance professor to comment on the University's finance policies). In such cases, or where the staff member has any doubt about whether he or she may answer the enquiry, the matter must be referred to the Corporate Communications.
24. Staff who answer a media enquiry as an academic expert must make it clear that their opinions are based on their expert knowledge and research. Where the subject is likely to be contentious, they must make it clear in their response to the media that their opinion does not represent the considered position of the University.

25. Staff must provide the media with their academic titles (e.g., Professor or Dr) when they are commenting as academic experts. Position titles (e.g., dean and deputy vice chancellor) are not appropriate in this context, as such titles may convey the impression that the person is representing the considered position of UTP.

## **PART 6 - VISITS TO THE CAMPUS BY THE MEDIA**

26. In circumstances where the media wish to visit the campus or any University facility in relation to enquiries under Part 5 above, the staff member is required to consider whether the visit might impinge on the work or study activities of other members of the University community. If so, the staff member must take reasonable steps to ensure that the relevant people are consulted, and that appropriate agreement to the arrangements for the visit are made, with any disruption to the work of others being kept to a minimum.
27. When a staff member hosts a media visit which is likely to lead to wider media interest, the staff member should consult the Corporate Communications at the earliest opportunity.
28. It is appropriate for the University grounds or facilities to be used for filming interviews relating to UTP activities and research, subject to the approval of the relevant Head of Department/Centre of Excellence or owner. Where extensive filming on campus is planned, staff are required to advise the Head of Property Management and Maintenance and the Head of Security Services of the details.

## **PART 7 - INTERACTION WITH THE MEDIA AS AN OFFICIAL SPOKESPERSON OF THE UNIVERSITY**

29. Only the Vice Chancellor or staff formally authorised by the Vice Chancellor (either generally or on particular matters), may provide official comment to the media on behalf of the University.
30. Only the Chairman of ITPSB may speak to the media on behalf of the University's Board of Directors.
31. All media enquiries relating to University policies, operations and issues received by a staff member must be directed to the Corporate Communications, who will, in consultation with the Vice Chancellor where appropriate, determine a spokesperson to address the enquiry. This spokesperson is then responsible for coordinating the gathering of relevant information and communicating with the media.
32. Any staff member who becomes aware of an issue or event that has the potential to impact significantly on the University's reputation or stakeholder relationships must immediately notify the Corporate Communications. The staff member must not make any comment to the media, even if it is the media who have alerted him or her to the issue/event.

## **PART 8 – EMERGENCIES**

33. Campus Security staff are responsible for notifying the Vice Chancellor, relevant senior staff and the Corporate Communications immediately of any serious security issue or emergency that occurs at the University (for example, an accidental death on campus, a fire, or significant police involvement with a matter connected to the University).

34. The Corporate Communications, in consultation with the Vice Chancellor and any other relevant staff, is responsible for releasing any information to the media about an emergency situation.

## **PART 9 - CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

35. Confidential University information must not be disclosed to the media under any circumstances. Requests for information that is confidential must be referred to the Vice Chancellor's Office and the Corporate Communications, so that they can be considered within the provisions of Personal Data Protection Act 2010 or other relevant acts.
36. Information about individual staff or students may only be given to media with the explicit consent of the individuals concerned, except in exceptional circumstances with guidance from the Corporate Communications.
37. Any staff member who receives a request for information, from the media or any other party, which seem confidential, must forward it immediately to the Vice Chancellor's Office/the Corporate Communications which will respond on behalf of the University.

## **Appendix I**

### **Media Guidelines**

The Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS' Media Policy governs interactions between staff and the media. The guidelines set out in this appendix to the policy provide additional information to assist staff to maintain and develop effective relations with the news media.

#### **Contacting the Corporate Communications**

The Senior Director of Corporate Communications is responsible for media relations at the University and manages this through the Branding & Communications Department. Initial contact with the Corporate Communications can be made through the direct line to the department. In urgent matters, any member of the Corporate Communications will be able to take the initial contact. Staff names and telephone numbers are listed in UTP website:

Academic: <https://www.utp.edu.my/directories/Pages/academic.aspx>

Management: <https://www.utp.edu.my/directories/Pages/management.aspx>

#### **The role of the Branding & Communications Department of Corporate Communications**

The Branding & Communications Department of Corporate Communications coordinates ongoing information-sharing processes between all areas of the University about issues affecting or potentially affecting the University's media and public relations.

The Department is available to help staff manage and co-ordinate the University's media relations. The Department is also a resource to assist staff to make media statements, give interviews and deal with media inquiries, as a way of building media profile for University activities and areas of expertise. The Department is also available to provide staff with media training. Training can be tailored to meet the needs of the individuals or groups involved.

#### **The role of the Corporate Communications**

Corporate Communications provides the University forum for coordinating longer term strategy on media relations. The Division will liaise with relevant communications staff in response to serious media issues or crises. Each Departments in the University should identify a person or people responsible for media relations and ensure that the Corporate Communications is provided with their up-to-date contact details.

#### **Interacting with the Media**

##### **Should you interact?**

Both academic and general staff may only make statements to the media on matters related to the University if they have been given explicit authority to do so by the Corporate Communications or by the Vice Chancellor. Academic staff are encouraged to interact with the media over matters relating to their areas of academic expertise.

##### **Key messages**

When preparing a media strategy, getting ready for an interview or producing information for media, decide what are the main points or "key messages" that you want to get across.

The process of developing key messages helps you to focus on what is important. It can also help you to decide on how best to explain or get across these key messages simply, particularly if the journalist

you are speaking to is in a hurry and/or does not have a good understanding of the area you are talking about.

A useful practice is to write down your key messages and supporting notes beside them that explain the points. Using these to develop media statements or oral comment is preferable to simply supplying a journalist with a large amount of information and hoping they will highlight what you think is important.

For newspaper or radio interviews, it is recommended you have your key messages written down in front of you, along with supporting information. These notes give you something to refer to if your mind goes off track during an interview. However, it is best not to refer to notes during television interviews. So, for TV interviews in particular, it is very useful to do a practice run through with a colleague. (When a radio or TV interview is pre-recorded for a small segment of it to be included in a news story, for example, it is generally fine to stop and start your answer again).

The more frequently you say something during an interview the better the chance it will be reported, so keep repeating the key messages where appropriate. The journalist may not have heard them properly the first time.

It is also a very good idea to anticipate what 'difficult' questions may be asked during the course of an interview and what your response will be. Don't assume media will want to stick to your 'agenda' during the course of an interview.

### **Availability**

Media are more inclined to write a story that best reflects the University's position if they get a response within a reasonable time. That way the journalist concerned has more time to incorporate your views into an article. If they get your response at the last minute they may only have time and space to include a small bit of what you say. However, don't be pressured into hasty responses. Journalists usually understand it will not always be possible to get the requested response or information within their time frame if the reason is explained to them.

### **When talking to media, the following guidelines can be useful for staff:**

1. **Always** make sure who the journalist is and where he or she is from. This information will help you to understand the likely media treatment of the issue. It may also help you to decide whether or not to give the interview.
2. **Before** you answer questions **find out** what they want to know, why they want to know it, who they've spoken to already and what others have said, whether they plan to speak to anyone else, when their deadline is and when the story/item will appear. If the journalist objects to all the questions, explain politely that you're doing your job and ask whether answering the questions is a problem.
3. **Don't** feel obliged to respond immediately. Unless you're sure of your facts, ask for a bit of time to check out/think about the matter and say you'll get back to the reporter by an agreed time. This response enables you to consult with the Corporate Communications if necessary, gather your thoughts and/or clarify information, decide what you will say and what your key messages are. Ask a support person to rehearse you before you call back if you think this will help.

4. **Refer on** any questions that are outside your area of academic expertise unless you have been authorised to make statements on the issue/event by the Corporate Communications or by the Vice Chancellor. If in doubt consult the Corporate Communications.
5. Providing '**off the record**' comment is very risky. Different journalists have different understandings of what 'off the record' means. A useful thought to bear in mind is that if you don't want something reported, don't say it. However, the Corporate Communications can be useful sources of advice if you think giving the journalist 'off the record' comment may be useful.
6. Saying '**no comment**' may give the impression that individuals or the University are not being accountable or not prepared to engage on matters of public interest. But there may be legal or commercial issues, for example, that prevent comment being made now. An example of saying no comment in a helpful way is: "We can't comment in detail on that specific issue at the moment for commercial confidentiality reasons, but we will look to make an announcement once discussions are concluded. We're committed to keeping the public informed of developments as soon as possible."
7. **Don't** assume media know anything about your work. Explain things as simply as possible. It can often be difficult to put complex subjects into simple language. But explaining things in clear words, without resorting to jargon, is the most effective way of ensuring that media clearly understand what you are telling them and that you receive good coverage of your views.
8. If you accidentally give out **too much information** or say something you later think is inappropriate, the Corporate Communications can be used as a source of advice about what to do.

### **Proactively managing bad news**

When we know 'bad news' is coming up, it can be best to:

- Announce it ourselves in a way we control.
- Develop a strategy for what we will say once the news becomes public.
- Be ready to acknowledge fault or say sorry and spell out what, if anything, we will do to correct the situation/make amends.

The Corporate Communications is available to help develop proactive or reactive media strategies.

### **Staff training**

The Corporate Communications will provide staff training in media relations from time to time. Notice of these training sessions will be provided through emails.

### **Contact Information**

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