

King's College London Media Directive

Contact: Alison Denyer, Director of Public Relations, 020 7848 3202, pr@kcl.ac.uk

The role of the Public Relations Department and the Communications and Marketing network, based in Faculties and Departments, is to work with the national and international media to protect and enhance the reputation of the university. By helping members of the university to handle media interest, the Public Relations Department aims to ensure that coverage is accurate, fair and wherever possible, positive.

If you would like any advice on handling specific media enquiries please contact the Public Relations Department. The Department produces the King's Directory of Experts, a tool used by the media to find academics to comment on issues. All academic staff with specific areas of expertise are encouraged to be listed therein. For more information, visit <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/contactus/contact-us>

This policy document outlines to members of staff their responsibilities with regards to dealing with the media. This refers to all broadcast and print media available to the public, and excludes academic journals.

1. The only members of university staff who are authorised to speak to the media on corporate issues are the President & Principal, the Provosts, the Director of External Relations and Director of Public Relations, or specific staff members nominated by the above. If staff receive any questions from the media about university policy (such as admissions procedures or corporate strategy, for instance), these must be referred to the Public Relations Department. Statements are approved by the Director of External Relations, the Senior Vice President (Operations) and the President & Principal.
2. Any media requests which have security implications, or which may be potentially controversial, or could damage the university's reputation with its strategic partners, must be referred, in the first instance, to the Public Relations Department. (These might include, for instance, sensitive issues involving terrorism, the use of animals in research at King's, or licensing for research on human embryos.) In areas where there may be potential repercussions for the university, expert panels will be established of staff who have an awareness of university policy, and will be able to speak with authority about the issues. Help and support is provided by the PR team in such cases, and where necessary, media training will be made available to staff.
3. Digital and social media have become ingrained how we communicate, and the media are no exception. The PR team encourages staff to engage with online publications, in addition to those in print. The media are using new and innovative ways to tell news 24-7, and the PR team are happy to support academic staff communicate via digital and social media. It is a fantastic way to raise the profile of their research and work at King's, and reach a global audience. Staff should consider the King's Social Media Communications policy to help guide them with regards to personal social media accounts.
4. The university welcomes positive publicity as this plays an important role in maintaining the excellent reputation and high profile that we enjoy. As such, academic staff members are encouraged to engage with the media about their areas of expertise. Indeed, it is incumbent upon academic staff to make the results of their research available to a wider public via the media, as this helps fulfil the university's mission of working 'in the service of society'.
5. Staff are requested to inform the Public Relations Department if they are publishing peer-reviewed papers in high-profile journals or presenting newsworthy research at major academic meetings. The Department is always keen to hear about good news stories on which to base press releases or briefings to journalists.

6. When staff are quoted in print or on television or radio, they should be referred to, in the first instance, as being a member of staff of “King’s College London” (ie. membership of an individual centre, school or institute should be secondary).
7. Staff who are contacted directly by journalists and who subsequently appear in the national media are requested to inform the Public Relations Department (pr@kcl.ac.uk). This will help the Department monitor the volume of media coverage that the university receives. The PR Department produces a weekly digest of press cuttings for University staff.
8. Any requests to film on university property should conform to the King’s [filming policy](#). If the proposed filming would take place on property belonging to our partner NHS trusts or involve patients this must be discussed with the relevant Trust press office.
9. Press statements and press releases regarding the university are issued from the Public Relations Department. Any other department that wishes to issue a press release must seek authorisation from the Public Relations Department.
10. Any press releases being issued by external organisations, such as funding bodies, contractors or journals which relate to work being carried out at the university should be signed off by the Public Relations Department.
11. For academics with joint King’s-NHS contracts, it is important that the university Public Relations Department is always informed of any stories that are to be promoted to the media. In some cases it may be appropriate for the press offices of the partner NHS trusts to manage a story’s publicity, particularly if patients are involved; in other circumstances it may be more appropriate for the university Public Relations Department to take a lead. This is particularly relevant when research has been undertaken by University employees and research funding has been managed by the university.
12. In all cases where staff believe that the reputation of the university may be compromised or that the university may receive negative publicity, the Public Relations Department must be informed at the earliest opportunity.
13. Departments (or individuals) in the university that wish to employ external communications staff must seek the prior approval of the Director of External Relations and Director of Public Relations.
14. Insofar as high profile visitors to the university may attract media attention, it is important that the Public Relations Department is informed well in advance of any visits by politicians, controversial figures or campaigners, media celebrities or other VIPs.
15. Members of staff (including visiting academic staff and retired members of staff) are entitled to write letters to the media that relate to their area of study or work, using their university address and title. However, if the letter concerns a personal opinion on a non-academic topic, it may be more appropriate to use a private address. Letters to the press reflecting upon or discussing university policy should only be sent after consultation with the President & Principal.
16. Surveys, questionnaires and the resulting league tables frequently feature in and are commissioned by the media and may impact on the university’s reputation. Members of staff may be contacted and asked to respond at short notice. The Public Relations Department is pleased to offer advice.

Approved by College Committee, April 2012
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