

A2 LEVEL

FACT FILES

Journalism

For first teaching from September 2013

For first AS award in Summer 2014

For first A2 Level award in Summer 2015

Journalism and Ethics



journalism

in the Media and Communications Industry (JMC)



Learning Outcomes

Institutions, Ownership, Law and Regulation in Online, Print and Broadcast Journalism

Students should be able to:

- explain the industry guidelines which broadcast journalists must follow (including the BBC Producers' Guidelines and Ofcom Guidelines);
- analyse and evaluate issues related to the following key debate areas, citing examples from their own study and practice throughout the course; and
- journalism ethics.



Content

Journalism Ethics

(page 12, specification)

News in whatever form must be treated with due **impartiality**, giving due weight to events, opinion and main strands of argument. Every story you write or broadcast should report the facts, tell both sides of the story and be balanced. Do not give your own opinion. Columnists can include their own opinions; reporters do not. As a journalist, your role is to give the public a voice; it is not a channel for you to state your thoughts on the subject. The approach and tone of news stories must reflect recognised editorial values, including a commitment to impartiality.



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Everything must be done to ensure due accuracy in all output. Output, as appropriate to its subject and nature, must be well sourced, based on sound evidence, thoroughly tested and presented in clear precise language. It is important to be open and honest about what isn't known and avoid unfounded **speculation**. Claims, allegations, material facts and other content that cannot be corroborated should normally be attributed.

Audiences should not knowingly and materially be misled. There should be no distortion of known facts, or presentation of invented material as fact or otherwise undermine audiences' trust in content.

Output

When output makes allegations of wrongdoing, iniquity or incompetence or lays out a strong and damaging critique of an individual or institution the presumption is that those criticised should be given a "**right of reply**," that is given a fair opportunity to respond to the allegations. Have a record of any request for a response including dates, times, the name of the person approached and the key elements of the exchange. Describe the allegations in sufficient detail to enable an informed response, and set a fair and appropriate deadline by which to respond. When serious allegations by an anonymous source are broadcast, full timely notes of interviews, conversations and information that provide the basis for the story must be kept, the source must be trust-worthy and an effort must be made to put the allegations to any potentially injured party.



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Live unscripted two-ways should not be used to report allegations. A 'two-way' is a discussion between the presenter of the news programme and a reporter. This means, that when reporting a story that is making allegations of wrong-doing, the facts and details of the story should be written down to ensure the story is accurate. If the story is being broadcast live, then there is more chance of saying something that is incorrect. If the story is pre-recorded, then there is less chance for error.

Contributors expressing contentious views, either through an interview or other means, must be rigorously tested while being given a fair chance to set out their full response to questions. Minority views should be given appropriate space in output; Special considerations apply during the campaigns for elections and referendums and, in some cases, the period running up to campaigns will involve greater sensitivity with regard to being fair to all.

On long-running or continuous **output** due impartiality may be achieved over time by the consistent application of editorial judgement in relevant subject areas.

Doorstepping and interviewing public figures in public places



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When public figures and other people are in the news, they can expect to be the subject of media attention. Doorstepping is when a journalist asks them questions and records the answers for broadcast without prior arrangement as they come and go from buildings, airports and so on.

However, when making allegations about someone or when a journalist wishes to challenge them, and difficulty is found doing so, the following applies: –

Any proposal to doorstep that is, to take them unawares and challenge them with questions, face-to-face, whether

in person or on the phone, where the journalist has tried to make an appointment for an interview with the individual or organisations concerned, must be approved by a senior editorial figure.

Approval will normally only be given when there is evidence of crime or significant wrongdoing and for one, or more, of the following reasons: the subject of a 'doorstep' has failed to respond to repeated requests for interview in connection with the wrongdoing alleged; a request for an interview has been repeatedly refused without good reason; substantial allegations of wrongdoing have been avoided; there is a history of failure to respond to interview requests or refusal to be interviewed.

Reporting catastrophes, major accidents and violent incidents



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There are very few circumstances in which it is justified to broadcast pictures of the moment of death. It is always important to respect the privacy and dignity of the dead. We should never show them gratuitously. We should also avoid the use of close-ups of faces and serious injuries of those who are dead, suffering or in distress.

In the immediate aftermath of an event involving deaths, suffering or distress, the use of more graphic material is normally justified to provide a reasonable account of the full horror, although an evocative script is equally effective in conveying the reality of tragedy and providing context for the materials. However, as the story unfolds, it may become more difficult to justify the continued use of such graphic material.

It is advisable to request interviews with people who are injured or grieving following an accident or disaster, by approaching them through friends, relatives or advisers.

Any proposal to interview a criminal active in, or wanted in, the UK must be referred upwards, to an editor or senior management. Interviews should only proceed if they are clearly editorially justified, for example by eliciting important information or insight. When interviewing criminals, care must be taken to minimise the potential distress this may cause to victims of the crime or their relatives.



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People who may not have committed a crime but whose behaviour is clearly anti-social must not normally be paid for interviews or other contributions about their behaviour.

A clear editorial justification is required for the broadcast of materials related to the identity of anyone under 18 who is involved as a potential defendant in a court case before proceedings are commenced. There may also be legal restrictions once proceedings are 'active,' that means, from the minute the person is arrested do not report anything that could prejudice that person's case in court.

Questions

1. What is the role of the journalist when reporting a story? Explain your answer.
2. Why might a journalist have to do a 'door-step' interview? Explain your answer.
3. What is a 'two-way'?
4. What does a journalist have to consider when reporting death or a catastrophe?
5. Why must journalists keep detailed notes of interviews?
6. What do journalists need to remember if they intend to broadcast allegations from an anonymous source?
7. What does 'active' mean when talking about the courts?