



Christ Church Students' Union

STUDENT MEDIA EDITORIAL POLICY

Officer Champion	President (Student Life)
Staff Champions	Communications Manager Opportunities & Events Manager
Approval bodies and date passed	Board of Trustees, 24th June 2024
To be reviewed by	June 2027

Student Media in Context

Policy Objectives

Editorial Standpoint

Conduct and Behaviour

Editorial Panel

Editorial Control

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1. Student Media in Context

- a. Student Media can include printed newspapers or magazines, online content, television or radio output and is a central part of the student movement. This can be both entertaining and informative, and it provides opportunities for students to gain new experiences and develop their skills.
- b. Student Media also plays a key democratic function – holding the University, the Students' Union, and NUS to account, raising awareness about what they do and supporting the democratic functions of these organisations.
- c. Just as national media outlets are seen as the 'fourth estate' of any society and crucial to informed citizenship, student media outlets are the fourth estate of the student movement – vibrant, high-quality, and engaged student media makes the student movement stronger.
- d. This Policy applies to the Unified news site. Community and Student Radio (CSR) is now operated by Kent Union and is covered by their editorial and compliance arrangements.

2. Policy Objectives

- a. Successful Student Media:
 - i. Is student-led;
 - ii. Includes varied and pluralistic news that appeals to a variety of audiences;
 - iii. Reflects students' interests rather than copy the national news agendas; and
 - iv. Thinks how national issues affect students locally and how local news fits in or affects the national news agenda.
- b. The objective of this Policy is to:

- i. Ensure successful, vibrant and diverse Student Media at Canterbury Christ Church University;
- ii. Ensure Unified is editorially independent from the Union, but operates within the current legal and policy context relevant to the production, publication and dissemination of all forms of media and content;
- iii. Ensure clarity of the relationship between Unified and the Union; and
- iv. Ensure there are robust procedures in place to mitigate risk to the Union, Student Media volunteers, and members of the Christ Church community.

3. Editorial Standpoint

- a. The ethos of Student Media at Christ Church Students' Union is that it should be independent from the Union in terms of editorial control and content. However, as Unified is part-funded and organised under the Union the onus is on the Union to ensure compliance with the current legal and policy context relevant to the production, publication and dissemination of all forms of media and content. The Union therefore has ultimate control of all Student Media content, but only with regard to matters of potential:
 - i. Libel - "a published false statement that is damaging to a person's reputation";
 - ii. Defamation - "the action of damaging the good reputation of someone; slander or libel": and
 - iii. 'Sensitive Material', as detailed in Section 5.
- b. Unified must ensure that published content reflects the interests of students, and duty of care must be considered in respect of the Christ Church community when reporting. Regular communications between the Editor-in-Chief of Unified, the Unified Committee, and the Union should take place to forge a positive relationship and identify relevant content.

4. Conduct and Behaviour

- a. The conduct and behaviour of Student Media Members is regulated by:
 - i. the Bye-Laws of Christ Church Students' Union;
 - ii. The Code of Conduct;
 - iii. The Code of Practice for Societies, and
 - iv. The Unified constitution.
- b. Unified contributors and publications should adhere to Code of Conduct for Journalists as devised by the [National Union of Journalists](#):
 - i. At all times upholds and defends the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed;
 - ii. Strives to ensure that information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair;
 - iii. Does their utmost to correct harmful inaccuracies;
 - iv. Differentiates between fact and opinion;
 - v. Obtains material by honest, straightforward and open means, with the exception of investigations that are both overwhelmingly in the public interest

- and which involve evidence that cannot be obtained by straightforward means;
- vi. Does nothing to intrude into anybody's private life, grief, or distress;
 - vii. Protects the identity of sources who supply information in confidence and material gathered in the course of their work;
 - viii. Resists threats or any other inducements to influence, distort or suppress information and takes no unfair personal advantage of information gained in the course of their duties before the information is public knowledge;
 - ix. Produces no material likely to lead to hatred or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation;
 - x. Does not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse by advertisement any commercial product or service save for the promotion of their own work or of the medium by which they are employed;
 - xi. Shall normally seek the consent of an appropriate adult when interviewing or photographing a child for a story about their welfare; and
 - xii. Avoid plagiarism.
- c. The identity and context of any sudden death should not be revealed due to the potential negative impact on the safety and wellbeing of the friends and family as well as the wider Christ Church Community. In these situations, the [Samaritans Media Guidelines](#) must be followed.
- d. Additional guidelines for reporting on sensitive issues are available through the [Independent Press Standards Organisation \(IPSO\)](#), and should be followed by Unified editors and journalists.
- e. Unified contributors should also be aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities including specific regulations for broadcasters, print and online (or across different media platforms) where appropriate.
- f. Training will be provided by professional journalists where possible in news, features, web-writing, sub-editing and production, radio and TV production and editing, and in the law affecting journalists.

5. Editorial Panel

- a. The Union shall convene the Editorial Panel when required, made up of three persons independent of Christ Church Students' Union and Canterbury Christ Church University. Selection of the Editorial Panel is detailed in the Student Media Editorial Panel Terms of Reference (Appendix 1).
- b. The Editorial Panel will consider the proposed publication or broadcast of sensitive material which:
 - i. Relates to the employment, capability, or performance of Union employees;
 - ii. Makes a judgement about or includes a view on an individual that is potentially open to legal challenge;

- iii. Makes a judgement about or includes a view on an external organisation or company that is potentially open to legal challenge;
- iv. Contravenes an existing Union policy;
- v. Is regarded as having the potential to be in breach of media law;
- vi. May bring the Union into disrepute or constitute a breach of Charity Law; and
- vii. May cause distress to individuals or unduly influence vulnerable people, particularly in the case of reporting on deaths.

6. Editorial Control

- a. All content of all publications and broadcasts shall be considered in the first instance by the Unified Editor-in-Chief who has received appropriate training in media law. It is the responsibility of the Editor-in-Chief to refer any sensitive material, as detailed in Section 5, to the Union for consideration by the Editorial Panel before publication or broadcast.
- b. The Editorial Panel shall be free to take external advice from appropriately qualified persons.
- c. The Editorial Panel will confirm their decision and the reasoning behind their decision, to the Union in the first instance. As the ultimate responsible body the Board of Trustees, taking the decision of the Panel into consideration, reserves the absolute right to refuse publication in extreme circumstances. This decision shall be final and the Unified Editor-in-Chief must adhere to this decision, using agreed take-down procedures where necessary.

7. Complaints

- a. Complaints about or regarding the operation of Unified are to be dealt with via the Editor-in Chief in the first instance.
- b. If the complainant is still not satisfied the complaint shall be referred to be dealt with as per the Bye-Laws of Christ Church Students' Union.

Appendix 1

STUDENT MEDIA EDITORIAL PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

The ethos of Student Media at Christ Church Students' Union is that it should be independent from the Union in terms of editorial control and content. However, as Unified is part-funded and organised under the Union the onus is on the Union to ensure compliance with the current legal and policy context relevant to the production, publication and dissemination of all forms of media and content by Unified. The Union therefore has ultimate control of Unicontent, but only with regard to matters of potential libel, defamation, and 'Sensitive Material' as detailed in Section 5 of the Student Media Editorial Policy.

The Panel has delegated responsibility on behalf of the Board of Trustees for ensuring the Union's student media complies with relevant legislation and regulations and acts in accordance with the Union's mission, vision and values.

Aims of the Panel

To use their professional judgement to undertake the responsibility and authority given by the Board of Trustees to:

- Promote a culture of accountability and transparency throughout the Union's student media operations; and
- Scrutinise, review, and consider the proposed publication of sensitive material by Unified as referred under the Union's Student Media Editorial Policy.

Role of the Panel

- To provide advice and support to the Editor-in-Chief and elected committee of Unified.
- To advise the Editor-in-Chief of any matter that threatens or carries a serious risk to the Union and of any actions necessary to mitigate such risk.
- To offer an ultimate port of call for any urgent or highly sensitive concerns raised by the Editor-in-Chief in respect of the current legal, reputational, and policy context relevant to the production, publication and dissemination of all forms of media and content.
- The Panel is free to take external advice from appropriately qualified persons.
- To consult with Christ Church Students' Union, its members, and the University of their views before coming to a final conclusion.
- To review these Terms of Reference periodically and make any recommendations to the Union's Board of Trustees.
- To receive an annual report on the activities of the Union's student media outlets.

Membership

The Panel shall be made up of three persons independent of Christ Church Students' Union and Canterbury Christ Church University and chaired by a member of the Union's Board of Trustees.

Membership of any Panel shall be selected from a pool of professional persons identified by the Union, currently or recently working in the communications industry, including journalism.

Members of the Editorial Panel pool will be required to undertake Media Law training (provided by professional journalists where possible) as all others involved in the final decision making process covering, but not exclusive to; defamation, libel, slander, and the reporting of deaths and suicides.

Panel Resources

- Any management resources necessary to achieve the Panel's aims.
- Professional advice as required, including legal advice.

Panel Administration

- Quorum shall be at least three panellists and a selected Board of Trustees member as Chair.
- The Panel can meet virtually and/or communicate electronically to make a determination. Records of these discussions must be kept.
- Meetings of the Panel will be minuted by the Union.
- The Panel has the right to ask those 'in attendance' to leave, especially during presentations by, or discussions with, external advisors.
- The Panel will make the final decision on publication of content of a sensitive nature which must be adhered to by the student media members, their elected committees with decisions to be implemented by the Editor-in-Chief.
- The Chair will be responsible for liaising with other parties and for communicating the final decision of the Panel outcomes.