

Media policy

Background

Education Scotland places a high value on quality media coverage.

The purpose of this document is to set out Education Scotland's media policy and to provide guidance for staff on how to deal with approaches from the media as well as using the media to gain positive coverage for the work of our organisation. There is separate guidance on social media.

As a public body Education Scotland is committed to openness and accountability. We are in a high profile position as the national body tasked with overseeing education across all sectors. We engage with the media on an ongoing basis both proactively and reactively in order to push information into the public sphere and to our stakeholders, as well as protecting and enhancing our reputation.

With a very high profile remit, we are constantly under public and media scrutiny.

It is important that we maintain good working relations with the media, ensuring our messages are consistent and timely and that they reflect our corporate image. In order to be able to do this we need to take a coordinated approach to media activity.

Education Scotland staff and the media

The success of any organisation is largely dependent upon good quality two-way communication, which is also pivotal in helping achieve our wider ambitions.

The Communications team is made up of professionals who are skilled in this area and can provide advice and support to you in communicating your key messages.

Proactive publicity and coordination

Communications has a role to play in publicising the positive work of Education Scotland.

In order for our key stakeholders to 'hear' our messages we will need to use a broad range of tools and channels to communicate these. Media is key channel due to its high profile nature and the value placed on it by the general public, politicians and other stakeholders.

Each piece of work or project will have specific objectives. Communications objectives should be aligned to these with specific key messages worked up and agreed as part of this process. The communications team can provide you with support around all of this.

It is those key messages we want to see appearing in the media. In order to do so we need to provide newsworthy content that warrants coverage.

Newsworthy content

Events, competitions, awards, publications, consultations and many other planned work provide good opportunity to do this. Many of you already involve communications colleagues in this work which produces good results. The sooner communications colleagues can be made aware of these key events the better in terms of planning and preparation.

Many specialist media e.g. the Times Educational Supplement (Scotland) (TES), Holyrood Magazine and dedicated education correspondents look for another level of engagement. This is mainly around our day-to-day work and particularly around changes and innovation. Therefore communications staff rely on you to highlight to us the positive work and changes taking place that could influence how people are taught and learn.

How the communications team can help.

The team can work with you to identify key targets, messages and campaigns to highlight through the media and we would encourage you to notify us of any new and innovative developments or resources you are working on even if it's only to have an initial chat about it.

Importantly, the communications team also has a strong overview of political issues that can affect projects, publicity and coverage. As well as this they maintain a communications planner which is shared with external key partners to aid in planning and to avoid clashes.

The team can help you promote your area of work by preparing press releases and other collateral such as social media posts. All staff should seek the advice and support of the communications team before undertaking any media engagement.

Reactive media handling

We regularly receive ad hoc media enquiries and interview requests, and these can produce great opportunities to get our news and messages. If you receive a request for information or interview please contact a member of the communications team to discuss further and agree an approach. Similarly if a member of the press calls you it is best to direct them to our communications team at media@educationscotland.gov.uk

Reactive media handling can range from looking for our opinion on a news story to looking for a response to a criticism of us or our work. These requests require careful handling and are the sole responsibility of the communications team working in conjunction with senior management to agree response and approaches. Senior management are required to 'sign-off' all publically available material and they are also responsible for deciding who within the organisation are to act as named spokespeople.

Media training

Our communications team will be happy to come and speak to you about media handling in general but we also provide access to external media training for colleagues where it is appropriate for them to participate in media training.

You and the media

In your day-to-day work you will have responsibility for handling documentation and authoring work that will eventually reach the public domain. Be aware that anything that is communicated outside our organisation (and even sometimes only within our organisation) could be subject to media scrutiny.

It is worth bearing this in mind when drafting reports or publications, speaking at conferences etc, particularly those which will be well read and used by many external individuals and organisations.

In preparing these types of communications you should try and bear this in mind and ensure that where possible inflammatory or blatant statements should be avoided where possible unless clearly required.

In dealing with stakeholders you may be asked to contribute to their publicity or press release and this is another good opportunity to profile our good work and that of our partners. Please notify the communications team of these opportunities when they arise to ensure key messages are being used and the overview and planning as mentioned previously is taking place.

If you would like to discuss this further with a member of the communications team before you start a piece of work please do get in touch. As the old PR adage goes, don't put anything in an email that you wouldn't want to see on the front page of a newspaper!

Process graph for interview requests/media enquiries

