

Public Comment Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy specifies the rights and responsibilities of Macquarie University staff when commenting in public forums including the media and Social Media platforms on matters related to their field of academic expertise.

Background

(2) The dissemination of knowledge to society is a key responsibility of universities. Macquarie University encourages its academic and professional staff and Higher Degree Research students (HDR Students) to contribute to public commentary and debate on the basis of their professional competence without unreasonable interference and restriction.

(3) The associated rights and responsibilities of academic freedom are specified in the University's [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy](#).

Scope

(4) This Policy applies to all academic and professional staff and HDR Students of Macquarie University, including full-time, part-time, casual and fixed-term staff, and holders of Emeritus, Honorary, Visiting, Adjunct, Conjoint, and Clinical appointments.

Section 2 - Policy

Coverage

(5) Staff and HDR Students must comply with University policies including this Policy, the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#), and the [Staff Code of Conduct](#) or [Student Code of Conduct](#), as applicable.

(6) This Policy applies to public comment in any medium where:

- a. it might be reasonably expected that the publication or circulation of the comment will spread to the community at large or to a particular community or group, whatever the original intention or audience. This includes but is not limited to: public speaking engagements; comments in newspapers or on radio and television; comments in web-based communications such as websites and Social Media; and expressions of views in letters to newspapers or in books, journals or notices; and
- b. the comment is made by a member of staff or an HDR Student of the University.

Public Comment in a Corporate Capacity

(7) The Vice-Chancellor and members of the Executive Group are principal spokespersons at Macquarie University on matters of policy, management and corporate issues. The Director, Communications and the Communications team act as the interface between the University and external media, with input from subject matter expert(s) as appropriate.

Comment in a Professional Capacity

(8) Macquarie University encourages its staff and HDR Students to participate in public debate, provide submissions to government, and be available to the media for comment on matters within their academic or professional expertise.

(9) When making public comment or submissions to government or public inquiries in a professional capacity, staff and HDR students should identify themselves using their University title, position, and / or qualifications. Staff and HDR students may make such comment or submissions using University letterhead and / or a University address / email.

(10) Staff and HDR students interviewed on matters on the basis of their academic expertise and professional competence do not need prior authorisation from the University, unless the logistics of these activities involves a possible disruption to normal operations. Staff and HDR students are encouraged to seek media training from the Communications team prior to engaging with media.

(11) University staff and HDR students must adhere to professional standards and University policies and procedures where they are making public comment in a professional capacity.

Comment in a Private Capacity

(12) The University does not limit staff or HDR students making public comment in a personal capacity. In these circumstances, staff and students should avoid using their Macquarie title, position or qualifications in a manner which implies or suggests the comment is made in their professional capacity or as a spokesperson for the University.

Information

(13) Staff and students must maintain the confidentiality, integrity, and security of University information to which they have access.

Releases

(14) Official Macquarie University media releases are issued only by Group Marketing upon approval from the relevant member of the Executive Group, Chief Marketing Officer, or Director, Communications.

Compliance and Breaches

(15) This Policy details the circumstances when public comment, including the making of submissions to government or public inquiries, is permitted. Any public comment by staff or HDR students outside the permissions in this Policy is not permitted and will be considered a breach of the Policy.

(16) Failure to comply with this Policy or related procedures may result in disciplinary action.

Section 3 - Procedures

(17) Nil.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(18) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

(19) The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Policy:

- a. Social Media means websites and digital communication platforms or applications that allow people to interact, comment, share digital media and participate in discussions, as otherwise defined in the [Social Media Policy](#).

Status and Details

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Effective Date	22nd February 2021
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Responsible Executive	S. Bruce Downton Vice-Chancellor
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