



**Mangosuthu
University of Technology**

TITLE	MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY
POLICY OWNER	VICE-CHANCELLOR
APPROVAL AUTHORITY	COUNCIL
OVERSEEING COMMITTEE(S)	FACULTY BOARDS → SENATE → COUNCIL
POLICY NUMBER	AD001/2018 CA
LATEST APPROVAL DATE	28 MARCH 2018
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POLICY STATEMENT

The policy intends to promote effective communication with the media about the University's mission and activities and compliance with University policies, laws and regulations.

MANAGEMENT CONTROL PAGE

Document management control

1. This document is the property of the Mangosuthu University of Technology. It contains information that is public to the university community and can be used by outside parties so long as they acknowledge their source.
2. This document has gone through the following mandated development and approval process as determined through the operation of the MUT Delegations of Authority Framework.

DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENT APPROVAL PROCESS		
COMMITTEES	COMMENTS	DATE OF RECOMMENDATION/ APPROVAL
REGISTRAR	Not Applicable	
EMC	Supported	March 2017
FACULTY BOARDS	Supported	15-17 August 2017
SENATE	Supported	06 March 2018
COUNCIL COMMITTEES		
COUNCIL	Approved	28 March 2018

POLICY HISTORY		
NAME OF THE OLD POLICY	POLICY NUMBER	APPROVAL OR LATEST AMENDMENT DATE

REFERENCES FOR THIS POLICY

1.	City of Victor Harbour Media Policy, 2010;
2.	The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No: 108 Of 1996);
3.	The Human Resource Council (HSRC) Media Policy, 2005;
4.	The MUT Code of Conduct for Staff;
5.	Social Media Policy Template by Eric Schwartzman, 2010.
6.	https://www.northeastern.edu/policies/pdfs/Policy_on_Media_Relations.pdf

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1. **RATIONALE**

The rationale for the Media Relations policy is to enable MUT to responsively and proactively accomplish the foundation of good media relations, which is the coordination, uniformity, accuracy and timeliness of the information released. At MUT, the Media Relations policy sets the tone for communication between the media and MUT staff, students, and Service Providers and/or other Stakeholders. It establishes the basis for the desired relationship with local, regional, national and international media, one that is open, effective and positive and supports MUT's core activities of teaching, learning, research, community engagement as well as support services.

The intention of this policy is not to curb freedom of speech at MUT. Rather, it seeks to manage communications between MUT and the media as well as to achieve MUT's communications goals.

MUT has a proactive and progressive relationship with the media. This relationship is drawn from the Marketing and Communications principles of:

- i. Openness and transparency;
- ii. Centralised messages;
- iii. Clear, consistent and focussed messages; and
- iv. The MUT staff, students, service providers, and the media representatives, assured of receiving equal treatment on information dissemination.

1.1 **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY**

- i. The purpose of the policy on Media Relations is to provide a framework that will guide Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) in offering responsible, constructive and effective communications with the Media. Media relations will best serve MUT by:
 - a) Informing the public of what MUT can do for them;
 - b) Promoting MUT's achievement, activities and significant events;
 - c) Expanding the general visibility of the University; and
 - d) Ensuring that accurate information is conveyed to the public regarding incidents and issues of a controversial and/or sensitive nature.
- ii. The objectives of the Media Relations Policy are:
 - a) To establish practical, reasonable and enforceable guidelines by which MUT staff, students and service providers can conduct responsible, constructive media engagement in both official and unofficial capacities;
 - b) To regulate interaction, particularly on public expression of uninformed comment between MUT and the media with a view to protecting the image, integrity and reputation of the University;
 - c) To ensure that information contained in communications with MUT staff, students, service providers and all forms of public media is consistent, accurate, fair and timely;

- d) To provide guidance to all those who will be governed by the Media Relations Policy and related procedures with regard to the release of controversial and/or sensitive information;
- e) To prepare the MUT community for utilisation of media channels appropriately, particularly in the event of a crisis, a disaster or an emergency;
- f) To protect the MUT community from violating media protocol, laws, rules, regulations and procedures through media channels;
- g) To guide the University in its publication of its special accomplishments, events of significance, activities, programmes and plans in all forms of public media; and
- h) To reinforce the MUT's existing media relations corporate culture.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

2.1 Communications

Communications will mean all forms of communication with another person(s). Communications will include any verbal, written and physical forms of communication that reach large numbers of people.

2.2 Controversial Issues

Controversial issues will mean issues that form the basis of heated debate, often identified to provoke a strong emotional response.

2.3 Crisis

A crisis will be defined as any emergency or controversy that could negatively affect the public perception or reputation of the University. An emergency includes fires, accidents, explosion and other weather-related incidents and natural disasters. Controversy includes crimes against the university and inappropriate conduct by staff, students and/or service providers, suicides, MUT community demonstrations, academic freedom issues, fiscal irregularities, personnel issues and any other matter that the University deems of a sensitive nature.

2.4 Media

Media will mean communication by use of all forms of public media and all tools used to store and deliver information or data. This will include advertising media, broadcast media, digital media, electronic media, hypermedia, mass media, multimedia, new media, news media, print media, published media, recording media and social media.

2.5 University

University will mean Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT).

3. **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all MUT staff, students, and service providers and refers to all forms of public media (print, virtual and electronic).

4. **POLICY PRINCIPLES**

This policy is guided by the following principles:

- 4.1 The University's desire to strike a balance between an individual staff, student or service provider's constitutional right to free speech and the right of MUT to preserve and protect its image and reputation as an autonomous institution that will not be defamed by:
- a) Incorrect and socially unacceptable language;
 - b) Improper honouring of qualifications alleged to be granted by MUT;
 - c) Incorrect messages and distorted facts;
 - d) Conflicting issues and messages; and
 - e) The unprofessional managing of the media system;

Members of the MUT staff, students, and service providers will be free to respond to the media, within the provisions of this policy, to effectively manage and protect the University's confidential information and affairs related to their contribution towards the accomplishment of the University's core activities and/or the university's expertise in artefacts and/or literary work. However, this response will be managed by the MarComms department:

- 4.2 The Senior Director: Marketing and Communications (MarComms) will serve as the official University spokesperson and thus will convey the official University's position on crisis issues and/or issues of general University-wide impact, significance, or on situations that are of a particularly controversial or sensitive nature. All media inquiries about such matters will be referred to him/her or to a Vice-Chancellor's spokesperson designate.
- 4.2.1 The Vice-Chancellor (VC) or designated Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) will chair all press briefings about all major announcements regarding controversial issues and/or crises; and
- 4.2.2 A Media Publications and Relations Officer will facilitate the relationship between the University and the media on campus.
- 4.3 Members of the MUT staff, students, and service providers will be free to respond to the media, within the provisions of this policy, to effectively manage and protect the University's confidential information and affairs related to their contribution towards the accomplishment of the University's core activities and/or the university's expertise in artefacts and/or literary work. However, this response will be managed by the MarComms department.
- 4.3.1 A contract member of staff, student, or service provider will notify the appropriate MarComms media specialist/publications and relations officer who will become directly involved in the entire communications process to ensure a coordinated, accurate, fair and consistent University response. Similarly, any ideas for articles/literary work or pieces of artwork that could positively or

negatively, portray the University, its work or its community will be, directed to the appropriate MarComms media specialist/publications and relations officer.

- 4.3.2 All media enquiries whether they involve legal issues, personnel issues, University integrity such as ethics or issues that may result in harm to others, controversial issues or crisis, will be referred to the Senior Director: MarComms.
 - 4.3.3 All media enquiries that involve affairs of a specific staff member and payroll services will be, referred to the Human Resources and Development department only by the Senior Director: MarComms;
 - 4.3.4 All media enquiries that involve information about a specific student's position will be referred to the office of the Dean of Students only by the Senior Director: MarComms;
 - 4.3.5 All media enquiries that involve affairs of a specific service provider will be, referred to the Legal Services department only by the Senior Director: MarComms; and
 - 4.3.6 Parents or guardians of persons under 18 years of age who have been identified among MUT students and/or among the MUT community engagement programmes' learners, for involvement in the media, will sign a consent form before such minors engage in MUT's videotape, film, photograph or interview activities; and
- 4.4 Media representatives on campus will always be accompanied by the Senior Director: MarComms, and/or his/her two officially designated MarComms' staff who, are journalists by profession. This action is aimed at reassuring the media representatives that they are welcome at the University, and at facilitating smoothly their purpose and mission, but not to censor or intimidate them in any manner.

5. GOVERNANCE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND AUTHORITY

- 5.1 The Vice-Chancellor will take overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy on media remains a source of pride to the institution and take account of all major announcements regarding controversial issues and/or crisis about the University.
- 5.2 The Office of the Senior Director: MarComms will coordinate media relations activities for the University and thus act as the official news source and the principal contact for all forms of communication between the University and the Media representatives; MUT staff and students may not use the university e-mail to submit or make personal statement to the media. The Senior Director: MarComms is further responsible for initiating and responding to media contacts and requests, and for managing those interactions. Accordingly, **all staff members** are required to coordinate with the marketing and Communications Office before responding to a press/media inquiry.
- 5.3 The **individual MUT staff**, students and service providers will be responsible for familiarising themselves with and ensuring that they abide by the provisions of this policy at all times;

5.4 The **Academic members** are encouraged to speak with the media on issues relevant to their academic discipline or research. In communicating with the media, academic members are also encouraged to coordinate with the Marketing and Communications Division for guidance or assistance on the most effective strategies regarding media requests for comments, and the promotion of new research and published work.

5.5 All **line managers** in their individual departments/units will be responsible for ensuring that this policy and related procedures are communicated and followed consistently, in their operations;

6. **POLICY CONTEXT**

This policy is informed by the following documents:

6.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No: 108 Of 1996);

6.3 The MUT Code of Conduct for Staff

6.4 The MUT Emergency Policy

7. **VIOLATION**

Non-compliance with this policy might damage the MUT's reputation and/or cause it to be prejudiced and to suffer damages and/or losses. Any non-compliance will be treated as serious and may result in disciplinary action.

8. **POLICY REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every five years in line with the University Strategy, and when there are changes to the internal or external operating environment, including legislation and other legal prescripts.