

POLICY 1.40 – Release of Information to the Media

Policy Category: General
Effective Date: January 26, 2006
Supersedes: December 12, 2000

POLICY

1.00 The University will endeavor to provide prompt and accurate information to the media.

Media requests regarding the affairs/administration of the University and/or the President's Office are coordinated through the Department of Communications & Public Affairs (C&PA). C&PA is also responsible for:

- Issuing media releases regarding University affairs/administration
- Assignment of spokesperson(s) on matters related to University affairs/administration
- Communications with the media during times of crisis.

When provision of information to the media involves release of University records or the release of personal information, current privacy and access to information legislation, and regulations and/or policies of the University of Western Ontario will apply.

2.00 While this policy might be described as an "Open Communications Policy", not all of the University's affairs should be subject to news media scrutiny at any time, for any reason. There may be matters, either because they are still under consideration by an administrative unit, or by the Board of Governors or Senate, that would be inappropriate to release publicly. As a general rule, the University will not release information of a personal nature which violates an existing personnel policy unless such release has been authorized by the individual(s).

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

3.00 Although it is not possible to set down arbitrary policies concerning the release of information, the following guidelines are recommended.

3.01 Requests for Information Initiated by News Media

Subject to the above, the University will make reasonable effort to provide information requested by the news media. Normally such information will be provided by an administrative head, such as a dean or department or budget unit head, although this function may be delegated to a subordinate. Information already in the public domain (i.e., already made public) may be released by the administrative officer with the relevant administrative responsibility.

In instances where the request by the news media is for more than factual information or information already in the public domain, and touches on matters relating to policy interpretation, the question should be referred to the appropriate

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administrative officer, who may refer the question to a Vice-President or the President. If guidance is needed, the matter may be referred to the Department of Communications and Public Affairs who will provide advice.

3.02 Information Released by the University

Release of information to the news media, except in response to queries from the media, will generally be the responsibility of the Department of Communications and Public Affairs. All press releases will be issued through the Department of Communications and Public Affairs unless alternate prior arrangements have been made with that Department.

In deciding what matters should be issued in press release form, the Department of Communications and Public Affairs will be the final authority on an item's newsworthiness, and on the appropriate journalistic style. The Department of Communications and Public Affairs will normally refer the drafts of official University announcements to the appropriate department head, Dean, Vice-President or the President.

3.03 Campus Media

For purposes of this policy, campus news media such as Western News, the Gazette, and CHRW Radio should be considered as having the same status as off-campus media, and should be shown the same consideration with respect to the release of information. In cases where one of these media requests information, the guidelines set out above shall apply.