



Policy Title – Code of Ethics for Student Publication
Approving Body: Executive Director
Responsible Manager(s): Senior Director, Operations
Effective Date: May 14, 2025

1. Policy Overview

- 1.1. WUSA¹ recognizes that student publications can only be effective in their aims and objectives if their publications are credible and respected. It is the responsibility of student publications² to serve as a watchdog of the student government, the University of Waterloo, and the broader University community as it affects students. This policy provides guidelines on the minimal level of responsibility and ethical behaviour that every student publication should strive for.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all undergraduate student publications (including any chartered/constituted student newspapers) at the University of Waterloo.

3. Editorial Independence

- 3.1. Student publications will be editorially independent and organizationally autonomous from the Publisher (WUSA). Staff supporting student publications shall be informed of this requirement to ensure they do not interfere with editorial processes, except in cases where a publication is about to release content that could result in potential legal issues, reputational harm, or violations of organizational policies.
- 3.2. WUSA shall provide high-level direction to each student publication. The day-to-day operations, publishing and management shall however be administered in accordance with the governing document of the relevant student publication.
- 3.3. Any issues related to a student publication shall be addressed by WUSA's Publication Manager. If the Publication Manager is unable to resolve the issue or if the resolution is deemed unsatisfactory, the matter will be escalated to the Senior Director Operations. If necessary, further escalation may be made to the Executive Director.
- 3.4. An Editorial Board, consisting of the Executive Editors of various student publications, will be responsible for developing guidelines for student publications in accordance with this Code of Ethics.

¹ Federation of Students, University of Waterloo operating as the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA)

² Student publications do not include WUSA's internal, directly managed communications (i.e. those administered by the Communications & Media Relations team)

4. Unbiased and Inclusiveness

- 4.1. All student publications should foster an environment of inclusiveness for all, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, disabilities, or gender. student publications will not refer to a person's race, colour, or religion unless it is relevant to the story, and will avoid stereotypes of race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or social status.
- 4.2. Bias or prejudice against members of a marginalized group should have no place in student publications. Student publications should instead seek to publish material which helps disperse such prejudices in its readership.
- 4.3. Publishing material intended to promote hatred or violence against any group or person is unethical and strictly prohibited.
- 4.4. All student publications must be free of any obligation to any interest other than informing and serving Waterloo students, including their readership's right to know.
- 4.5. To be impartial does not require student publications to be unquestioning or to refrain from editorial expression. All student publications must maintain a clear distinction for the reader between news and opinion. Articles that contain explicit opinion or personal interpretation should be clearly identified.
- 4.6. Student publications must make a tireless effort to avoid conflict of interest in a story. Conflicts of interest, biases, or the appearance thereof, must be avoided in all instances to maintain a high standard of journalism.

5. Fairness, Accuracy, and Transparency

- 5.1. Reporting must be fair, accurate, honest, and in context. When mistakes are made, they should be corrected, and facts must not be ignored or tempered for the publication's or individual's own interests. The publication should rectify in print, at the first available opportunity, all culpable mistakes, recognizing its responsibility for everything published. These corrections should be in a position of prominence comparable to the one in which the original error appeared.
- 5.2. Student publications should not falsify information or documents, nor distort or misrepresent facts, whether purposefully or through negligence.
- 5.3. Student publications should not plagiarize material from other writers or other media, nor should they take facts from other sources without corroboration.

- 5.4. Student publications should not report unsubstantiated opinions as fact, condemn persons or groups by innuendo or hearsay, or distort meaning by over or under-emphasis, or by placing facts or quotations out of context, or by using headlines not warranted by the text.
- 5.5. Student publications should have the freedom and the responsibility to protect the anonymity of sources to whom they have given such assurances.
- 5.6. There can be multiple sides to every news story. A duty of responsible student publications is to seek information from various sources and perspectives and appropriately acknowledge sides of any controversy or dispute. Every effort must be made to contact all sides and to notify the readership if one side did not wish to comment. Satire, parody, and opinion pieces shall be exempt from the requirement for balanced coverage.
- 5.7. Student publications' staff and volunteers should clearly identify themselves as members of a student publication to avoid misleading sources in any interviewing context. Reporters should only go undercover in rare cases when the public interest justifies it as a last resort.
- 5.8. Typically, use of anonymous sources shall be avoided. If anonymous sources are used, reporters will independently corroborate facts. Anonymous sources shall not be permitted to make malicious and destructive comments about individuals or organizations. Fairness also requires that sources of information should be identified, except when there is a clear and pressing reason to protect their anonymity.
- 5.9. Persons publicly accused should promptly be given the opportunity to respond.

6. Privacy and Legal Responsibilities

- 6.1. Student publications should consistently respect the dignity, privacy, freedoms, and well-being of the people encountered while gathering and presenting information. All parties have a right to privacy and at times confidentiality under the law, which may arise from time to time require care and due consideration. There are inevitable conflicts between the right to privacy or confidentiality and the public good or the right to be informed about the conduct of public affairs. Each case should therefore be judged in the light of common sense and humanity.
- 6.2. Publications will refrain from publishing, without consent, the names of the victims of crimes which carry a social stigma.

- 6.3. Individuals who wish to request the removal of specific content can do so by submitting a formal request providing details of the content to be removed and why the content should be removed.
- 6.4. All content removal requests will be promptly acknowledged, and a thorough evaluation process will be initiated which will consider legal requirements, ethical considerations, and journalistic integrity when assessing each request. The requester will be notified generally of the decision within 30 days with justifications provided if the request is denied.
- 6.5. Student publications must strive to uphold the same high standards as professional journalists and will at all times comply with applicable laws and regulations.

7. Insurance and Risk Assessment

- 7.1. Student publications shall maintain appropriate insurance coverage (e.g. general liability insurance and professional liability insurance) to mitigate potential financial losses resulting from unforeseen events.
- 7.2. Publication shall regularly conduct thorough risk assessments to identify potential hazards and implement appropriate preventive measures.

8. Affiliations and External Organizations

- 8.1. Editors of student publications may not be a representative of a political party or be involved with organizing events for political parties on campus, without public disclosure of the potential conflicts of interest this may create reported to WUSA's Publications Manager.
- 8.2. Furthermore, contributors to a student publication should disclose to the Executive Editor or Editorial Board of the respective student publication, any relevant affiliations to organizations which may cause their contribution to appear biased.

9. Compliance and Enforcement

- 9.1. Compliance with this policy is mandatory and failure to comply with the provisions of this policy may expose WUSA to significant risks, including but not limited to: operational; legal/regulatory; financial; reputational; safety and security risks. Non-compliance may therefore lead to the enforcement of disciplinary measures such as warnings, suspension, or termination, depending on the severity of the violation.
- 9.2. Anyone who becomes aware of a violation or potential violation of this policy is required to promptly report the issue to their manager, or through the whistleblower or reporting mechanism detailed in this policy.

[Ethics Guidelines v2023](#)

Appendix A