

Media Interaction Guidance

Purpose:

This document outlines guidelines for staff and associates when interacting with media representatives (including broadcast, print, and online journalism) to minimise risks and ensure consistent and accurate representation of the organisation.

Scope:

This guidance applies to all interactions with media, whether initiated by a direct approach from a journalist or outlet, by the Communications team, or by your own activity. It includes (but is not limited to) interviews, background briefings, providing comments, and responding to inquiries. This policy applies to all staff, consultants, freelancers, and Associate Fellows as well as volunteers (including trustees) in both a professional and personal capacity when their affiliation with the organisation is known or could be inferred.

Before engaging with the media, you must read this policy, which contains guidance that will help you adhere to our standards.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and we may amend it at any time.

Why engage with media:

Engaging with the media is a crucial aspect of disseminating our research, meeting funder's objectives and furthering our charitable purposes. Through appearances in the media from our staff and associates, we can increase public understanding of key issues, contribute to informed debate, and enhance our reputation.

By sharing their knowledge and expertise with journalists, staff and Associates play a vital role in presenting RUSI to the outside world and can also raise their own profile, potentially generating further opportunities for work or other media engagements. It is essential to approach media engagement strategically and responsibly, in line with this guidance, to maximize its benefits and minimize potential risks.

Although engaging with the media is an important part of a researchers' role and can be why an Associate affiliation has been offered to non-members of staff, it is not mandatory and it's recognised that it can be time consuming.

Approaches from and to media and journalists and involvement of the Communications team:

- **Inform the Communications Team:** Preferably before, but at least after, any approach please let the Communications Team (Media Relations Manager, Director of Communications and RUSI Press Office email (rusip@rusi.org)) know of any engagement you've undertaken. This gives the team the fullest possible picture of the media landscape, can help coordinate approaches to other staff or associates and enable us to amplify activity that aligns with the wider priorities of the Institute
- **Coordinate outreach:** If you are thinking of engaging with media proactively, either as part of a project or on a standalone topic, please talk to the communications team first. The team can advise on the best way to secure media interest.
- **Please Do Not Ignore Approaches:** If it's an approach you're not interested in, or you would prefer not to engage with that particular journalist again, please either respond directly to the journalist with the press office on cc, or pass to the press office and ask the Communications Team to respond. Comms are always happy to act as a first point of contact.

Representing your work for RUSI vs. Representing RUSI

Although research staff are encouraged to engage with the media in relation to their work, media appearances *about RUSI* – i.e. about the Institute as a whole, rather than your individual work or expertise, should not be made without consulting the Communications Director and SMT.

Key Principles for Media Interaction:

- **Training:** To ensure you are confident and that your interactions with the media go smoothly, you should receive training. The Communications Team and HR stage periodic training. Please contact both, if you feel you would benefit from this.
- **Make your Affiliation Clear:** Discuss with the journalist or producer how you will be referenced in any article or TV appearance. Associates especially, should be clear about how they will be presented and should avoid giving the impression that they are employed directly by the Institute. Equally, however, if the appearance has been arranged through RUSI, the Associate should do everything possible to ensure that that affiliation is recognised.
- **Be Professional and Respectful:** Maintain a professional and courteous demeanour at all times, even if the questioning is challenging. Avoid jargon, be clear and concise, and respect deadlines.
- **Consider the Audience:** Remember that your words will be interpreted by a wide audience. Be mindful of the language you use and avoid anything that could be perceived as offensive, discriminatory, or misrepresentative of the organisation's values.
- **Be Mindful of Body Language (for Broadcast):** Your non-verbal cues can convey as much as your words. Maintain appropriate eye contact, posture, and facial expressions.
- **Be Aware of the Impact:** Understand that your comments can have a significant impact on RUSI's reputation. Consider the potential consequences of your words before you speak.
- **Confidentiality:** Do not disclose any confidential or sensitive information that could harm RUSI, or our funders.
- **Off the Record:** Exercise extreme caution when speaking "off the record." Understand that there is no guarantee a journalist will respect this request. If in doubt, do not share information you wouldn't want to see attributed to you.
- **Social Media and Media Interactions:** Be mindful that your social media activity can be seen by journalists and may be quoted or referenced in their reporting. Ensure your personal social media activity aligns with the organisation's values and this guidance.

Dealing with Mistakes or Misquotes:

Inform the Communications Team Immediately: If you believe you have made a factual error during a media interaction or if you think you have been misquoted in a published piece, notify the Communications Team as soon as possible. Do not attempt to contact the journalist or issue a correction yourself.

For further guidance:

Please contact RUSI's media relations manager (Jim McLean) or communications director (Simon Brooks)

Last updated:

This document was last reviewed on 22 May 2025