Using the Media

Aim of this document

This document sets out how you can use the media as part of your campaign, what different media sources are available to you and how to get the best out of every media opportunity you have access to.

Why would you use the media as part of a campaign?

Successful campaigning is about getting people and institutions to change. This often depends on mobilising people and getting their support to persuade decision-makers to change their policies and practices. The media are critical in getting your campaign message out and getting people on side as part of your campaign.

You can always use social media channels to multiple the impact of your media coverage. Check out the ‘Using social media’ tactics sheet for more information.

What kinds of media could you use?

‘The media’ can cover all sorts of different things, including all our KCLSU student media groups which you can find on our website kclsu.org/getinvolved/studentmedia

- Press releases – this often cover news events or campaign developments that you can write and then send out to media outlets so that they have all the essential information.
- Letters to editor – Letter pages are some of the most read in newspapers, particularly local and national papers, and can be a great way to succinctly get your campaigns message across.
- Blogs – these are often written from a personal perspective and can share personal stories of those that are campaigning.
- Radio and television interviews – A personal interview with a campaigner can be a great way to get a personal take on a campaign and share a personal story. Having people who are comfortable to share their stories are key to this.
- Taking part in a radio show or phone in – This can be a great opportunity for campaigners to speak directly with members of the public and potential supporters of the campaign.
- Inviting members of the media to events – These could be open meetings, stunts or to see what is happening in one of the communities or areas impacted by your campaign.
- Getting your campaign featured in articles for existing newsletters or publication

What should you think about when working with the media?

Your key messages - The key thing you need to keep in mind when working with the media is the messages about the campaign that you want to communicate to your audiences. There is more information about key messages in the ‘Developing Key Messages’ handout but it’s best to have three key things that you want to get across about your campaign in each media interaction. Ideally, they would be one or two lines each and avoid using jargon.

Your target media – If you are trying to reach a particular audience, it’s key to think about what which media source your audience will be using.
Your ‘hook’ – the media tend to be interested in timely and relevant things. What are the hooks that you can use to get the media interested in your campaign? Do you have a student event coming up? Has there been a policy change they should know about?

**Top tips for press releases**
Press releases can be brilliant for getting your story out there. The better the press release is, the easier it is for the newspaper to print immediately meaning you can get your campaign message straight out there.

Make sure you include:

1) A short snappy headline
2) Who, where, when and what is happening – keep it brief and to the point
3) How it is effecting people
4) A quote from a spokesperson
5) A call to action – this could be attending an event or signing a petition but be sure to give people something to do to be involved
6) Good photographs – this will increase the chances of your story being featured. For print, any photos should be around 1-2MB
7) Follow up with a phone call – once you have sent your press release, make sure you contact the newspaper and make sure they have received it

**Top tips for blogs**
Blogs are a great chance to share a personal perspective on an issue. Make sure you:

1) Think about your audience and do your research
2) Keep it an appropriate length – Blogs do give you the freedom to include more information but it can be hard for people to read huge sections of text so keep that in mind when you’re writing it
3) Include photos and links

**Top tips for interviews**
Whether it’s a TV, radio or print interview there are a few key things to remember:

1) Be clear about what your key messages are. Write them down if that’s helpful
2) Use case studies to illustrate your points if you have them. It’s always good to share a personal story.
3) Pre-empt any questions, particularly any difficult ones and have some good counter points.
4) Do your research on your interviewer and media source. Will they be hostile or supportive of your campaign?
5) Find out if it will be live or pre-recorded and edited. It might also be good to know who else might be interviewed.
6) Practice with a friend if you are feeling unconfident
7) Don’t use jargon and try and be relaxed and conversational. Often media sources want to use your information and knowledge so people buy or listen to their material so feel confident that you will probably know more about the issue than they do!
Top tips for features and articles

1) Research their audience – make sure you do your research on who reads the publication you are pitching to. If you don’t think there will be immediate interest from their target audience, you could try linking it to other news stories or recent events that might interest them.

2) Have strong case studies – ‘Case study’ basically means someone who is impacted by your campaign issue. It’s really important to have people who can speak about the personal impact of the campaign and who feel comfortable doing so. It’s worth thinking about the fact that not everyone involved in the campaign would feel comfortable talking openly about their story, perhaps for fears over safety and privacy, so it’s worth asking if the reporter will use a different name or keeping them anonymous.

3) Keep your key messages in mind – Feeling comfortable and confident in your key messages is vital. Good key messages make the aim and intention of the campaign really clear and sets out the issue the campaign is trying to rectify.

This general rules are true for trying to get your campaign featured in a national newspaper or even a KCLSU society newsletter.