

QMSU Student Media Editorial Process

Student Media Outlet Proofreading Editorial and Guidance

Student Media Outlets producing published content must be aware of media law. Media law governs what can be published and/or broadcast. Elements of media law include censorship, defamation, privacy, and intellectual property. Where applicable, this process can also be applied to other Student Groups affiliated to Queen Mary Students' Union.

The process detailed in this document will outline risk mitigation for all publications by Student Groups, including, but not limited to: comments, opinions, news, reviews, and reports. This process covers the risks associated with all content, written and broadcast. It also recognises the importance of supporting the editorial independence of Student Groups and the importance of freedom of press. This process covers live broadcast, print and online publications. Print publications are required to be proofread by the Students' Union prior to being printed. All publications by Student Media which are to be printed must be submitted to the relevant staff member with a minimum of 5 working days notice before they are to be sent for print

Responsibilities

Best judgement should be used by the students producing and editing content. Advice can be sought, but final decisions should lie with students, unless there are legal questions surrounding a piece of content.

Committee

The committee is responsible for ensuring this process is followed and recorded.

The committee is responsible for ensuring that all writers are aware of media law prior to producing content.

Principal Officers

The Managing Editor, Deputy Managing Editor, Editor-at-large, or equivalent are responsible for proofreading the content which the Student Group or Outlet may produce. The Managing Editor, or equivalent, is accountable for all content produced and published. Within the Outlet, the Managing Editor, or equivalent, has final say.

Section Editors

Section Editors are the lead for all content that falls under their respective sections and written. They will work with the Principal Officers, other committees, and editors to proofread and ensure that content abides by media law. Section Editors are responsible for proofreading work by their authors. Broadcasting live can be monitored through checking content regularly.

Authors/Broadcasters

Authors or broadcasters are responsible for ensuring their work complies with media law and that it is sent to the relevant editor for checking prior to being published online, in print or broadcasted.

Students' Union

The Students' Union is responsible for overseeing this process and ensuring it is being applied within Outlets who are publishing content. The Students' Union will regularly check content which has been published to ensure it is still complying with media law. Please refer to the 'Take Down Procedure' in instances where it does not comply with media law.

The Students' Union is responsible for providing media law training and ensuring it is accessible for the Principal Officers and Section Editors where able. The Students' Union will provide support for any Student Groups producing content and respond promptly with any concerns relating to media law.

Proofreading

Proofreading occurs when the final draft is ready. Prior to proofreading, Section Editors should be in contact with their authors or broadcasters to ensure the best articles are produced. There should be limited grammatical or spelling errors in the piece during the proofreading stage.

This process focuses on the content and the semantics thereof, to ensure the work complies with media law.

Process for written content, podcasting and television (live streaming)*

- The content is produced by the author and the final draft is sent to the Section Editor.
- A proofing checklist has been produced to expedite the process. Where applicable, a proofing checklist can be used by the Section Editor to categorise and proofread.
- The checklist outlines which actions must be taken prior to publishing. If there are no actions and the risk is low, the work can be published. **NB: Do not assume low risk content will have no issues automatically.**
- Mid-risk content requires approval by the Principal Officers. High risk needs to go to Principal Officers also. Additionally, high-risk pieces are to be submitted to su-studentmedia@qmul.ac.uk. SU Student Media requires a two-day turnaround.
- The sign off should be recorded logged in the proofing checklist as evidence.

*Live broadcasting should follow a similar procedure whereby students submit a short summary of the content of their show to be approved. The content should be regularly monitored and checked by the Section Editors and Principal Officers dependent on the risk rating. The Students' Union will take the same approach.

Risk

The Students' Union recognises the risks associated with the publication of content and believes all content should be created based on the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) Code of Practice. This process seeks to mitigate the risks of published material. When considering the risk which published content may pose, it is important to consider:

- Frequency of publication; increased publication increases risk,
- Distribution method,
- Content itself,
- Training which Principal Officers, Editors and Content Producers received.

The table below provides a baseline risk rating for the content which may be produced; an Editor, Principal Officer or Students' Union staff member are able to raise the risk rating but not decrease it. This table is a guideline for risk-rating; however, we do understand content should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Low Risk	Mid Risk	High Risk
Event listings	Comment /Opinion	Investigative
Factual reporting*	Comedy	Elections
Historical	Satirical	Crime and court proceedings

Review Lifestyle Creative Content (see below)	Political Students' Union Elections (additional guidance will be given for this)	Printed Editions Privacy questions Other
Approval Level		
Low risk content can be approved for publication at the Section Editor's discretion.	Mid risk content requires the Section Editor to ask the Principal Officer to proofread and sign off for publication. Opinion pieces should be clearly identified and include a note stating the content is not reflective of the views or opinions held by the Outlet, Queen Mary Students' Union or Queen Mary, University of London. It is purely the opinion of the content creator.	High risk content needs to be reviewed by a Principal Officer and forwarded to su-studentmedia@qmul.ac.uk to be signed off for publication by staff or an Executive Officer.

*This is dependent on the topic and content, where this crosses with another type of content. If the additional type is higher, that risk should be taken. For example, a factual report on a crime would be high risk.

No content should be published without sign off from the relevant person. This needs to be logged every time it is approved and signed off.

Creative Content

Outlets which produce creative content should be aware of media law also, notably surrounding copyright. This content should be considered on a case-by-case basis by the section editor and/or committee. Where necessary the Students' Union can support in this.

Sometimes creative content which is produced may be triggering, and in cases where this is likely Outlets should provide a trigger warning. The welfare representative should also reach out to authors where they feel it is appropriate.

If creative content conveys an opinion, there should be an opinion note given clarifying the content is not reflective of the views or opinions held by the Outlet, Queen Mary Students' Union or Queen Mary, University of London.

Take Down Procedure

This procedure has been created to protect groups producing published content. It is intended to prevent the dissemination of published content which may violate UK law or infringe on the QM Students' Union Policy. This procedure will not be enacted lightly and – provided the proofreading process was correctly followed-- should not be used regularly.

If the Students' Union initiates a Take Down Procedure, the following steps will be taken:

- An article is identified which may violate UK law or infringe on QM Students' Union Policy; this is flagged with another member of staff or executive officer. If they agree, the below steps are taken.
- The Students' Union will contact the Managing Editor, or equivalent, requiring them to remove the content within 24 hours of the email being sent. In rare occasions--where there is a serious and urgent issue-- they may be called. The Students' Union will provide a detailed justification for removing the piece.

- The piece must be removed when requested. Although the Students' Union values freedom of the press--and will not prevent the publishing of content that may be critical to the Students' Union itself--we will promptly instruct a take down in instances where the content breaks media law.
- The Managing Editor will liaise with the Students' Union to amend the issue or discuss this further actions. They will be required to provide the log proving that article or broadcast was proofread and signed off accordingly.
- The Managing Editor and Students' Union will review the log and provide amendments needed if the article is to be published again. The two teams will work together to try to resolve this within three days where possible.
- In the event that a take-down procedure is initiated more than three times within a single academic year, the Principal Officers must meet with the Students' Union to discuss and provide arrangements to support the group. Continual breaches will be enforced by the relevant Students' Union Disciplinary Procedure.