

## Media Guidelines for Staff

### **The Communications Team**

The Communications Team is responsible for all media relations for SOAS University of London in order to enhance the School's regional, national and international reputation. Media coverage of academic research and activity at SOAS has a positive impact on the success of SOAS, its reputation and attractiveness to other partners, and to potential staff and students.

#### **Our role includes:**

- drafting and issuing press releases highlighting research and achievements by SOAS staff and students
- promoting these online externally and internally, and through social media and other channels
- helping prepare academic colleagues for interview or other media engagements
- actively promoting SOAS experts for commentary on topical issues and responding quickly to requests
- maintaining positive and effective journalist contacts
- working with senior colleagues to draft and issue corporate responses to media enquiries
- monitoring press coverage of SOAS and sharing information within the school about coverage achieved by SOAS staff and students.

#### **Dealing with media enquiries**

- **The Communications Team is the first point of contact** for all media enquiries: we work to identify the best way to respond to such approaches, including identifying academic members of staff with appropriate expertise. Members of staff are not generally authorised to speak as representatives of the University on matters concerning SOAS, HE more widely or other issues not related to their research and teaching at SOAS.
- **If academic staff are contacted directly** by a journalist to comment: If you are contacted about your research, or issues relating to their teaching or subject expertise, they are free to do so. The resulting piece should reference you, your academic title/role and SOAS.
- **Let the comms team know if you have been approached** - or are otherwise working with the media - since we can work to help maximise coverage, identify other opportunities and may receive follow up calls from other journalists when the story is published or broadcast. This includes where you might be working as a consultant or adviser on a radio or TV programme, or film etc, since that will then generate media coverage and interest.
- **Refer the journalist to comms if the media enquiry is not relevant** to your area of work or if you are unsure of how to respond, we can then work to identify the best person from SOAS to lead.

- **Need advice:** please contact us if you would like advice before responding to a media enquiry.
- **If the enquiry concerns University policy issues** and the journalist is seeking the views of the University please refer them direct to us. If professional services staff are contacted by journalists on any matter, they should refer enquiries to the communications team without offering comment. We will then identify how the enquiry should be handled. Only the communications team and the senior management team are authorised to speak on behalf of the university.

### Contacting the media

- **Proactive contact with the media** should usually be made through direct contact with journalists by the communications office.
- **If an external body (eg a funding council or academic journal) is planning to issue a press release about your work**, please let us know as soon as possible. This will help us to promote the news as well and to deal with any enquiries from journalists arising from the release.
- **If you have an idea for a news story related to your research or activities at SOAS please contact us.** We will work with you to identify the best opportunities for coverage.
- **Send through your clippings to comms:** While communications team actively monitor all press coverage in the UK and overseas, if you are aware of coverage you have received (or preferably may be about to receive), please let us know (email [comms@soas.ac.uk](mailto:comms@soas.ac.uk)) so we can share that information and where appropriate promote further - eg on social media.

### General advice to academics when commenting

- **Remember that you are the expert** and will almost certainly know more about the topic than the journalist. Try to ensure that your comments are easy to understand for the general audience.
- **Don't respond to a media enquiry when put on the spot.** It may be better to arrange a convenient time to call the journalist back when you have prepared your key points.
- **A journalist can quote anything you say or share on social media in their story** so avoid making any "off the record" comments. You should never disclose confidential information or make negative comments about the school.
- For further guidance or practical advice on working with media please contact the communications office [comms@soas.ac.uk](mailto:comms@soas.ac.uk)