

Promoting your research through the media

Notes from a [public engagement conversation](#) held on 9 March 2016 where contributions were made by: Andy Dunne (Research Marketing Manager); Professor Carole Mundell (Department of Physics); Dr Aurelien Mondon (Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies); Dr Chris Chuck (Department of Chemical Engineering) and Jheni Osman (freelance journalist).

What are journalists after?

Journalists work to tight timescales and are under pressure to deliver the latest news in an accessible way. Their emphasis is on entertaining first (as the initial hook) and then informing.

Pitching a story effectively:

The best stories are those that:

1. Make everyday people care – i.e. people can see the relevance to themselves / their daily lives
2. Make effective use of analogies and / or have a 'wow' factor

Tips for engaging journalists:

1. Do make use of the University's Press Office (press@bath.ac.uk) who have contacts with many local, national and international journalists
2. If emailing out a press release, ensure that the email subject line is enticing – e.g. an intriguing question that the press release then addresses
3. Build up a portfolio of articles written for a general audience (e.g. blogs, articles on [The Conversation](#) etc) so that journalists can get a feel for your research
4. Establish a Twitter presence as journalists often use Twitter as a platform from which to source the latest news stories

Some Twitter tips

- Follow people that interest you (including journalists)
- Think about the personality that you want to portray with regards your work and research - what do you want to be known for?
- Be interesting!
- Keep an eye-out for popular hashtags (#) that could be related to your research
- Peak time for tweeting is 1 – 3pm every day so tweet then to reach a maximum audience

For more advice on Twitter and other social media avenues, have a look at the University's [Social Media Toolkit](#) and the [Twitter guide](#) developed by the LSE Impact blog.

Planning publicity around your research

Most media work will be proactive. You might find yourself in a position where you're able to proactively plan some publicity around a research project be that new funding or the publication of a new paper.

In this instance, you have the luxury of time and can work iteratively with the University's Press Office on devising a press release and securing appropriate channels for media coverage. It's often a good idea to line up a comment article, for instance, via [The Conversation](#) to coincide with a more general release.

Through working with journalists and the Press Office in this way, you can shape your desired message and maximise the likelihood that the resultant coverage is of interest to key stakeholders of your research.

Media coverage around specific research projects can be particularly useful in terms of demonstrating dissemination to funders and raising the profile of your work to a variety of external, non-academic, stakeholders.

Being called upon to give expert comment

You may find yourself called upon to give expert comment on a news story. In this instance:

- Find out a little more about the media company that have contacted you – e.g. what's their political agenda, their likely stance on the issue that they'll be interviewing you on? The University's Press Office will be able to advise
- If you have to turn down an invite for whatever reason, frame it as "no, but please ask me again in the future" so that you show willingness
- Be prepared to meet journalists 'half-way'. In particular, science journalists are keen to get their facts right, but you might need to let go of some of the nuances in your research when you comment
- If you're asked to comment on someone else's research, make sure that you go back to the original source paper rather than relying on the press release; the latter is just an advert for the research

Reacting to breaking news

If you're ever in the position where you'd like to respond to breaking news, there are a variety of things to bear in mind:

1. Avoiding rushing in to comment vs. Reacting quickly to an evolving story

Before commenting (especially on a situation that is still playing out), you need to be 100% sure that you have all the latest facts to hand – don't comment until you're completely ready and confident to do so.

Once you are confident and have devised your argument, then you should react quickly. You'll need to be on-hand day and night for media demands so clear your diary! You'll also need to keep yourself updated as the story continues to evolve.

2. Pre-records vs. Live transmissions

Consider whether you have a preference for pre-recorded or live pieces. With the former, there is the possibility that the piece could be edited and your comments taken out of context. With the latter, you might be more nervous but you retain more control over your message.

Some final bits of advice

Google your name! This will give you an idea of where your work has already featured, and who is commenting on or is interested in it.

Don't ignore local media. Local media stories can often be a good lead in to national media stories. In particular, BBC national news is linked closely to BBC local news outlets.

If you publish an article online, it is up to you as to whether you engage in any comments below the article. If you do decide to do so, keep focused on engaging around the arguments in your article. Avoid being drawn into any more personal, subjective comments.

Enjoy it! And when you're on radio or TV, pitch your tone as one of "informed debate down the pub with friends" to maximise accessibility of your message.