

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POLICY ON COMMUNICATION WITH THE MEDIA

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this document is to make the Department's policy on communication with the public media available to all staff members.

BACKGROUND

2. Communication with the electronic and printed media is a very important aspect of the activities of the Department and is reserved for authorised senior officials.
3. The Public Service Code of Conduct indicates that a public servant (including an educator) may not use or disclose any official information for personal gain or for the gain of others. A public servant may also not in his/her official capacity irresponsibly criticize government policy at a public gathering or in a publication or printed media.

MATTERS INCLUDED IN MEDIA COMMUNICATION

4. The electronic and printed media include radio, television, the internet and printed matter that is distributed publicly, including books, reports, periodicals newspapers, etc.
5. The communication includes the following:
 - 5.1 Enquiries from the media where information and/or opinions are requested.
 - 5.2 Media releases, interviews and/or conferences where the Department wants to communicate matters to and through the media.
 - 5.3 Participation in radio and TV talks and shows.
 - 5.4 Campaigns, meetings conferences, seminars, workshops, functions, exhibitions, etc. where the media may be present/involved and where Departmental officials deliver speeches, participate in discussions and debates in public, offer presentations, etc.
 - 5.5 External communication through newspaper inserts, letters to the editor, editorial comments, publications, journals, periodicals, brochures, posters, pamphlets, flyers, banners, etc.

LIASON WITH THE MEDIA

6. The liaison with the media is handled by the Directorate Communication Services of the Department in its Head Office. The Media Liaison Officer (MLO) serves as the spokesperson for the Department
7. Communications with the media may only be authorized by the Superintendent-General, the Deputy Directors-General and Chief Financial Officer.

8. The Deputy Directors-General and Chief Financial Officer must use their discretion on when the Superintendent- General should be consulted.
9. Media liaison on political matters is handled by the Member for the Executive Council (MEC).

PROCEDURE ON LIAISON WITH THE MEDIA

10. The journalists and other representatives of the media are aware of the fact that media liaison is handled through the Directorate: Communication Services. When media persons enquire, requests comments, etc. they must be referred to the Directorate: Communication Services (MLO). It must be borne in mind that this measure applies to all components of the Department, including schools, colleges and District Offices.
11. When public events are planned a media plan must be parcel of the planning. The Directorate: Communication Services must be consulted and approval of the Superintendent-General or a Branch Head must be obtained for the communication plan before such an event is organised. The plan must include a procedure for the handling of questions put and comments requested by the media during an event. It is advisable that officials consult their Branch Head before a presentation, speech, etc. is made at a public event.
12. When the Directorate: Communication Services receives requests for information or comments from the media, it must obtain the required draft information or comments from the Branch dealing with the specific matter.
 - 12.1 The Directorate: Communication Services must endeavour to obtain the request in writing from the media with an indication of the due date and time.
 - 12.2 The request must handed to the relevant Branch Head and he or she must obtain all information necessary to provide a reply. (It is not the responsibility of the Directorate: Communication Services to gather the information for the Branch Head. The MLO must also refrain from providing replies from its own information sources.)
 - 12.3 The requests from the media are usually subject to very tight schedules with regard to when a report is printing or broad-casting. The requests of the media must therefore be handled taking the needs for timely reporting into consideration. The Directorate Communication Services (MLO) must be informed timely if the deadlines cannot be met in order to enable it to make an arrangement with the media.

- 12.4 The Branch Heads must ensure that accurate information is provided to the media.
 - 12.5 Once the Superintendent-General or a Branch Head has Authorized a response, it must be handed to the Directorate Communication Services (MLO) for transmission to the media.
 - 12.6 It must not happen that it is reported that the Department was not available for information or comment or that the Department failed to provide information or a comment. Arrangements must be made by the Directorate Communication Services (MLO) to be available at all time and to access the Departmental Officials at all times. The Branch heads must make individual arrangements with the Directorate Communication Services about Officials who will stand in for them when they are not available.
13. The following procedure must be followed with regard to any publication, poster, pamphlets, newsletters, flyers, banners etc.
 - 13.1 The Directorate: Communication Services must be consulted in the developmental phase.
 - 13.2 The approval of the Branch head must be obtained with regard to the communication aspects before it is produced.
 14. The officials of the Department (including the staff of colleges and schools) are not authorised to handle media liaison without the express approval of the Superintendent -General for a specific case.
 15. Liaison with the media is a very important aspect of the Departments public accountability and affects its image in the eyes of its customers. All the staff members of the Department must contribute towards a prompt and quality service to the media.