
MEDIA RELATIONS GUIDELINES



LIKE NOWHERE ELSE

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Media Relations and News

Share your Acadia story

Acadia University has a long and vibrant history of being like nowhere else. Our story is a collective and you are an integral part of it.

The art of storytelling is just that – an art – yet we all tell stories daily. Stories are an important part of our lives. We hear stories from friends, colleagues, students, alumni, and the media. They come in many forms, and some leave lasting impressions.

By sharing our Acadia stories with others, we give them a chance to experience Acadia and get caught up in those intangibles that create the Acadia spirit. It's our chance to draw new students and old friends into Acadia University.

Whether it is at a party, the grocery store, a conference, a class setting, your Facebook page, your Instagram account, or your news blog – please tell your Acadia story. Remember the audience and be sure to engage them.

When to call University Communications

- You have been contacted by a news organization.
- You can offer an expert opinion on a current news story.
- You or another faculty member has won a major award or recognition.
- You have completed a ground-breaking research project and want to announce it.
- You want to tell others “good news” about your students.
- You are concerned about potential negative news going public.

Promoting events and news

Promoting an event to the campus

Faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to post events online via events calendars. You can use the Content Management System (CMS), working with your web trustee (person in your unit trained to use the CMS), to post on your departmental home page, or contact the [HUB](#) to learn how to post on the Main Events Calendar on Acadia University's home page.

How to promote your event beyond campus

University Communications writes and distributes media releases to local, provincial, and national media about high-level announcements and news items that are of broad, general interest. We rely on stakeholders to keep us informed about significant events or news in their units or departments.

Please consider that University Communications needs time to assemble and write the information and distribute it to the relevant media, and the journalists need time to respond.

We also use media notices to pitch story ideas to media outlets. Editors need time to consider and assign your event to their reporters.

Tips for getting media coverage

- For media releases intended to promote an event in advance (you want to get the word out so people will show up or attend online), we need your complete information at least three weeks before the event date. If there is an advance registration deadline, submit your information three weeks before that deadline.
- Avoid use of discipline-specific jargon and be sure to accurately report the names of any organizations – don't use acronyms.
- If your event has great visuals or audio, include information about that, too. It helps determine the best media outlet to cover your event.
- Remember, the media decide what information to use – University Communications has no control of where, when, or how media releases are used in any publication or outlet. The only way to guarantee that your information will appear when and how you want is to purchase advertising space.
- Include complete information about the event date, time, and exact location, plus any specifics that would help a reader understand the significance of the event, such as the biography of the speaker, the title of the presentation, and a brief description of what the program will include. If there is a website, send along the URL.

How to promote honours won by faculty, staff, and students

Most honours and awards at Acadia are primarily of interest to the campus community. Generally, these include recognition such as departmental awards, appointments to boards or committees of academic or specialized organizations, and other honours related to the jobs people do at Acadia. These are generally reported on departmental home pages, or on the page of the relevant vice-president. These can also be sent via Acadia-FYI emails to share with the campus or shared on Acadia's social media channels or internal e-newsletter.

A few awards and honours – such as prestigious scholarships, large research grants, or national recognition by widely known organizations – are appropriate news for the broader community. In those instances, University Communications will prepare a media release and distribute it to relevant media outlets. We will also provide it to the Acadia Alumni Bulletin magazine for consideration, and share on appropriate University social media channels.

Tips to assist with promotion

- Be sure to inform University Communications of the specifics as soon as the award or honour is announced so we can write and distribute a timely media release. It's not news to any media outlet if it happened months ago, no matter how prestigious or important it is to you, unless we can find a news angle.
- Remember, the media decide what information to use – University Communications has no control of where, when, or how press releases are used in any publication. The only way to guarantee that your information will appear when and how you want is to purchase advertising space.
- Include complete information about the award and the organization presenting the award, as well as a brief description of the criteria used to choose the winner.
- Include a photo, or ask University Communications to facilitate photography.

How to promote activities or honours of Acadia alumni

The Acadia Alumni Bulletin magazine is a twice-yearly digital publication that covers the achievements and activities of University alumni and provides select campus highlights to our alumni in a variety of formats, ranging from news briefs to feature articles. The Acadia Alumni has dynamic social media channels and an electronic newsletter that can help promote your event or share your news.

To suggest topics, email the editor fred.sgambati@acadiau.ca

Formatting your information

Having people understand or get interested in your news or event requires planning and the use of the five Ws and How:

Who – give the name of the story subject, correct spelling, title, grad year, and program.

What – name the accomplishment or event.

When – provide the date, particularly in time- sensitive stories.

Where – provide the location of the event or the setting for the story.

Why – lead your story or news brief with the most important element first and explain why this is of interest to the audience.

How – tell how this event or accomplishment happened.

- Always include a contact person and their email and telephone contact information.
- Always include a quote that adds “emotion” and/or backs up your claim with authority.
- Keep the language simple and straightforward. This is not an essay. It's news, and as such there is always limited space and time for it to find a place in mainstream media.

Media Interviews

What to do when a reporter calls

- Return the call as quickly as possible – reporters generally have deadlines.
- Ask the name of the news outlet, the topic, the depth of the interview, and who will be the audience. This helps you know whether you have the level of information the reporter requires. If you don't think you're the right person for the topic, say so. If you know who is and can put the reporter in touch, do so.
- Because of time constraints, reporters often conduct interviews by telephone or virtually instead of face-to-face. If you need time to prepare for the interview (such as looking up statistics), offer to get back to the reporter by their deadline, especially if the interview concerns breaking news.
- It is reasonable to request a few sample questions in advance to allow you to better prepare.
- Contact University Communications if you need assistance. You are not required to obtain permission before speaking with the media, but we are available to help you decide whether to participate and to help you prepare for a positive outcome.

Preparing for an interview

- Focus on three to five key points you can get across quickly. If you are being interviewed for radio or television, you should break up your points into 20-second sound bites (a sentence of about 30 words). Make notes on the points you want to emphasize so you don't leave out significant details.
- Try to anticipate difficult questions that could come up and consider how you would answer them.
- Compile any statistics or background information you can provide to the reporter that support your main points, and arrange to provide written copies.
- Use language and terms relevant to the intended audience. If the story is for the general public, explain any technical terms that the ordinary person is unlikely to understand.

- If the story will be illustrated with a photo, consider what image would best convey the important points. The reporter might request assistance setting up a photo or ask to have a photographer contact you. You might also be asked to provide a photo of yourself. (University Communications can assist to ensure it meets print or digital requirements.)

Being interviewed

- Be friendly and professional. Having the chance to highlight your area of expertise can be enjoyable.
- Always tell the truth. Avoid the temptation to guess or exaggerate – if you don't know the answer, say so and offer to help find it (either by referring the reporter to the person who would know, or by finding the information and calling the reporter back).
- If you are speaking for the University (or a department or organization), indicate that to the reporter. Otherwise, be clear that you are offering your personal opinion. If you don't know the University's official position on an issue, say so and refer the reporter to University Communications.
- Keep your answers brief and non-technical. Avoid using discipline-specific jargon or acronyms that a general audience won't understand.
- Don't feel you must fill in silences, which is a technique reporters sometimes use to get people to say more than they intend. Answer the questions as completely as you think appropriate and then wait for the reporter to ask the next question.
- If the interview strays from your key points, redirect the conversation. Keep your notes at hand as a reminder and check to ensure you have covered the information you consider most important.
- There is no such thing as "off the record." If you don't want to see it in print or hear it on air, don't say it. And remember recording devices might still be on even after the interview has concluded. Anything you say to a reporter, even conversation before or after the interview, could be used in a story.

Types of Interviews

After the interview

- Thank the reporter for his/her time and effort.
- Never ask to preview or approve a story before it is printed or aired. Reporters are professionals and generally will not agree to have you check their work.
- Ask when the story will run, but realize reporters aren't in control of this. Please inform University Communications; it may warrant highlighting to campus.
- If you find a significant error in a story after it is printed or aired, contact the reporter, or ask University Communications to do so. Newspapers routinely run corrections of major errors. If the error is small, it might be better to let it go than to call more attention to it. If the reporter does not respond to your concerns, contact University Communications for assistance.
- If the story was well done, be sure to send along your thanks to the reporter and his/her editor or producer.

Print interviews

- Print interviews are generally longer, and reporters seek more context and details than broadcast journalists. You should still provide succinct answers that are expressed in simple terms.
- Because print organizations generally have more newsgathering resources, they are the media outlet most likely to break stories that will then be picked up by radio and television outlets.
- Quotes are often “cleaned up” to remove stumbles or hesitations. Provided it does not change your message, this is unlikely to cause problems. Many misquotes, however, are often the result of a misunderstanding of technical language. So, speak clearly and use short, simple sentences.
- Supporting documents are often welcomed by journalists.

Radio interviews

- Find out if your interview is being used for the news or for a feature. If it is for the news, your responses will be limited to between five and 10 seconds.
- Quotes are often heavily edited to get your message across succinctly. Keep your replies brief and to the point.
- Feature items of up to three minutes will often be for larger audience shows, and clips of your quotes will be linked by the reporter's words, or played off another interview clip.
- Telephone interviews are common in radio, and allow you to keep notes nearby. Use a landline and ensure you will not be interrupted or have interfering noise in the background.
- No matter how informal the interview feels, keep your approach professional, and remember that your entire encounter will likely be taped.
- In a studio, good posture and a normal speaking voice will provide the right projection when the microphone is about eight inches from your mouth.
- If the reporter comes to your location, he/she will likely put the microphone very close to your mouth. The purpose is to eliminate background noise.
- In all scenarios, talk normally and smile while you speak (if appropriate) – it will improve the texture of your voice while relaxing you.

Television interviews

- Television has similar requirements to radio with the added need for visuals.
- First impressions matter. If the interview is arranged at your location, select the location with care. (University Communications can assist.)
- Check for background distractions that take away from your message or the image you want to project.
- Noise distractions can be problematic. They include things such as air conditioning units, so be prepared to turn these off.
- Light can also interfere with shots.
- If the television crew wants to move furniture or adjust your surroundings, it is generally in your best interest. This will allow them to set up the camera and “dress” the set to create an attractive image.
- Wear what you normally would for your position, but avoid large, bold accessories. Do not wear clothes with close stripes or small checks. Choose yellow or blue instead of white shirts/blouses. Do not wear hats or dark glasses. If in doubt, dress conservatively. Hygiene and proper grooming are a must.
- TV studios are hot and the lights bright, so you may need powder to prevent shine or glare. (Ask their makeup staff to assist, if necessary.)
- If seated, square up your shoulders and sit on the hem of your jacket to prevent the collar from riding up. Be aware of your seated posture.
- Unless directed otherwise, keep your eyes focused on your interviewer during a one-on-one scenario. If in a news conference, work the room confidently with your eyes.
- Keep your posture good and your body language open and relaxed.
- The pace of your answers is important. Take a breath before answering and speak slowly.

Virtual interviews

- Since COVID-19 lockdowns, the use of virtual interviews using Zoom, Teams, and Skype have become a common occurrence.
- Choose exactly where the interview will take place ahead of time. Practice via the platform with a trusted source to test your camera and mic in advance. If you're near a window, make sure it's in front of you or on the side, not behind you. Elevate the camera by placing your device to eye level.
- Make sure your device is charged, turn off notifications and silent your device. If at home, try to make sure family members aren't also online during the interview – if possible to keep your Internet connection at its strongest.
- Sit at the edge of your seat, up straight. Or stand.
- Consider using wireless earphones to ensure you can hear the questions.
- Pay attention to your backdrop. Make sure the area seen on camera is spotless.
- Inform those around you that an interview is occurring to prevent interruptions.
- Have good lighting. Consider having a ring light – the strip of LEDs built into a circle that provides attractive light without shadows or harsh lines. A tripod or elevated laptop stand will give you more options as to where to place the light.
- Look into the camera, not into the screen.
- Dress for the part. Avoid white, black, and red – or patterns. Don't let your clothing colors blend into the backdrop. Blues are best on camera.
- Make sure to change your username to your full name and title. Coolprof101 doesn't cut it.
- It's okay to have a few notes on index cards, written large.
- As always, don't stop with a yes or no answer. Keep it conversational.



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