



## **UG RESEARCH POLICY GUIDELINES**

### **GUIDELINES FOR MAKING RESEARCH FINDINGS UNDERSTANDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE**

## **Introduction**

Research and knowledge dissemination is an integral part of the mission of the University of Ghana, the fulfilment of which requires that we make the public aware of the valuable research being carried out at the University. Effective communication of research will demonstrate to the public the University's role and relevance in finding solutions to national and world problems; correct perceptions that the University is cloistered and detached from the realities of everyday life, and promote continued public support for the University. The media are one of the foremost vehicles through which research can be communicated to the public. They are the gatekeepers of public information and knowledge and the most efficient and economical way of reaching people. These guidelines are aimed at directing University faculty and staff on how best to engage with the media on research and extension activities.

A key principle of the University of Ghana Research Policy is making research findings understandable and accessible. The results of research or scholarship undertaken at the University of Ghana will be disseminated in an open and timely manner to the broader scholarly community and public in keeping with University of Ghana's mission. Critical target audiences for research findings include policy and decision makers, the private sector as well as civil society organizations. In order to reach all its audiences, it may be necessary to present research findings in formats which are understandable and accessible which could include non-traditional forms of presentation such as theatre, radio and documentaries. The University will:

- Support training of researchers in appropriate communication and media engagement techniques and methods.
- Support faculty dedicated to liaise with the media.
- Enhance university participation in public events such as lectures, seminars, workshops, exhibitions and trade fairs.

## **Objectives of Media Engagement**

- To inform the public about important research being conducted at the University.
- To improve public understanding of the significance and relevance of research findings generated by the University and maximize the impact of such research.
- To promote the University as a centre of excellence in research, innovation and engagement on public issues.
- To expand the visibility of the University as a foremost research institution willing to use and share expertise with public and private institutions for the development of Ghana.

## Guidelines on Communicating with the Media

- Faculty and staff are encouraged to proactively reach out to the media to discuss important research findings from their work.
- Faculty and staff are encouraged to talk about their work in an open and responsible manner, balancing the need to maintain scientific rigour with the requirement that research should be communicated in a way that is understood by the wider public.
- When approached for an interview, researchers should seek to know the context and time in which the information will be published or broadcast.
- Researchers can ask that the interview be postponed if the time is not convenient, but as much as possible when dealing with journalists should be prompt, helpful and honest. Calls from the media should be returned as soon as possible, in deference to reporters' deadlines.
- Accuracy is of utmost importance. Researchers must make sure they understand each question from the media before answering. If they cannot answer the question, or are uncomfortable providing a response, they should suggest the most appropriate person the reporter can talk to.
- Researchers should not offer speculations or gossip or answer a reporter's question with "no comment." They should not underestimate the reporter's intelligence, but make sure the reporter understands their responses.
- In responding to the media, researchers can be seen as representing and speaking for the University. Personal opinions should be clearly and carefully identified as such.
- In discussions on research findings researchers should be wary of being drawn into other University matters. They should avoid discussing legal issues, personnel issues, campus emergencies or crises, or questions that involve university integrity and insist such questions be directed at the Public Affairs Director of the University.
- Where aspects of the research involve issues with university-wide significance and/or are of a controversial or sensitive nature it should be referred to the Director of Public Affairs for advice.
- The media cannot deal with complexities and have a penchant for drama and controversy. This poses a challenge for conveying impartial research. Researchers can help mitigate the risks if they simplify research, avoid or explain technical jargon and offer to supply background material ahead of the interview, or in the case of print, during or after the interview.
- Researchers should clarify the status of their research reports. In discussing findings it must be stated if findings have been published and where; whether they are 'preliminary' and not to be generalised; have yet to be replicated; are significantly different from previous studies on the same subject; are derived from small or unrepresentative samples, etc.
- Researchers should consider delaying communication of research results until the credibility of the evidence has been established. They can try to persuade journalists who already know about the study to wait until the necessary proof can be provided.
- Researchers can draw attention to the most interesting and newsworthy aspects of their findings, but should not exaggerate the importance of the work.
- Researchers should acknowledge other collaborators and any funders of the research.
- Researchers should always provide phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses for follow-up questions.

- Researchers should alert the Director of Public Affairs to any negative publicity resulting from media engagements on research.
- Researchers should draw the attention of journalists and their editors to any inaccuracies or distortions in published stories, preferably in a letter intended for publication as a rejoinder.
- If such correspondence does not produce a satisfactory response, or if the misrepresentation is of a serious nature, a complaint should be made to the National Media Commission (NMC).