**Policy on *Press and Media Inquiries***

**Introduction**

The AUA Office of Communications is responsible for managing all relationships and communications with journalists and media outlets. Its aim is to work with the media to raise awareness about the University and its mission.

**Definitions**

Media

The media is vital for the dissemination of accurate information. ‘Media’ includes – but is not limited to – local, national, and international newspapers, magazines, radio, television, online news and blogs.

Spokespersons

To ensure proper institutional brand management, AUA limits the number of employees who can speak to the media on behalf of AUA. Examples include members of the Executive Team, Senior Leadership Team, administrators, unit directors, research center directors, and disciplinary experts.

**Communications Staff Responsibilities**

The staff of the Office of Communications is responsible for managing all relationships and communications with journalists and media outlets. Any exception to this practice would be granted on a case by case basis, agreed in advance with Communications and the Executive Team.

Communications should be notified about, and handle all media inquiries and contacts from journalists. University employees should notify Communications as soon as possible via communications@aua.am if contacted by a journalist. This includes any requests for ‘off the record’ or ‘background’ briefings.

All AUA press releases, statements, quotes, briefings or comments are to be coordinated and approved by Communications. All engagement, outreach and invites to media and journalists for AUA activities and events are coordinated and approved by the Office of Communications.

The Communications staff aims to provide support wherever possible. Media enquiries and requests for appearances should be submitted at least a week before the appearance date but not less than three days prior to the scheduled event.

Communications will make the final decision on whether an event or piece of work will be promoted to the media. Communications must coordinate and approve any interviews or comments to journalists and media, in line with sign off procedures.

**AUA Employee Responsibilities**

If a member of the University community is approached by the media, they should contact the Office of Communications at the earliest opportunity before responding to that media contact. Communications will offer support and guidance and manage the approach.

Subject to applicable laws and University policies, members of the University community are free to contribute to public debate. The University is committed to maintaining intellectual freedom and enquiry, and in this regard, Employees are free to speak to the Media, or in any other forum, in their capacity as academic or professional Employees, such comments will normally lay within their respective fields of expertise.

Employees of the University may identify as a member of the University community and make an academic and expert comment in an area of expertise and responsibility when

* participating in public debates
* expressing opinions about issues and ideas related to discipline/specialist areas or higher education and research
* initiating and responding to any Media issues that may arise within an area of expertise.

When making a comment as an identified University Employee, it is important to consider how comments will reflect on the reputation of University peers and the institution. All members of the community are welcome to make appearances in the media with proper preparations from the Communications staff; employees will be asked by Communications to give interviews and make appearances based on their areas of expertise, but not as spokespeople of AUA. In each instance, Communications will coordinate and work with nominated spokespeople as per the policy. This ensures that Communications is aware of all opportunities; speaks with a consistent message and is able to protect and promote the University as appropriate. Importantly, it also enables Communications to provide professional support to individuals and employees who engage with the media, so we can protect them in the event of any negative coverage.

Public comments by University employees in their capacity as private individuals are permitted provided that any such comment makes it clear that the view expressed in their own and not necessarily the view of the University. When commenting in this capacity, members of the University community must not identify themselves as representatives of the University.

However, in some cases, a connection may still be made to AUA. As such, Communications should be notified before speaking to the media in a non-AUA capacity. Communications will be able to identify any risks and put in appropriate measures to manage where needed. In certain circumstances where there is a real risk to the University, AUA may ask and recommend an employee not to speak to the media in a personal capacity.

It is not the intention of this procedure to restrict such rights of any member of the University community.

When expressing personal views to the media, on any subject, a University member should take into regard the following:

* Employees expressing personal views should not mention that they are an AUA employee; it must always be made clear that the views being expressed are personal and not necessarily the views of AUA;
* Personal views which, in style or content, discredit AUA, are not acceptable and will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter in appropriate cases;
* Due to the inextricable link to an employee’s role, any comments on subjects core to the institution’s mission – such as education, universities or teaching – must be made in a professional capacity;
* It is expected that a University member will not publicly criticize AUA. Anyone with concerns about AUA should seek to resolve the matter internally through an appropriate line of reporting. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, it should then be raised with a member of the Executive team.

From time to time, issues will arise within AUA that could pose a reputational risk to AUA if reported in the media. It is important these are flagged at the earliest possible opportunity. Communications can provide communications management advice and take mitigating actions. If an employee becomes aware of any issue that could pose a reputational risk to AUA if it was reported in the media, they need to notify Communications as soon as possible via communications@aua.am