

Media policy for the University of Sydney's School of Physics

The following are guidelines written for anyone in the School who interacts with the general media, specifically academics and postgraduate students.

University media is the media within the University of Sydney, and includes the Media Office, UniNews, Alumni News, etc.

General media is all media outside the university.

If you are issuing a press release, written or verbal, it must first be approved by the Head of School.

It is recommended any press release that is to be submitted to the general media be shown to the school's Outreach Officer who will release it via the University's Media Office. Alternatively, you can deal direct with the Media Office (www.usyd.edu.au/media), but a copy should be given to the Outreach Officer.

If you do have contact with the general media, please inform the Outreach Officer, even if it is only a brief email to say you answered a simple physics question.

General tips on writing a press release or article appear below.

Tips for writing a press release

A media release is a short invitation to the media to take interest in your news. It invites them to contact you for more information. It can be a fax, mail or email.

Put the primary information (who, where, what, and when) into the first two (ideally one) sentences. It has to be specific, not "an outstanding breakthrough has been made in the field of theoretical physics"

Think eye-catching. News is news if it is original, a great photo or video opportunity or something interesting.

Have the press release read by someone else, ideally a non-scientist, regardless of how often you double check it.

Use short words and sentences. Explain all technical and scientific terms that are not familiar to an educated non-science member of the public. Use the active voice, not the passive "our team has discovered tachyons" not "tachyons have been discovered".

Use analogies and metaphors carefully. However, they do add to the story's spice.

Most press releases should be kept to one page. Two is acceptable. If they want more information, they'll ask.

Put your name, position, contact details and when you cannot be contacted at the bottom of the press release (the media like to know when they can get hold of you, and they prefer the morning).