

RCSI Media Communications Policy for Staff and Students

January 2026

1. Introduction

The RCSI Communications Department works to raise awareness and enhance the profile and understanding both externally and internally of RCSI's mission, research, teaching, and societal impact. The media plays a key role in how our stakeholders perceive RCSI and our reputation as a global health sciences institution.

We are committed to proactive and strategic engagement with the media to achieve good working relationships with journalists. Positive relationships with the media are developed and enhanced by providing honest and helpful information to reporters in a timely manner and with mutual respect.

The Communications Department is responsible for the management of all RCSI interactions with the media including media campaigns, the co-ordination of the RCSI response to general media inquiries and issuing official RCSI statements to the media.

2. Purpose

This policy provides clear guidance for all staff and students¹ on interacting with the media, helping to ensure that RCSI communications are:

- Accurate, timely, and comprehensive and consistent
- Aligned with RCSI's strategic goals
- Legally and ethically sound

¹ See 'Scope' for further details

3. Scope

This policy applies to all RCSI staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students, PhD students, researchers, and all those operating on behalf of RCSI, such as contractors, honorary appointees, agency staff, visiting academics and international and transnational operations of RCSI.

This policy applies to all external media interactions across broadcast, digital, print and social media platforms. This includes both proactive publicity (e.g. promoting research or planned events) and reactive enquiries (e.g. requests for comment, coverage of unexpected events).

4. RCSI Academic Freedom Statement

While recognising that media plays an important role in the context of academic freedom, the principles of RCSI's Academic Freedom Statement² apply also to engagement with the media, and RCSI requires responsible and scholarly communication in line with this policy.

2 'Academic freedom within RCSI is valued as the freedom to teach, speak, conduct and publish research, and participate in professional or representative academic bodies without interference, censorship or penalty, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly endeavour'.

5. Core principles of media engagement at RCSI

- RCSI encourages openness, honesty and professionalism in all media interactions.
- Media enquiries must be managed in collaboration with the Communications Department.
- Communications should reflect the institution's expertise, integrity and respect for academic and clinical standards.
- All media engagement should be approached with awareness of reputational risks and opportunities.

6. Media interaction protocol

The following rules apply to all staff when engaging with the media. These are designed to protect the integrity and reputation of RCSI while ensuring a responsive and coordinated approach. Do not ignore or delay media enquiries; it is important to action media calls or emails quickly, courteously and professionally via the Communications Department. When contacted by a journalist:

- Be aware that anything you say can be quoted.
- Let them know: "RCSI policy is to refer all media enquiries to the Communications Department."
- If contacted by phone or in-person, take their name, media outlet, topic or angle of interest and contact details
- Refer the enquiry to the Communications Department by emailing communications@rcsi.ie.
- For out-of-hours media queries or if you are contacting us in relation to an urgent media enquiry, ring the department on +353 1 402 2218 or +353 1 402 8610.

- Never attempt to answer questions 'off the record' or provide comment or confirm facts on-the-spot.
- If you are not the appropriate expert, advise that the Communications Department will connect the journalist with a relevant expert.

Once you refer an enquiry to the Communications Department, a member of the team will follow up to assess the opportunity and support you with the appropriate media approach. This may include reviewing answers to questions, liaising with journalists on your behalf and arranging interviews.

7. Filming, photography and on-campus media presence

- All media filming or photography on campus requires prior authorisation from the Communications Department. This approval should be sought before requesting the required health and safety permits. Where possible, please ensure to seek approval at least a week in advance of filming.
- Staff must notify Communications immediately if media representatives arrive unannounced.
- No media personnel should be permitted to enter RCSI buildings without prior consent, health and safety permits, and coordination.
- All approvals will take into account the suitability of the space, operational impact and reputational context.

8. Promoting RCSI research, events and news stories

- Only the Communications Department is authorised to issue press releases or approach media outlets on behalf of RCSI.
- Staff who believe they have a positive or newsworthy story should contact Communications early for advice and planning.
- Do not engage with a journalist directly about a story without first consulting the Communications Department who will work with you to gather information and determine if and how the media should be contacted.
- Some items may be more suitable for internal communications (such as Workvivo, VC Memo), social media, or the RCSI website.

9. Additional guidelines for researchers

RCSI researchers are valued contributors to public discourse and are often called upon by the media to comment on health topics, including their own research or that of others.

Researchers should only speak within their area of expertise. When the research being focused on is unpublished or not yet peer-reviewed:

- Any engagement should focus on broader research questions, goals and significance:
- Emphasise methodology or intended impact, rather than specific results.
- Avoid definitive claims or interpretations.
- Reinforce the forward-looking nature of the work and the importance of peer review.

If you are planning to submit an op-ed, blog or public commentary related to RCSI research or healthcare policy, you must notify the Communications Department in advance. This coordination helps avoid overlapping media engagement and allows the team to advise on optimum timing and support or amplify your piece appropriately.

If you have an upcoming research paper that you think may be of interest to the media, please give the Communications Department at least four weeks' notice prior to online publication by sending a completed copy of the [Research and Innovation briefing document](#) available on Workvivo or the [Researchers Handbook to communications@rcsi.ie](#).

10. Media engagement in sensitive or escalated situations

If a media enquiry, interview or interaction becomes sensitive, controversial, or has the potential to impact the reputation of RCSI, staff and students should pause engagement and refer the matter immediately to the Communications team. Any such situations will be managed in line with RCSI's Critical Incident Management Plan and RCSI's Crisis Communications Policy, which takes precedence where applicable.

Staff and students are not expected to or authorised to manage crisis communications directly; situations of this nature are managed by the Communications Team, reporting to the Senior Management Team.

11. Media training and support

The Communications Department is available to offer advice and guidance to staff and students engaging with the media. This includes support with messaging, interview preparation and understanding the media process.

Where appropriate, additional training can be provided for high-profile media engagements.

12. Breach of the policy

In the interest of protecting the reputation of RCSI, RCSI reserves the right to request removal any media engagement or public communication that is deemed to be in breach of this policy.

RCSI will take appropriate action when an allegation of a breach has been identified. Action taken against staff or students who act in breach of this policy will be in line with the relevant RCSI policy.³

³**Staff:** *Data Protection Policies, Dignity at Work Policy, Staff Disciplinary Procedure, Equal Opportunities Policy, Grievance Procedure, Intellectual Property Policy, Protected Disclosure Policy, IT Acceptable Usage Policy, IT System Access Policy, Internet Usage Policy, Child Safeguarding Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, EDI Policy*

Students: *Student Agreement Policy, Disciplinary Regulations, IT Acceptable Usage Policy, RCSI Student Privacy Policy, RCSI Student Complaints Procedure, Student Dignity and Respect Policy*

13. Monitoring of Policy

This policy will be reviewed periodically as required. RCSI will ensure this policy, and any future changes, are accessible to all staff and students.

Louise Loughran, Chief Communications Officer

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