



Promoting Your Research to the Media

Practical Guide for
UCD Researchers



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Prepared by
UCD Research and Innovation

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INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared to provide researchers at University College Dublin, who think that some aspect of their research activities (e.g. publication of academic paper, research funding, awards, commercialisation activities etc) may be of potential interest to the news media, with practical advice on their next steps. It also provides some practical advice on recognising newsworthiness and an overview of key elements of a press release and examples of recent UCD press releases.

As public relations and public affairs are closely related this Guide should be read in conjunction with the *Practical Guide to Developing a Public Affairs Strategy*, available via the UCD Research and Innovation Services Portal.



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WHO TO CONTACT/ STEPS INVOLVED

Researchers should in the first instance contact the local Communications/Marketing Manager at their respective College or School or Institute or Centre to discuss their potential news item and its potential newsworthiness and seek their guidance on the next steps involved.

Media Appeal

Following discussions with the researcher the local Communications Manager to decide if the news item is potentially newsworthy (see section below) for any of the following;

- International media
- General media in Ireland
- Specialist media
- Only for internal UCD media channels (websites, social media channels, UCD publications)
- Does not currently have media appeal.

Third Parties

Following discussions the local Communications Managers can also decide if third parties need to be contacted (e.g. journal, funders, collaborators) to discuss the potential news item and its content.

Preparing/Issuing a Press Release/News Item

If the news item has potential media appeal the local Communications Manager will then seek the assistance of the researcher in drafting an associated press release.

Local Communications Managers will at this stage decide whether to issue the press release to the media themselves and subsequently disseminate it further within UCD or at this stage inform and discuss with the Communications staff in the UCD University Relations Office and/or Communications staff in UCD Research and Innovation.

Images

If issuing the associated press release the local Communications Manager will discuss with the researcher the availability of appropriate imagery/video to enhance the press release and arrange new photography if required.

Interviews

The local Communications Manager can also assist the researcher in preparing for any media interviews which may result from the issuing of a press release and decide following discussions with the researcher, and based on the researcher's previous media engagement experience, if media training is required and discuss with the UCD University Relations Office.

Track and Monitor

The local Communications Manager can also track and monitor any media coverage received and provide the researcher with an overview report of the coverage received.



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NEWSWORTHINESS

What is often viewed as significant within an academic institution, or to an international academic audience, may not be newsworthy to a more general audience and therefore potentially not of interest to the media.

Recognising potential newsworthy stories

- Research findings in high-impact journals with direct relevance or potential interest to the general public
- (Significant) research funding secured, especially international and prestigious funding bodies
- Awards (especially internationally)
- Related to Government announcements and/or announcements by research partners and/or funders
- Partnerships (with leading industry, companies, institutions, nationally and internationally)
- Results from key reports and/or surveys and contributions to new national policies
- Research commercialisation activities (e.g. spin-out company related (funding, jobs, products, acquisitions, trade sales) or technology licensing).

Certain research topics (e.g. dinosaurs, space) are generally of potential interest to the media, as are items related to current national policy discussions (e.g. housing, climate action, COVID-19 etc).

Newsworthy questions to consider:

- What is the news angle?
- Does it really matter to anyone outside of UCD?
- What is the relevance and impact to the general public?
- How does it fit into the 'context' of current news cycle and is it topical?

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PRESS RELEASE ELEMENTS

Outlined below are key elements of a press release which will help researchers when they are assisting the local Communications Manager to draft a press release/news item.

A press release should answer questions such as: What is happening ? Who is involved ? Where is it happening ? When is it happening ? Why is it happening ?

Numbers: Journalists like numbers, so if a news item has an associated and relevant number or numbers to support the release these should be included in the headline and/or opening paragraph.

Length: Ideally 400 – 500 words (i.e. 1 to 2 pages)

Headline: Short, appealing and to the point, grabs attention, captures the essence of the story in as few words as possible.

Opening of leading paragraph: The opening paragraph should summarise the key points of the press release and hook the attention of the journalist to continue reading.

Additional paragraphs: These paragraphs are used to elaborate or support the opening paragraph of the story and to draw out the most interesting and relevant aspects of the story. Content of each paragraph should be of less importance than the preceding paragraph, i.e. the inverted pyramid approach.

Ensure that any relevant 3rd parties are appropriately referenced in the press release.

Quotes: At least one quote from a person relevant to the story (i.e. from the researcher). Include a third-party quote if appropriate. Quotes should add to the story, provide additional information, should be short and impactful and give a human element to the story. No more than 2 or 3 quotes.



Language Dos: Simple and to the point language, avoid long sentences (8 to 15 word sentences), spell out any acronyms when used for the first time (keep any acronyms to a minimum), present or future tense, active verbs.

Language Don'ts: Avoid clichés, jargon, padding and overly ornate language, buzzwords and too scientific/technical language. Don't use capitals. Claims such as 'biggest', 'unique' 'world's first' should be avoid unless really justified.

Links: If press release/news story is related to a report/academic paper or other relevant information source provide relevant weblink(s), DOI number, journal title, paper name etc.

Social Media: If there are relevant social media accounts (e.g. twitter handles, event hashtags etc) provide a list of these at the end of the press release.

ENDS: Indicate the end of the press release with the word - ENDS -

Editors Notes: This section is used to provide additional information and/or relevant boiler plates with associated website links and/or social media handles.

Images/Videos: High-resolution and professionally taken photographs which capture the essence of the story and which are correctly captioned can add significantly to a story. Links to any related video content on YouTube, Vimeo can also add to a press release.

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PRESS RELEASE EXAMPLES

Below are some examples of press releases/news items.

Eight University College Dublin Projects Awarded €1.5 million in Funding Through the COVID-19 Rapid Response Research and Innovation Programme

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news/ucd-sfi-funded-covid-19-research-projects>

Zipp Mobility Gets the Green Light for UK e-Scooter Trials

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news/zipp-mobility-green-light-uk-trials/>

Output Sports Closes €1.3 Million Seed Investment Round

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news/output-sports-seed-funding-round/>

Two leading UCD researchers receive 2019 Science Foundation Ireland awards

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news/ucd-researchers-win-2019-sfi-awards/>

UCD mathematician awarded €2.5 million in ERC Funding to do the maths on big wave

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news-items/dias-ucd-erc-funding/>

Astronomers publish new map of the sky detecting thousands of previously unknown galaxies

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news-items/lofar-study-ucd/>

UCD study reveals Toyota hybrids drive over 60% of the time in Zero Emissions Mode

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news-items/ucdstudyrevealstoyotahybridsdriveover60ofthetimeinzeroemissionsmode>

Cancer researchers at UCD lead development of new urine test to detect prostate cancer

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news-items/ucd-prostate-cancer-irish-cancer-society/>

UCD leading €2.1m Horizon 2020 project to tackle climate change impact on food safety

<http://www.ucd.ie/newsandopinion/news/2019/july/03/ucdleading21mhorizon2020projecttotackleclimatechangeimpactonfoodsafety/>

€760 million raised by NovaUCD supported companies over the last 15 years

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news-items/760millionraisedbynovaucdsupportedcompaniesoverthelast15years/>

Tyrannosaurus rex nosed out the competition, new study suggests

<http://www.ucd.ie/newsandopinion/news/2019/june/13/tyrannosaurusrexnosedoutthecompetitionnewstudysuggests/>

Ireland's first ever satellite moves one step closer to launch into space

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news-items/irelands-first-ever-satellite-moves-one-step-close/>

UCD Partnering with Vodafone Ireland and Ericsson on a new 5G accelerator programme

<https://www.ucd.ie/innovation/news-and-events/latest-news-items/ucdpartneringwithvodafoneirelandandericssononanew5gacceleratorprogramme>

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CONTACT

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www.ucd.ie/research