

Real Press adheres to the Fourth Estate Alliance's T4 Hub code of conduct for its journalists, illustrators, editors and contributors.

The T4 Hub Code of Conduct

Overview

This Code of Conduct applies to all users of the T4 Hub software and must be agreed upon before logging in for the first time.

All news produced by our network is done by organising journalists into separate news agencies, with the content of each agency guaranteed by the reputation of their newsdesk teams. These teams include sub-editors and news editors who are the gatekeepers for everything we send, who are prepared to use their names and reputations as a guarantee of both quality and independence.

All agencies agree to a professional standard and all journalists agree to follow a code of conduct that above all excludes production of content for any other purpose other than the creation of independent news to be sold to publishing partners.

Our Agencies: Professional Standards.

Within our news community journalists, join newsrooms which are divided into desks. Desks that are successful in producing content which is generating income with publishers will grow and become agencies in their own right with their own selection of desks.

Agencies and desks that no longer function optimally are dissolved, with members from those teams then free to join other agencies and desks. There is always a demand for news; our system ensures a fluid supply of the content that is in demand at the time.

Agencies need to have qualified professionals who take responsibility for the content and ensure in turn that the professionals in their own organisations are properly trained to carry out all of the 10 roles needed in the generation of a typical article.

Our agencies are not allowed to distribute PR or marketing material disguised as news unless it is material provided without payment that is deemed newsworthy in its own right.

Agencies in our network undertake to use our software in the generation of content in order to guarantee quality and offer transparency in the event of complaints.

Stories are distributed to publishing partners clearly naming the journalist who created the content and the sub-editor who authorised it and approved it for distribution.

All content includes journalist-generated subject metadata to help it to be distributed to the most relevant desk within partner publishing groups.

All content also includes geographical tags, again to allow specialist correspondents easy access to the most relevant news.

Content is also clearly sorted into a variety of 'experimental' subjects and categories ranging from tabloid news through to mainstream news.

Agencies are expected to clearly distinguish between comment, analysis and reporting.

In order to ensure stronger stories are quickly identified for publication, agencies use a news ranking system.

Sources should be included for verification purposes among clients that may want additional confirmation on sensitive matters.

Agencies agree to develop strategies for sharing their journalistic work on social media including Facebook and Twitter in order to interact with readers by putting them directly in touch with journalistic creators – further assisting in tackling fake news and identifying potential issues that allow journalists to constantly improve and evolve.

Agencies are expected to maintain a simple web page to interact with sources and publishers. It should include such information as details about their professional standards, any funding or mission statements, its target content and policy on making corrections and other matters.

Our Journalists: Code of Conduct

The best publishers need the best content, and they need to be able to rely on professional freelancers as part of their network providing that content.

For many reasons the trusting relationship between freelancers and news desks has been eroded and this code of conduct has been drafted by the Fourth Estate Alliance as a platform on which our members may begin the process of rebuilding the special relationship with publishers.

Journalism is a tool for the greater public good, but if not held to a high standard of integrity, it flounders.

The Fourth Estate Alliance's mission is to empower and support independent professional journalists and help them produce strong and accurate news content, working with publishers to rebuild global respect for the profession.

Trustworthy reporting makes positive contributions across all aspects of society when it challenges, questions, offers fresh perspectives, and is subject to professional standards and an ethical code. This Code of Practice is a tool to help independent journalists maintain a principled stance and achieve the standards of conduct and professionalism that will drive public respect for their industry and earn acknowledgement from publishers seeking strong, ethical and accurate copy to use. It is a living document and will continue to update and grown over time. Accredited journalists must remain aware of updates to the code by regularly checking the Fourth Estate Alliance website for changes, as well as subscribing to the Alliance's mailing list to be kept aware of changes. Failure to adhere to this code damages you, your brand name, your partners in this project, and the entire profession.

Code of Practice

Journalists accredited by the Fourth Estate Alliance must agree to follow these principles and accept the Alliance's right to adjudicate on issues of non-adherence to this code:

Verify information and sources

Modern digital communication systems enable information to flow from many sources, and correctly filtering and testing this information to determine what is real or fake is vitally important.

Also, many reports now originate, to some extent, in the work of other journalists. This means valuable information can be made available to wider audiences. But it is crucial to verify the work of others and add value before using it, enriching it through new research and fresh angles where possible, and re-writing it into the journalist's own words.

A byline is a journalist's confirmation and assurance that the information contained in a report has been carefully examined and is factually correct.

Maintain a separation between news and marketing

Accredited journalists must agree to independently select the subjects that they write about and only accept payment for that work from publishers. This does not mean that news cannot originate from PR sources or press releases. It means that accredited journalists should avoid accepting PR or marketing contracts.

If they do, this income must be declared and made completely transparent. Only by being open and honest about potentially compromising influences can the work of a journalist remain credible.

Demonstrate qualifications or experience

Journalists need a professional qualification or a track record of experience in the industry to be accredited by the Fourth Estate Alliance.

Accredited journalists must maintain an up-to-date public portfolio with the Fourth Estate Alliance that demonstrates their standards and qualifications and provides samples of their work.

This is an essential tool in reassuring the public that the fourth estate that guards their interests is comprised of journalists fit to hold this significant role, and it is an important guide to publishers seeking to utilise the highest standard of independent journalists for their publication.

Check the facts

Accredited journalists must make every effort to ensure all facts in a story are correct and all available information has been included without suppression. If any fact is later proven incorrect, a correction must be issued as soon as possible.

If a story is found to be in any way deficient, it must be corrected or withdrawn immediately. If it appears in a publication where it is beyond your ability to correct or withdraw you must make every reasonable effort to alert the publisher.

Check the sources

Journalists are expected to rate their online news sources as a database for others to help assess reliability of material being introduced into their own work. This information compiled by news

professionals should help with our mission of avoiding debunked sites. Each new source includes a journalist's own ratings and the amalgamated group ratings based on five stars. The rating should be based purely on the site's proven accuracy in reporting. Other relevant fields about the political orientation, source of funding and geographical location also need to be recorded under the organisation's profile.

Balance opinions

Journalists must make every effort to ensure that both sides of an argument are represented by including facts and opinions that represent both sides. Journalists must not place needless emphasis on gender, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, illness or personal disability.

Use integrity when gathering news

Accredited journalists should always attempt to act with integrity when gathering news.

The Fourth Estate Alliance acknowledges there are many grey areas in this but asserts that in cases where the correct action is unclear, the matter should be discussed carefully among colleagues before acting. The experience and conclusions of members are welcome as additions to this code.

Private grief and personal privacy must be respected and journalists should enforce their right to reject compulsion to intrude on them. Children under the age of 16 must never be interviewed or photographed without prior consent and without a guardian in attendance.

Declare any interests

Accredited journalists must not allow personal interests to influence them in their professional duties, and all personal interests must be declared.

Fourth Estate Alliance profiles include a section where interests can be declared and personal views that may affect impartiality can be listed. In doing so, it allows the journalist to write with passion about subjects that they care about without allegations of partiality.

Don't use media privileges for personal gain

It is not acceptable to use journalism for market research, to advise you in investment decisions, or for any other purpose other than the creation of news.

Accredited journalists must never allow professional duties to be influenced by any gift or offered advantage, nor seek payment in any way other than compensation by a publisher for journalistic work. Any offer or gift that is accepted must be disclosed where possible.

Never plagiarise

Ideas, facts, phrases or sections of text which is clearly substantially based on the work of another must always be rewritten. If that work contains facts that are clearly a result of journalistic effort, it must be credited accordingly.

Respect confidentiality

The identity of confidential sources must be preserved. A source who has requested anonymity should only be named by a journalist if ordered to do so by a court of law, and the Fourth Estate Alliance supports accredited journalists who would defy such a court order. All other requests must be rejected.

Avoid pseudonyms

Bylines are a journalist's brand and should be accurately and honestly included on all work that is produced.

Journalists covering stories involving criminal activity or terrorism, those working in countries where journalists are regularly persecuted, or those with other valid reasons may wish to use a pseudonym, but the Fourth Estate Alliance must know the real identity of the author in any such case and the reason why. Tolerance for pseudonyms is limited.

Depending on circumstances, breaches of the code under a pseudonym will not help a journalist avoid investigations and subsequent rulings.

Share and strengthen independent journalism

All Alliance members agree to pool data regarding details of where content can be published, contribute to discussions on dealing with the changing media landscape, identify challenges and opportunities for the profession, and work together to further independent journalism for example in the development and improvement of this code.

Useful data for sharing includes general contact information for publishers and details on payment rates and markets to aid categorising in terms of profitability or risk.

Help shape future software versions

Users of the Fourth Estate Alliance's T4 software agree to cooperate to improve this communal software for the benefit of all. Individual modifications are possible, but such updates will also be made available to the wider community if it is determined that they would benefit all.

Dealing with breaches

Allegations of a breach of professional standards, in conduct or reporting, must be fully investigated, and both sides given the opportunity to defend their position. A voluntary panel of three Fourth Estate Alliance members not connected to the complained about matter will adjudicate and rule on each instance and, if deemed applicable, will recommend actions to address wrongdoings.

Details of every ruling will be published