Media Council of Malawi (MCM)

Malawi Media
Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct
CHAPTER ONE: THE INDIVIDUAL JOURNALIST

1.1 Self-Representation: A journalist has the responsibility to provide the public with accurate information. He/she shall also conduct him/herself with propriety at all times when performing his/her duties.

1.2 Dress: A journalist shall dress decently and observe etiquette as the situation demands.

1.3 Interviews: Since it is not an obligation for any person, public or otherwise, to talk to journalists, sources must be informed that they are being interviewed for a story and a journalist shall not insult abuse or otherwise embarrass interviewees.

Interviewees shall be at liberty to put restrictions on what is to be published as well as what is to be attributed to them.
1.4 **Language:** A journalist shall conduct an interview in a language the interviewee is competent in and may, where necessary arrange for an interpreter.

1.5 **Conflict of Interest:** A journalist shall not associate with situations that will bring a conflict of interest with his/her profession.

1.6 **Policy:** A journalist shall observe the editorial policy of the media house for which he/she is working.

1.7 **Cheque - Book Journalism:** A journalist shall not demand or accept payment in order to include or exclude material on a story he/she is writing.

**CHAPTER TWO: THE JOURNALISTS WORK**

2.1 **Material:** All material produced by journalists shall be credible, balanced, fair and verifiable to all sides. In the same vein, headlines should reflect the gist of the story to avoid misleading the audience. Unwarranted distortion and speculation should be avoided, as should discriminatory and inflammatory language, slants involving racism, tribalism, religion, etc.

2.2 **Distinction in Presentation:** A journalist shall avoid traumatizing shocking or obscene pictures as much as possible. Pictures must be used appropriately, not for the sake of sales promotion. A journalist shall not publish pictures that infringe on individuals right to privacy.

2.3 **Quotations:** Quotations must be accurate.
CHAPTER THREE: GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND ISSUES

3.1 Accuracy: A journalist shall strive for accuracy and thoroughness in the writing and reporting of news.

3.2 Pictures: A journalist shall ensure that picture relate to the story.

3.3 Plagiarism: A journalist shall avoid plagiarism.

3.4 Correction: Whenever it is recognized that a significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distorted report has been published, it should be corrected promptly and with due prominence and an apology published whenever appropriate.

3.5 Objectivity: In reporting news, a journalist shall strive for objectivity.

3.6 News and Opinions: A journalist shall distinguish clearly between news reports, speculation and expressions of opinion.

3.7 Headlines: News headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the articles they accompany. Photographs and broadcasts must give an accurate representation of an event.

3.8 Balance and Fair Play:

- A journalist shall make every reasonable effort to present all sides of the story.
- A fair opportunity for reply should be given to organizations or individuals.

3.9 Advertising: Advertisements and public announcements shall be accurate and clearly distinguishable from news items.
3.10 **The law and the Journalist:** In reporting matters that involve or may involve litigation;

- a journalist shall avoid practices which would tend to interfere with the right of an individual to a fair trial.

(b) A matter that is pending court decision must not be commented on in a manner that would prejudice the outcome.

3.11 **The right to Know:** While facilitating the public's right to know, a journalist shall observe the following limits:

- A journalist has an obligation to protect confidential sources of information.
- A journalist shall not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification unless, by law, he/she is at liberty to do so. Similarly, a journalist shall not, even where the law does not prohibit it, identify children under the age of 13 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, whether as victims, witnesses or defendants.
- A journalist shall avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to a person's race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, sex or sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability unless such reference is relevant to the story.
- A journalist shall generally not obtain or seek to obtain information or pictures through misrepresentation or subterfuge unless it can be justified that such materials cannot be obtained by any other means.
- A journalist shall generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime, unless the reference to them is necessary for the full, fair and accurate reporting of the crime or legal proceedings.

**CHAPTER FOUR: RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PUBLIC AND OTHER JOURNALISTS**
4.1 **Chance of Reply:** The public and institutions should be given the opportunity to reply to statements made about them in the media.

4.2 **Privacy:** A journalist shall respect the individuals private life without intrusion or harassment.

4.3 **Transparency:** A journalist shall strive for transparency at all times.

**CHAPTER FIVE: MEDIA HOUSES**

5.1 **Dress:** Media houses shall ensure that all journalists in their employ are properly dressed.

5.2 **Policies:** Media houses shall ensure that their editorial policies are not in conflict with media ethics.

5.3 **Cheque-Book Journalism:** Media houses shall not demand any financial inducement in order to publish or exclude material from publication.

5.4 **Refutals:**

- Media houses may publish refutations as long as they are meant to clarify the issue at stake.
- The medium that published the story that is being refuted may run the refutation free of charge.
- Media houses have the liberty to comment on any refutation.

5.5 **Media Relationship:** Media houses shall foster relations, exchange of ideas, debate and discussion among themselves.
CHAPTER SIX: DISPLINARY ACTION RESULTING FROM PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT

6.1 Any infringement of any of the provision of this Code shall constitute an act of professional misconduct.

6.2 The Ethics, Complaints and Disciplinary of Media Council of Malawi shall be responsible for enforcing the observance of this Code.

6.3 Upon receipt of complaint against a journalist the Ethics, Complaints and Disciplinary Committee shall proceed in accordance with the procedures set out in Media Council Malawi, Ethics Complaints and Disciplinary Committees rules of procedure. Provided that any action taken by the said Ethics Complaints and Disciplinary Committee shall have regard to the rules of natural justice and shall not prejudice the right of a journalist to seek recourse in a court of law.