

ETHICS

Multiliteracies | Graduate Outcomes | Industry Standards

Assessments that could measure aspects of these learning outcomes

TASK: Media Law Exam which canvases both knowledge and case study application of knowledge and legal reasoning

LITERACIES: Can provide an assessment of students' capabilities of negotiating the legal parameters of public communication. An effectively designed exam can also demonstrate broader literacies in reasoning and critical analysis not just retained knowledge.

NOTES: Exams are usually not the best markers of students having achieved broad adaptable literacies or capabilities in a given area however when assessing students abilities to negotiate legal and ethical frameworks it is important to assess their reservoir of "ready" knowledge that will act as an alert system to potential legal and ethical problems in professional practice

Ethical Professional Understanding

- Ethics awareness
- Professionalism
- Sustainable development

Information Literacy	Their negotiation of new technologies and new approaches to media and communication will be governed by an understanding of the ethics of privacy and human rights
Research & Inquiry	Their professional choices will be informed by a sound knowledge of media histories, forms, technologies and techniques and an understanding of the ways that media and communications facilitate democracy and global citizenship.
Ethical, Social & Professional Understanding	A journalism graduate will function ethically and professionally in a variety of autonomous and organisational environments across the rapidly changing media and communications sector
Communication	Their choice of sources, story formats, and story approaches will be governed by an understanding of media ethics and professional responsibilities and an understanding of media communication as an engaged participatory process.
Personal & Intellectual Autonomy	They will be adept at assessing and negotiating personal and organisational ethical frameworks for ethically responsible professional practice.

Assessments that could measure aspects of these learning outcomes

TASK: Journalism Ethics Case Studies which require students to research and analyse the ethical context for media practices

LITERACIES: Case study research develops broad competencies in historic and applied research as well as in this instance focusing on an assessment of ethical/professional understandings.

NOTES: A case study approach is particularly appropriate for the assessment of ethical competencies and understandings as it requires students to link theory, history and an analysis of practice. Incorporation of both practice based realities and broad media histories should inform a case-study approach

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Ethics: informing the practices of choice

This political ethical role of animating citizenship is at the heart of journalism as a profession and as a discipline. One educator put it this way:

Journalism is irretrievably caught up with a political role and notions of the public and notions of democracy and participation, which puts it in a different place from most other disciplines. Because in most other disciplines you are talking to fellow scholars and then you might vernacularise it for the public. Journalism is always directed to the public.

It is this broad context that is important in developing a vibrant set of ethical competencies in journalism graduates. However there has been some tension between industry and journalism education as to how much theoretical content and what ethical frameworks ought to be included as part of a journalism education course.

Some industry respondents seem to believe that an over emphasis on ethics can lead to a type of professional paralysis. As one public radio editor put it:

I've often found that students want to know whether the fire can be covered ethically, rather than how to cover it, there's just a, often with these kids there's just a turgid perimeter that they've got to swim through before they can actually get to the basics of this business, and that just annoys me, it's silly.

However the competencies outlined above emphasise that ethical frameworks guide very practical parts of journalistic decision-making processes. They govern story choice and navigation of newsworthiness - in the public interest - as well as source choice and diversity. In order to facilitate a notion of an ethical professional framework which facilitates rather than inhibits efficient professional choices a broad range of theoretical frameworks must be covered in the journalism education curriculum while maintaining an emphasis on practice. One educator expressed it this way:

If you are graduating people who have got the word journalism in their degree title the grounding and the focus should be practice and the theory should inform that. ... There are all sorts of bodies of theory you can draw on... There's political science, there's legal and ethical studies and there's textual analysis...many courses seem to focus only on... the media studies tradition and that is only one of several bodies of theory, which are equally important.