

The LBR Editorial Code of Ethics

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**Law
Business
Research**

The LBR Code of Ethics

About the LBR Code of Ethics

The LBR Code of Ethics provides guidance to editors and journalists to ensure our news and other editorial content is delivered to a high quality, in the public interest, and balanced with respect for the rights and interests of everyone involved.

The Code applies to all editorial content published on our digital platforms and distributed via our briefings and social media channels. It follows best practices from around the world, and is inspired especially by the [Impress Standards Code](#) and the Independent Press Standards Organisation's [Editors' Code of Practice](#). It is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

The Code is intended primarily for editors and journalists producing news content for LBR subscription brands but can be consulted by all creators of content employed by LBR. It also informs our readership about the standards we hold ourselves to.

The Code applies to all written, audio and visual content, including images and headlines, created by journalists for LBR. It extends to 'newsgathering activities'.

Our journalists report on legal and regulatory developments around the world. They provide daily news reporting and analysis on matters including legal claims and judicial decisions, investigations, and industry news in complex, fast-moving areas of law.

Our audiences are primarily legal professionals in a range of settings, including law firms, corporates and government bodies. They are experts in their fields, and turn to us for high-quality, substantive reporting, exclusive information and objective, engaging analysis of developing trends affecting their practice.

Through their relationships with contributors and readers, our journalists play a key role in shaping and preserving our reputation. Our editorial teams are expected to be members of the communities they cover in good standing. We strive to report the news without favour or deference, whilst showing respect and courtesy to our readers and sources.

LBR expects its journalists to behave responsibly and meet the standards set out in this Code, while protecting their role to investigate and report freely.

The Code addresses some issues that also related to civil and criminal law. Journalists should be aware of the legal risks they may face when publishing and are expected to be familiar with LBR's media law crib-sheet.

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The Code

1. Accuracy

Our audiences turn to us for credible, trustworthy reporting on legal developments that, in some cases, can inform their decision-making, case strategy or advice. Inaccurate reporting of the facts could cause significant harm to our reputation as responsible providers of high-quality news and intelligence.

Our journalists and editors will put fairness and accuracy first, to ensure that our stories are both factually correct and accurately represent the diversity of viewpoints of our community.

We strive to listen and be accountable to our readers and sources both before and after publication by checking facts beforehand and, when necessary, responding to inaccuracies quickly and decisively.

LBR requires its journalists to take reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy of their news reporting. Considerations to take to ensure accuracy include the significance of any possible inaccuracies and their potential consequences, and the speed at which the story needs to be published. The reliability of the source(s) being used is also a factor.

Journalists should take the necessary steps to corroborate a story. This includes making reasonable attempts, before publication, to contact any individuals or organisations for whom publication could potentially have a significant adverse impact and offer them an opportunity to respond. A response should normally be published at the same time as any allegations are made or any information is placed in the public domain. The omission of certain facts can also cause reporting to be inaccurate.

Articles can only be published once they have been edited and approved by an editor with the appropriate authority – usually an editor, a deputy editor or a news editor of the same brand. Journalists should not make substantive changes to stories post-publication without clearance from an editor.

2. Contemporaneous notetaking

It is good practice for journalists to make timely notes when gathering information and comment for news stories. This is not a strict requirement, but it helps to ensure that journalists report accurately and have a complete record of what happened, for example in the case of breaking news, where events can unfold rapidly, and in court reporting. Notes should be clearly dated. Gathering information and commentary for news articles is good journalism practice, particularly when reporting breaking news where events might unravel quickly, and in court reporting. Notes should be properly dated, recorded on LBR's server, and retained for at least 12 months, in case of a future issue.

Journalists will always notify interviewees if their conversation is being recorded and recordings will be stored in the same way as notes.

3. Statements of fact and opinion

Journalists should clearly distinguish between facts and opinion. A fact can be proven and is based on objective evidence, whereas an opinion is a view formed about something that is not necessarily based on fact.

Opinion and facts can appear in the same piece of reporting. In all instances, journalists should take steps to distinguish clearly between the two. This can be achieved through clear labelling of what constitutes an opinion and whose it is, for example, using language such as “he opines” or “it is X’s view that”. Journalists can present personal opinions of sources in comment pieces, but they must ensure the facts guiding the angle of a story are not misleading.

A note on libel - There is a libel risk in publishing very damaging opinions held by others about named individuals that are not supported by facts.

4. Impartiality

To appear trustworthy to our readership, we must operate in a fair and honest manner. We must also be independent, objective and unbiased. Where appropriate and possible, journalists should provide facts relating to the source that could affect their impartiality, for example, their affiliations of client relationships.

A key element of ethical responsibility is ensuring balance. Approaching a variety of sources and obtaining the opinions of multiple counterparties will help to ensure a journalist’s work paints a full picture of what is going on. For example, when a senior partner leaves a leading law firm, the firm must have a chance to comment on any notions that its practice will suffer from the departure; inform the journalist of any plans to replace them; or give an alternative view about the reasons for the departure if there is one. We will only report that lawyers changing firms are taking their clients with them if this has been corroborated by the client or the former firm.

5. Confidentiality and sources

We will always respect our confidentiality obligations. Journalists should endeavour to check with sources before attributing quotes to their names and use quotations in the context they were given. We will attribute quotes unless explicitly requested not to do so and journalists should consider all e-mail correspondence to be on the record unless the source explicitly informs them that it is confidential or unattributable. Quotes may be checked for accuracy if requested by the source, at the discretion of the journalist.

Journalists are expected to know the meanings of the expressions *on the record*, *off the record* and *on background* and make sure the source agrees on how their quotes will be used from the outset of any communication.

On the record - Information that can be publicly disclosed and attributed to the source.

Off the record - Information provided by a source that is not intended for public disclosure or attribution.

Background - Information that can only be used in ways agreed with the source. For example, the information cannot be attributed to the source but can be used to deepen the journalist’s understanding of a subject.

Journalists should consider the context of requests for anonymity and whether there is a good reason, such as to protect their livelihood or personal safety. While it is infinitely preferable to get information from a reliable, named source, the nature of the legal sector means this isn’t always possible due to conflicts, ongoing cases, etc. However, when reporting on a legal dispute, journalists should consider the source’s relationship to the case and question whether the source could be using anonymity to make

misleading statements or overstate their position in a way that would not happen if they were quoted. Journalists should also question whether the story could bring the risk of defamation, or if there are reporting restrictions such as contempt of court or confidentiality. In the case of such risks, the anonymous source may disappear. Journalists should also ask themselves if the information can be corroborated elsewhere, or if there is another source who will go on the record.

We will not obtain information using hidden cameras or listening devices; by intercepting private telephone calls, messages or emails; or by engaging in the unauthorised removal of documents or photographs.

6. Attribution and Plagiarism

Senior editors and publishers should be familiar with issues around copyright and data protection.

Journalists should make reasonable efforts to identify and credit the originator of any third-party content and correct any failure to do so at the earliest opportunity. Care should be taken when sourcing content from online or social media sources and user-generated content, when journalists should take reasonable steps to verify the accuracy and reliability of a source.

As well as being essential for ensuring accuracy, attribution helps Law Business Research, as a publisher, comply with its legal requirements under copyright law, for example the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

7. Correction policy

We are committed to correcting inaccuracies as clearly and quickly as possible.

With all mistakes that are factual or could mislead our readers we will publish a notification of correction at the bottom of the relevant story, identifying the nature of the error and providing the correct information in the body of the text and in the correction notice.

The editor or deputy editor will use their editorial judgment to decide upon the correct way to address a mistake, considering the significance of the inaccuracy and editorial judgement over the difference between errors that materially affect the story and mistakes that need correcting but do not affect the overall story materially. Significance is measured by scale of the inaccuracy and its consequences, for example, the impact it has on an individual's or organisation's reputation or the story's substance.

Journalists must communicate any inaccuracies and complaints as soon as possible to their editor or deputy editor, who will work with them on the appropriate response. Journalists can correct typos themselves, whereas factual changes should be amended with the oversight of an editor or deputy editor.

When correcting a significant inaccuracy, we may republish the story with the word "Correction" before the title, with prominence equal to the original article at the earliest opportunity. If appropriate, we might provide individuals or organisations with an opportunity to respond, as an alternative to, or in addition to, a correction.

In the case of serious errors and complaints, we may take down a published story while we investigate. This should only be done by an editor or their superiors. In the rare instances where this is not immediately possible and the complaint is very serious, a journalist may unpublish the story on a temporary basis, making clear to the complainant that this is only until further review.

The prominence of the correction should be proportionate to the prominence and importance given to the original story and the seriousness of the inaccuracy being corrected. For example, if a significant inaccuracy appeared in a story published at the top of a briefing and in the main slot of the homepage, we may consider it appropriate to publish the correction in the same place for a similar amount of time. We will endeavour to publish the correction as soon as is reasonably possible after the inaccuracy has been identified and, in the case of significant corrections, may include the corrected version in the next relevant briefing. If appropriate, we may post the corrected version on any social media channels where the story was promoted.

Clarifications

'Clarifications' may be issued when new information comes to light that may change the facts or context of a story.

Editor's notes

A correction that calls into question the entire substance of an article, raises a significant ethical matter or addresses an instance in which we did not meet our standards, may require an editor's note by means of an explanation. The inclusion of an editor's note will be at the discretion of a senior editor.

Take-down (unpublish) requests

As a matter of editorial policy, we do not unpublish stories on request. Our response will be led by senior editors, who will consider whether further editorial action is warranted, for example, a correction, a clarification or further coverage of the subject.

Journalists can find further guidance on responding to complaints in LBR's media law crib-sheet.

8. The internet and social media

Editors and journalists must be alert to the presence of false content created by certain individuals, for example hoaxers, and AI on the internet, by checking relevant information against trusted or official sources and taking reasonable steps to verify the accuracy of the information from blogs and social media posts, which must be clearly linked to and labelled.

9. Artificial Intelligence

Sophisticated technology is becoming more accessible and the rapid advancements in generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology are changing how we produce content and our audiences' expectations around the consumption of news.

The arrival of readily available generative AI tools presents opportunities. In journalism, and other editorial processes, it can support a range of tasks, such as drafting, summarising long texts, text editing, idea generation and creating headlines. But it also creates uncertainty around trust, accuracy, accountability and bias, on top of the considerable reputational, legal and commercial risks regarding privacy, consumer protection, intellectual property and contractual and confidentiality. In particular, many of the publicly available generative models and services are known to "hallucinate", creating made-up claims, facts and arguments. To make things worse, these statements tend to be phrased with absolute certainty and, even, expert-sounding explanations.

Another aspect of these services that we need to remember is that, unless explicitly mentioned in a contract, all companies providing Gen AI support will use any data inputted into their system for training their internal models. They might also expose this data to other users of their system in ways and

contexts that cannot be forecasted in advance. With this in mind, we will make responsible use of AI technology to support our output only when we are confident that the results consistently meet our high standards for quality and accuracy.

All creators of content employed by LBR must be transparent and explicit about their use of AI with their editors, apply rigorous oversight and be alert to its limitations.

AI technology is advancing at great speed and so our parameters around its use will be frequently reviewed and adjusted. At present, our guidance on its use is as follows:

- We will only use AI tools that have been approved by Law Business Research as being technically robust and secure, to minimise the risk of errors and misuse.
- Journalists may use approved AI tools to enhance or facilitate the production of high-quality journalism and images but should always apply robust oversight and be transparent to editors about how they have used it.
- Employees should never upload company information of any kind, including emails, data provided by clients, confidential information, or news articles, whether published or unpublished, onto a publicly available AI platform.
- We should never trust unverified, unattributed facts given to us by an AI system.
- All articles we publish must always be assigned to a named journalist, who is responsible for the output and its veracity.
- We will be transparent about our use of generative AI, clearly signposting published material where the majority or entirety of content has been automated.

10. Privacy

Journalists must respect people's reasonable expectation of privacy. The decision of whether to use certain information must take into account the sensitivity of the facts at hand, how the information was communicated or obtained, the relevant attributes of the person, such as their age, occupation or public profile; and whether the person has courted publicity on a relevant aspect of their private life.

In rare cases, there may be a public interest justification for breaching this clause, but the decision to do so can only be made by a senior editor.

11. Justice and court reporting

When reporting on court proceedings, journalists must be fair and accurate, and in compliance with any reporting restrictions or statutory prohibitions. Reports must clearly distinguish between what was heard in court and any information from other sources. The taking of contemporaneous notes is strongly recommended during court proceedings, to demonstrate that care has been taken over the accuracy of any subsequent court report. If the opening of a trial is reported, it is good practice to report the conclusion.

Journalists must not:

- knowingly or negligently obstruct any criminal investigations or prejudice any criminal proceedings;
- directly or indirectly identify any people under criminal investigation before being charged, unless in cases where the police have released someone's name or other identifying information;
- directly or indirectly identify people under 18 who are, or have been, involved in criminal, immigration and asylum, or family proceedings, except as permitted by law; or
- make or offer payments to witnesses or defendants in criminal proceedings, except as permitted by law.

They must:

- preserve the anonymity of victims of sexual offences, except as permitted by law or with the person's express consent.

When reporting on court proceedings outside of the UK, journalists must seek to understand the relevant administrative rules on the identification of parties and raise any concerns about naming parties with an editor.

12. Transparency

LBR will ensure that significant conflicts of interest are disclosed and that information about financial products is objectively presented. We will correct any failure to disclose significant conflicts of interest with due prominence at the earliest opportunity.

13. Commercial content

LBR publishes some commercial content on its platforms. It provides an opportunity for trusted external contributors from around the world, who are vetted for their standing and knowledge, to showcase their expertise before our readers, while allowing us to tap a deeper well of expertise and to provide more leisurely in-depth granular analysis than the exigencies of journalism allow. Contributors may choose what to write within a pre-agreed set of parameters. Pieces that do not fit this are rejected.

To make clear the relationship of commercial contributors, any such material is clearly presented as a distinct content type, such as our "Insight" content. Example [here](#).

14. Public Interest

In certain circumstances, a story in the public interest may justify breaching one or more aspects of the code.

Journalism in the public interest refers to reporting news and information that is relevant, important, and beneficial to the public. More specifically, it refers to an 'interest' or stake in issues that concern a particular community or society, in this case LBR's readership.

Examples of public interest journalism at LBR include:

World Trademark Review (WTR)'s [reporting](#) on low-cost trademark application platforms that had similarities with fraudulent sites and its [investigation](#) into the mass trademark and domain building efforts of a millionaire who was not available for comment but whose flings were causing issues for brand owners and government authorities.

The public interest may be used to justify content or activities that would otherwise breach the Code when the benefits to society outweigh the potential harm caused by the published article. When publishing a story or acting in a way that that may breach the Code, we must show that it is in the public interest. In such instances, it may be appropriate to document the public interest, the justification, why the same result couldn't have been achieved without breaching the code and why the public interest is greater than the harm caused by the action.

15. Discrimination

Journalists must not make any prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's race, colour, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability. Any such details must be avoided unless they have a direct relevance to the story.

Journalists must not use language or references that explicitly encourage hatred or abuse of a person or group based on their characteristics unless they are direct quotes in certain instances. They should consult the LBR style guide for further guidance.

16. Harassment

Journalists should always identify themselves as journalists and provide the name of their title when making contact. They must not engage in intimidation, harassment or deception and are required to comply immediately with any reasonable request to desist from contacting, following or communicating with a person.

Any continued pursuit by a journalist, or the use of material obtained through harassment or intimidation (for instance, from a photographic agency), may breach this clause and fall foul of criminal or civil law.

17. Children

Journalists must only engage with a child or report on an identifiable child under 18 when this will not cause them harm. Reporting must have the child's consent and, where necessary, the consent of an appropriate adult. Identification of a child can only be made where it is relevant to the story. It must not cause harm to the child or place the child at risk of harm. If a person was under 18 when identified in a piece of news content and later requests to be anonymised in that content, editors must consider the request. Editors should consider using techniques or practices that remove identifying data about children, for example their parents' occupations. This practice also helps publishers comply with minimum use requirements under data protection law. This clause does not apply to the publication of images of general scenes unless this would put a child at risk of harm.

18. Self-harm, sexual assault and suicide

When reporting on self-harm, sexual assault and suicide, we will not provide excessive details of the method used, the specific location or speculate on the motives and we will signpost sources of support. We will consider the use of trigger warnings where appropriate.