

The Star's codes of ethics and conduct

Members of staff subscribe to The Star's Code of Conduct and Independent Newspapers' Code of Conduct.

These codes specifically spell out the rules by which we gather and present news.

There is also a code for the production of surveys and advertising features.

All journalists on The Star undertake to ensure they comply with these codes at all times.

The Star's code of ethics

Revised January 1999

Responsibilities:

1. In its reporting and comment, The Star should be accurate, fair, honest and frank.
2. The Star should aim to give all sides of an issue, by means of balanced presentation without bias, distortion, undue emphasis or omission.
3. The Star should be independent of government, commerce or any other vested interest.
4. The Star should expose wrongdoing, the misuse of power and unnecessary secrecy.
5. The Star should encourage racial co-operation and pursue a policy aimed at enhancing the welfare and progress of all sections of the population.
6. The Star should endeavour to be positive and constructive but not misleadingly optimistic or bland.
7. The Star should not pander to personal or sectional interests, but be solely concerned with the public interest.
8. The public's right to know about matters of importance is paramount. The Star should therefore fight vigorously any measure to conceal facts of public interest, any attempt to prevent public access to the news and any effort further to curtail freedom of speech.
9. The Star respects the individual's right to privacy, except where it conflicts clearly with the public interest.

Accuracy:

10. Sources of news should be identified unless there is good reason not to.
11. Facts should be checked carefully.
12. Reports of a technical nature should always be read back to the source. Other reports should be read back to the source for the checking of facts only, except when time does not permit or there is valid reason to believe that the source will endeavour to frustrate publication on grounds other than factual accuracy.
13. The Star should not be afraid to admit error, and should publish corrections spontaneously, promptly and with suitable prominence. Where an apology is appropriate, it should be tendered.

Integrity:

14. The Star should report issues in an impartial and balanced manner. Every effort should be made to reflect all sides of a controversy, if not simultaneously, then in subsequent editions.
15. The Star should report news without regard to its own interests or viewpoint, and without favour to its advertisers.
16. No Star journalist should identify the source of information provided under a pledge of confidentiality.
17. News and comments should be kept separate, save in exceptional circumstances. Comment should always be clearly identifiable, as should material from non-Star sources.
18. Advertising or promotional features should be clearly labelled, so as to leave readers in no doubt about the source and nature of the copy.
19. In its comment, The Star should be fair, but outspoken where necessary. It should provide a forum for the exchange of comment, and publish opinions it disagrees with.
20. The Star should report matters concerning itself or its staff in the same manner as it reports on other individuals or institutions.

Honesty:

21. The Star and its staff should be free of any obligation to news sources and special interests, including political parties. Even the appearance of obligation should be avoided, especially by political and financial journalists.
22. Neither The Star nor its staff may accept any gift or service of value, without reference to the editor. No gift, favour or special treatment may be accepted if it puts a member of staff under any obligation to the donor. Staff should distance themselves from excessive entertainment by seekers of publicity.
23. No individuals may accept free or reduced-rate travel, without the permission of the editor. Such offers should be made to the newspaper rather than the person. Where a travel or other concession is accepted in order to write a feature, mention of it should be made at the foot of the article.
24. No individual may accept the loan of a vehicle, except for test-drive purposes.
25. Star journalists should avoid active involvement in public affairs where a conflict of interest, potential or real, is likely to arise. Any financial, social, political or personal interest or activity which could give rise to such conflict should be declared to the editor.
26. Staff may only accept outside commissions, part-time employment or freelance work for other publications with the knowledge and consent of the editor.
27. Star journalists should be scrupulous in attending functions to which they have accepted invitations. If any appointment cannot be kept, the host or person concerned should be informed beforehand, or an apology tendered immediately afterwards.

Trips Charter

To be read in conjunction with The Star's Code of Ethics

1. All invitations to host staff members on trips must be addressed to the Editor. When invitations are sent directly to staff members or heads of department, these must also be referred to the Editor. No trips may be taken unless approved by the Editor. There will be no exception to this rule.
2. The Editor will then consider whether the invitation should be accepted. The following questions should be asked: Will the trip compromise The Star's Code of Ethics? Is it a venture The Star could recommend/be associated with? Is it likely to yield newsworthy copy? Would it be of interest/value to our readers? Would The Star have sent someone if expense were not an issue? (Multiple invitations from the same host should ring alarm bells and be discouraged.)
3. All trips taken by members of staff should be logged in the travel register. This is to ensure transparency and fairness in awarding trips, as well as to record problems or failure to deliver copy.
(The Saturday Star will maintain its own travel register but will inform the editor of The Star and the executive in charge of the travel register if trips are awarded to staff members who work across both titles.)
4. As trips are considered professional assignments, staff members need not apply for leave. However, you must apply for leave if you intend to extend the trip with the prior approval of your head of department.
5. Without exception, all articles arising out of trips must declare the involvement of all sponsors who paid for transport costs, accommodation, etc.
6. Prospective hosts/sponsors may not be asked to arrange free or discounted travel for partners, spouses or children. Any such offer made by the host/sponsor must be declined.
7. A distinction is drawn between professional assignments and travel/tourism trips:
Professional trips: (Examples: the motoring editor being invited to an overseas car show; a boxing writer reporting on an overseas bout; an arts writer being invited to attend a premiere, etc)
 - The permission of the editor as well as the head of department must be obtained.
 - The trip must be logged in the travel register.
 - It must be made clear to the prospective host/s that there will be no obligation/guarantees of coverage.

Travel/tourism trips:

- At least two editorial executives, including the one in charge of the travel register, will recommend to the editor whether a travel invitation should be accepted. This will be done in consultation with the travel editor and after the interrogation in Rule 2.
 - They will also recommend to the editor who should be awarded the trip, after consulting with the travel editor and the head of department concerned. The staff member chosen must be a capable of producing interesting and accurate copy and reliable in meeting deadlines.
 - Staff members offered trips are obliged to write an article or articles within two weeks of their return. They will be required to complete and sign an undertaking to this effect.
8. Costs:

- For local professional trips, the staff member and their head of department must agree beforehand on an advance to cover reasonable expenses likely to be incurred during the trip, such as transport costs, meals not included in the accommodation, telephone calls, etc. Advances will not cover personal entertainment or other personal items such as toiletries, cigarettes and alcohol. Within two weeks of their return, staff members must submit receipts for these expenses and refund any surplus to the company.
In the case of overseas trips, the prevailing company rate (currently US \$240 a day or £170 a day in Britain) will be allocated and the same accounting rules will apply. A person on a by-invitation overseas trip will qualify only for the 100/£100 airport expenses allowance (see below)
- No advances will be given for travel/tourism trips, except in the case of overseas travel when US \$100 (£100 in the case of Britain) will be advanced for airport expenses on departure and arrival. Within two weeks of their return, staff members must submit receipts for these expenses and refund any surplus to the company.
- Failure to submit an expenses return in the set time frame will result in the advance being deducted from the staff member's salary.

Obligations on travel page trips

Date

Dear

We are delighted that you have accepted the invitation to visit from _____ to _____

Please complete and sign this form. Then give a copy of this form, with a copy of your itinerary attached, to both the travel editor and your head of department.

THE TRAVEL EDITOR

Rules for travel trips:

1. Professional Responsibilities

Please note that this is an official assignment and you are representing The Star. Your acceptance entails certain responsibilities, as set out in the Code of Ethics. Please ensure that you are familiar with it before you leave.

Please attend functions arranged for your benefit or, before the event, give your host good reasons why you cannot make it. Be punctual when accompanying others to a destination. In both instances, this is common courtesy.

Do not get drunk during assignments or behave in any way that could bring The Star into disrepute.

2. Costs

Your hosts will provide accommodation, meals and transport but you must pay for all other items (eg. phone calls, alcohol, etc). If you are travelling overseas, arrange with Editorial Administration for an advance of \$100 to cover airport expenses. See information on this in the Trips Charter.

3. Coverage

Before departure, confer with the travel editor as to what is required in terms of article/s and their length. The article/s must be accompanied by a factfile giving information on the destination, costs, weather, flights, etc. It is vital to provide illustrative material. If you don't take a camera, arrange for the tour operator to provide pictures. This should be done as a back-up anyway. Try to bring back postcards, brochures, maps, tickets, etc

4. After the trip

Within 14 days of your return, you must submit the article/s to the Travel Editor. Failure to meet this deadline will be recorded in the travel register and you will never again be offered a trip. If applicable, you must also submit an expenses form for the \$100 advance and refund the surplus to the company within that period.

5. Emergencies

Please arrange to get a travel insurance card from any of the staff in Syndication (x2310/2309/2220)

Names and telephone numbers of immediate family members (in case of emergencies):

Name Contact no

Name Contact no

SIGNATURE:

The Star's policy on gifts, services and hospitality

Gifts:

The acceptance of gifts may put a member of staff under an obligation to the donor and these rules shall apply:

1. Only token gifts may be accepted if they have a general "purpose" such as a launch of a product or service, or are a Christmas gift, etc. Staff members may not accept any gift connected to a specific story before it is written.
2. Gifts worth more than R100 may not be accepted by any member of The Star. If such a gift has been delivered and its return could be awkward or misconstrued, it should be given to the Editor who will decide what should be done with it.
3. A standard letter of acknowledgement must be sent to donors. This letter will be written by the Editor.

Hospitality

Staff members who receive tickets/invitations to sporting and cultural events (such as golf days) must declare these to their head of department, who will maintain a list of these invitations and who has accepted them. The head of department must approve attendance of such an event and so inform the editor.

Only one additional ticket for a partner should be accepted.

Free or subsidised services

Staff members may not accept any free or subsidised service without the approval of the editor. Subsidised services courtesy of the company (e.g. corporate rates at hotels, reduced M-Net subscriptions) are acceptable. If a staff member needs a service to perform his/her job (e.g. cellphone or satellite TV), the company should pay.

Reviews

Staff tasked with reviewing may accept books, CDs, computer software and movie and theatre tickets for review purposes. However, the company must pay the bills for restaurant reviews.

Vehicles

Your attention is drawn to this clause in The Star's Code of Ethics: "No individual may accept the loan of a vehicle, except for test-drive purposes".

The Editor must approve such loans.

Consultancy, Promotional and Freelance Work

To avoid any conflicts of interests, or the appearance thereof, you may not accept ANY outside work without the permission of the Editor, or the executive designated by him.

This rule is contained in The Star's Code of Ethics, namely: "Staff may only accept outside commissions, part-time employment or freelance work for other publications with the knowledge and consent of the editor".

If permission to do outside work is granted, remember that such work may not be done during working hours or using company resources.

Code of conduct for The Star surveys and advertising features

Core principles

1. Editorial content of The Star's surveys and advertising features should observe the same standards of good writing expected in the rest of the newspaper, namely accuracy, fairness, clarity, conciseness and good taste.
2. Readers should be left in no doubt about the source of copy. If material has been provided by advertisers or other sources outside The Star, this should be clearly stated. Claims by advertisers and other companies must be attributed to them and not presented as statements of fact.

3. Sales representatives may not guarantee use of copy or illustrations in editorial space in order to elicit advertisements. Nor may they charge clients for the placement of photographs and logos in editorial space.
4. Editorial and advertising about a company should, wherever possible, not appear on the same page.
5. Reports about or references to companies relevant to a survey or advertising feature may not be omitted merely because they have declined to advertise in the product.
6. Extracts from published material must be properly attributed. It is inadvisable to quote at length from other works, not only because this may contravene copyright law but because it reflects poorly on the writer and The Star.
7. To avoid conflicts of interest, everyone involved in the production of a survey or advertising feature must declare any connection to or involvement with individuals or companies which are the focus of the feature or advertising in it.
8. Staff may not accept any gift or service of value without reference to the editor. No gift, favour or special treatment may be accepted if it puts a member of staff under any obligation to the donor.
9. Writers may not use pseudonyms without the permission of the editor.
10. Whenever possible, reports should be read back to the source for the checking of facts.

Surveys

1. Editorial must be gathered independently by a writer commissioned by The Star and must meet all criteria laid down in The Star's Code of Ethics. Specifically, it must "give all sides of an issue, by means of balanced presentation without bias, distortion, undue emphasis or omission".
2. The integrity of the editorial must be maintained regardless of whether the focus of the survey is an industry, an event, a sport, an issue of topicality, a company or a non-profit organisation.
3. Writers may act on helpful leads from the sales representative and may contact companies which may be advertisers or potential advertisers during the course of their research. However, there must be no liaison between writers and sales representatives or between writer and advertisers on the question of specific editorial content. If this does occur, the feature may not be called a survey.

Advertising features

1. The primary aim of advertising features is to give clients an opportunity to publicise their activities, services and products. They are made viable by support from primary advertisers and their clients or suppliers. However, editorial space has not been paid for and thus advertisers have less control over content than would be the case with advertisements.
2. Editorial material should preferably be generated by a writer commissioned by The Star. If material is provided by advertisers, it should be processed by a writer commissioned by The Star to ensure it meets standards.

3. Clients may brief writers on what aspects of their business they want covered and provide illustrative material to accompany the text. They must be given the opportunity to check the copy for inaccuracies.
4. The wishes of clients regarding content and design will be taken into account but must not supersede considerations of standards and style of The Star. For example, reports and illustrative material may be omitted if there is no space or they are of inferior quality. And page elements that identify the product with The Star, such as banners, must follow style.
5. If time permits clients may be given an opportunity to see proofs of pages and suggest changes. However, no guarantee may be given that they will see proofs or that suggested changes will be made. This will be left to the discretion of the Production Editor.
6. These products must be clearly labelled ADVERTISING FEATURES. In addition, readers should be told that information was obtained from the client/clients.

Service features

1. Although these features attempt to attract advertising of a particular nature, their primary aim is to provide a service to readers. They tend to appear regularly or seasonally and include such themes as Adult Education, Holiday Destinations and Training for a Career.
2. The writer should attempt to give readers a balanced view of the subject and present items which are newsworthy and of service to readers.
3. Sales representatives may invite advertisers to submit editorial for consideration but may not guarantee its use.
4. Material submitted by advertisers may be used if: a) It is appropriate to the theme; b) It is newsworthy or of service to readers; c) There is space after worthier items of service or news interest have been used.
5. Material submitted by advertisers (its use must not be guaranteed) must be processed by a writer of The Star to ensure it meets editorial standards. If such material is used in a service feature, readers must be told, in a note at the end of the report: "Information in this report was supplied by (name of company)."
6. Advertisers have no control over the appearance and the content of the feature and have no right to see page proofs.