

Questions student staffs should discuss before entering the social media environment:

Even with strong ethical principles, journalists will always face difficult decisions. Open-ended questions like the ones below can produce informed discussion and good decisions when dealing with print and online questions.

- What is this journalist's primary role?
- What is this journalist's role in the context of the moment?
- Is the tone and voice appropriate for this content and its purpose?
- Is the content straight news reporting, informed analysis or opinion? Does the audience clearly understand the purpose of the content?
- Does this content blur or blend the roles of reporter and commentator? If so, how should this content be labeled?
- Does the tone of this content diverge from that of the parent site?
- Does this content need to be put through the same editing process as similar content on the parent site? Why? Why not?
- Is there anything in this role that could create the appearance of a conflict of interest, or that could imperil the journalist's ability to report the story objectively in the future?
- Is there anything in this role that would cause the principles in the coverage to doubt the accuracy or independence of the reporter's future work on this topic?
- Have all the proper stakeholders been involved (heard from) in this decision?