

## CMNS2140: Principles of Public Relations

Newcastle City Precinct

Semester 1 - 2024



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEWCASTLE  
AUSTRALIA

*The School of Humanities, Creative Industries and Social Sciences is committed to providing an inclusive environment in which all cultures are accorded respect and all students and staff are expected to act with honesty, fairness, trustworthiness and accountability in dealings with others. The School recognises and respects the unique histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their unbroken relationship with the lands and the waters of Australia over millennia, and the validity of Aboriginal ways of knowing. We are dedicated to reconciliation and to offering opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access and succeed in higher education.*

## OVERVIEW

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Course Description</b>             | This course introduces students to the field of public relations and provides a foundational knowledge of public relations theory and practice. Students will begin to develop an understanding of professional practice, ethical issues, and role of communication strategies and tactics in public relations management. Students are encouraged to explore different types of public relations practice and to begin positioning themselves to develop a career in the field. |
| <b>Academic Progress Requirements</b> | Nil  |
| <b>Requisites</b>                     | Students cannot enrol in this course if they have successfully completed CMNS1290.   |
| <b>Assumed Knowledge</b>              | CMNS1090 Media Storytelling.   |
| <b>Contact Hours</b>                  | <b>Newcastle City Precinct</b><br><b>Lecture</b><br>Face to Face On Campus<br>1 hour(s) per week(s) for 9 week(s) starting Week 1<br><br><b>Tutorial</b><br>Face to Face On Campus<br>2 hour(s) per week(s) for 4 week(s) starting Week 2<br><br><b>Tutorial</b><br>Face to Face On Campus<br>1 hour(s) per week(s) for 7 week(s) starting Week 6  |
| <b>Unit Weighting</b>                 | 10   |
| <b>Workload</b>                       | Students are required to spend on average 120-140 hours of effort (contact and non-contact) including assessments per 10 unit course.  |

# COURSE OUTLINE

[www.newcastle.edu.au](http://www.newcastle.edu.au)

CRICOS Provider 00109J

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# CONTACTS

**Course Coordinator**     **Newcastle City Precinct**  
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(02) 403 39238

Consultation: Weekdays between 9 AM and 4PM at NUspace or online via Zoom, by appointment only.

**Teaching Staff**             Other teaching staff will be advised on the course Canvas site.

**School Office**             **School of Humanities Creative Industries and Social Sciences**  
NU Space, Level 4  
409 Hunter Street  
Newcastle  
[HCISS@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:HCISS@newcastle.edu.au)  
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# SYLLABUS

**Course Content**             Topics include:

- Public relations theory, practice, and current debates in the discipline
- Popular culture portrayals of public relations and how these portrayals inform perceptions of public relations
- Public relations ethics and how ethical frameworks impact on practice
- Preparation of a public relations communication plan using research-based evidence.

**Course Learning Outcomes**     **On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:**

1. Explain core public relations theories and how they apply to practice;
2. Describe types of public relations activities and illustrate their use in real world contexts;
3. Interpret and apply ethical frameworks for public relations
4. Design public relations strategies and tactics in order to solve real-world problems;
5. Implement teamwork, problem solving, report writing and interpersonal communication skills

**Course Materials**             Required Text:

- Johnson & Glenny (2020). Strategic communication: Public relations at work. Routledge.
- Refer to the course's Canvas page to find the required reading for each topic.

Other Resources:

- Refer to the course's Canvas page to find the recommended reading for each topic and the resources for assessments, as well as other learning resources such as the course's lecture and tutorial slides.

# SCHEDULE

| Week                       | Week Begins | Topic   | Learning Activity             | Assessment Due   |
|----------------------------|-------------|---|-------------------------------|--|
| 1                          | 26 Feb      | Introduction to the course  | Lecture only                  |  |
| 2                          | 4 Mar       | Public relations vs. media relations: Similarities, differences, and overlaps.    | Lecture & tutorials (2 hours) | Reflective Journal for Topic 3 due Friday 8 March 11:59pm  |
| 3                          | 11 Mar      | Public relations ethics: An oxymoron, a minefield, or an impossibility?           | Lecture & tutorials (2 hours) | Reflective Journal for Topic 4 due Friday 15 March 11:59pm   |
| 4                          | 18 Mar      | Putting 'relationship' into the practice of public relations                      | Lecture & tutorials (2 hours) | Reflective Journal for Topic 5 due Friday 22 March 11:59pm   |
| 5                          | 25 Mar      | Working in teams (and briefing for Assessments 3 and 4)                           | Lecture & tutorials (2 hours) | Reflective Journal for Topic 6 due Friday 29 March 11:59pm   |
| 6                          | 1 Apr       | The field of public relations practice: Changes and challenges                    | Lecture & tutorials (1 hour)  | Reflective Journal for Topic 7 due Friday 5 April 11:59pm<br><br><b>Assessment 1 (Blog) due Sunday 7 April 11:59pm</b> |
| 7                          | 8 Apr       | Public relations practice as boundary spanning: Internal and community relations  | Lecture & tutorials (1 hour)  | Reflective Journal for Topic 8 due Friday 12 April 11:59pm   |
| <b>Mid-Semester Recess</b> |             |   |                               |  |
| <b>Mid-Semester Recess</b> |             |   |                               |  |
| 8                          | 29 Apr      | Public relations planning: Crafting strategy, tactics, and messages               | Lecture & tutorials (1 hour)  | Reflective Journal for Topic 9 due Friday 3 May 11:59pm  |
| 9                          | 6 May       | Crisis communication and issues management  | Lecture & tutorials (1 hour)  | Reflective Journal for Topic 10 due Friday 9 May 11:59pm   |
| 10                         | 13 May      | Integrated public relations: Brand management and communication across PESO media | Tutorials only (1 hour)       |  |
| 11                         | 20 May      | In-class assessment task (Assessment 3)   | Tutorials only (1 hour)       | Assessment 3 (Research Support Material/s) due during tutorials  |
| 12                         | 27 May      | Monitoring and evaluating public relations communication plan                     | Tutorials only (1 hour)       |  |
| 13                         | 3 Jun       |   | NO tutorials.                 | Assessment 4 (Report) due Sunday 9 June 11:59pm  |
| <b>Examination Period</b>  |             |   |                               |  |
| <b>Examination Period</b>  |             |   |                               |  |

# ASSESSMENTS

This course has 4 assessments. Each assessment is described in more detail in the sections below.

|   | Assessment Name           | Due Date  | Involvement | Weighting | Learning Outcomes |
|---|---------------------------|---|-------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 1 | Blog                      | Week 6, Sunday 7 April 11:59pm  | Individual  | 25%       | 1, 2, 3           |
| 2 | Reflective Journal        | Due Fridays 11:59pm in Weeks 2 to 9, depending on the topics. Refer to the Schedule for more details. | Individual  | 25%       | 1, 2, 3           |
| 3 | Report Support Material/s | Week 11, during scheduled tutorials   | Group       | 15%       | 5                 |
| 4 | Report                    | Week 13, Sunday 9 June 11:59pm  | Group       | 35%       | 4, 5              |

## Late Submissions

The mark for an assessment item submitted after the designated time on the due date, without an approved extension of time, will be reduced by 10% of the possible maximum mark for that assessment item for each day or part day that the assessment item is late. Note: this applies equally to week and weekend days.

## Assessment 1 - Blog

### Assessment Type Purpose

Online Learning Activity

The purpose of this assessment is for students to investigate and critically analyse ethical issues in contemporary public relations (PR) practice and draw on PR theories/concepts and ethical frameworks to explain how PR activities can be carried out ethically in real-world contexts.

### Description

Students will respond to a brief and write a blog post for the PR agency they 'work for'. The task involves analysing popular culture portrayals of the PR industry, practice, and/or practitioners in a recent film or television series of their choosing. The chosen film or television series (a minimum of 2 television episodes to be analysed) must be from the last five years (between 2019 and 2024). In the blog post, students must describe at least 2 significant treatments of how the PR industry, practice, and/or practitioners are portrayed and what ethical issues these raise, as well as provide relevant learning points for PR practitioners and/or clients of PR agencies. Students are required to integrate a minimum of 3 course readings and the Public Relations Institute of Australia's ethical code of conduct for PR and communication professionals into their analysis to substantiate their arguments, interpretation, and analysis.

Students must ensure their content is written and presented as a descriptive blog post (i.e., not a listicle) and adheres to the conventional style and format of a blog post. A checklist will be provided on Canvas. In-text citations within the body paragraphs and a full reference list at the end of the blog post are required. All sources used in the blog post, whether academic, industry, or creative, must be referenced. References must confirm to either the Harvard author-date or APA 7th edition author-date reference style.

### Weighting

25%

### Length

800 words (+/- 10%)

### Due Date

Week 6, Sunday 7 April 11:59pm

### Submission Method

Online

Submit via Canvas and must be submitted to Turnitin

### Assessment Criteria

Available on Canvas

### Return Method

Online

### Feedback Provided

Online - Quantitative and qualitative feedback will be provided

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## Assessment 2 - Reflective Journal

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Assessment Type</b>     | Journal  |
| <b>Purpose</b>             | The purpose of this assessment is for students to examine the key (theoretical) principles that underlie public relations (PR) practice and reflect on how these principles inform PR practice and influence their engagements with PR activities.   |
| <b>Description</b>         | <p>Students will write six reflective journal entries that engage with a reflection prompt relating to the topics and required course readings from Weeks 3 to 10. The reflection prompt will be provided on Canvas. In each reflective journal entry, students will use their selected topic's required course readings as the starting point of their reflection. Students are asked to reflect on their personal and/or professional engagements with the PR industry and PR activities, providing relevant examples as required to demonstrate their understanding of PR practice and theories/concepts. They must also reflect on how the knowledge and insights they have gained about PR theories/concepts have changed or challenged how they define PR, its practice, and/or its role and value both in and for an organisation. Students should not summarise the course readings and instead, they should integrate the key views/arguments and counter views/arguments from the topics' course readings into their reflection.</p> <p>In-text citations within the body paragraphs and a full reference list at the end of the reflective journal entries are required. All sources used in the reflective journal entries, whether academic, industry, or creative, must be referenced. References must confirm to either the Harvard author-date or APA 7th edition author-date reference style.</p> |
| <b>Weighting</b>           | 25%  |
| <b>Length</b>              | 1800 words (+/- 10%) (6 x 300-word blog posts +/- 10%)   |
| <b>Due Date</b>            | Due Friday 11:59pm in Weeks 2 to 9, depending on the choice of topics. Refer to the Schedule for more details.   |
| <b>Submission Method</b>   | Online<br>Submit via Canvas and must be submitted to Turnitin  |
| <b>Assessment Criteria</b> | Available on Canvas  |
| <b>Return Method</b>       | Online   |
| <b>Feedback Provided</b>   | Online - Quantitative and qualitative feedback will be provided  |

## Assessment 3 - Report Support Material/s

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Assessment Type</b>     | Written Assignment  |
| <b>Purpose</b>             | The purpose of this group assessment is to help students gain familiarity with communication materials that public relations (PR) practitioners use and create as part of their everyday work.  |
| <b>Description</b>         | <p>Students will form groups of no more than 4 people by the end of Week 7. Students will be working in the same groups to complete Assessments 3 and 4. For this assessment, students must use the communication materials provided to them via Canvas to write a media release that addresses one (or more) communication objectives outlined in the client brief for a "real-world" organisation. The client brief will be uploaded to Canvas. A briefing for this assessment has been scheduled during Week 5 tutorials.</p> <p>In Week 11, each group must bring the final draft of their media release to their scheduled tutorial, where it will be peer reviewed by another group. After editing the media release based on the peer review feedback, each group will submit the media release for marking at the end of the tutorial. Students will be provided with a template to use and must ensure the media release is written and formatted according to industry norms.</p> |
| <b>Weighting</b>           | 15%   |
| <b>Length</b>              | 400-500 words (+/- 10%)   |
| <b>Due Date</b>            | Week 11, during scheduled tutorials   |
| <b>Submission Method</b>   | Submit via Canvas and must be submitted to Turnitin   |
| <b>Assessment Criteria</b> | Available on Canvas   |
| <b>Return Method</b>       | Online  |
| <b>Feedback Provided</b>   | Online - Quantitative and qualitative feedback will be provided   |

## Assessment 4 - Report

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Assessment Type</b>     | Report  |
| <b>Purpose</b>             | The purpose of the report is for students to experience the full process of developing a public relations (PR) communication plan for a “real-world” organisation.  |
| <b>Description</b>         | <p>In groups, students will write a report detailing their PR communication plan for a “real-world” organisation. Students will work in the same groups to complete Assessments 3 and 4. The PR communication plan should be developed to help the “real-world” organisation accomplish their communication objectives, which will be outlined in the client brief uploaded to Canvas. The report must (i) present practical and relevant PR strategies, tactics, messages, and SMART objectives, (ii) explain how the proposed PR strategies and tactics can achieve the organisation’s aims and goals, (iii) be informed by sound research and PR theories, and (iv) incorporate relevant academic and industry publications or reports.</p> <p>A briefing for this assessment has been scheduled during Week 5 tutorials. Students will be provided with a template to use and must ensure the report is written and formatted according to industry norms. In-text citations within the body paragraphs and a full reference list at the end of the report are required. All sources used in the report, whether academic, industry, or creative, must be referenced. References must confirm to either the Harvard author-date or APA 7th edition author-date reference style.</p> |
| <b>Weighting</b>           | 35%   |
| <b>Length</b>              | 1,800 words (+/- 10%)   |
| <b>Due Date</b>            | Week 13, Sunday 9 June 11:59pm  |
| <b>Submission Method</b>   | Online<br>Submit via Canvas and must be submitted to Turnitin   |
| <b>Assessment Criteria</b> | Available on Canvas   |
| <b>Return Method</b>       | Online  |
| <b>Feedback Provided</b>   | Online - Quantitative and qualitative feedback will be provided   |

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## Grading Scheme

This course is graded as follows:

| Range of Marks | Grade                 | Description  |
|----------------|-----------------------|--|
| 85-100         | High Distinction (HD) | Outstanding standard indicating comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an outstanding level of academic achievement; mastery of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.          |
| 75-84          | Distinction (D)       | Excellent standard indicating a very high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a very high level of academic ability; sound development of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.  |
| 65-74          | Credit (C)            | Good standard indicating a high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a high level of academic achievement; reasonable development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.            |
| 50-64          | Pass (P)              | Satisfactory standard indicating an adequate knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an adequate level of academic achievement; satisfactory development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes. |
| 0-49           | Fail (FF)             | Failure to satisfactorily achieve learning outcomes. If all compulsory course components are not completed the mark will be zero. A fail grade may also be awarded following disciplinary action.  |

\*Skills are those identified for the purposes of assessment task(s).

## Attendance

Attendance/participation will be recorded in the following components:

- Tutorial (Method of recording: Manual and/or online recording of attendance by the tutor/s.)

## Communication Methods

Communication methods used in this course include:

- Canvas Course Site: Students will receive communications via the posting of content or announcements on the Canvas course site.
- Email: Students will receive communications via their student email account.
- Face to Face: Communication will be provided via face-to-face meetings or supervision.

## Course Evaluation

Each year feedback is sought from students and other stakeholders about the courses offered in the University for the purposes of identifying areas of excellence and potential improvement.

As a result of student feedback, the following changes have been made to this offering of the course:

- Assessment 2 (Reflective Journal): Provide a selection of topics for students to choose from, which allows students to choose topics based on their personal/professional interests, as well as the progress and deadlines of their assessments in the other courses. Students did not have the option of choosing topics previously.
- Assessment 3 (Research Support Material/s) and Assessment 4 (Report): Move the client briefing session forward to Week 5 to give students more time to think about their strategy to address the client brief and scheduled during a 2-hour tutorial to allow more time for questions. The client briefing session was previously scheduled in Week 7 during a 1-hour tutorial.
- Assessment 3 (Research Support Material/s) and Assessment 4 (Report): Defer the

grouping of students from Week 3 to Week 7 to provide students with more time to know each other and form groups based on similar professional interests and/or their strategy to address the client brief.

**Oral Interviews (Vivas)** As part of the evaluation process of any assessment item in this course an oral examination (viva) may be conducted. The purpose of the oral examination is to verify the authorship of the material submitted in response to the assessment task. The oral examination will be conducted in accordance with the principles set out in the [Oral Examination \(viva\) Procedure](#). In cases where the oral examination reveals the assessment item may not be the student's own work the case will be dealt with under the [Student Conduct Rule](#).

**Academic Misconduct** All students are required to meet the academic integrity standards of the University. These standards reinforce the importance of integrity and honesty in an academic environment. Academic Integrity policies apply to all students of the University in all modes of study and in all locations. For the Student Academic Integrity Policy, refer to <https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=35>.

**Adverse Circumstances** The University acknowledges the right of students to seek consideration for the impact of allowable adverse circumstances that may affect their performance in assessment item(s). Applications for special consideration due to adverse circumstances will be made using the online Adverse Circumstances system where:

1. the assessment item is a major assessment item; or
2. the assessment item is a minor assessment item and the Course Co-ordinator has specified in the Course Outline that students may apply the online Adverse Circumstances system;
3. you are requesting a change of placement; or
4. the course has a compulsory attendance requirement.

Before applying you must refer to the Adverse Circumstance Affecting Assessment Items Procedure available at:  
<https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=236>

**Important Policy Information** The Help button in the Canvas Navigation menu contains helpful information for using the Learning Management System. Students should familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures at <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-students/respect-at-uni/policies-and-procedures> that support a safe and respectful environment at the University.

*This course outline was approved by the Head of School. No alteration of this course outline is permitted without Head of School approval. If a change is approved, students will be notified and an amended course outline will be provided in the same manner as the original.*

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