Be prepared and be confident - you are the expert

Be prepared

- Make sure you know what the article is about, why the journalist wants to speak to you, what newspaper they are from - or, if it’s a freelance, where they plan on pitching it - and when it’ll be published.
- Ask who else the journalist is speaking to, and whether you are responding to specific comments or findings.
- News and journalists move fast, but it’s okay to ask them to ring back in 15 minutes so you have time to prepare – just say you have something to finish first.
- Write down your three key messages, and any relevant figures you might need.
- Think about the audience and how your story is relevant to them.

Speaking to the journalist

- Don’t assume the journalist has understood a complex point, if in doubt offer to repeat it and do so clearly and simply.
- Stop when you’ve answered the question, it’s not your responsibility to fill the silence.
- If you have complex statistics to convey, offer to email them to the journalist to ensure they are reported accurately.
- If the call is going on too long and you feel you have said all you can, politely end the call.
- A journalist will not run their article by you before publication, so don’t ask.
- If you have had a bad experience previously and want a record of what you said, or if you want to learn from the experience by listening back, it’s okay to record the interview yourself, but tell the journalist at the start of your conversation.

Don’t forget

- Nothing is ever completely off the record so don’t say anything you wouldn’t want printed.

Communications Office

T 01206 873529
E comms@essex.ac.uk