**Ethical guidelines  for Takedown Requests**

Journalists may be asked to remove online content for any number of reasons. Just because content is unpopular or controversial does not mean a media staff should comply with such requests. When journalists meet their goal of producing consistent, responsible journalism, they likely will choose to leave the content in question online even in the face of criticism.

All media – including student media – provide a historical record of issues, events and comments. As such, content should not be changed unless there are unusual circumstances. Another alternative to takedown demands would be to create publishing standards we would call Put Up criteria. Train student editors and staffers in why and how something should be published so takedown requests are avoided.

**Staff manual process**

 Content should not be removed unless the student editorial board determines it is factually inaccurate or was otherwise factually, legally deficient at the time of publication. The staff manual should provide a checklist or guide students can use to determine whether a takedown request has merit.

**Suggestions**

* In some cases, student editors may take down a story because they determine the content warrants a one-time exception (such as fabrication or to protect a source).
* Reporters may elect to do a follow-up story.
* If student editors choose to remove content, they should publish a note on the site explaining when and why the content was removed.
* Takedown criteria should be outlined and explained in the staff manual.
* Create guidelines and procedures to ensure students only post information and images they feel meet standards of responsible journalism: Put Up guidelines.

**Resources**

 [Takedown Demands: Here is a Roadmap of Choices, Rationale](http://jeasprc.org/takedown-demands-here-is-a-roadmap-of-choices-rationale/), JEA Scholastic Press Rights Committee

[Respond to Takedown Demands](http://www.splc.org/article/2010/01/responding-to-takedown-demands?id=111), Student Press Law Center

[Setting Criteria Before the Requests Come](http://jeasprc.org/takedown-demands-setting-criteria-before-the-requests-come-an-ethics-lesson/), JEA Scholastic Press Rights Committee

[10 Steps to a Put-Up Policy](http://jeasprc.org/put-up-recommendations/), JEA Scholastic Press Rights Committee

[Audio: Takedown Requests](https://soundcloud.com/scholastic-press-rights/press-rights-minute-21-takedown-requests), JEA Scholastic Press Rights Committee, Press Rights Minute

[5 Ways News Organizations Respond to ‘Unpublishing’ Requests](http://www.poynter.org/news/mediawire/104414/5-ways-news-organizations-respond-to-unpublishing-requests/), The Poynter Institute