

British Guild of Beer Writers

Code of Conduct

The British Guild of Beer Writer (BGBW)'s Code of Conduct sets out the main principles of beer communication and journalism. The code forms part of the rules of the Guild.

All joining the BGBW agree that they will adhere to its professional principles. We encourage people to read and support this Code of Conduct and we ask members to promote it throughout the media and brewing industry.

1. Personal Conduct

This applies to all members of the Guild.

1.1 Guild members should conduct themselves in a professional manner that befits the image of Guild as an established and respected national professional organisation.

Unacceptable behaviour includes, but is not limited to, discrimination, bullying, aggression on grounds of age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation. Guild members do not use racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic language in any context, and do not engage in bullying, coercive, aggressive, harassing or sexually intimidating behaviour at Guild or other industry events.

1. 2 At events where alcohol is consumed, Guild members are expected to refrain from drinking to a point where they lose control of behaviour to a degree that is likely to cause embarrassment, harm or distress to themselves or others, or encouraging others to do so.

1.3 Regarding disagreements with other members in areas that are relevant to Guild membership, everyone is entitled to their own opinion, and a disagreement should be dealt with in an appropriate business-like manner, particularly when in the presence of, or on a platform accessible to, non-members, the press or any other media representatives.

1.4 Members must not without the appropriate approval, commit the Guild at local, regional or national level to any position or action which is contrary to the Articles of Association or accepted policy as defined by the Board.

2. Communications

2.1 Universal Guidelines

This section applies to all members of the Guild creating communication about beer or pubs in any medium. All Guild members should:

2.1.1 Strive to ensure that information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair.

2.1.2 Do their utmost to correct harmful inaccuracies.

2.1.3 Differentiate between fact and opinion.

2.1.4 Obtain material by honest, straightforward and open means, with the exception of investigations that are both overwhelmingly in the public interest and which involve evidence that cannot be obtained by straightforward means.

2.1.5 Do nothing to intrude into anybody's private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest.

2.1.6 Protect the identity of sources who supply information in confidence and material gathered in the course of her/his work.

2.1.7 Resist threats or any other inducements to influence, distort or suppress information and take no unfair personal advantage of information gained in the course of their duties before the information is public knowledge.

2.1.8 Produce no material likely to lead to hatred or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.

2.1.9 Support the principles of responsible drinking both in their work and their behaviour in the industry.

2.1.10 Avoid plagiarism.

2.1.11 Clearly credit and substantiate information, quotes and statistics used from other sources.

2.1.12 Declare any use of artificial intelligence (AI) that can create new content, such as (but not limited to) images, text, audio, video, and music.

2.2 Guidelines for Communicators

This section applies to journalists, writers, authors, bloggers, photographers, podcasters, and posts on beer-related social media accounts belonging to members or others. It applies to freelance writing, independent content, and content commissioned by periodicals, book publishers or other content providers. All such members:

2.2.1. Do not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse any commercial product or service save for the promotion of her/his own work or the medium in which it appears.

2.2.2 Make clear in any work if work is being paid for by brands or companies being featured in the work, or their agencies.

2.2.3 Give full disclosure if reporting on a press trip or other visit or significant hospitality that has been paid for by the brand or company being written about, or their agencies.

2.3 Guidelines for PR Executives and other Individuals in Industry Roles

This section applies to individuals who may be communicating specifically in their capacity as employees of brewers or other industry-related companies who are Guild members and are creating beer communication outside their main role. All such members:

2.3.1 Are understood to be representing their brand or company if communicating in official company publications, press releases or social media accounts clearly stating their affiliation with that brand or company, unless otherwise clearly stated.

2.3.2 Are expected to clearly and honestly state their affiliation with that company if communicating about beer and pubs in any third-party medium if their professional affiliation could be deemed relevant to the subject of the communication.

2.3.3. Should ensure paid-for advertorials or advertising features are clearly identified as such.

2.3.4 Should not attempt to induce any journalist or photographer to work for less than NUJ rates or conditions, when commissioning freelance work.

The BGBW believes a journalist has the right to refuse an assignment or be identified as the author of editorial material that would break the letter or spirit of the BGBW code of conduct.

The BGBW will support journalists who act according to the code.

3. Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Complaints can be levelled at individual members and Industry Partners. Complainants will be asked to provide a written complaint and evidence if available. In the first instance, initial complaints against members will be reviewed by the Guild Chair plus one independent, qualified individual who has no connection with the Guild.

If the complaint is upheld at this stage, the Guild member whose behaviour is in question will be contacted by the Chair, a copy of the complaint provided and they will be asked to provide a rebuttal, if they so choose. At this stage both parties shall enjoy anonymity. The complaint and any rebuttal will be brought to the next Board meeting for discussion.

If the Board is of the opinion that a member has been guilty of conduct which is in breach of the code of conduct, it may:

1. Suspend that member for a period not exceeding 12 months
2. Express its censure in such terms as it deems appropriate, including a formal warning that further breaches may result in suspension or expulsion.
3. Impose both these penalties, or
4. Expel them from the Guild.

The Board is empowered to receive complaints about the work or behaviour of Guild members which, in the complainants' view, contravenes the code of conduct.

The decision of the Board will be final, but both parties can appeal the following in writing:

1. The finding of misconduct/breach of a specific part of the code; and/or
2. The sanction applied

If either party appeals, that appeal and reasoning will go back to the chair and the independent HR advisor for the final decision.

Any person disciplined under this rule will not receive a refund of their Guild subscription. If they are suspended, that member shall not be eligible to hold office or to vote until the suspension has come to an end.