

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 and cider communication and journalism as well as ethical and responsible behaviour within the beer industry. 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. And applies to both online and in-person conduct whether acting in your capacity as a Guild member or not.

1.1 Guild members should conduct themselves in a professional manner that befits the image of Guild a professional organisation.

1.2 Guild members should treat other Guild members and general members of the public with respect and dignity. The use of foul and/or abusive language or aggressive behaviour or any form of bullying is unacceptable as a Guild member.

1.3 Guild members must not engage in any form of discrimination on grounds of age, gender (including transgender), gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy, race, colour, creed, religion or belief, disability or sexual orientation. Guild members should be respectful of other views and opinions. Guild members will not use racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic or other discriminatory language in any context, and will not engage in bullying, coercive, aggressive, harassing or intimidating behaviour on any grounds at Guild or other industry events. Any form of sexual harassment towards any other person, Guild members or other, will not be tolerated.

1.4 Conduct outside of Guild or industry events which has the potential to bring the Guild or industry into disrepute is also not acceptable and applying the above at events where alcohol is consumed, Guild members are expected to drink responsibly and in an appropriate manner, refraining 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 encourage others to do so or which is done in a manner which contradicts the drink responsibly ethos.

1.5 Regarding discussions or 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, preferably in private, particularly when in the presence of, or on a platform accessible to, non-members, the press or any other media representatives. Guild Members should refrain from engaging in public criticism of other Guild members in public/on social media, and seek to address their concerns/issues in private and in a professional manner.

1.6 Conduct outside of Guild or Industry events which has the potential to bring the Guild into disrepute/reflect poorly on the Guild is also not acceptable.

1.7 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, cider or pubs in any medium. This includes but is not limited to events, meetings and posts on social media. 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, gender reassignment, ethnicity, race, colour, creed, religion or belief, pregnancy or 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, marketers, writers, authors, bloggers, photographers, podcasters, and posts on beer-related social media accounts. It applies to freelance writing, independent content, and content commissioned by periodicals, book publishers or other content providers. All such members:

2.2.1 Should make clear in any work if work is being paid for by brands or companies being featured in the work, or their agencies.

2.2.2 Should 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 and Marketing 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, cider 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 made about any individual members and Industry Partners where their conduct is contrary to this Code of Conduct.

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 demonstrates a case to answer has substance at this stage, the Guild member whose conduct is in question will be contacted by the Chair, provided a copy of the complaint and relevant evidence and they will be asked to provide a rebuttal, if they so choose. At this stage both parties shall remain anonymous (where practicable) unless the complainant consents to their identity being disclosed.

A rebuttal/response or explanation from the Guild member whose conduct is in question should be provided promptly and no later than 7 days of a request being made, unless further time is requested and agreed by the Chair.

The complaint and any rebuttal/response will then be brought to the next Board meeting for discussion. If the complainant or Guild member whose behaviour is in question is a member of the board, that person will be recused from any discussions.

If the Board is of the reasonable opinion (on balance of probabilities) that a member has engaged in 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 formal 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.