



**REGULATION ON ACCREDITATION OF JOURNALIST**

**MEDIA COUNCIL OF BHUTAN  
THIMPHU**

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# REGULATION ON ACCREDITATION OF JOURNALISTS

## **1. Legal Basis**

This Regulation is issued in accordance with Section 71 of the Information, Communications and Media Act of Bhutan 2018 (the “Act”) to establish procedures for application and the criteria for the grant of accreditation to journalists.

## **2. Effective Date**

This Regulation shall come into force from the .....

## **3. Amendment**

This Regulation may be amended by the Council, as and when deemed necessary.

## **4. Scope of Application**

This Regulation shall apply to all national journalists, both regular staff of media houses and freelancers. The Regulation shall also be the basis for foreign journalists coming to Bhutan to cover special events.

## **5. Definition**

Unless the context requires otherwise, the words and terms used in this Regulation shall have the same meaning as assigned in the Act.

‘*Newspaper*’ shall have the same definition as given in the Information, Communications and Media Act of Bhutan 2018.

‘*News Media*’ shall include newspapers, wire service and non-wire service news agencies, News Feature Agencies, Electronic Media Agencies, and organizations that produce and/or disseminate news for public consumption.”

A ‘*Daily*’ newspaper shall be published not less than five days a week.

A ‘*Weekly*’ and ‘*Fortnightly*’ newspaper shall have not less than 45 or 22 issues in a year, respectively.

‘*Accreditation*’ means recognition of news media representatives by the Government or corporate, private and other non-government entities for the purpose of access to information and related news materials, written or pictorial.

‘*Electronic News Media Organization*’ (Television or Radio) will include any TV/Radio News Programme Production Unit and TV/Radio News Agency.

‘*Journalist*’ means any person who is engaged in the task of editing, reporting or writing for a

newspaper, broadcasting or other media service.

## **6. GENERAL TERMS OF ACCREDITATION**

- 6.1 Accreditation will be granted in accordance with this regulation to news media representatives of various categories in different types of News-Media organizations.
- 6.2 Accreditation shall not confer any official or special status or privilege on journalists but shall only recognize their identity as professional working journalists.
- 6.3 Accreditation shall be granted to representatives of only those media organizations that have been functioning or operating continuously for at least a year.
- 6.4 At least 60 per cent of a print and broadcast media content must be news and/or comments of general public interest.
- 6.5 Professionals writing for publications containing information of sectional interest such as house journals, technical and other professional publications are not eligible for accreditation.
- 6.6 The organizations owned and run by Cable Operators providing cable television service through Cable Television Network shall not be eligible for accreditation.
- 6.7 Accreditation shall be terminated if the conditions on which it was granted cease to exist. Accreditation shall also be terminated or suspended if it is misused.
- 6.8 If an applicant or a media organization is found to have supplied false, fraudulent or forged information or documents, the journalist or the media organization shall be debarred from accreditation up to a maximum of five years but not less than two years, as decided by the Media Council.
- 6.9 The Media Council reserves the right to recommend or reject grant of accreditation. Decision of the Media Council shall be final.

## **7. Accreditation of journalist**

- 7.1 Any journalist, being a citizen of and resident in Bhutan, who wishes to be recognized as an “accredited journalist” may apply to the Council for such status. The application shall be made in the prescribed form available as Appendix A.
- 7.2 Accreditation shall be granted only to an individual, and not to an organization. Where a media organization wishes to seek accreditation for more than one journalist employed by it, each journalist shall submit separate application for accreditation.

## **8. Consideration of application**

- 8.1 On receipt of an application for accreditation, the Council shall consider it on the basis of the following criteria and make an appropriate decision):
  - i. whether the applicant is a *bona fide* journalist;

- ii. whether the applicant has the necessary educational qualification to be considered for accreditation; and
- iii. whether it would be in the public interest to grant accreditation to the applicant.

8.2 If the Council decides to grant accreditation, the applicant shall deposit the applicable fees, following which the Council shall issue an “accreditation card” duly signed bearing the applicant’s photograph. The card shall constitute official proof of accreditation.

8.3 If the Council decides to decline accreditation, it shall notify the applicant in writing of this decision as soon as practicable but not later than seven days from the date of submission of the application, stating the reasons for refusal.

8.4 Any applicant aggrieved either by a decision of refusal or silence for more than ten days from date of application may appeal to the Alternative Dispute Resolution Center within ten working days from the date of the receipt of information relating to such refusal or silence as the case may be.

## **9. Requirement for Accreditation**

9.1 The requirements for the consideration of accreditation for local journalists shall be, but not limited to, the following:

- i. The applicant shall be a reporter/writer/editor/columnist/photographer in any media organization and should produce recommendation from the head of the media organization he or she is working at present.
- ii. University graduates in journalism or a university graduate with an internship of at least four months in any media organization; or
- iii. A portfolio of recent work that has either appeared in print or broadcast media;
- iv. A clear electronic passport size photograph; and
- v. Must commit in writing to abide by the Journalist Code of Ethics and any other related Codes for the practice of journalism.

9.2 The requirements for the consideration of accreditation of freelance journalist shall be, but not limited to, the following:

- i. Recommendation from the media organization the journalist has worked for or is working for or is affiliated to, whichever is applicable.
- ii. Minimum 5 years of professional experience as a full time working journalist.
- iii. Professional Certificate that is either a university Degree or a Diploma in Communication from a recognized training institution.

- iv. A portfolio of recent work that has appeared either in print or broadcast media.
- v. A clear electronic passport size photograph.

9.3 The requirements for the consideration of accreditation of students shall be, but not limited to, the following:

- i. Enrolled in a degree or diploma programme.
- ii. A letter from the Head of Department of the Institution.
- iii. Valid School Identity Card.
- iv. A clear electronic passport size photograph.

**Note:**

Accreditation card will only be issued to students doing internship with any of the Media Houses

9.4 All media practitioners and student applicants must complete the Media Council of Bhutan Ethics Training Course to be conducted by the Council or the Council may, **in special cases**, exempt an applicant from such a requirement.

## **10. Rights of accredited journalists**

Accredited journalists shall have the right to:

- i. Attend briefings, press conferences, and access press releases by the government or public sector organizations and other events organized for the press; and
- ii. Inclusion in official visits by the State and Government officials.

## **11. Duties and Obligations of accredited journalists**

Accredited journalists shall:

- i. Observe the Code of Ethics for Journalists;
- ii. Observe the rules and procedures determined for those events;
- iii. Not interfere in the course of the event they attend; and
- iv. Carry the accreditation badge on them at all times.

## **12. Withdrawal of accreditation**

Accreditation may be withdrawn by the Council:

- i. On the expiry of the accreditation date;

- ii. If or when a journalist is dismissed from the service of a media organization;
- iii. If or when a media organization cease to function;
- iv. If a journalist presents a distorted information and image or an event about or in Bhutan; and
- v. If a journalist willfully violates any laws of the country and is convicted for the same by a court of competent jurisdiction.

### **13. Term of Accreditation**

13.1 Any accreditation granted shall be non-transferable and shall be valid for a period of one year from the date mentioned on the card:

- a. Provided, however, that the Council may revoke or cancel any accreditation before the expiry of the said period, if it is satisfied that the continued enjoyment of accreditation by the journalist concerned would not be in the public interest;
- b. Provided further that, before the Council revokes or cancels any accreditation, it shall give the journalist concerned a reasonable opportunity of making representations against the proposed revocation or cancellation, and, where any representations are made, it shall give due consideration to such representations.

13.2 The accreditation shall be deemed to be legally terminated if the said journalist:

- i. Becomes incapacitated for reason of physical and/or mental health or otherwise declared insolvent by a competent court of law; or
- ii. Surrenders his accreditation on his own volition.

### **14. Renewal of accreditation**

14.1 The accreditation granted under this Regulation may be renewed on the receipt of an application in this behalf by the journalist to whom it was granted.

14.2 An application for renewal of accreditation shall be made in writing in specified form prescribed by the Council.

14.3 An application for renewal of accreditation shall be made no later than seven days, prior to the date of its expiry following which a penalty of Nu 50 per day shall be applicable.

### **15. Replacement of accreditation card**

15.1. Lost press cards will be replaced only upon submission of police report accompanied by a letter from the employer stating the loss.

## **16. Ad hoc accreditation of foreign journalists**

16.1 Any journalist, who is not a citizen of Bhutan or who, being a citizen of Bhutan, is not ordinarily resident in Bhutan, may apply for *ad hoc* accreditation as a journalist. The application shall be made in the prescribed form.

16.2. The Council, on receipt of the application, shall consider it forthwith and make an appropriate decision. In making its decision, the Council shall have due regard to all relevant factors, including the following:

- i. Whether the applicant is a *bona fide* journalist;
- ii. Whether the applicant has the necessary qualifications and experience to be considered for accreditation; and
- iii. Whether it would be in the public interest to grant accreditation to the applicant.

16.3.If the Council decides to grant accreditation, it shall issue an “ad hoc accreditation card” within two days. The said card shall constitute official proof of accreditation.

Provided, however, that the Council may, where it considers it necessary, make the accreditation subject to such conditions as it may specify in this behalf, and, if the journalist concerned accepts such conditional accreditation, he/she shall be under obligation to comply with those conditions at all times.

16.4 If the Council decides to refuse accreditation, it shall notify the applicant in writing of this decision as soon as practicable but no later than seven working days from the date of application, stating the reasons for refusal.

16.5 Any accreditation granted under this Regulation shall be valid for a maximum period of three months from the date of issuance of the *ad hoc* accreditation card, or for the duration of the coverage of a particular event, or such shorter period as the Council may specify.

16.6 The ad hoc accreditation granted under this Regulation shall not be renewed.

## **17. Register of accredited journalists**

17.1 The Council shall maintain a register, hereinafter referred to as “Register of Accredited Journalists” in which the names, addresses, and other details of all journalists to whom accreditation has been granted shall be entered in chronological order.

17.2 The Register of Accredited Journalists shall be updated regularly, and any information as to revocation, cancellation or expiry of accreditation shall be noted as soon as practicable against the names of those on the register.

17.3 All employers shall within seven working days of termination or hiring of a journalist or media practitioner shall inform the Council of their appointment or termination and accordingly surrender the card as applicable.

17.4 The Council shall make the Register of Accredited Journalists available for the general public during office hours, if it is required so. The Council may also make the information on the register available to the general public through the Council’s website.

**ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS**

**(A) Local Journalists**

Sl. No.	Category	Conditions
1.	Local Journalists	<p>The requirements for the consideration of accreditation for local journalists shall be, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The applicant shall be a reporter/writer/editor/columnist/photographer in any media organization and should produce recommendation from the head of the media organization they are currently working;</li> <li>ii. University graduates in journalism or a university graduate with a major in journalism with an internship of at least four months in any media organization; or</li> <li>iii. Any other university graduates with at least two years of training/internship in a media organization;</li> <li>iv. Portfolio of work that has appeared either in print or broadcast media;</li> <li>v. A clear electronic passport size photograph; and</li> <li>vi. Must commit in writing to abide by the Journalist Code of Ethics and any other related Codes for the practice of journalism.</li> </ul>
2.	Freelance Correspondents / Camerapersons	<p>The requirements for the consideration of accreditation of freelance journalist shall be, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Recommendation from the media organization the journalist has worked or is working or is affiliated to;</li> <li>ii. Letter of recommendation from institution of internship;</li> <li>iii. Minimum 5 years professional experience as a full</li> </ul>

		<p>time working journalist;</p> <p>iv. Professional Certificate that is either a university degree or a diploma in Communication;</p> <p>v. A portfolio of recent work that has appeared either in print or broadcast media;</p> <p>vi. A clear electronic passport size photograph; and,</p> <p>vii. Commitment in writing to abide by the Journalist Code of Ethics and any other related Codes for the practice of journalism.</p>
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**(B) News Organizations (Electronic Media)**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Conditions</b>
1.	TV/Radio News Production Organizations	<p>The requirements for the consideration of accreditation for local journalists shall be, but not limited to, the following:</p> <p>i. The applicant shall be a reporter/writer/editor/columnist/photographer in any media organization and should produce recommendation from the head of the media organization they are currently working;</p> <p>ii. University graduates in journalism or a university graduate with a major in journalism with an internship of at least four months in any media organization; or</p> <p>iii. Any other university graduates with at least two years of training/internship in a media organization;</p> <p>iv. Portfolio of work that has appeared either in print or broadcast media;</p> <p>v. A clear electronic passport size photograph; and</p> <p>vi. Must commit in writing to abide by the Journalist Code of Ethics and any other related Codes for the practice of journalism.</p>
2.	Television News Agencies	<p>The requirements for the consideration of accreditation for local journalists shall be, but not limited to, the following:</p> <p>i. The applicant shall be a reporter/writer/editor/columnist/photographer in any media organization and should produce</p>

		<p>recommendation from the head of the media organization they are currently working;</p> <p>ii. University graduates in journalism or a university graduate with a major in journalism with an internship of at least four months in any media organisation; or</p> <p>iii. Any other university graduates with at least two years of training/internship in a media organization;</p> <p>iv. Portfolio of work that has appeared either in print or broadcast media;</p> <p>v. A clear electronic passport size photograph; and</p> <p>i. Must commit in writing to abide by the Journalist Code of Ethics and any other related Codes for the practice of journalism.</p>
3.	Radio News Agencies	<p>The requirements for the consideration of accreditation for local journalists shall be, but not limited to, the following:</p> <p>i. The applicant shall be a reporter/writer/editor/columnist/photographer in any media organization and should produce recommendation from the head of the media organization they are currently working;</p> <p>ii. University graduates in journalism or a university graduate with a major in journalism with an internship of at least four months in any media organization; or</p> <p>iii. Any other university graduates with at least two years of training/internship in a media organization;</p> <p>iv. Portfolio of work that has appeared either in print or broadcast media;</p> <p>v. A clear electronic passport size photograph; and</p> <p>vi. Must commit in writing to abide by the Journalist Code of Ethics and any other related Codes for the practice of journalism.</p>