


2 BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

3 Preparing journalism students for a dangerous world

4 Jaron Murphy

5 ABSTRACT

6 *Firstly, this chapter provides an overview of the generally dreadful state of press*
7 *freedom worldwide, with online and physical attacks on journalists commonplace. In*
8 *doing so, it surveys research data from leading international organisations*
9 *advocating for journalism safety, which collectively illustrate a range of clear and*
10 *present dangers to reporters such as murders with impunity, imprisonment and*
11 *disproportionately for women*  *online violence that could easily spill offline.*
12 *Secondly, in order to assist journalism educators internationally to better prepare*
13 *their students for the realities of this extremely dangerous world, it provides a*
14 *platform for some of the foremost experts in the field of journalism safety to share*
15 *their advice and recommended resources. The international mix of these experts is*
16 *reflected in the combination of institutional or organisational affiliations: the United*
17 *Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Global*
18 *Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN); iWatch Africa and Reach plc in the UK.*
19 *Finally, in the context of their knowledgeable input, it turns its attention to recent*
20 *developments in journalism education in the UK. It suggests that new opportunities to*

1 *formulate and deliver safety and resilience training on courses accredited by the*

2 *NCTJ could help to inspire and spread such training internationally.*

3 This chapter calls for the introduction of dedicated and mandatory safety training for
4 students on journalism courses internationally, to properly prepare new generations of
5 journalists for working in a dangerous digital-age world where the distinction between
6 everyday **virtual** (or online) and **real** (or physical) threats has dissolved. To help
7 bring about such change, this chapter has two interrelated aims: (1) to convey in some
8 detail why safety is an extremely challenging but essential future direction for
9 journalism education in the digital age and (2) to support journalism educators in both
10 institutional and industry contexts with up-to-date safety advice and resources from
11 leading experts which could assist the formulation and delivery of appropriate safety
12 training for students. The unique challenges in diverse national and local contexts, as
13 well as the multiplicity of threats contingent on individual circumstances, obviously
14 preclude a **one size fits all** approach to safety training internationally. Nevertheless,
15 based on the evidence of copious research by international organisations at the
16 forefront of highlighting the scale of online and physical attacks on journalists, action
17 by journalism educators worldwide is clearly needed as a matter of urgency to both
18 protect emerging journalists and future-proof the profession as a viable career choice.

19 For instance, the latest Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index
20 (2022) describes, by way of fact files on the 180 countries and territories covered, a
21 wide range of perilous conditions and recorded violations impacting the global

1 rankings. As the colour-coded map on the index website vividly illustrates, much of
2 the world's population does not enjoy anything close to resembling press freedom
3 which is defined as "the effective possibility for journalists, as individuals and as
4 groups, to select, produce and disseminate news and information in the public interest,
5 independently from political, economic, legal and social interference, and without
6 threats to their physical and mental safety". The generally bleak situation globally is
7 categorised as "very bad" in a record number of countries — 28. Significantly, the
8 index identifies the "globalised and unregulated online information space" as a key
9 factor contributing to "a two-fold increase in polarisation amplified by information
10 chaos" that is, media polarisation fuelling divisions within countries, as well as
11 polarisation between countries at the international level. Alarming for supporters
12 of the Fourth Estate, while major safety risks under repressive autocratic regimes and
13 in war zones are to be expected, journalists are also being caught in the crossfire of
14 divisions within democratic societies and in the onslaught of "propaganda wars
15 against democracies" (RSF 2022).

16 The war waged by Russia (ranked 155th) in Ukraine (106th) since the end of
17 February 2022 is cited as an example of a physical conflict preceded by a media and
18 online propaganda offensive; while China (175th), also among the world's most
19 authoritarian regimes, is reported to be utilising its legislative powers to restrict and
20 isolate its population from the rest of the world — with Hong Kong tumbling down the
21 rankings (from 80th in 2021 to 148th). The ten worst-ranked countries for press

1 freedom include Syria (171st), Iraq (172nd), Cuba (173rd), Vietnam (174th),
2 Myanmar (176th), Turkmenistan (177th), Iran (178th), Eritrea (179th) and North
3 Korea (180th). Owing to the latter's "desire for complete isolation from the world",
4 journalists have been "arrested, deported, sent to forced labour camps, and killed for
5 deviating from the party's narrative"; and yet at the other end of the spectrum,
6 although only "a few rare cases of physical violence have been reported" in the top-
7 ranked country, Norway, "threats are commonplace: according to one study, one in
8 four journalists received threats in one way or another" (RSF 2022).

9 Notably, too, a number of countries which consider themselves to be
10 democratic bastions of press freedom, like the US and UK (42nd and 24th
11 respectively), are beset with considerable safety issues for journalists and therefore
12 ranked lower than might be expected. The index points out that the US government
13 has been persisting in its pursuit of the extradition of Wikileaks founder Julian
14 Assange "to face trial on charges related to the publication of leaked classified
15 documents in 2010" and that Assange "remains detained on remand in the UK",
16 impacting both countries' standings. In the US, online harassment, "particularly
17 towards women and minorities, is also a serious issue for journalists and can impact
18 their quality of life and safety". Moreover, owing to political polarisation and low
19 public trust in the mainstream media, there is "a troubling trend of journalists
20 experiencing harassment, intimidation and assault in the field". Journalists have been
21 subjected to "dangerous conditions and have faced an unprecedented climate of

1 animosity and aggression during protests¹, with¹ unprovoked physical attacks¹ on
2 clearly identified reporters¹ (RSF 2022).

3 In the UK, while the publication in March 2021 of a government-backed
4 National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists to tackle threats to personal safety¹
5 including online abuse¹ was a welcome step¹, troubling issues include the
6 resurrection¹ of an alarming proposal for reforms to official secrets laws that could
7 see journalists jailed for¹ espionage¹; secretive and¹ extensive freedom of
8 information restrictions¹; an escalation of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public
9 Participation (or SLAPPs) against UK and international journalists which has seen
10 London become the¹ defamation capital of the world¹; and threats against journalists
11 in Northern Ireland, with claims of insufficient police response,¹ for reporting on
12 organised crime and paramilitary activities¹. On the latter point, the index reminds
13 readers that a¹ shadow remains cast by lingering impunity for the 2001 murder of
14 *Sunday World* journalist Martin O'Hagan¹ and that no one¹ has yet been brought to
15 trial for the murder of Lyra McKee in Derry in April 2019, although further arrests
16 were made in 2021¹ (RSF 2022). Since the release of the index, a man has been jailed
17 for possession of the gun used to kill McKee.¹

¹ Lyra McKee was a journalist from Northern Ireland who wrote about the legacy of
the Troubles for several publications. She was shot dead on 18 April 2019.

1 The extent to which occupational hazards have multiplied for journalists
2 internationally can also be gauged in part from UNESCO's *World Trends in Freedom*
3 *of Expression and Media Development: Global Report 2021/22* (2022) which
4 confirms that "85 percent of the world's population experienced a decline in press
5 freedom in their country over the past five years". Among its key findings is that
6 journalists have been under vicious attack: "From 2016 to the end of 2021, UNESCO
7 recorded the killings of 455 journalists, who either died for their work or while on the
8 job. At the same time, imprisonment of journalists has reached record highs"
9 (UNESCO 2022). Under the heading "Safety of Journalists", UNESCO calculates
10 that, on average, every five days a journalist is killed for bringing information to the
11 public. It adds:

12

13 Attacks on media professionals are often perpetrated in non-conflict situations by
14 organised crime groups, militia, security personnel, and even local police, making
15 local journalists among the most vulnerable. These attacks include murder,
16 abductions, harassment, intimidation, illegal arrest, and arbitrary detention.

17

(UNESCO 2022a)

18

1 This can be compared to data compiled by the international Committee to Protect
2 Journalists, which shows 2,170 journalists and media workers have been killed in the
3 period 1992–2022. The total number includes those “Murdered” or who died “In
4 Crossfire/Combat” situations and “On Dangerous Assignment” ([CPJ 2022](#)). The
5 CPJ’s database also records 65 journalists and media workers killed so far in 2022
6 (CPJ 2022a). The CPJ’s last prison census, for 2021, found the number of journalists
7 jailed for their work hit a new global record of 293, up from a revised total of 280 in
8 2020 ([CPJ 2021](#)).

9 The release of these statistics followed UNESCO’s research discussion paper
10 *The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists* (2021)
11 which garnered input from hundreds of journalists from more than 120 countries
12 (including understudied developing countries) and resulted in 28 recommendations
13 for action (see UNESCO 2021: 91–93). Opening the paper, which contains detailed
14 information and graphic accounts illustrating the gravity and extremity of the
15 experiences of women reporters targeted online, the authors explain succinctly:

16

17 There is nothing virtual about online violence. It has become the new frontline in
18 journalism safety and women journalists sit at the epicentre of risk. Networked
19 misogyny and gaslighting intersect with racism, religious bigotry, homophobia and
20 other forms of discrimination to threaten women journalists severely and

1 disproportionately. Threats of sexual violence and murder are frequent and
2 sometimes extended to their families. This phenomenon is also bound up with the
3 rise of viral disinformation, digital conspiracy networks and political polarisation
4 [exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic]. The psychological, physical,
5 professional, and digital safety and security impacts associated with this escalating
6 freedom of expression and gender equality crisis are overlapping, converging and
7 frequently inseparable. They are also increasingly spilling offline, sometimes with
8 devastating consequences.

9 (UNESCO 2021, p5)



10
11 Indeed, as the paper highlights, terrifying parallels have been drawn between the
12 relentless persecution in the Philippines of Rappler founder and Nobel Peace Prize co-
13 winner, Maria Ressa, under the regime of President Rodrigo Duterte (who stepped
14 down at the end of June 2022 after reaching his six-year term limit) and prominent
15 journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia who was assassinated via a car bomb in Malta in
16 October 2017. There have been other shocking assassinations of journalists in recent
17 years ■ for example, the Slovakian investigative reporter Ján Kuciak, who was shot
18 dead along with his fiancée, Martina Kusnířová, in February 2018; Saudi journalist
19 Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul and
20 dismembered in October 2018; and the Mexican reporter Antonio de la Cruz, who
21 was shot dead in June 2022 (the 12th journalist killed there that year, amid an 85%

1 increase in attacks since President Andrés Manuel López Obrador came to power
2 three years ago). However, the misogynistic nature of the online attacks on Ressa
3 (who also suffers racist abuse) and Galizia, combined with the clear link established
4 between online and physical violence, should also prompt journalism educators into
5 concerted action to help protect female students. The report quotes Caoilfhionn
6 Gallagher QC (now KC), who represents Galizia's bereaved family, underlining the
7 appalling similarities between Maria and Daphne's cases, including a long period ...
8 in which they both experienced a combination of attacks, from multiple different
9 sources, online and offline — State-facilitated and State-fuelled" (UNESCO 2021,
10 p64). At the time of writing, Galizia's family are still awaiting justice.

11 [Advice from experts](#)

12 By and large, although there have been notable initiatives offering support for the
13 well-being of journalists (such as the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma in the
14 US and Europe and the Headlines Network in the UK), journalism course providers
15 and industry bosses have tended historically to be unsystematic, even a bit blasé,
16 about equipping fledgeling reporters with the knowledge to anticipate potential safety
17 threats and the practical skills to minimise risk, respond if necessary in an effective
18 manner, and ultimately safeguard themselves and the stories they are bringing to light.
19 Instead, with growing experience, journalists have often strategised and countered
20 risks for themselves — for example, investigative journalists sharing confidential

1 information and collaborating internationally so that if any of them were to be killed,
2 the story being worked on would not die too. The widespread paucity of dedicated
3 safety training on journalism courses and in newsrooms historically could be
4 explained in part, perhaps, by the fact that some educators might be (1) reticent about
5 sharing their own triggering past experiences of being threatened or worse and (2)
6 reluctant to potentially discourage or even scare off trainee reporters by referring not
7 just to such incidents but also to the grisly details of the murders of journalists which
8 represent the **worst-case scenario** in an industry they are preparing to enter in the
9 near future. Nevertheless, a basic premise of this chapter is that it is dangerous, in
10 itself, to leave it to the School of Hard Knocks and therefore growing experience in
11 industry to compensate for poor or non-existent safety training on journalism courses
12 that purport to qualify their graduates for the **real** working world.

13 What, then, should journalism educators consider and do to prepare students to
14 stay safe while serving the public interest and holding power to account? To help,
15 four experts in the field of journalism safety share their advice and recommended
16 resources.

17 **John Bosco Mayiga** **programme specialist, freedom of**
18 **expression and safety of journalists, UNESCO**

19 Mayiga is responsible for implementation of UNESCO's safety of journalists
20 programmes, including monitoring and reporting the killing of journalists,

1 maintaining UNESCO's Observatory of Killed Journalists (see UNESCO 2022b) and
2 organising the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (see
3 UNESCO 2022c).

4 UNESCO is the United Nations lead agency responsible for promoting
5 freedom of expression and safety of journalists. This mandate is implemented within
6 the framework of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of
7 Impunity (see UNESCO 2016), which is a multi-stakeholder normative instrument for
8 tackling the problem of impunity for crimes against journalists. The implementation
9 of this plan is anchored on six pillars: awareness-raising, standard setting and policy
10 making, monitoring and reporting, capacity-building, academic research, and
11 coalition-building.

12 **What journalism students should be learning, in Mayiga's view,**
13 **about personal safety in the online environment**

- 14 1. **Digital security:** This should be the first step for everyone engaging
15 with digital technologies. It is more important for journalists because
16 of the nature of their work, particularly the professional ideology of the
17 confidentiality of sources.
- 18 2. **Media and information literacy:** This is the ability to critically
19 engage with digital technologies, leveraging the potential of
20 technology, cognisant of the potential harms that the same technologies

1 can engender. UNESCO implements the Media and Information
2 Literacy Programme which seeks to enhance the capacities of policy
3 makers, educators, information and media professionals, youth
4 organisations and disadvantaged groups through provision of various
5 competences and tools to help people to maximise advantages and
6 minimise harm in the digital information ecosystem.

- 7 3. **Digital rights:** Knowledge of digital rights is not only essential for
8 purposes of journalists guaranteeing their own rights but also ensuring
9 that they promote the digital rights of citizens as a whole. Given the
10 opacity that is usually associated with digital technologies, rights like
11 privacy, protection of personal data, encryption and decryption are
12 essential parts of a rights framework that journalists should learn and
13 be conversant with. In this realm, UNESCO has led several initiatives
14 mainly at the normative and policy level, including a policy brief on
15 transparency and accountability in the digital age (see UNESCO
16 2021a) as well as a global initiative to enhance the transparency of
17 internet companies, which resulted in the development of High-Level
18 Principles on Transparency (see UNESCO 2021b) that has received
19 broad support from companies, regulators and civil society.

1 Mayiga's list of recommended resources which could support
2 teaching/learning of students in this regard

3 Some of the resources are referenced in-text above. The others are:

- 4 • *World trends in freedom of expression and media development: global*
5 *report 2021/22* (also referenced in-text earlier in this chapter see
6 UNESCO 2022)
- 7 • *Media and information literate citizens: think critically, click wisely!* (see
8 UNESCO 2021c)
- 9 • *Survey on privacy in media and information literacy with youth perspectives*
10 (see UNESCO 2017)
- 11 • *Steering AI and advanced ICTs for knowledge societies: a Rights, Openness,*
12 *Access, and Multi-stakeholder Perspective* (see [UNESCO 2019](#))

13

14 What journalism students should be learning, in Mayiga's view,
15 about personal safety in the physical environment

- 16 1. **Newsroom safety:** Since the newsroom is the primary working space
17 of journalists, it is important for journalism students to learn about the
18 safety mechanisms at the organisational level.
- 19 2. **Safety of women journalists:** Journalism students need to learn that
20 women journalists are disproportionately targeted and their physical

1 safety is threatened more than their male counterparts. UNESCO is
2 promoting the safety of women journalists through a number of
3 initiatives (see UNESCO 2021d) such as research on good practices,
4 capacity-building, and awareness-raising.

- 5 3. **Emotional well-being:** Trauma, particularly for journalists covering
6 conflict and highly emotional events, is one of the marginalised safety
7 issues. Journalism students learning about trauma would enable them
8 to understand the connection between the physical environment and
9 their mental well-being.

10 **Mayiga's list of recommended resources which could support**
11 **teaching/learning of students in this regard**

- 12 • *Safety of journalists covering trauma and distress “Do no harm”* (see
13 UNESCO 2022d)
- 14 • *Safety of journalists covering protests: preserving freedom of the press*
15 *during times of turmoil* (see UNESCO 2020)
- 16 • *Freedom of expression and the safety of foreign correspondents:*
17 *trends, challenges and responses* (see UNESCO 2021e)

18 **Nikolia Apostolou, Resource Centre Director, Global**

19 **Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN)**

1 For the past 15 years, Apostolou has been writing and producing documentaries from
2 Greece, Cyprus and Turkey for more than 100 media outlets, including the BBC and
3 the Associated Press. She covered extensively Greece's economic crisis which started
4 in 2010 and the European migrant crisis. Her documentaries have been screened in
5 festivals around the world and have won multiple awards in various competitions.
6 She's also a Dart and a Fulbright fellow. Apostolou is currently teaching digital
7 journalism and on the Master's programme in Media and Refugee/Migration Flows at
8 the University of Athens. Previously, she's also taught at Panteion University.

9 The GIJN serves as the international hub for the world's investigative
10 reporters. Its core mission is to support and strengthen investigative journalism around
11 the world with special attention to those under repressive regimes and from
12 marginalised communities.

13 What journalism students should be learning, in Apostolou's 14 view, about personal safety in the online environment

15 Journalism students should be learning first off how, as consumers, their personal data
16 is collected. As they're young, their digital footprint is still small. They need to learn
17 how to protect themselves from this data collection because it may be used against
18 them when they become important journalists breaking scandals.

19 They'll also need to learn how to protect their communication in order to
20 protect their sources. Simple steps like getting two-factor log-in passwords, buying

1 paid versions of VPNs and antivirus software and using encrypted services like Proton
2 Mail and Signal.

3 [Apostolou's list of recommended resources which could support](#)
4 [teaching/learning of students in this regard](#)

- 5 • *Digital security basics* (see [Shelton 2016](#))
- 6 • *Steps to take for your digital security, along with great tools and links*
7 *to other tip sheets* (see [GIJN 2022](#))

8 [What journalism students should be learning, in Apostolou's](#)
9 [view, about personal safety in the physical environment](#)

10 Students should be learning about harassment from sources, as they might often find
11 themselves alone with them. The year 2021 was one of the deadliest years for
12 journalists. Therefore, they should learn how to stay safe: never go alone to a location
13 or a country that's dangerous and you don't have experience of, work with other local
14 journalists, learn how to blend in a country and not stand out like a tourist, remember
15 you're just human, always get advice from experienced journalists/friends/professors,
16 follow your gut. Don't be a hero.

17 [Apostolou's list of recommended resources which could support](#)
18 [teaching/learning of students in this regard](#)

- 1 • *Tip sheet on what to do when you need to flee your city/country* (see
2 GIJN 2022a)
- 3 • *A list of guides on journalists' security and a list of journalism safety
4 and security groups* (see GIJN 2022b)
- 5 • *A great tool for journalists and organisations that need to do a risk
6 assessment on a particular situation or story* (see GIJN 2022c)
- 7 • *Covering street protests tip sheet* (see [GIJN 2022d](#))
- 8 • *Presentation by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting
9 Project* (see [OCCRP 2021](#))

10 [Apostolou's closing comments](#)

11 What you're doing is important. This should be a fundamental class for all journalism
12 students. I was never taught in school about any of this and it only made me feel more
13 vulnerable. Information is power and your students need to know how to protect
14 themselves. Also, this is an ever-changing topic, so we all need to continue learning
15 about it.

16 [Gideon Sarpong, Co-founder and currently Policy and News](#)

17 [Director at iWatch Africa](#)

18 As it states on the website of the University of Oxford's Reuters Institute for the
19 Study of Journalism, where Sarpong's fellowship paper "Keeping journalists safe

1 online: a guide for newsrooms in West Africa and beyond¹ was published in April
2 2022:

3

4 Gideon is a policy analyst and media practitioner with nearly a decade of experience
5 in policy, data and investigative journalism. He is an alumnus of the Young African
6 Leaders Initiative (YALI), Thomson Reuters Foundation, Free Press Unlimited and
7 Bloomberg Data for Health Initiative. Gideon is a 2020/21 Policy Leader Fellow at
8 the European University Institute, School of Transnational Governance in Florence,
9 Italy and a Ghana Hub Lead for the Sustainable Ocean Alliance. He is also a
10 2020/21 Open Internet for Democracy Leader at the Center for International Media
11 Assistance and the National Democratic Institute in Washington, DC and believes in
12 promoting a safe, secure and inclusive digital ecosystem.

13

[\(Sarpong 2022\)](#)

14

15 In his paper, Sarpong presents ²gender-inclusive guidelines and protocols to counter
16 online abuse and harassment of journalists in West Africa³ which could potentially be
17 applied or adapted to newsrooms elsewhere. Published around the time of
18 international headlines on the targeting of Indian journalist Rana Ayyub, Sarpong's
19 paper provides a practical ⁴roadmap⁵ consisting of five action points ([Sarpong 2022](#)):

20

1. Build digital rights literacy

- 1 2. Establish safety practices
- 2 3. Conduct risk assessments
- 3 4. Implement support mechanisms
- 4 5. Assign roles and tasks

5

6 While his views on journalism safety online are summed up in his introductory write-
7 up for his downloadable paper on the Reuters Institute website, Sarpong provided
8 these additional comments specifically in relation to teaching journalism students:

9

10 Journalism educators may assist students better appreciate the evolving power
11 struggle over the online ecosystem between undemocratic leaders around the world
12 today and platform owners. Students must be equipped to navigate the new landmine
13 of internet shutdowns, legal restrictions and arrests increasingly being deployed by
14 autocrats to stifle independent journalism and critical commentary. I believe that
15 students must be prepared to use newer technologies (e.g., VPNs) to help circumvent
16 internet and platform restrictions by state actors as we witnessed in Nigeria last year.
17 For student journalists, they should first of all understand that journalists, particularly
18 female journalists today, are very susceptible to online attacks.
19 They should be aware of the political nature of such attacks and must be prepared to
20 report it when abused. Student journalists must also be aware that their work will be
21 vigorously scrutinised by groups who may seek avenues to undermine their
22 credibility and undermine press freedom generally. Student journalists should

1 establish professional relationships with experienced [journalists] who may guide
2 them very early in their careers to avoid some mistakes that may put their safety at
3 risk. Journalists must also be adequately prepared in dealing with adversarial
4 governments.

5 **Rebecca Whittington, online safety editor, Reach PLC**

7 Whittington is the online safety editor for Reach plc, publisher of more than 130
8 national and regional titles in the UK (including the *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express* and
9 *Manchester Evening News*). She joined Reach in 2021, in a newly created role ■ the
10 first of its kind ■ to tackle the growing problem of journalists coming under attack
11 online. She has previously worked in a number of journalism roles and was course
12 leader for undergraduate journalism at Leeds Trinity University in the UK. Her PhD
13 from the University of Leeds analysed digital impacts on news production and brand
14 and journalistic identity at local newspapers in the UK.

15 **What journalism students should be learning, in Whittington's** 16 **view, about personal safety in the online environment**

- 17 1. We all have a role to play in making online spaces safe ■ we can take
18 personal responsibility by ensuring our accounts are secure, we can use
19 online tools responsibly and we can treat people in the way we would

1 like to be treated. Check your privacy settings regularly and make sure
2 you are happy with the information you share about yourself online;
3 think about what pictures, comments and personal information you are
4 happy to have connected to you and consider what social media you
5 may have used in the past and check you are happy for it to remain
6 online. Personal protection and awareness of risk and how to prevent it
7 is vital ■ while in no way can online harm, harassment or abuse be
8 justified, taking these steps can help minimise the risk of becoming a
9 victim of doxxing, harassment and invasion of personal online space.

10 2. Don't ■ shoulder online abuse or harms alone. Talk to a colleague or
11 manager or someone you trust about what you have experienced.

12 Online abuse can make an individual feel incredibly isolated, exposed
13 and vulnerable, but talking about it will help take the first steps to
14 regaining control. Many colleagues may have faced something similar
15 and may be able to advise on the steps they took. If there is a support
16 network such as an established person within your sphere who helps
17 manage online safety then get in touch with them. If you are working
18 alone or working as a freelancer, then make use of the services and

1 resources provided by your union or online networks such as the
2 Coalition Against Online Violence.²

3 3. Don't feed the trolls. It can be tempting to respond to hateful
4 comments, but a response will often give oxygen to the haters. Instead,
5 stifle them by blocking, reporting and ignoring. Your lack of
6 interaction makes you a much less interesting target.

7 4. Stalking, hate crime and sexual harassment are a crime in the UK. If
8 you are a victim of this kind of abuse online it should be taken
9 seriously by your employers and the police if you wish to report it.
10 Again, make sure you tell someone if this happens to you.

11 5. Take time out. It's important to give yourself a break from social
12 media and online work. Try to separate work and personal social
13 accounts so you have the breathing space you need. It can be hard to
14 maintain a physical space from work when so much of it is conducted
15 from our homes or mobile devices that come into our homes. Shut the
16 laptop, put the work phone in a drawer, mute notifications and take a
17 break.

18 Whittington's list of recommended resources which could
19 support teaching/learning of students in this regard:

² <https://onlineviolenceresponsehub.org/about-the-coalition-against-online-violence>

- 1 • *Coalition against online violence* (in-text link above; also see
2 www.iwmf.org/coalition-against-online-violence/#members)
- 3 • *Center for countering digital hate* (<https://counterhate.com/>)
- 4 • *Meta safety for journalists*
5 (www.facebook.com/formedia/mjp/journalist-safety-online)
- 6 • *HeartMob* (<https://iheartmob.org/resources>)
- 7 • *#DontTakeTheFlak* (on Twitter)

8 What journalism students should be learning, in Whittington's 9 view, about personal safety in the physical environment

- 10 1. Planning ahead even in a breaking news scenario, planning ahead can
11 protect your safety. Think about what environment you are going to
12 and what the risks might be discuss these with your manager. For
13 example, if you are covering a crowd event, the atmosphere can
14 depend on a number of factors, including the event itself, alcohol
15 consumption and emotion of the crowd.
- 16 2. Make sure your managers know where you are going and what you are
17 doing. Check in with them when you return. Make sure you discuss the
18 risks of the job and establish together how you plan for those see
19 point 1.

1 3. Make sure you use the right kit for the job ■ using a tripod and mic can
2 improve film quality and reduce the number of critical comments
3 online about production problems. It also means you don't ■ have to
4 stand too close to crowds, interviewees or scenes to capture the right
5 shot. Check your phone has battery power! Make sure, if you are
6 covering a crime scene or a high-tension situation, that you plan your
7 positioning so that you stay within eyesight of police or security, so
8 that if you run into problems you have support nearby. Whatever the
9 story, it's ■ never worth more than your personal safety, so stay out of
10 the crowds and instead find a viewpoint that captures the scene without
11 putting you at risk.

12 4. Think about your travel to and from a job. If driving, park on a busy
13 road and stay within public places wherever possible when walking to
14 the job, particularly if you are covering breaking news, a crowd or an
15 emotive story or if you are working out of hours or when it is dark. If
16 you are meeting a contact, try to arrange a meeting place in a public
17 place. If that is not possible, make sure your managers have the exact
18 address of where you are going and the timings, so they can check in
19 with you.

1 5. Trust your gut. If something doesn't feel or look right, then don't be
2 afraid to move away and tell your managers. Never put getting the
3 story before your own welfare.

4 Whittington's closing comments

5 There are clear links between online and physical safety and we should not silo the
6 two elements. As these areas of knowledge and understanding develop, it is important
7 trainee and student journalists learn about safety and risks to help manage these
8 challenges when they emerge. The chilling effect of threats to journalism safety is a
9 significant threat to democracy; together we need to continue to support, report and
10 challenge platforms for abuse and hate.

11 Promising developments in the UK


12 As the creation of Whittington's pioneering online safety editor role at Reach plc
13 indicates, there has been a growing conversation in the journalism industry in the UK
14 about how to address rampant online abuse, the danger of related physical threats, and
15 support for staff. Correspondingly, a conversation has also been ongoing in
16 journalism education in the UK, gaining momentum after the main course accrediting
17 body, the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ), received feedback
18 concerning some candidates who felt triggered or traumatised by scenarios
19 presented in reporting assessments which tutors considered to be quite challenging
20 topics but typical of situations that working journalists must contend with. On 6

1 September 2022, the NCTJ announced via its website that students on accredited
2 courses must be given resilience training to cope with the demands of real-world
3 journalism. By then, the NCTJ had updated its performance standards for accredited
4 courses to ensure students are adequately supported to deal with challenging
5 scenarios in training and assessments, and to prepare them for what they may
6 encounter in the newsroom. At the end of the announcement, without elaboration,
7 the NCTJ stated that a new course in journalism safety will also be launched on the
8 NCTJ's Journalism Skills Academy by autumn 2022 (NCTJ 2022). At the time of
9 writing, details of the new course content are yet to be revealed.

10 However, an article on the *journalism.co.uk* website clarified (1) that training
11 providers would have the onus on them as well as the discretion to deliver the
12 resilience training in any way that works for them, including content, delivery and
13 timetabling within their course structure, subject to annual review and (2) that the
14 new safety course is designed for any current or prospective journalist who would
15 like to gain more skills and support about staying safe in different contexts and will
16 include advice on how to protect yourself and others online, including dealing with
17 privacy and online abuse, and how to manage reporting on sensitive subjects
18 (Granger 2022). Within the 2022/23 Programme of Study for the mandatory Essential
19 Journalism module of the Level 5 Diploma in Journalism, the NCTJ's position is
20 explicit in several places. In the Social Media study unit section, for instance, it states
21 that candidates must understand the nature of online abuse and what actions they can

1 take to ensure digital safety as well as how to go about moderating reader
2 comments (NCTJ 2022a: 15). Later, in the Mobile Journalism section, it is stipulated
3 that candidates must understand the importance of health and safety when working
4 as a mobile journalist and how to assess risks to themselves and others (NCTJ 2022a:
5 17).

6 The NCTJ's position is also apparent in the Health and Safety section,
7 which is among the non-examined topics. Forming part of a holistic bundle of items
8 including employee and employer responsibilities in terms of legislation, avoiding
9 injury in using equipment and in the workplace generally and integrating into
10 newsrooms (whether in the office or working from home), there are objectives for
11 candidates to understand how to minimise risk when working alone and learn
12 strategies to minimise risk if a situation becomes threatening. It is also flagged that
13 journalists may, in the course of their duties, be present at events which are
14 dangerous and possibly horrific and therefore candidates

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16 must be aware of these possibilities including: staying safe during an unfolding
17 incident when lives are at risk, the possibility of seeing people who are dead and/or
18 badly injured, and distressing images and video arriving into a newsroom from the
19 scene, including via social media [this should be related to the ethical studies about
20 publication of such material].

21 (2020a: 18)

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Overall, then, in the UK, the NCTJ's direction of travel towards increased safety and resilience support for students, to bolster their readiness for industry, is promising. The expert advice and recommended resources incorporated into this chapter could assist tutors on NCTJ-accredited courses to formulate and deliver appropriate training. Innovative and exemplary practice could, in turn, help to spur the spread of such training for journalism students internationally.

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