

LFB meets students at City

WE SPOKE to over 300 postgraduate students of journalism at City, University of London in October. As far as anyone can remember this is the first time that City, University of London has invited us to talk about the value of the NUJ. City is seen as having one of the best and the largest UK journalism departments.

The opportunity arose during the previous weekend. We had spoken with the head of the journalism department, Professor Suzanne Franks, who copied in senior lecturers: Richard Evans booked us for the first Saturday in December (a report on that event follows) and Dr Paul Lashmar contacted us at the end of September.

Paul, deputy head of the department of journalism, told us he wanted to focus his lecture on ethics. So Sarah Kavanagh, who is the staff

member assigned to the NUJ Ethics Council, delivered a detailed speech about the NUJ Code of Conduct. He had already collaborated with her in the past in different universities.

After Sarah's speech the recruitment group (LFB Committee's Larry Herman and myself) plus Branch Co-Secretary Phil Sutcliffe introduced London Freelance Branch and replied to students' questions about membership and branch activities.

A new version of the NUJ's recruitment leaflet was distributed and the students all looked interested and engaged. The NUJ delivered an effective message – "Join us, it is good for you" – in a 30-minute slot.

Our host was happy with the result, which is encouraging for future meetings. The NUJ already has direct contacts inside City and Goldsmiths; meetings planned at both and at the



University of Westminster.

Branch members addressed students at City University on 1 October

Image

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If any LFB members know lecturers in journalism departments at Brunel, University of East Anglia (UEA), Birkbeck or others, please contact the *Freelance*. Watch this space for details of events at other higher education institutions.

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Stern warning – do taxes by 31/01/19!

IT'S THAT time of year again: time to issue a stern admonition to self-employed freelance journalists. Do your taxes! Now you can only do your tax return for tax year April 2017-April 2018 online. You have until **31 January 2019** to do this.

If you're unsure of your Government Gateway password to access your HMRC account with the tax people and start filing your tax return online, sort it out now, via the portal linked from the online version of this article. The HMRC enquiry line on 0300 200 3300 will tell you which is your local tax office – have

your National Insurance number ready. If you became self-employed in tax year 2017-2018 and haven't yet registered with HMRC for online tax returns and got a Unique Tax Reference number, contact your local tax office *now*. You'll need to get a password sent to you by – possibly slow – post before you can start using HMRC's online portal.

HMRC's website can crash under the sheer volume of submitted tax returns in the run up to the deadline. There are automatic three-figure fines for failing to submit your tax return by the deadline.

You may also want to take the opportunity now, before the January rush, to find out whether there are any gaps you need to fill with your "Class 2" National Insurance (NI) contributions.

Self-employed members who are EU nationals living in the UK should be aware that their application for the EU Settlement Scheme will be based largely on HMRC and Department of Work and Pensions data. Those who have out-of-date tax records should start addressing this now and seek advice.

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Yes, you can record Council meetings

JOURNALISTS were reminded recently that they have the right to record local authority meetings and don't need to give notice in advance that they are doing so. In October, Hackney Council apologised to an unnamed reporter from the *Hackney Citizen* after Councillor Sophie Conway, chairing a meeting of the Borough's Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission, wrongly told the journalist to switch off their recorder and delete their recording of the meeting. The journalist refused.

Hackney Council's assertion that the journalist needed to give prior notice that they were recording the meeting was also erroneous. Under the rather confusing Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, everybody has the right to record Council meetings and decisions. Many Councils have "protocols" about recording their meetings that still need to be updated to take account of the latest regulations.

Councils still have the power to police recordings of sub-committee of meetings that are regularly attended by "vulnerable" people – as would a Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission – but only to ensure that journalists record the proceedings of *the meeting itself* and don't film or record vulnerable people in the public gallery or any of their contributions. Councils also have the power to "mediate" between those recording meetings and vulnerable people who don't want to be recorded. This may be where the Hackney confusion arose.

Guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government says it's still "advisable" for you to give notice that you are recording, if only to ensure you get the facilities to do so. The 2014 regulations cover district, borough, unitary and county councils in England only. There are different rules for parish and town Councils and for joint committees

formed by more than one authority; we are unsure whether they cover the City of London.

The Local Government Act 1972 still applies, and obliges local authorities to hold meetings in "private" – with no public or press allowed – if they cover "confidential" matter. The statutory list of these includes enforcement action, trades union negotiations and things under commercial confidentiality or legal privilege. But the decision to hold these meetings "in private" must be taken in public, with plenty of formal notice given of a meeting "in private" to give the public the opportunity to object. Reasons must be given for meetings being held "in private" – if you're barred from recording a Council meeting, get an explanation in writing. NUJ members see www.londonfreelance.org/emergency for a helpline to contact if you are prevented from recording a local authority meeting.



New recruitment posters

A SERIES of refreshingly good colour recruitment posters from the NUJ with "Reasons to Join" is now available to download and print from the NUJ website. There are 13 of them in total, covering themes such as Pay, Flexible Working, Press Freedom, Respect at Work, Diversity Matters, Help and Support (illustrated), Ending Gender Pay Gap and other issues. You can download them to print in either an A4 or A3 format from www.nuj.org.uk/about/nuj-resources/recruitment-materials-for-every-member/

Leveson 2 inquiry stays dead

A JUDICIAL Review of the legality of the Government's decision to cancel "Leveson 2" – the follow-up Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the British press – ruled at the beginning of December that the Government had met its narrow legal obligations in cancelling the Inquiry. For more see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1809leve.html and www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1812leve.html