

Consultation response form

Please complete this form in full and return to bbcregulationreview@ofcom.org.uk

Consultation title	How Ofcom regulates the BBC – a review
Full name	Hadar Sela
Contact phone number	[X]
Representing (delete as appropriate)	Organisation
Organisation name	CAMERA UK https://camera-uk.org/
Email address	[X]

Confidentiality

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Your details: We will keep your contact number and email address confidential. Is there anything else you want to keep confidential? Delete as appropriate.	Nothing
Your response: Please indicate how much of your response you want to keep confidential. Delete as appropriate.	None
For confidential responses, can Ofcom publish a reference to the contents of your response?	Yes

Your response

Question	Your response
Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed scope of the review of BBC	<p>N</p> <p>Broadly speaking, yes. The proposal to include regulation of the online services in the Operating Licence is particularly important and should include BBC-run websites such as BBC News and BBC Sport. The BBC News website is of prime significance because it is presented by the BBC as 'permanent public record' and 'historical record' and it has both domestic and global outreach.</p> <p>It would also be advisable for OFCOM to regulate the BBC's foreign language services. All too often those platforms fall short of BBC editorial standards. Our</p>

<p>regulation as set out in this document ? If not, please explain the areas where you think changes should be made.</p>	<p>experience monitoring BBC Arabic indicates that the BBC is not always sufficiently aware of the standard of content being produced in its name in foreign languages. While the foreign language services are run by the BBC World Service, they are also available to UK audiences and their content is all too often not compatible with the Public Purpose of “social cohesion and wellbeing of the United Kingdom”. For example: https://camera-uk.org/2020/10/13/bbc-arabics-selective-portrayal-of-social-media-support-for-terrorist-ahlam-tamimi/ https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/shame-of-bbc-arabic-as-systematic-bias-revealed-1.511433</p> <p>While the new BBC Director General committed himself to tackling the issue of impartiality on social media accounts held by BBC employees, that issue remains extremely problematic, including among those in foreign language departments. https://camera-uk.org/2021/06/21/bbc-arabic-employees-breach-corporations-social-media-guidance/</p>
<p>Question 2: Do you agree with the proposed approach to reviewing the BBC Operating Licence? If not, please explain why.</p>	<p>N Yes</p>
<p>Question 3: Do you have any views on how to measure the BBC’s performance?</p>	<p>N</p> <p>It would be advisable for both the BBC and OFCOM to adopt the IHRA working definition of antisemitism in order to measure - and improve - the BBC’s performance when reporting on topics such as the Labour party antisemitism scandals, the related EHRC report or expulsions from the Labour party.</p>

Question 4: Do you agree with our proposed scope of the review in relation to content standards? If not, please explain why.

N

Yes. The issue of the BBC complaints procedure is particularly pressing. While the 'BBC First' approach is logical, it has not improved the already flawed system from the public's point of view.

The impression held by many members of the public is that the outsourced handling of complaints at Stages 1a and 1b is designed primarily to rebuff complaints regardless of their validity. We have seen several cases in which complaints rejected at Stages 1a and 1b were subsequently upheld by the ECU and such cases inevitably undermine public trust in the BBC's complaints procedure.

There has been a marked decline in standards since mid-2019. Initially the BBC claimed that it was short of staff due to summer holidays. Subsequently it claimed that the failure to handle complaints in a timely manner was due to a 'high volume of complaints' relating to the December 2019 UK election. Then came the Corona pandemic and the situation deteriorated even further. While the pandemic undoubtedly created unique challenges, one would nevertheless expect the BBC to have found solutions which would enable it to provide the public with the service they supposedly fund: an efficient complaints system.

For example, since the beginning of 2021 we have submitted 17 complaints to the BBC via the webform, nine of which were resolved (corrected or rejected) and eight of which remain outstanding because the BBC either failed to address them within the designated time frame or – more seriously – simply failed to respond at all. For example: case numbers C9J2V9, 6519065 & 6551052, P5W5D2, B1S6G9.

A significant proportion of those unaddressed complaints relate to impartiality and in particular the section of the BBC editorial guidelines relating to 'contributors' affiliations'.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/impartiality/guidelines/#contributors%E2%80%99affiliations>

<https://camera-uk.org/2021/07/12/down-the-bbc-complaints-procedure-rabbit-hole/>

It is clearly not acceptable that nearly half the complaints we submitted via the webform have not been addressed by the BBC.

The option of referring an unaddressed complaint to OFCOM is seen by many members of the public as ineffective, not least because they do not receive a direct reply and because by then, very often considerable time has passed since the reason for the complaint arose.

When compared to the time it takes to receive a response from other international media organisations (usually a matter of a few days at the most), the BBC complaints procedure's timeframe is obviously unduly long and clearly not conducive to the system's ostensible aim - the quick and efficient correction of editorial complaints in order to meet the BBC's own editorial guidelines and public purposes.

Even when corrections are eventually made, the system lacks consistency. Footnotes are sometimes added to corrected articles on the website – but sometimes not. The same applies to recordings available on BBC Sounds and iPlayer.

The BBC News website should have a dedicated corrections page where readers can see if an article they have already read has been amended. A dedicated corrections page would make corrections more visible and accessible, increase the likelihood that people will receive the corrected information and contribute to the BBC's transparency as well as reducing the likelihood of waste of public funding on unnecessary complaints. The procedure for informing the public that a correction has been made to content should be standardised across all platforms and not – as is the case today – left to the decision of individual producers and editors.

<p>Question 5: Do you agree with the issues we have identified with the processes for assessing the competitive impact of changes to the BBC's UK Public Services? If you consider there should be changes to these processes, please set out what these are and, if possible, provide any relevant evidence.</p>	<p>N Yes</p>
<p>Question 6: Do you have any concerns about the regulatory framework for the BBC's commercial activities</p>	<p>N No</p>

that are
not being
considered
in the
review of
BBC
Studios?

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