

The Gateway Confidentiality Policy

Ratified as of March 27, 2024

1.6 Confidentiality Policy

Granting a source confidentiality should only be used as a last resort, if including them in the article creates a potential risk to their safety or wellbeing. Standard journalistic practice is to name all sources, as a result, granting confidentiality is a journalistic tool used sparingly.

1.6.1 Terms and definitions: There are generally three levels of confidentiality which are at the discretion of the Editorial Board to grant to a source:

- a. Not for attribution: quotes or information granted in an interview can be used in reporting, but the source will not be named. However, the source's general information can be described.
- b. On background: Information gained in an interview can be used in an article, but quotes cannot be used.
- c. Off the record: Information gained in an interview can only be used to help the reporter understand the issue or perspective at hand. Information cannot be used in reporting, either through statements or quotes.

1.6.2 Grounds for confidentiality: When deciding to grant confidentiality to a source, the following factors must be considered: the impact and importance of the story on the U of A community; the possible ramifications if the source's identity were to become known; the ability to fulfill the request; and the quality of the information received.

Grounds for confidentiality includes, but is not limited to: if revealing the identity of the source would cause personal, physical, or significant harm to the source or others; if the source is divulging details of their involvement in illicit activities; if the source is giving information pertaining to an event that is extremely personal; or if the publication of this information puts them or others they know at legal risk.

1.6.3 Procedures to follow: Before granting confidentiality to a source, the line editor or journalist must get approval from the Editor-in-Chief. To ensure that The Gateway is doing its due diligence to adequately report the story to the campus community while protecting the source's identity, all confidentiality requests must be submitted to the Editor-in-Chief in writing. This request must include what the story is about, why the line editor thinks confidentiality should be granted, how the source is at risk if named in the article, and what the importance and impact the information serves. The request does not have to include the name of the source or any identifying information.

If confidentiality is granted, the following conditions have to be met: the source's credibility must be established, through corroborating the information received with an additional source; identifying information must be protected, and articles must be thoroughly checked to ensure that this information is not included; conditions and

expectations regarding confidentiality and the risks involved with inclusion must be set ahead of an interview with the source; the identity of the source should stay between the writer and the editorial board; and a line editor or reporter not involved in the reporting of the story must be told the identity of the source and fact-check and corroborate all information gained.

1.6.4 Granting confidentiality post-publication: All confidentiality requests post-publication must be sent in writing to the Editor-in-Chief. The Editor-in-Chief shall review the request and article, and come to a decision in consultation with the Editorial Board. All requests must be made within four years of the date of publication to be eligible for consideration.

Grounds for confidentiality post-publication includes, but is not limited to: matters of personal safety, egregious errors, legal restrictions such as publication bans, and defamatory material, as well as the grounds listed above.

1.6.5 Remedies for confidentiality requests: The Editor-in-Chief has full discretion in the application of any remedies, should any be necessary. This includes, but is not limited to, granting confidentiality, unpublishing the story, making corrections, issuing a new story, or adding a publishers note.

1.6.6 Appeals process: An appeal of the Editor-in-Chief's decision may be launched by contacting the GSJS Ombudsperson and shall be carried out under the processes set out in section 9. Decisions on confidentiality cannot be appealed on the grounds that the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision itself.

1.6.7 Public notice: When a source is granted confidentiality, a note must be included in the article explaining why. The wording of section 1.6 and a summary of sections 1.6.1-6 must be made publicly available on The Gateway's website at all times and updated to reflect any changes to applicable Standing Operating Policies.

1.6.8 Precedence and institutional knowledge: To maintain consistency and historical knowledge, The Gateway will keep a record of all confidentiality requests and their outcomes. To protect the identities of sources, this information will be kept secure and confidential.