



A global
educational
news service for
young people

NEWS DECODER

2021-22 SCHOOL HANDBOOK

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I. Introduction

About this handbook

This handbook will help your school make the most of its partnership with News Decoder. You will find information about our educational resources and the steps faculty and Student Ambassadors can take to foster engagement with us this year.

Our mission

News Decoder is a global educational news service for young people. We teach journalistic skills that extend students' horizons and understanding of global issues. Our mission is to help students develop skills and behaviours that make them better global citizens.

The United Nations has made global citizenship education a Sustainable Development Goal and identified core global citizenship competencies that educators should foster in young people. These are: an ability to communicate; respect for diversity and intercultural understanding; recognition of global issues and their interconnectedness; empathy; critical thinking and problem solving; conflict resolution; a sense of identity; and shared universal values.

News Decoder's work revolves around a journalistic process — pitch, report, draft and revise (PRDR) — that we encourage students to follow because it helps them develop these global citizenship competencies. PRDR teaches students how to identify topics of global importance; to put aside preconceived notions and biases; to consider multiple and opposing perspectives; to contact and communicate with experts; to identify solutions to problems; to produce authoritative and engaging content; to accept constructive feedback; and to develop professional behaviours.

By engaging with us, students deepen their knowledge of the world in all its complexity. They learn to communicate with people in different places and to empathize with their perspectives. They develop the intellectual toolkit and behavioural tenacity to dig into big problems and identify concrete solutions. We are tremendously excited to help your students develop these competencies this year.

II. Getting Started

Identify point people

A News Decoder partnership is most successful if staff and students are prepared to champion us on campus. There should be one to two faculty point people and at least two Student Ambassadors who liaise regularly with us. We encourage these individuals to involve the greatest possible number of faculty and students in our activities.

What Faculty need to do:

- Identify faculty who are interested in using the services described in this handbook.
- Identify students who are capable of serving as Student Ambassadors — students who are proactive, well-organized, communicative and natural leaders.
- Connect interested faculty and your chosen Student Ambassadors with us.

"Working with News Decoder has allowed our students to gain a deeper understanding of the world, giving them the agency to work with experts and students from other schools and to explore more deeply topics that are relevant to them.

— Sophie Paris

Director, Institute for Global Education, Miss Porter's School

Participate in an orientation session

We host orientation workshops with faculty and Student Ambassadors before the start of the school year. During this virtual workshop, we walk you through our site, services and resources. We explain how faculty can use us in their classrooms and how Student Ambassadors can promote News Decoder engagement among their peers.

What Faculty and Student Ambassadors need to do:

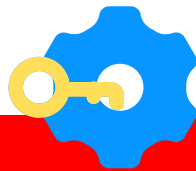
- Watch out for an email with different orientation workshop times.
- Register for the workshop that best suits your schedule.
- Encourage other teachers to register for it as well. This workshop is a great way to get other faculty interested in our resources.
- Email us if you miss or are unable to attend a workshop. We'll try to reschedule or send you a recording.

Register

News Decoder is a school-wide resource. For students across the school to use us, they must be registered to log into our site.

Registration is simple. At the start of the school year, we ask you to complete a spreadsheet with the names and email addresses of the students at your school (in the case of secondary schools, those in high school). When completing the spreadsheet, we recommend erring on the side of inclusiveness. The more students you permit us to register, the greater the number of students who will have opportunities to engage with us.

As soon as they are registered, students receive an email with their username and password, as well as a “welcome email” that includes an orientation video and instructions for logging into the site.



We worry about privacy so you don't have to.

We consider it a privilege to help your students grow as thinkers, communicators and citizens. To engage meaningfully with your students, we need to connect and communicate with them, which requires us to collect and use their personal data.

News Decoder complies with the European Union's rigorous General Data Protection Regulation, our [privacy policy](#) and our membership agreements with partner schools. We have adopted controls and safeguards to ensure faculty and students' personal data is only used for the limited purposes for which it was collected and only shared with others as stated in our privacy policy and contract with your school. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about our privacy practices.

What Faculty need to do:

- Keep an eye out for an email asking you to complete a spreadsheet in Google Drive.
- Populate the spreadsheet with the names and email addresses of students.
- Send the spreadsheet to us as soon as possible and alert us. We will take care of the rest.

Log In

Use your username and password to log in to the site. Once logged in, you will see a menu bar at the top of the site. From this menu, you are able to access our full suite of educational resources.

What Faculty and Student Ambassadors need to do:

- Save your username and password.
- Log in.
- Explore the resources accessible from the top menu bar.



Promote us at the start of the year

The beginning of the school year is the best time to build awareness of News Decoder among faculty and students. Below, we propose some ideas for generating interest in our activities and resources, although this list is by no means exhaustive!

What Faculty and Student Ambassadors need to do:

- Announce News Decoder to students at the start of select classes or a school assembly.
- Speak to faculty who might be interested in using News Decoder in their classrooms.
- Put up posters around the school. (We'll send the SAs a template!)
- Set up a News Decoder booth if your school hosts a club fair day.
- Circulate a sign-up sheet that allows students to add their names to an internal mailing list. Student Ambassadors can later use this list to circulate announcements about workshops, webinars, contests and podcasts to students who have expressed an interest in working with News Decoder.

III. Workshops

Early in the first term, we will lead a virtual workshop with your students that features one of the correspondents in News Decoder's network. This interactive session will give your students an opportunity to engage with an experienced journalist and to learn how to leverage our fundamental process of pitching, reporting, drafting and revising to create distinctive, multimedia content.

We encourage you to identify a group of students to participate in this workshop and to ask them to come prepared with questions they'd like to ask or story ideas they'd like to discuss.



News Decoder president Nelson Graves leads a workshop with students at Westover School.

What Faculty need to do:

- Keep an eye out for an email offering to schedule a virtual workshop.
- Coordinate a workshop date and time with members of your school and our team.
- Organize a group of students to participate in the workshop. The students can be members of the webinar team, students in a class or club.
- Reserve a physical space for students to congregate for the workshop.
- Ask students to prepare questions and story ideas in advance.
- Ensure students are ready at the scheduled time, so the workshop can start on schedule.
- Following the workshop, have your students apply what they've learned in an assignment.

IV. Global Webinars

Choose your global theme

A core aspect of News Decoder's educational program is cross-school collaboration. At the start of the academic year, your school will be paired up with another News Decoder partner school that is based in another part of the world. The schools will jointly host a global webinar, which can be attended by any students in our global network.

To kick off your partnership, the faculty point people and Student Ambassadors from both schools should meet – virtually or by email. The purpose of this e-meeting is to select a date and global theme for your schools' webinar.

To help schools pick themes, we will provide a list to choose from, but schools should feel free to choose something not on the list. Themes are not meant to be a straitjacket. Rather, they are a useful tool for helping students hone in on an issue of global relevance and learn from each other about how that issue plays out locally in their own communities.



Last year, one pair of schools chose women's rights as their theme. Students from the New York school conducted reporting on the #MeToo movement and sexual harassment on the NYC metro, while students from the school in Africa focused on abuse against women in the home. The exercise helped students appreciate how challenges of a global nature — in this case, women's rights and gender violence — can play out in different ways at the local level, while also providing an opportunity for students to connect and learn from each other.

What Faculty and Student Ambassadors need to do:

- Keep an eye out for an email from us announcing your school pairing.
- By meeting or email, introduce yourself to the faculty point people and Student Ambassadors from your partner school.
- Together, choose a global theme for the year.
- Notify us of your theme.

Build your webinar team

Faculty and Student Ambassadors should encourage students to participate in their school's webinar. Each school's webinar team should, at a minimum, fill the following roles:

- **1 Managing Director:** Organizes and leads team meetings to ensure deadlines are met and team members are on track.
- **3-6 Researchers:** Conduct research and reporting and transform their materials into multimedia content for our news site.
- **3 Presenters:** Conduct research and reporting along with the Researchers and present the key findings on camera during the webinar.
- **1 Production Lead:** Oversees webinar logistics, including ensuring audio set-up, securing a location for the webinar and seating the presenters and audience.
- **1 Audience Engagement Officer:** Organizes an audience to attend the webinar and promotes the webinar on their school's social media channels.

"The opportunity to participate in and lead SYA's Nationalism in Europe webinar provided me with the tools to manage a team and research complex issues."

— Elisabeth Wachtel

School Year Abroad France Student Ambassador

What Faculty or Student Ambassadors need to do:

- Assemble a team.
- Assign roles to each team member.
- Email News Decoder with the names, email addresses and roles of each team member.

Engage in cross-cultural learning

Once teams are formed, News Decoder will host a brainstorming session with the teams from the paired-up schools. During this session, the News Decoder host will explain the PRDR process we expect students to follow and will send students from different schools into virtual "breakout rooms" that enable students to discuss a series of questions — such as what piqued their interest in a particular topic and what they know about that topic so far.

Following the brainstorming session, students will submit a pitch to News Decoder with their story ideas. The News Decoder team will provide feedback on each pitch within 24 hours.

What the Webinar team needs to do:

- Keep an eye out for an email proposing a brainstorming session.
- Speak with your team to identify some meeting times that work for most of the team members and relay this information to us.
- In advance of the session, team members should identify some topics they'd like to research and report on for their webinar and multimedia stories. These topics should relate to their theme.
- Participate actively in the brainstorming session.
- Following the session, each team's Presenters and Researchers should pitch their planned presentation topics to News Decoder.

Conduct research and reporting

Following the brainstorming session, Presenters and Researchers should conduct research and reporting on their webinar topics. At a minimum, each Presenter and group of Researchers should interview two sources who approach the topic from different perspectives. Researchers should take the materials from the interview and turn it into multimedia content that we can publish on our site.

What Researchers and Presenters need to do:

- Conduct research.
- Arrange and conduct at least two interviews. Be sure to take notes!

Participate in a planning session

A month before the webinar, News Decoder will host a planning session with the webinar teams, during which we will provide direction on how to prepare for the webinar. Students will be sent into virtual breakout rooms to discuss what they've learned so far and any challenges they've encountered with their reporting.

What the Webinar team needs to do:

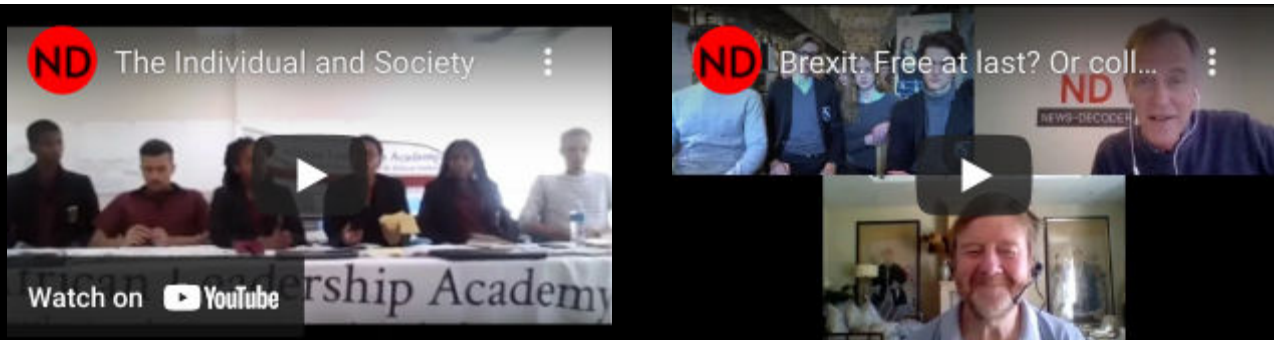
- Keep an eye out for an email proposing a planning session.
- Speak with your team to identify possible times for a planning session and relay this information to the News Decoder team.
- In advance of the planning session, complete as much research and reporting as possible.
- Participate actively in the planning session.

Prepare to present and get published

Ahead of the webinar, Presenters should prepare brief webinar presentation notes and practice presenting. Researchers should use the materials they gathered from their research and reporting to produce first drafts of their multimedia content.

What the Webinar team needs to do:

- Presenters should prepare brief presentation notes summarizing the key findings from their research and reporting.
- Researchers should use the materials from their research and reporting to draft their multimedia content. They should email a first draft of their content to News Decoder by the date of their school's webinar.
- The Production Lead should reserve a room for the webinar and ensure the space is equipped with a large screen and IT setup.
- The Audience Engagement Manager should encourage other students at the school to attend the webinar in person or register to watch it.



Shine in your global webinar and on our site

During a one-hour webinar, the Presenters will share their key findings and discuss their topic with the other Presenters and attendees. News Decoder will work with the Researchers to get their multimedia content published.

What the Webinar team needs to do:

- The Production Lead and Presenters should get set up at least 30 minutes before the webinar's start time, to allow enough time to resolve any IT issues.
- Each Presenter should briefly present to the camera for 2-3 minutes.
- Each Presenter should be prepared to discuss their topic with the other attendees.
- The Audience Engagement Manager should circulate the webinar recording among the school community and promote the Researchers' multimedia content on social media.

V. Multimedia Production

News Decoder publishes media content by young people that meets the highest editorial standards. By following our Pitch, Report, Draft, Revise process, students who produce content for us develop an array of critical skills and behaviours – and maximize their chances of getting published.

P

PITCH: Students submit a story pitch through our online pitching portal. A pitch is a short summary of the topic the student plans to examine, their research and reporting strategy and their proposed deadline. The topic should be of global relevance even if the reporting focuses on local developments. We respond to student pitches by email within 24 hours.

R

REPORT: Once a student has received our feedback on a pitch, they can begin their research and reporting. Research involves finding authoritative data in reports and studies. Reporting involves interviewing one or two sources about the subject in question. This is a chance for students to learn, challenge their assumptions and move outside their comfort zones.

D

DRAFT: After gathering materials through research and reporting, students should produce a first draft of their multimedia content that summarizes their key findings. If in written form, the article should be between 600 and 800 words. This first, rough draft will invariably be edited by the News Decoder team.

R

REVISE: Students should email their first draft to News Decoder by the agreed-upon deadline and then work with News Decoder's editorial team to get their content into publishable form. Authors should remain in close contact with News Decoder during the entire editing process and understand that the final version may differ substantially from the initial draft.

Multimedia Production

PRDR is a process that all students should learn, whether or not they are interested in journalism. The process teaches students how to identify topics of global importance; put aside biases; consider opposing perspectives; communicate with experts; identify solutions to problems; produce authoritative and engaging content; and accept constructive feedback.

We encourage faculty to embed News Decoder — and the PRDR process — into their classrooms, for example by replacing a traditional academic essay assignment with a requirement to produce multimedia content for News Decoder.

What Faculty need to do:

- Consider embedding PRDR into their classes. The process takes students through sequential steps that lead to the creation of multimedia content. Outstanding content is published, and all students develop core global citizenship competencies by participating in the PRDR process.
- Contact News Decoder to discuss how to integrate the PRDR process into your class.

VI. Storytelling Contests

We run two storytelling contests each school year: one in the first term and one in the second. Students from across your school are encouraged to enter submissions. We welcome content in any form (articles, videos, photo reports and podcasts) and style (reported articles, personal essays, fictional stories and poetry). A three-person jury selects the top entries, and thanks to a generous donor, we award cash prizes to winners. We publish the top submissions on our site.

What Student Ambassadors need to do:

- Keep an eye out for an email announcing the contest.
- Put up posters around your school. (We'll provide a template!)
- Circulate an email to peers announcing the contest and encouraging them to follow the PRDR process (which is explained on the "Get Published" page of the website), as doing so will increase their chances of producing a winning submission.
- If your peers are selected as contest winners, promote them and their work on social media and in school publications.

VII. E-Learning Courses

Students have exclusive access to our E-Learning Course Library, which offers online courses on Reporting, Drafting, Media Literacy and Podcasting. Each course takes roughly 30 minutes to complete and ends with a short quiz. Upon completion, students receive a personalized course certificate.

We encourage faculty to have their students complete these courses within their classes. School librarians should also be registered as users, so they can direct students to these courses as appropriate.

What Faculty need to do:

- Task students with completing these courses.
- Ask students to submit their course certificates as proof of course completion.

"Reporting 101: Interviewing Fundamentals taught me that interviewing multiple sources is crucial to balance differing perspectives, which ultimately allows readers to make their own informed opinions."

— Malik Figaro

Former Friends Seminary Student Ambassador

VIII. Educators' Catalog

Every day, we publish original content on our site that explores topics of global importance. This explanatory, impartial content helps young people make sense of global issues.

Each month, we email faculty a catalog featuring a curated selection of the best articles we've published that month, along with a note explaining their educational relevance. Articles end with questions aimed at fostering student reflection, discussion and debate.

What Faculty need to do:

- Keep an eye out for our monthly Educators' Catalog and review the featured articles.
- Assign articles as required reading.

IX. Podcast Series



Every year, we produce the *News Decoder Podcast* in partnership with our media partner Podium.me. The *News Decoder Podcast* is an entirely student-led podcast: each season features a new team of students and each episode is led by a different group of students. The episodes are published on Apple, Spotify, Soundcloud and News Decoder's site.

What Student Ambassadors need to do:

- Keep an eye out for an email announcing the launch of our podcast.
- Put up posters around your school. (We'll provide a template!)
- Circulate an email to peers announcing the opportunity to participate in the *News Decoder Podcast*.
- Promote the series within your school community.

X. Follow Us

Here are some tips for staying connected throughout the year:

- Read our emails.
- Review our monthly newsletter.
- Sign up to receive email updates of our latest articles.

XI. Contact Us

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us directly by emailing nelson.graves@news-decoder.com.

