

## **Accuracy should supersede speed in reporting – BBC tells UG scholars**

Prospective and practising journalists across Guyana are being encouraged to focus on accuracy as opposed to speed before disseminating information, and to ensure there are at least two sources to avoid providing misinformation to the general public.

British Journalist and Broadcaster Jonathan Dymond made the appeal on March 9 during a BBC World Questions event at the Education Lecture Theatre at the University of Guyana, Turkeyen Campus.

The senior journalist explained that while modern practices by some media houses are to get the story out first or fast, the BBC has always sought a more careful approach to reporting, ensuring it gets the story right.

He posited that verification is key at the BBC – a strategy which continues to guide the newsroom.

**“We don’t have to get the story first, but the country and the world will only trust us if we get it right. Trust is one thing that people pay their licence fee for,”** the Washington-based reporter stated.

Further emphasising the importance of trust, Dymond pointed out that the new norm has become misinformation, disinformation and false claims, highlighting that this could be very stressful for readers and even publishing outlets.

The journalist pointed to instances where publications were postponed and, in some instances, cancelled due to the BBC not being able to gather information from a second source.

**“We have a rule for our basic news gathering, which is that you need two sources. It’s not good enough just to have the one,”** Dymond disclosed.

He added, **“I have had people, when I’m presenting programmes, say, ‘we’ve just heard this, put it on air,’”** **“I say, ‘have you got a second source?’ And they say, ‘No, I don’t.’ If you’re not sure, don’t put it on air.”**

To ensure that information is factual, Dymond disclosed that the BBC has established a unit called ‘Verify,’ which focuses solely on fact- checking.

Persons attending the workshop were also urged to be mindful of the growing influence of social media and how untrue information can spread rapidly.

Dymond noted that this has made the work for balanced journalists much harder, explaining that more emphasis has to be placed on ensuring the information is factual and refuting some unnecessary claims.

According to him, the BBC has taken a more in-depth approach to address these challenges by strengthening its internal systems, as well as developing editorial guidelines that govern how its field workers operate.

**“We now have this enormous book... called Editorial Guidelines. And it is about the rules, the ideas behind what we do. You still cannot do what we do without the culture of the organisation.”**

Discussions at the event also surrounded artificial intelligence, which was identified as a growing concern and may potentially be a ‘new challenge.’

Despite this, Dymond believes that accountability is essential, adding that “once trust is lost, rebuilding it is extremely difficult, making accuracy and transparency non-negotiable in modern journalism.”

Vice Chancellor, Professor Paloma Mohamed Martin, along with Head of Centre for Communication Studies, Clarence Brotherson, and BBC Producer, Helen Towner, also attended the event.