LIONS

LIONS Integrity Handbook

The LIONS Integrity Handbook represents our commitment to protecting creativity's reputation as a powerful economic and cultural force. It's designed not to restrict creativity, but to fortify it - ensuring breakthrough work gets the recognition it deserves while preserving the integrity that makes the recognition meaningful.

Our role as a global convenor and industry benchmark comes with responsibility: to codify standards, to listen openly, to evolve without losing rigor and to ensure that creativity remains a powerful, verifiable force for business growth and societal progress.

This handbook represents our commitment to three fundamental goals:

Legitimacy. Every entry should represent real work, created for real clients, with real results. No fabrication, no exaggeration, just genuine impact that deserves recognition.

Credibility. Work should demonstrate the highest levels of professionalism, responsible representation and authentic connection to business objectives. We celebrate creativity that drives progress.

Integrity. All Entrants and Jurors must act with integrity – adhering to the rules and behaving in a way that won't bring the industry or LIONS into disrepute.

This marks the next stage of our commitment to creative legitimacy. Going forward, every submission into the Awards will be independently verified through a combination of human expertise and AI-supported analysis, with authenticity validation, and clear consequences for misrepresentation. We remain impartial and transparent in every decision, and as we continue to advance these standards together with the help and support of the global creative community, we're committed to providing regular updates on our progress.

The launch of this handbook is a defining moment - a comprehensive framework designed for industry-wide adoption as a blueprint for safeguarding creativity's reputation and economic value.

Simon Cook
CEO
LIONS

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How to use this guide

The LIONS Integrity Handbook is designed as a practical guide to help entrants - and the creative industry more broadly - understand the standards we expect when an entry is submitted into our Awards and the consequences of not adhering to the rules.

Creative excellence is still the primary judging criterion, but this guide provides a clear framework for participation across three core pillars: **legitimacy**, **credibility** and **integrity**. Within each section, you'll find guidance on what is and isn't acceptable. At the end there is a useful checklist and a glossary of the definitions we're using throughout this document.

✅ **DO = What you should do**

⛔ **DON'T = What you can NOT do**

ℹ️ **INFO = Background context**

The foundations for submitting an entry

Our Guiding Principles serve as the foundation of the Awards. These principles require all entrants and Festival organisers to act with:

- fairness and integrity
- transparency and accuracy
- ownership and responsibility
- good faith and cooperation.

When everyone complies with the rules, the very best work rises to the top. And that starts with ensuring that your entry is legitimate and meets the requirements to compete.

DO	DON'T
· Only submit work that was genuinely created for a client/brand · Ensure the work launched publicly within the relevant eligibility period · Include sources for all results and claims made in your entry · Get explicit permission to submit from the CMO/Business Leader of the commissioning brand before you start · Inform the CMO/Business Leader of the commissioning brand that they should expect an email from our team requesting their approval of the work listed in the entry · Ensure that you have the required licences, consents and rights to enter into the Awards · Keep clear records of campaign timelines and key milestones	· Don't submit work that is made only for Awards · Don't fabricate sources or include campaign mock-ups. If you can't verify the information provided and show that it happened, don't include it in your entry · Don't submit work without consulting the CMO/Business Leader of the brand. They will be required to approve the entry, so make sure they know it's coming · Don't use unlicensed music, images or other intellectual property

INFO: To read the rules in full, download Entry Kit 2

Legitimacy of the entry, data and results

LIONS is the home of creativity, and the Awards recognise the full spectrum of creativity - everything from craft to creator to commerce.

But we're not celebrating creativity for creativity's sake. The impact of an idea is a key measure of excellence - and the way you present the outcomes of your efforts is crucial.

To ensure accountability, you should be prepared to verify claims made in your submission. This could include sharing media plans, unedited assets or original campaign materials. At any point, the Festival can contact the brand to provide additional context about campaign details or consult industry experts. We'll also be using AI detection tools to assess the feasibility of reported results.

DO	DON'T
· Only include real, verifiable results · Keep a record of data sources and methodologies of analysis · Be prepared to share the sources of your results for verification, e.g. client-provided data, third-party data analytics, research firms, news articles, video clips, social posts · Disclose special circumstances, e.g. the work ran in a limited market or was in a test phase	· Do not include fabricated, manipulated or exaggerated results, statistics or benchmarks of any kind. If you cannot verify the information provided, don't include it in your entry

INFO: Verification may include requests to review original documents and sources, technical checks and direct contact with brand CMO for confirmation.

Acceptable AI usage and disclosure

As AI technology improves, so does its scope and impact across the advertising and marketing industry. It's important to ensure that, regardless of how you implement AI in your work, you're using it responsibly and transparently.

For the purposes of the Awards, responsible and acceptable uses include using AI to assist with creative ideation, exploring creative concepts with clear human creative direction, enhancing production processes and analysing data or streamlining workflows or processes.

What isn't acceptable is fabricating campaign results and impact, falsely attributing AI-generated work as human-created, creating artificial 'proof' or false testimonials, generating fake metrics or altering content without disclosing what has been manipulated.

DO	DON'T
• Complete the AI disclosure question for every entry submitted • Provide full details of how AI was used in the work and in the entry • Demonstrate proper attribution by ensuring that you've clarified all AI contributions to the work and not presented any of them as human creativity • Disclose the methodology used to ensure the accuracy of AI-generated data analysis	• Don't use AI to generate or enhance results, or to fabricate campaign metrics or impact • Don't present AI-generated work as entirely human-created • Don't create artificial 'proof' of campaign implementation or 'testimonials' and present them as authentic • Don't include work that has been enhanced by AI or has AI-generated elements without disclosing what has been altered • Don't create synthetic representations of campaign reach or effectiveness • Don't create in-situ examples of the work, which did not happen in that location

INFO: Since 2024, we've asked all entrants to disclose whether AI was used. This is a mandatory question and asks you to outline which tools were used, what elements of the work or entry were enhanced by AI, what the data sources were and how the outputs were independently verified.

Credibility of the work

We know that creativity can be a significant force for good in the world and that purpose-led work - when it sits at the heart of a company's mission and decision-making - can be a powerful differentiator.

LIONS Juries are encouraged to consider the difference between work that's driving a client's business while doing good for the world and work where a company may have attached itself to a social cause where it doesn't really have permission to play (see glossary).

We're active champions of work that rejects stereotypes, confronts prejudice and promotes positive societal change. But for work in this space to have true impact, it needs to be embedded throughout the organisation, not just an external campaign.

The other area that requires careful consideration is the topic of sustainability. Cannes Lions encourages all efforts that advance sustainability across the industry. However, to ensure that winning work in this space is credible and connected to long-term sustainability commitments, the Jury will consider three additional evaluation criteria:

- **Impact:** What are the measurable environmental outcomes?
- **Integrity:** Are the claims credible and meaningful and do they reflect the scale of the brand?
- **Relevance:** Is there strategic alignment and sustained commitment?

✅ DO	⛔ DON'T
• Ensure the work is connected to the brand's objectives and it isn't aligning with a cause or an issue for the purpose of the Awards • Demonstrate how the idea feeds into a broader, more long-term brand strategy • Outline how the results are proportional to the size of the brand. Put the impact of your work in context • Make sure that any sustainability claims are credible and accurately represent the environmental impact • Ensure that any representation of people and cultures is done with respect (see glossary)	• Don't exaggerate the impact of your efforts • Don't include stereotypical, exploitative or objectifying content (see glossary) • Don't include content featuring individuals without their consent

INFO: LIONS is proud to be a founding member of the Unstereotype Alliance, supporting the invaluable work they do to eradicate harmful stereotypes in all media and advertising content.

We've worked with global Sustainability Consultancy SLR to provide guidance for both Jury members and entrants. This framework is intended to show what good looks like when it comes to sustainability and to ensure you know what information we need you to provide so that our Jury can make informed decisions where there is a sustainability angle to the work.

Integrity of the judging process

Each year, Jury members are appointed for their expertise, their industry reputation, their work and, above all, their integrity. Before they begin, they're required to sign a code of conduct and join training on the judging process, the Jury platform and how to mitigate bias in relation to assessing what great creativity looks like.

When it comes to the judging process, there are robust measures in place to ensure fairness, transparency and impartiality. These measures are designed to eliminate conflicts of interest and maintain the credibility of the Awards.

At each stage of the process, we monitor voting patterns to identify any unusual activity or potential bias. Any anomalies are flagged for investigation, and if necessary, the Jury President will be alerted. Although instances like this are rare and often innocent, this system ensures that Jurors can vote without external pressures or political influence, focusing solely on awarding the best work.

To ensure full transparency, all entries related to a Juror's company or other affiliation are flagged in the system. If a Juror is presented with work from their own brand or business, their vote is removed, and they must leave the room for any discussion. This process allows the other Jurors in the room to participate fully while safeguarding the impartiality of the results.

Throughout, we encourage Jurors to approach all entries with an open mind, giving progressive and innovative work the time and consideration it deserves. If any Juror has doubts about the authenticity or legitimacy of a piece of work, they're encouraged to consult the Cannes Lions team or their Jury President. This ensures that any concerns are thoroughly investigated and that the judging process remains fair and transparent.

DO	DON'T
· Ensure all companies and individuals involved in the work are credited appropriately · Submit your entries on time so that the Jury can give your work the attention it deserves	· Don't contact the Jury to share your work · Don't lobby the Jury to vote for your work in the Jury room · Don't contact Jury members for updates on how work is performing at any stage of the judging process · Don't attempt to influence Jurors to vote against a competitor's piece of work

We ask Jurors to disclose when activity occurs that could call the integrity of the judging process into question. Any offending entrants will be subjected to the consequences of non-compliance of our rules.

INFO: All Jury members receive bias mitigation training to help them identify how bias can impact decision making and ensure they are aware when making a creative evaluation.

Consequences of non-compliance

These measures have been introduced to ensure that the work awarded at the Festival is the best representation of how powerful a differentiator creativity can be. They exist to reinforce the importance of accountability, accuracy and fairness and supplement the Awards Rules which govern all entries to the Awards.

As the industry continues to evolve, it's crucial we all understand, and adhere to, the principles in this handbook.

Violations of our rules may result in disqualification, withdrawal of Awards, exclusion from our Juries or even a ban from future Festivals.

Any investigations will be handled through a formal process, and escalated cases will be reviewed by an independent Integrity Council. This process ensures anyone can report suspected breaches confidentially.

To report a concern, please contact awardsintegrity@canneslions.com.

Annual review

Our industry is evolving at a rapid pace. Our Awards will, too.

We'll be reviewing the LIONS Integrity Handbook annually to include updates on guidance for accepted use of new technologies. Each edition will reflect any changes to our verification methodologies and outline any additional transparency requirements.

Entry checklist

- ❑ **Work is legitimate.** You have evidence that the work has been created for a real client and it launched publicly within the eligibility period
- ❑ **Brand permission secured.** Your CMO and Business Leader have approved the submission and know they will receive a verification email
- ❑ **All IP is licensed.** Any music, images or content included in your entry has been properly cleared for use
- ❑ **Results are real.** All data and claims made in the entry is verifiable and all sources are documented
- ❑ **No fabricated content.** Everything submitted in your entry exists and has not been manipulated or misrepresented
- ❑ **Genuine brand connection.** The work serves genuine business objectives, not causes adopted solely to win Awards
- ❑ **Documentation ready.** You have kept records of all the materials used in your entry, including links to articles and data and you are prepared to verify any claims if requested

Glossary

Artificial intelligence (AI): Systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, including but not limited to generative AI tools (text, image, audio, video generation), machine learning algorithms, computer vision systems and natural language processing tools.

Credibility: The extent to which claims, actions or communications are genuine, substantiated by evidence and align with an organisation's actual practices and capabilities.

Exploitation: when a historically dominant group dehumanises or takes advantage of lived experiences of historically marginalised groups for their own commercial gain. This can also present as brands being performative by signalling support and solidarity with marginalised groups in an attempt to build social capital.

I**ntegrity:** The commitment to maintaining trust and fairness by acting with honesty, transparency and consistency - matching actions with values held.

Legitimacy: The state of being real, valid and properly authorised, able to be verified and substantiated through credible evidence and proper processes.

Respectful representation: meaningful descriptions or portrayals of people or cultures, free of stereotypes. Instead, there is purposeful and accurate portrayal.

Right to play: the brand has a robust rationale for external campaigns via visible actions in relation to workforce, suppliers, community, philanthropy, activism etc. I.e. what the brand says is aligned with what the brand does.

Scam work: Work created solely to win Awards.

Stereotyping: a reductive practice that uses assumptions or generalisations about a person or group of people.

Synthetic media: Content that has been created, altered or manipulated using AI technologies, including AI-generated images, videos or audio; deepfakes or manipulated representations of people or events; computer-generated environments or scenarios.

AI disclosure question

1. Was AI (artificial intelligence) used in the work or the entry materials?
2. If yes, please indicate how and consider the following:
    - What AI tools were used?
    - What was the extent of AI use in the final work?
    - What are the data sources and origin of data or inputs used for any AI-generated elements?
    - How were the results or impacts from the use of AI independently verified?