

## General departmental blog guidance/good practice

### Consider what your blog will/will not be

<b>A blog is...</b>	<b>A website is...</b>
Written by multiple <b>named</b> authors, with their own individual voices – some of which can be scholarly, in jargon, or for niche audiences	Written in an agreed corporate style - authorship is anonymous/organisational, and written in plain English.
Browsed by using tags/categories, or in chronological order	Usually topic driven, with key tasks for a user to complete reflected on the homepage. Sections are typically of content groupings.
Used to experiment, or to explore and develop ideas; it can be reflective or conversational	Authoritative, with fully formed facts/information.

### Be clear about your existing communication channels – consider whether your blog is:

- An announcement channel – typically, email
- A training section - typically, documents, web or wiki pages
- A consultation area - typically, a wiki or sharepoint page
- A policy/guidelines repository - typically, your website

### Content

- Your blog should have a purpose, and each post should meet an objective
  - Create a 'categories' list that your posts should meet – examples are given below
- Include photos or images where possible – it is good for readers and searchers
- Agree a typical word limit (it's ok to break this, but will give your blog consistency)
  - For example, 'Fewer than 500 words'
- Draft an 'About' statement/page detailing what readers should expect to find on your blog

### Example categories and objectives

#### Directors updates

High-level, strategic update from director

- Infrequent posts, but category exists to give a level of freedom for higher level strategy

#### Central service updates

Updates on the central services we provide

- Offers transparency and further understanding around our processes
- Showcase expertise and best practice

## Events & training

Narrative and point of view reports from training and events, both our own and those we've attended; narrative posts about new training we're developing, and why

- Showcase expertise and best practice
- Show how we engage with the University
- Show how we engage with the wider sector

## Team news

Often more of a sociable, chatty bent. Discussion around changes and news directly relevant to the team

- Offer up the personal face of our team
- Showcase external recognition for the team

## Technical developments & enhancements

Narrative around new developments we're working on

- Offer transparency and further understanding around our processes
- Showcase technical expertise and best practice

## Authorship

- Will posts be written by any member of team?
- Will you encourage guest bloggers?
- Usually, members of the team may publish directly, with guest posts coming via a member – but will you have an editorial workflow/checking?

## Schedule/activity calendar

- Make blog posts a standing agenda item at team meetings – if it isn't serious enough to be discussed, should you have a blog at all?
- Consider a calendar to schedule your posts – this will both prompt people to post, and ensure a regular feed on your blog
  - For example: "at least 1 and no more than 3 posts to be published each week (no two on the same day)"
- An example calendar:

<b>Week</b>	<b>Post</b>
<b>1</b>	Central service activity Anecdotal post
<b>2</b>	Technical developments activity Anecdotal post
<b>3</b>	Team news Anecdotal post
<b>4</b>	Events and training update Anecdotal post

### Anecdotal/individual posts

Examples of activity that could prompt a blog post:

- Completion/commencement of a new project/activity
- Attending/presenting at a conference or event
- Guest posts from those we work with outside the team
- Attending/giving training on a particular subject
- Team updates – staff changes

### Promoting the blog

Are your intended audiences aware you have a blog? You could consider:

- Add blog link to your website homepage
- Add links to related posts/categories throughout your website
- Use your regular comms channels to let people know: email, presentations, events
  - Send ad-hoc messages when particularly important posts are written; although, don't flood people with emails – nobody will care about your blog like you do

### Categories v tags

Categories	Tags
It should be mandatory to have at least one	Not mandatory, but adding (multiple) tags to your posts helps your readers understand the relationship between your posts
Use a fixed set of categories, agreed to start with, and only modified/added to after careful discussion.	Tags are used much more informally and can be defined ad-hoc (though care needs to be taken a tag isn't replicated using a very similar term)  Tags should <b>not repeat</b> the category name
Posts can use <b>more than one</b> category (though are unlikely to fit into more than two); all posts should meet <b>at least one</b> of your categories.	A given tag may be allocated to only one post for some time, but when that topic is posted on again, the same tag can be used (for example, an annual conference)

## Sample posts

Category	Example blog	What it's not
Directors updates	What Kate is thinking, illustrating collaboration, networking, influencing etc	
Central service update	Our project story map (how it works, how it's helping)	
Central service update	Latest on the migration plans	Official comms channel to migration participants
Central service update	Developing content types (why we're going a certain way)	Training for the content types
Central service update	Why have we implemented feature x? (story of the user testing journey that led the feature to be developed that way)	training for the feature
Events & training	Report from February update vent - anecdotal, linking to slides	Announcement of upcoming event
Events & training	Report from Conference	
Events & training	Report on training pilot	Announcement of upcoming training
Events & training	Team member to present at x conference	An invitation to the conference
Team news	Thanks and goodbye to Jane	
Team news	We've won an award	
Team news	Anne's completed a marathon	
Technical developments & enhancements	Latest on cookies (how we're interpreting legal guidance and what we're doing about it)	Instructions on what people need to do
Technical developments & enhancements	What we learnt from developing our widgets (the consultation process, technical challenges)	Announcement of new widget/training for new widget
Technical developments & enhancements	How we're improving functionality (what we've identified as users needs and how; technical challenges)	Announcement of changes, training

## Moderation

- Comments to be open, with anti-spam plugins
- Single point of contact for comment and trackback notifications via team email address – this can be checked as part of standard queue checking.

## Review

Review your blog after a suitable period to determine whether it is meeting your business goals (3-6 months is reasonable).

Your review could include:

- Analysis of analytics data
  - What posts have been popular?
  - What categories have been popular?
  - What routes have people taken? (eg coming from central site, from emails, subscribing to category, etc)
  - Demographics of readers
- Collation of anecdotal feedback from events
- Estimated time blogging has taken up

From this, you can determine whether to:

- continue the blog at all
- refocus the post topics
- redefine categories
- consider promotion strategies