

Social Media Guidelines

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These guidelines have been prepared by the EDINA Social Media Officer for use at EDINA. You are welcome to reuse the guidelines for your own organisation. If you do reuse them we would be keen to hear from you, as it would be useful to us to know how they have been of use to others.

Contact EDINA at edina@ed.ac.uk

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INTRODUCTION

EDINA supports team, service or project blogs, microblogs (such as Twitter, etc.) and social media presences (such as Facebook pages). If you are thinking of creating a social media presence or starting a blog please start by speaking to the Social Media Officer who will be able to give you advice on finding the right social media tools and spaces for your audience and will be able to give you advice on how to get started.

Blogs, microblogs and other social media tools offer greater flexibility in terms of content, tone and timeliness compared with more formal websites and newsletters. They are a less formal and more discursive way to communicate between project or service teams and users or stakeholders. However, these presences are still public records so you always need to bear in mind that you are still representing EDINA when you post and interact in these spaces.

This guide offers practical guidelines and help for setting up and running an EDINA social media presence. If you are considering writing about EDINA or your work on a personal social media presence (such as a blog or twitter) then please also see the Personal Guidelines below.

The guidelines are to be considered within the wider [University Social Media Guidelines](#).

You may also wish to read and familiarise yourself with the [Social Media Community's Guidelines wiki](#) (requires EASE login)

SET UP

Consult – Discuss with your line manager and obtain their approval for any new social media presence. Contact the Social Media Officer and discuss the most appropriate social media platform or strategy for your project/service. Line managers and/or another named back-up person in EDINA should subsequently be provided with login and password details to ensure continuity of access/posting.

Contact - Appoint a member of the team, project or service to be the main contact point for your presence so that one person is able to maintain a common editorial line and to regularly moderate comments.

Authenticity - Be sure that your social media presence includes a labelled link to the EDINA website (where space is short link back to the relevant official EDINA website – e.g. the service website or project page). You should also ensure that you include the following text (linked to EDINA and University of Edinburgh websites) in the footer of your blog/microblog/social media presence where possible:

"EDINA is a Centre based at the University of Edinburgh. The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, with registration number SC005336."

Use branding, both project/service logos/colour customisation and EDINA and funders' logos). Ask our Web & Graphic Designer for assistance in creating appropriately branded images/logos/backgrounds.

Disclaimers - Include any necessary disclaimers (for example that your blog does not necessarily represent the views of all project partners) and appropriate usernames (and/or the project/service name reflected in the URL) consistent with this approach. Ask the Social Media Officer if you would like any advice on doing this or if your project/service's name is already in use on the service you want to use.

Profile - Be transparent about who is posting or contributing to your blog or social media presence (include real names and job titles whenever possible). Ensure that, if applicable, the profile associated with this presence is filled out with a suitable image(s), link(s) to project/service page(s), and the name and role of the blogger/microblogger/contributor. If several people are editing a service/project blog it may be appropriate to list all of those involved. It is most important to ensure the social media identity relates back to the appropriate project, service or team.

CONTENT

Tone - When setting up a new social media account, or posting to an existing account, it's always good to consider the tone of voice you want to communicate. Be appropriate and professional in presentation and tone, but also consider how you wish to engage with your followers. The [LSE Twitter guide for academics and researchers](#) is a great resource for considering different styles and tones of voice that can be achieved in Twitter's 140 characters. Much of this is easily transferrable to other social media applications too.

Commercially Sensitive Material – Consider if content may be commercially sensitive (e.g. minutes that have not been agreed, potential partnerships, unpublished research, bids in progress, funding situations) and if it should be published or not. If an item/area/announcement is already public it is likely reasonable to discuss it, but seek advice from your line manager and/or the service/project team manager over any item where the publication status or commercial confidentiality is unclear.

Copyright and Take Down - Always ensure all links, images, slides etc. are appropriately credited, linked to, and that the content involved is responsibly created in as much as it is reasonable to check (e.g. not the result of copying, piracy, etc.). This both means ensuring your own postings do not breach rights/copyright and do not link to any dubious (pirated, copied, unlicensed) materials, and also ensuring that images are cleared for use (or are [Creative Commons](#) licensed and appropriately credited). If a complaint is made or a copyright holder would like their material to be removed from the site, please ensure that you follow the EDINA Take Down Policy.

Frequency - Please publish regularly and relevantly. Think about length, presentation, quality (of content, writing and spelling) of your posts and ensure that they are consistent with expected professional standards. See the 'Updating Your Blog' section below for more information. By

setting up a social media presence you are committing to update it regularly. If the account is to be used only sporadically for a specific purpose (e.g. news, service update, or an event that only runs at a specific time of the year), ensure that this is clearly stated on the account. Additionally, communicate if there is to be a pause or a break in use of the presence, e.g. tweet or write a blog post explaining why the account will not be updated for a period of time.

Comments - Comment moderation should be used to limit the potential for spam or abuse (this will be possible in most but not all social media spaces). Moderate comments regularly. If moderation is not available in a social media space (e.g. Twitter) then you should monitor comments and “garden” (remove spam posts, respond to others as needed) regularly. Ensure that there is a secondary contact for the blog/presence so that comments can be viewed, moderated and responded to in the event of the primary contact being away from the office for any extended period. See Comment Moderation section for more information. Do remember that people may submit a *Freedom of Information (FOI)* request through social media channels and we are **legally required** to respond. Forward any FOIs about EDINA or EDINA's projects or services to the EDINA Helpdesk: edina@ed.ac.uk.

Exit Strategy - If a social media presence, particularly a blog or microblog, is not being kept up to date then the best course of action may be to formally cease updating it (and post a final comment that indicates that it will no longer be updated), take a copy of your posts for archiving and, in some cases, subsequently remove it.

UPDATING YOUR BLOG OR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

- **Stay relevant** and interesting to the expected audience of stakeholders and project partners. This may mean that postings about broader technologies may be relevant but postings about, say, other projects within EDINA, may not be of interest to the audience. You may find over time that the audience you reach becomes quite identifiable and specialist which will make it easier to judge the type of topics of interest. Remember that your social media presence is public and thus may be found and read by others (not only service users and site representatives) who have an interest in the project/service.
- **Be respectful** to all parties both in terms of legislatively protected areas of respect and fairness (e.g. equality of gender, age, race, sexuality, belief) but also in terms of good netiquette and professional appropriateness (e.g. no aggressiveness, rudeness, politics).
- **Engage** with stakeholders and link or refer to others' content when relevant. Ensure that any negative comments or criticism you post are balanced and measured in content and tone and fit fairly and validly within the scope of the blog or social media presence.
- **Refer** to your line / team / service / project manager if you plan to discuss any prospective developments, modifications to services, changes in personnel or potentially sensitive topics. They will be able to clarify what can be shared and should be able to assist with wording and may suggest a suitable caveat to include in the post.
- **Follow the principles of "writing for the web"**. This includes making your writing “scannable” by using meaningful blog titles, putting important keywords at the beginning of sentences, breaking up large blocks of text and writing succinct posts. An informal style does

not mean writing as stream of consciousness, or that editing to best effect is unnecessary. The University of Edinburgh offers a regular Writing for the Web course (listed and open to registration [via MyEd](#)) which is recommended by EDINA staff.

- **Monitor** the activity around your social media presence. Keep track of your own activity (number of posts etc.). Use tracking or analytics to gauge readership (the Web & Documentation Officer can help you add your social media presence to the EDINA Google Analytics account) and keep track of RSS subscriptions, followers or other useful measures. The Social Media Officer can assist you in establishing suitable metrics and identifying suitable monitoring tools.

MODERATING COMMENTS

When you have a new comment on your blog you should work through the Comment Moderation Flow Chart (see below) which will help you decide the best action to take (if any comment falls outside this guidance please contact the Social Media Officer and appropriate updates and changes will be made to the chart).

As a broad guide any comments received should be published (or removed/reported as spam) as soon as possible. You may also want to respond to what has been said, in which case you should always respond in a professional and measured tone that reflects EDINA communications practice. Remember that you are representing the organisation in your response.

The following may be worth bearing in mind when responding to comments whether on your EDINA blog or postings on others' blogs:

- **Transparency** – Disclose your connection with EDINA and/or with your project/service/team.
- **Sourcing** – Cite any relevant sources using URLs, references, videos, images, etc.
- **Timeliness** – Make sure you reply quickly to the original comment (inside 48 hours if possible and quicker if the comment is particularly time sensitive). For microblogs you will want to monitor responses or comments at least once every day. Take time to create a good response but, if needed or appropriate, you can always add a further follow up comment afterwards (e.g. if you are dealing with a comment about a service downtime or bug).
- **Don't Stifle Discussion** – It is appropriate to publish both positive and negative comments and, if you feel that additional information or correction is needed you can and should add this publicly. The more transparent your blog can be, the more trusted it will be.
- **Be Fair** – It is not always possible to judge tone from textual comments so please ensure you do not make your commentators look bad or lose face, even if you are correcting a criticism or misconception. Anger is not a professional response to criticism. Try drafting your response then leaving it a few minutes. Then read over it again and you may wish to ask your line manager or a colleague to check it before posting publicly.
- **Measure** – Keep a record of comments (whether received or posted by you) so that they can be noted for relevant metrics and learned from. Some comments may also help highlight particular strengths, weaknesses or opportunities for your project or service.

EXISTING SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCES AT EDINA

A current list of active presences can always be found at:

http://edina.ac.uk/news/news_socialmedia.html

GUIDELINES FOR PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCES

Introduction

This guidance is intended to help you decide if and how you may comment about EDINA work, projects or services on any personal blogging, microblogging or social media presences. There is no intent to provide guidance on how you communicate on a personal basis about any other topic.

Any mixture of personal and professional identities can be complex and raise unexpected issues. This guidance is intended to help you think about how you blog, microblog or otherwise produce social media comments about EDINA, projects, services or technologies associated with EDINA, and your professional colleagues and contacts. Please also note that these guidelines relate to the guidelines above for official EDINA social media outlets, and particularly the notes regarding tone and appropriate content for blogging and commenting.

Personal Responsibility

EDINA, as part of the University of Edinburgh, is your employer and as such you have a legal and moral responsibility not to bring either organisation into disrepute. Maintaining the reputation of EDINA, EDINA projects, services and staff members plays a crucial part in ensuring the continuing success of the organisation. Comments, particularly those with a strongly negative or unprofessional tone, can have serious unintended consequences. It is therefore important to remember that what you say about your work, even in personal social media presences, can reflect upon EDINA and the University.

Please exercise common sense over whether or not the space you are posting to (whether your own or as a guest post on another person or organisation's blog or social media presence) is an appropriate space for discussion of work or work related matters. If in doubt, you can always ask your line manager for advice.

Please do not comment about EDINA matters in any social media space which could be construed as offensive or illegal.

Disciplinary action may result if following an investigation there is evidence of damage to:

- The reputation of the University
- Working relationships within the University
- Working relationships with external / collaborative partners

- Relationships with students, customers or service providers

At a practical level, all employees are advised to avoid posting anything online that they would not wish managers or colleagues (both internal and external) to see.

Disclaimer

If you intend to comment on EDINA and/or EDINA related matters on your personal blog, microblog or social media presence please remember that you are voicing your own personal opinions and ensure that (where possible) you include a statement that indicates that:

"The views expressed here are the author's own and do not represent the views of EDINA or the University of Edinburgh."

If you intend to post on a fairly regular basis about EDINA, EDINA projects and services, or particular technologies or areas of interest that reflect on your professional role at EDINA then you may wish to add the disclaimer to a fixed element on your blog (for instance in the sidebar or footer). If these posts are the main content of your personal blog or social media presence then you may wish to consider whether an official EDINA social media presence would be a more appropriate space to post.

Deciding What Material Can Be Blogged, Microblogged or Commented On

- In general it is always appropriate to mention and refer your readers to published or public material. Adding your own comments and discussion of this type of public information is acceptable but you should always be respectful in tone and it should be clear that your views are your own.
- You must not post any commercially confidential information. This may include any indications of forthcoming developments or bids, the publishing of code, information about colleagues or personnel matters, unresolved grievances, non-public or not-yet-approved documents or minutes, news or information. If you are in any doubt about whether it is appropriate to blog or post a comment about something please speak to your line manager (or the relevant project/service manager) for clarification.
- Don't use your personal presence as the first point of publication for any official reports or announcements. Your personal blog or social media presence should not be the first point of publication for any official reports or announcements. Official materials should always appear first on an official EDINA space – usually the EDINA website, the project or service website or the appropriate official project or service blog, microblog or appropriate official social media presence. If you have an official announcement to make but do not have an official EDINA space, please contact the Helpdesk (edina@ed.ac.uk).
- If you are sharing links to already-public works like publications, websites, annual reports, project blogs etc. please ensure that you credit them appropriately. Please also include a link back to the EDINA website (and/or the EDINA project/service site) in your posting so that your readers can find out more about the relevant project/service/initiative/news/report.

- If you are in any way unsure about whether an item is public or publishable refer to your line manager for advice before you blog or comment about it.

Comments Posted About EDINA on Your Social Media Presence

It is up to you if/how you moderate comments on your own blog, website or social media presence. However we would ask that you forward any questions or notable comments about EDINA or EDINA's projects or services to the EDINA Helpdesk: edina@ed.ac.uk.

Notable comments might include those that are:

- Excessively critical in tone
- Queries or comments that may require a support response or indicate an issue (e.g. unexpected downtime, broken links, bugs) with a service or project
- Very positive or supportive in tone and would benefit a wider audience such as your colleagues or project/service funders. These comments may also help inform the planning of outreach or promotional activities.

Where these comments occur (particularly queries and reports of bugs or downtime) it may be appropriate to reply privately or publicly with the EDINA Helpdesk email address (edina@ed.ac.uk) and/or phone number (+44 (0)131 650 3302). It may also be appropriate to indicate that the EDINA Helpdesk should be the first point of call for questions or urgent support issues.

Comments You Make on Others' Blogs and Social Media Presences

If you are commenting on another project, service, or personal/professional blog in a personal capacity please be aware of how your comments may reflect upon EDINA or the project or service you are associated with. Whilst open discussion of ideas and technologies is encouraged you should also remember that your personal identity may well be associated with your professional role in many social media contexts.

- As with posting to your own social media presences:
- You must not post any commercially confidential information
- You should refer any notable posts or queries to the Helpdesk (edina@ed.ac.uk).

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

If you have any questions about these guidelines please contact the Social Media Officer who welcomes any suggestions of improved wording, new areas to be covered or requests for clarifications. If you would prefer to raise questions or comments anonymously then you are very welcome to do so.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

As indicated in the introduction this guidance is based in the wider context of University of Edinburgh employment, behaviour and disciplinary policies. In particular please work within the following policies, regulations and guidance (many also refer back to UK and EU legislation regarding copyright, data protection, etc.):

- [University of Edinburgh Policy on Employee Use of Social Media \(pdf\)](#)
- [University Regulations](#)
- [Computing Regulations](#)
- [University of Edinburgh Disciplinary Policy \(pdf\)](#)
- [University of Edinburgh Disciplinary Policy - Key Facts \(pdf\)](#)
- [Dignity and Respect Policy \(pdf\)](#)
- [University of Edinburgh Equality and Diversity Strategy \(pdf\)](#)
- [University of Edinburgh Equality and Diversity site](#)
- [University of Edinburgh Conditions of Employment](#)

ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

If you require any of the above guidance in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact the Social Media Officer (Stephanie.farley@ed.ac.uk).

FLOWCHART FOR DEALING WITH COMMENTS ABOUT EDINA

