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**FSE Department blogs - Tips and advice**

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The FSE Department blogs provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the expertise, character and diversity of each Department.

Blog posts can be much more fun and creative than, for example, Department news stories, which are less flexible and more to-the-point - and are a fantastic tool for student recruitment in particular. Given the recent revamp and streamlining of Department websites, the Department blogs offer a space to house and promote much of the content deemed not relevant for an external website - an academic's individual research/opinions or a student's individual experiences, for example.

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**Type of posts**

Each Department blog has a number of post categories built in. These were decided with input from each Department when the latest iterations of the blogs were first designed. Each Department blog has roughly similar categories, though these may vary slightly depending on the individual Department's needs/preferences.

Importantly, every post created should fall under at least one of these categories (although there should be flexibility within these categories - we wouldn't not include a particularly strong post because it doesn't appear a perfect fit).

Typically, though not always, categories should look something like the below (follow the links for examples):

***-Meet the Department***

Profiles of the people who make a Department what it is:

* Students [(undergraduate](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/compsci/2020/05/06/our-csmcr-students-raluca-cruceru/) and [postgraduate](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/mace/2019/10/14/life-as-a-phd-student-tom-fisher/))
* [Academics](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/sees/2019/09/30/in-conversation-with-dr-russell-garwood-lecturer/)
* [Alumni](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/uommaterialsblog/our-alumni-remote-working-in-the-uk-technology-sector/)

Here is also an opportunity to explore the [heritage](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/science-engineering/2020/08/11/meet-manchesters-heritage-heroes/) and [diversity](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/science-engineering/2020/10/21/along-the-black-history-trail-sharing-experiences-in-science-and-engineering/) of a Department, as well as any [date-led posts](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/science-engineering/2020/02/11/celebrating-fses-women-in-science/) that are specific/relevant to a Department.

***-Welcome to [Department name]***

The things that a Department does/has that really showcases its character, such as:

* [Events](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/maths-student-blogs/2019/03/chinese-new-year/)
* [Outreach activities](http://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/science-engineering/2019/02/18/young-engineers-enter-orbit-fired-by-lego/)
* [Facilities](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/science-engineering/2020/10/15/firs-environmental-research-centre-gets-2m-makeover/)
* [History and heritage](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/maths-student-blogs/2020/03/alan-turing-1912-1954/)

***-In the real world***

Examples of our students, alumni and staff using the skills they've learned at Manchester to make a difference out in the world. These can include:

* [Work experience/industrial placements/internships](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/uomchemistryblog/2019/09/work-placement-diary-ben-asher-post-1/)
* [Graduate jobs](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/sees/2021/01/04/meet-our-alumni-an-interview-with-verity-fitch/)
* [Graduate success stories](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/compsci/2020/05/07/3d-printing-visors-for-the-nhs-with-graduate-tom-macpherson-pope/)

***-Student experience***

Articles by and about current students, detailing their experience. Posts can include:

* [Student diaries/experiences/'a day in the life' posts](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/eee/2019/04/09/meet-a-4th-year-student-huda/)
* [Tips and advice](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/uomchemistryblog/2020/11/the-wellbeing-blog-top-tips-for-managing-your-wellbeing-whilst-studying-from-home/)
* [Award wins](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/ceasblog/2020/08/03/social-responsibility-awards-2020-%F0%9F%8F%86-celebrating-the-best-of-ceas/)
* [Focus on a student's work](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/uommaterialsblog/sewing-scrubs-for-the-nhs-meng-student-olivia-faye-dickinson/)
* [Celebrating diversity](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/mace/2019/10/03/michelle-breaking-the-gender-mould/)
* [Student/University initiatives](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/uommaterialsblog/pass-ing-with-flying-colours-rachel-cox/)
* [Societies/committees](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/eee/2020/09/25/eee-society/)
* [International student focus](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/science-engineering/2020/02/05/your-work-is-worth-something-scholarships-and-rewarding-excellence/)

***-Research and impact***

Some of the most interesting and exciting research coming out of a Department, and its potential global, economic, environmental and business impact. Posts can take various forms, but might include:

* [Research profiles](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/physics/2020/12/18/physics-music/)
* [Impact examples](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/science-engineering/2021/01/14/prometheus-underground-robotics-team-solves-network-rail-cave-puzzle/)
* [Academics' successes](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/ceasblog/2020/05/06/staff-highlight-adisa-azapagic-awarded-mbe-for-sustainability-and-carbon-footprinting-work/)
* [Research in the media](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/physics/2020/10/06/bbc-crowdscience/)

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**Tone and style**

Blog posts should be written in a style that is accessible and engaging, with a strong introduction that encourages the user to continue reading.

They should be informative and educational, but not too full of jargon that the everyday reader would struggle to understand them. They can be [lighthearted, even humorous](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/science-engineering/2018/12/12/when-doctor-who-came-to-jodrell-and-uoms-other-sci-fi-hits/), if appropriate.

***Word count***

In terms of word count, this can vary - but it is recommended that a post should aim to be around ***400-700*** ***words***. A post can be shorter or longer, depending on the content, but this is a good yardstick to aim for.

***Subheadings***

Subheadings are a great way to break up the copy, preventing the user from being confronted with a 'wall of text' that might deter them from investing their time in reading the piece. They can also signpost a reader to a part of the post they are looking for/will interest them most.

To add a subheading, select the 'Heading 2' option from the dropdown menu above where you enter your text (normal text will be set as 'Paragraph'). You can also use 'Heading 3' if need be - but only if you need to use subheadings within a subheading.

***Hyperlinks***

Add hyperlinks to your post wherever you feel they will be useful to the user. For instance, to a piece of research or to an academic's research profile. You can also link through to your other posts, if relevant, allowing the user to read more on a particular theme, and ensuring their journey remains on your blog and not elsewhere.

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**Imagery and video**

Strong imagery is key and can make a great first impression to the user. You may, in fact, choose to create an [image-led post](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/science-engineering/2020/09/09/in-pictures-then-and-now-science-and-engineering-at-manchester/), rather than a text-led post, depending on the content.

***Banner image***

The banner image is particularly important - but can be difficult to get right with tricky measurements of ***1400px x 400px***. If possible, try to resize and crop the image beforehand using photo-editing software eg Photoshop, or create a banner image with the correct dimensions on design platforms such as Canva.

It can be a challenge to find and edit a suitable banner image given the dimensions, but getting this right can make a big difference to the overall feel of a post. Though not essential, a banner image would ideally feature the main object of the image near its centre, as it is this section that will appear in the promo boxes that populate the 'Latest posts' and category pages once a post is published.

To add your banner image, use the 'Featured image' box in the bottom-right-hand-side when editing your post.

***'Post image'***

For images within a post, it is recommended that you use the 'post image' option (typically around **768px x 400px**), if available. This will ensure that the image is a suitable size and will render correctly. Alternatively, you can resize an image to the required size using photo-editing software beforehand, and upload the image using the 'full size' option. Again, it is recommended to aim for around **768px x 400px** for a full-width image.

It is important to not upload images that are much too big, as these can cause issues across the platform by taking up too much room.

Some images will lend themselves better to portrait form, and either left or right alignment - though 'post image' size with centre alignment is recommended.

***Sourcing imagery***

Finding the right images for your post is important - and shouldn't be an afterthought. If the post is about an individual, you would ideally receive suitable images from that individual; likewise if it is about an event, then photos of that event would be best.

For images you need to source yourself, below are some useful free resources:

* [***Third Light***](https://www.ims.manchester.ac.uk/home.tlx) - The University's visual content library. You should be able to request access to this if you don't already have it.
* [***Canva***](https://www.canva.com/)- Great for coming up with your own designs, and includes lots of free (as well as paid-for) images.
* [***Pixabay***](https://pixabay.com/)- Lots of free images, but ***be sure to check the copyright licence*** to make sure you're permitted to use an image.
* [***Flickr***](https://www.flickr.com/)- You should be able to find free-to-use images here by filtering your search to 'Creative Commons' only, but again ***be sure to check the copyright licence***.
* [***Wikimedia Commons***](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)- Another good resource, but ***be sure to check the copyright licence***.

When using a sourced image, it is recommended that you attribute the image and link through to it within your post. Even if you do this, however, it is important that you check the copyright licence to make sure you are free to share an image.

***\*There have been instances of the University having to pay significant amounts of money due to copyright issues, so it is always best to play it safe. Double check the copyright licence or select an alternative image.***

Stock image sites such as Shutterstock are great for images, but may require a paid-for licence.

***Video***

Adding richer content such as video can [really bring a blog post to life](https://www.mub.eps.manchester.ac.uk/science-engineering/2020/12/03/the-fascinating-history-and-future-of-firs-environmental-research-station/). The Department blogs can support videos from either YouTube or the Manchester Player.

To add a video from YouTube, simply add the embed code into the post.

To add a video from the Manchester Player, add the following code (in bold) before and after the embed link:

***[UOMVideo src="*** before the html text, and ***" /]*** after it.

Example:

**[UOMVideo src="**https://video.manchester.ac.uk/embedded/ffffffff-8844-7a30-0000-0169ba2cebe0**" /]**

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**Must-dos**

Before publishing a post, there are a number of things you must remember to do. They are:

* ***Feature image*** - Add your banner image (see above for more information about banner images).
* ***Categories*** - You need to assign your image to at least one category (see above for more information about categories). You can assign it to more than one provided it fits in each. The categories you select **must** correspond to those in the left-hand navigation of your blog (for instance, 'Meet the Department' or 'Research and Impact' - you'll usually have a choice of four to six of these), and not any that are available as options but don't appear in the left-hand nav ('Alumni', as an example).
* ***Tags*** - As with categories, you need to tag each post with relevant tags. You can either add the tags in manually, or use the 'Choose from the most used tags' option. You have more options/greater flexibility with tags than categories, and can add in the keywords that you deem the most relevant. Any posts that have the same tag can be accessed together when a user clicks on that tag at the bottom of a post, and can help users when searching for posts on similar topics.
* ***Meta description*** - All posts should include a meta description, which is particularly important for when posts appear in search engine results pages. This will be the copy that the user sees, and is an opportunity to encourage the user to click through to the post, to briefly explain what the post is about, and to include any keywords. There should be space to enter your meta description within the 'Google preview' box; you will be able to see whether the description is too short or too long, and how it appears alongside a segment of your banner image.
* ***Excerpt*** - Like the meta description, the excerpt is an opportunity to encourage users to click through to your post. The excerpt, when published, is included in the promo boxes that appear in the 'Latest posts' and category pages, and is therefore important for enticing readers. The space for entering your excerpt should appear towards the bottom of the back-end (and beneath the Google preview). If it doesn't appear here, you should be able to manually add it by clicking the 'Screen Options' tab at the top of the screen, which should drop down and open up options that you can check or uncheck. Make sure the excerpt box is checked.
* ***Web accessibility*** - Every time you publish any content you should have web accessibility in mind. This refers to the accessibility of content to all people, regardless of disability type or severity of impairment. Before producing online content you should familiarise yourself with this [web accessibility statement on StaffNet](https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/web-accessibility/). Some of the key points to remember for blogs in particular are the inclusion of an alternative description for any image and subtitles for any videos.

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**Promotion**

To get as many eyes on your post as possible, you will have to promote it. There is no guaranteed way of achieving a certain number of views, but the below options should help:

* ***Social media promotion*** - If the content warrants a post on your Department's blog, it probably warrants a post on your Department's social media channels. Twitter is likely the best avenue for this, though you should also consider whether it could be posted on Facebook, Instagram etc. If you think the post might be something the Faculty team would want to amplify from the Faculty's Twitter account, tag it in ([@UoMSciEng](https://twitter.com/UoMSciEng)) and the team can then decide whether to share/retweet etc. Likewise tag in any other accounts that might be interested/likely to share.
* ***Social media leaders roundup*** - The Faculty's Communications and Marketing team sends out a weekly email roundup of the best FSE content to some of the Faculty's most engaged academics - or 'social media leaders - each Friday, encouraging them to use their platform to amplify the content. Most Department blog posts are considered for inclusion.
* ***Asking others to share*** - If you know of anyone with a platform/social media presence that you think might be willing to share, why not get in touch and ask them to do so? If your post is linked to another Department or research institute, for example, they might be keen to promote it as well.
* ***Including in newsletters etc*** - Each Department has different ways of cascading information, such as newsletters, email roundups etc - might your posts be a welcome addition to these? Some of these have very high recipient numbers and can be a great way of boosting views among a target audience.
* ***Cross-promotion*** - If asking others to share (another Department, for example), why not agree to share something of theirs in return? This cross-promotion can benefit both audiences.
* ***Any other ideas you have*** - Promoting your posts can often be the hardest part - but trying different methods can sometimes yield surprising results.

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**Assistance**

If you have any questions or require any assistance, please contact fsemarketing@manchester.ac.uk.

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