

Overview

These guidelines are for employees who:

- use Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) corporate blogs, podcasts or wikis in the workplace.
- use personal blogs, podcasts or wikis outside the workplace that contain postings about the work of LTS or their colleagues' work.
- post about LTS on the blogs, podcasts or wikis of others.

The guidelines outline the importance of understanding the LTS Code of Conduct policy and include recommended best practices to consider when blogging or podcasting about LTS. They also provide a roadmap for constructive, respectful, and productive dialogue between bloggers/podcasters and their colleagues, which reflects our culture and values, and is at the best interest of all LTS employees.

What is a blog?

A web log, more commonly known as a blog, is similar to a personal web page made up of frequently updated posts – rather like a 'What's new' page. You can voice your opinions, views and comments about anything: your hobbies, interests or opinions on current affairs. People who create blogs are known as 'bloggers' and the process of keeping a blog is known as 'blogging'.

What is a podcast?

The term podcasting was inspired by Apple's iPod but any device onto which you can download audio files will enable you to listen to podcasts. Podcasts are similar to radio broadcasts but can be downloaded from the internet or listened to online. It is also possible to have some podcasts delivered to your computer via an RSS feed.

What is a wiki?

A wiki is a website or similar online resource that allows users to add and edit content collectively.

Corporate Blogs, Podcasts and Wikis

One of the defining attributes of the emerging Web 2.0 and social networking technologies is the ability to present unique voices and points of view. As a powerful tool in communicating, LTS welcomes and encourages employees who are enthusiastic in this medium to use corporate blogs, podcasts and wikis as appropriate for their work and the sharing of their expertise.

Similarly, LTS encourages self-publishing and is aware that many employees have their own blogs, participate in other blogs or podcast on a regular basis. As a learning organisation and a key player in promoting emerging technologies in schools, LTS wishes to be at the forefront of using such technologies to communicate and collaborate with others in the education world.

In doing so, LTS encourages employees, as it does external individuals and organisations, to engage and contribute in online communications about LTS's work.

The aim of these guidelines is not to get everyone blogging or podcasting but to make sure that LTS is part of the conversation when Scottish education is on the agenda. Before you initiate a blog or a podcast, ask yourself if it is the most appropriate method to communicate with your audience. Read other blogs or listen to some podcasts. What do you think works well? What do you dislike? What is it that you have to say and is this the right medium in which to say it?

You can link to examples of employee blogs, podcasts and wikis via the LTS Intranet. These also link to other type edu-blogs.

The Code of Conduct and best practice for staff

LTS Code of Conduct Policy

These guidelines complement the LTS **Code of Conduct Policy**.

The Code of Conduct Policy states:

4.5 Confidentiality Requirements

LT Scotland Information

There may be times when you will be required to treat discussions, documents or other information relating to the work of LT Scotland in a confidential manner. You will often receive information of a private nature that is not yet public, or which perhaps would not be intended to be public. There are provisions in legislation on the categories of confidential and exempt information and you must always respect and comply with the requirement to keep such information private.

It should be borne in mind that under your contract of employment it is gross misconduct to disclose any confidential information, including information to which you have privileged access, either orally or in writing, to a third party. As regards other documents and information, you are requested to exercise your judgement as to what should or should not be made available to outside bodies or individuals. In any event, such information should never be used for the purpose of personal or financial gain, or used in such a way as to bring LT Scotland into disrepute.

Blogging, Podcasting and Wiki Guidelines – for staff



Code of Conduct

Official Information

Under common law, you owe a general duty of confidentiality to LT Scotland and are therefore required to protect official information held in confidence. Nothing within this Code should be viewed as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep confidential or, where appropriate, disclose certain information.

The **Freedom of Information Policy** should also be read as well as the **Discipline Policy**.

The same principles and guidelines also apply to online publishing and discussion, such as blogs, podcasts and wikis. Other useful guidelines and policies include the **Acceptable Use of Electronic Communications and Resources Policy**, and **Corporate Guidelines – Email Style**.

Please review and understand these before you begin blogging, podcasting or participating in wikis. These policies can be accessed via the LTS intranet or via HR.

Best practice guidelines for staff

These guidelines apply to blogging, podcasting and wikis and have been split into sub-headings for easy use. 'Blogging' in this section applies to both personal and corporate blogging.

In summary:

- Keep secrets and be mindful of what you say
- Respect your colleagues
- Get your facts straight
- Be interesting – writing or talking is hard work
- Write what you know – add value
- Quality matters – respect the LTS corporate identity and values
- Provide context to your argument
- Engage in private feedback

Keep secrets and be mindful of what you say

Blogging

When you choose to go public with your opinions via a blog, you are personally responsible for your commentary. It is therefore important to understand what is confidential to the company at that moment in time.

Your personal blog must state that you are an employee of LTS if commenting about LTS's work and should include a simple and visible disclaimer such as 'These are my personal views and not those of LTS'. Think twice before you blog about an internal company

Blogging, Podcasting and Wiki Guidelines – for staff



meeting: seek advice from your line manager or the **Code of Conduct** if you think it important enough to mention.

Podcasting

The above also applies to podcasting. You should also be aware that if you create and distribute audio files internally, those files could be shared outside LTS. Do not record anything you wouldn't disclose outside the company. Keep this in mind particularly if your internal podcast is meant to supplement or replace an internal meeting.

Blogging, podcasting and wikis

Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libellous (whether pertaining to LTS, individuals or any other organisation). For these reasons, employees should exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterisations.

Be mindful not only of what you say, but how you say it. Sometimes the way you say something, such as with a hint of sarcasm, can be as revealing as what you say.

Be respectful of your colleagues

Blogging (and wikis)

Be thoughtful and accurate in your posts, and respect other employees. All LTS employees and their blogs/podcasts/wikis can be viewed as representative of the organisation, which can add affect public views of the organisation.

Employees who identify themselves as LTS employees in their blogs and comment on the company at any time should notify their line manager and the PR Officer of the existence of their blog to avoid any surprises. It is not necessary to alert your manager of your posts, but please tell them if you have a blog where you may write about LTS.

Podcasting

In podcasting, do not record any person without his or her consent and awareness. Recording and distributing conversations is a breach of others' privacy. You must have the consent from every individual whose voice can be heard on your podcast. Start each audio recording by identifying everyone who is participating. When recording a meeting or event, make a statement at the beginning, such as 'this conversation is being recorded for a podcast', so the participants are aware when the microphone has been switched on. Consider what you are presenting. MP3 files can remain accessible on the internet for years.

Get your facts straight

Blogging, podcasting and wikis

If you wish to participate in blogs or podcasts, look around and do some reading, so you learn where the conversation is and what people are saying. If you start writing, remember

Blogging, Podcasting and Wiki Guidelines – for staff



the Web is all about links so when you see something interesting and relevant, link to it. You will be doing your readers a service, and you'll also generate links back to yourself or LTS.

As a LTS employee with intranet access, you have the opportunity to contact the employees who are responsible for the programmes, resources or services that you may want to write about. To ensure you are not misrepresenting your fellow colleagues or their work, consider contacting a member of the relevant team before posting. This courtesy will help you provide your readers with accurate insights, especially when you are blogging outside your area of expertise. If there is someone at LTS who knows more about the topic than you, check with them to make sure you have your facts straight. The same principles also apply to the use of wikis.

Be interesting – writing or talking is hard work

Blogging and podcasting

There's no point in doing it if people don't read it. Get the balance right and write about something interesting. This applies to podcasts too. Successful bloggers or podcasters expose their personality by talking about themselves, their families and their interests. Make it fun so that you will encourage your listeners or readers to come back for more. Remember a blog is a public place and you should try to avoid embarrassing your readers or the company.

Write what you know – add value

Blogging and wikis

The best way to be interesting, stay out of trouble, and have fun is to write about what you know and add value to what you say.

Quality matters – respect the LTS corporate identity and values

Blogging and podcasting

It is important that your blog or podcast is designed and produced well. Our Learning and Technology teams are skilled to assist you with this whether it is for internal or external use. It is important that the LTS Corporate identity is also upheld.

External podcasts that present programmes or points of view relevant to LTS reflect on the company's values. These podcasts should be produced with care, with attention to detail and quality of audio production. With blogging, the quality of the thinking, writing, spell-checking and expertise are important.

Provide context to your argument

Blogging

Please provide enough support in your posting to help employees understand your reasoning, be it positive or negative. We appreciate the value of multiple perspectives, so

Blogging, Podcasting and Wiki Guidelines – for staff



help us to understand yours by providing context to your opinion. Remember your comments should be constructive not destructive.

Engage in private feedback

Blogging

Not everyone who is reading your blog will feel comfortable approaching you if they are concerned their feedback will become public. In order to maintain an open dialogue that everyone can comfortably engage in, LTS bloggers are asked to welcome 'off-blog' feedback from their colleagues who would like to privately respond, make suggestions, or report errors without having their comments appear on your blog.

Bloggers want to know what you think. If you have an opinion, correction or criticism regarding a posting, reach out to the blogger directly. Whether privately or via the blog, let the blogger know your thoughts.

Finally, if in doubt about anything mentioned above, contact your line manager.

Blogging, Podcasting and Wiki Guidelines – for staff



Press enquiries/Public disclosure

Blog postings or podcasts may generate media coverage.

Before you blog or podcast either on a personal or corporate level, you should ask for clarification on whether specific information can be publicly disclosed. The Communications Information Officer and the PR Officer will be able to assist you with this.

If a member of the media contacts you about a blog posting/podcast, please contact the Media Relations Officer for advice.

You may be invited to participate in someone else's podcast or blog. You should keep these guidelines in mind. Depending on the podcast or blog making the request, you could treat this in the same way you would treat an interview request from the media.

Guide for line managers

Managers should ensure that any special instructions on blogging are reasonable and explained clearly to staff.

Managers should bear in mind concerns about impartiality, confidentiality, conflicts of interest or commercial sensitivity. In some cases individuals may be dealing with matters which are so sensitive that rules may have to be set on what they can and cannot talk about on their personal blog.

Managers should consult the LTS Code of Conduct policy. HR should be contacted for information relating to code of conduct matters.

Further advice

For further advice please contact the Head of Communications or the External Communications Manager .