NUFFIELD DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY CARE
HEALTH SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

A Quick Guide to Blogging for academics and students

Blogging can help you amplify your research, engage with new audiences, build networks, and establish your voice as a thought leader. Here are some key tips for crafting an effective academic blog post.

What we're looking for on the department blog

- Student, alumni, and researchers' stories, in their own words
- Opinion and thought leadership pieces on topical issues
- Further context or 'deep dives' on published papers or work not covered in the paper or a news story
- Comment on current primary or health care related issues or research stories.
- Explainers on complex or controversial topics making them more accessible.

Some of the departments most popular blog posts are by researchers writing on topics of interest to a public audience, or on conditions affecting those people.

If you've got an idea for a post, speak with the comms team first to make sure it's suitable, ask any questions, and – especially if time is important – to make sure it fits into the departments editorial calendar.

Know your purpose and audience

Every blog post should have a clear purpose. Ask yourself what you want your readers to take away from it. Is a blog post the most effective way to achieve this, or would a case study, policy brief, or plain-language summary be more suitable?

Understanding your audience is key to writing an engaging and effective post.

For the departmental blog, our target audience is broad:

- health and care policymakers,
- health professionals,
- students and staff past, present, and future,
- researchers,
- funding bodies, and
- the general public.

This means writing in an accessible style that resonates with a non-specialist audience.

Be clear. Be concise

Get straight to the point and say what you need to in as few words as possible. This benefits both you and your reader:

- It keeps readers engaged by preventing them from getting lost or losing interest.
- It sharpens your argument by forcing you to be clear and logical in your thinking.

Use short paragraphs (2-3 sentences) and break up your post with headings and lists to improve readability. Explain technical terms for a non-specialist audience.

Structure your post effectively

Begin with a compelling introduction that hooks readers and clearly articulates your main message. Use the main body to develop your argument, focusing on one idea per paragraph supported by evidence and examples.

Conclude by summarising key points and providing a clear call to action. Aim for 1,000-1,500 words to explore your topic while respecting readers' time. But nothing wrong with 5-600 if that fits the content and message.

Craft a compelling headline

Your headline is your first (and sometimes only) chance to grab a reader's attention. Make it compelling, informative, and relevant:

- Be specific, using precise language and relevant keywords.
- Intrigue your audience by highlighting key findings or posing thought-provoking questions.
- Keep it to 6-12 words, using active voice and strong verbs.

Use a conversational, engaging tone

Imagine you're talking to a colleague or friend. Avoid overly formal language or jargon. Be professional but relatable by injecting personality and using engaging language and analogies. Encourage interaction by posing questions and sharing personal insights where appropriate.

End with a strong call to action

Encourage readers to engage further by directing them to your research, promoting events, or inviting collaboration. Be clear and specific, using action-oriented language and stating the benefit of taking action. Limit CTAs to maintain focus.

Polish your post

Before publishing, take the time to proofread carefully for clarity, flow, and accuracy. Get a second opinion from a colleague and use tools like Grammarly and the [Hemingway app](Hemingway) to identify and correct errors.

When you're done, consider if your post needs to be run past your PI / supervisor first before passing it on to the comms team to post.

All posts are subject to approval and a light edit from the comms team.

By following these guidelines, you can create engaging, impactful blog posts that showcase your expertise and connect with your target audience. Start crafting your post today!

Need help? Contact the communications team at communications@phc.ox.ac.uk for guidance and support.

Want to dig deeper? Then check out the Ultimate Guide