



AU Blogs Guidelines

Subject: Requirements and standards for use of AU Blogs.

Office Responsible for Annual Review of This Policy: University Communications and Marketing (UCM) and Office of Information Technology (OIT)

Procedures: Blog Site Governance and User Management

Related University Policies/Protocols: Computer Use Policy; Policy on Ownership of Copyright for American University; Web Copyright; Blog Account Setup Protocol; AU Social Media Guidelines

I. SCOPE

These guidelines govern the use of the AU Blogs. This system is intended to provide blog tools to American University (AU) Community Members for use at blogs.american.edu. Because there are multiple users of the system and will be affiliated with the american.edu domain, this distributed publishing responsibility includes a shared accountability for quality assurance, usability, performance, and security. Therefore, expectations are set to ensure quality, manage risk, and present the blogging content to users in the most effective ways.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish basic requirements for use of AU Blogs to maintain quality and allow blog users to publish their content while observing the acceptable web and computer use standards at AU. The requirements of this policy address university standards for content submission, visual identity, design and editorial quality, accessibility, and advertising.

III. DEFINITIONS

Community Member: Member of the AU community (or department/unit) who requests permission to access the blogging platform. For AU Blogs, access may be granted to AU faculty, staff, and selected alumni representatives.

Blog Owner: A Community Member who authors content for an individual blog and moderates its commentary.

Blog Sponsor: A Content Publishing Lead (CPL) or Content Publishing Committee member (CPC) who has gone through online training in order to serve as a support person to the Blog Owner

Blog Admin: Staff members within OIT and UCM who have administrative rights to administer the blogs.

Commenter: A community member or external visitor who comments on the content in a blog. He/she must be logged in to AU Blogs via WordPress login or social media authentication in order to comment.

IV. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The distribution of responsibilities for the blogging system is as follows:

1. **Blog Owner:** Authors content for an individual blog and moderates its commentary.
2. **Blog Sponsor:** Provides minimal technical support (i.e., account setup, basic tutorial of features) and communicates AU policies and procedures to Blog Owners.
3. **IT HelpDesk:** Communicates and routes troubleshooting requests and issues (e.g., user account setup, blog submission issues, general service availability, etc.) to the appropriate responsible party.
4. **University Communications and Marketing:** Provides overall management of the blogging system and incorporates university visual identity and images for consistent web presence look and feel. Maintains a list of blog owners and sponsors. Creates, de-activates, archives, and deletes individual blogs. Refreshes blog themes as necessary. Provides statistics on use to Web Steering Committee. Responds to concerns expressed about violation of terms of service.
5. **Office of Information Technology:** Administers AU aspects of system and implements technology, automating content integration with other systems, and supports blog owners with additional services, including database backups and application maintenance/upgrades. Archives and exports AU Blog content as necessary. Reviews enhancement requests.

VI. CONTENT GUIDELINES

A. Content Responsibility of AU Blog Members

Blog Owners are solely responsible for the content of the blogs listed in the directory. Neither the content of these blogs, nor the links to other websites, are regularly screened, approved, reviewed, or endorsed by AU or any AU-affiliated entity. The text and other material on these blogs are the opinion of the specific author and are not statements of advice, opinion, or information of AU. However, blog owners should be aware at all times that their blogs reflect on AU as the host of the blog site, which is provided for academic and work related purposes. All content and use must abide by the Computer Use and Acceptable Use policies and AU Social Media Guidelines.

B. Privacy

AU blog accounts and passwords are specific to the individual and may not be shared with others. See <http://www.american.edu/oit/policies/Web-Copyright.cfm>.

C. Terms of Service

AU Blogs are provided to members of the AU community. A standard set of configuration options are available.

AU Blogs are subject to university data retention policies (which determine how long content remains on the AU Blogs system), and associated blogs and sites may be removed

or archived by the university at a later time in accordance with published, formal guidelines.

An email will be sent annually to blog owners to confirm continued use. Blog administrators will delete or archive content for blogs that are no longer active or have not been updated for six months.

Use of AU Blogs web publishing tool requires adherence to AU's acceptable use guidelines and that access may be revoked for any blog participant (whether from AU or from outside of AU, i.e., Blog Owner or Commenter) who does not follow these guidelines.

The following types of content are not permissible:

- Messages that promote the commercial interests of off-campus businesses and organizations
- Messages that promote membership in groups or organizations that are not open to the entire university community
- Vulgar, slanderous, spam, solicitations, and otherwise inappropriate content are not allowed. Users will be notified that inappropriate comments or posts will be deleted.)

The blog owner has sole responsibility for informing participants about the nature of its availability – i.e. whether it is generally available, viewable by authorized users, etc.

By requesting and registering for a blog, the user affirms that her/she has read and agreed to the above Terms of Use and Privacy Policy.

D. Look and Feel (AU Branding and Design Guidelines Adherence)

AU Blogs will use of one of the provided AU Blog themes that match the current look and feel of the AU web presence. Customization options for header/banner image, selection of pre-installed plug-ins, and background gradient color is provided.

VII. GENERAL OPERATING GUIDELINES

A. Blog Service Webpage Location

blogs.american.edu – Main AU Blog (with featured blogs, recent comments/posts, and imagery from random blogs)

[sub-blog name].blogs.american.edu – Individual Blog of a Blog Owner

B. Eligibility / Requirements

1. Blog creation at blogs.american.edu is open to AU faculty, staff, and alumni. Sign-up requires a valid american.edu email address or verification through the Office of Alumni Relations that the user is an approved alumni representative.
2. Each blog owner will be allocated one (1) blog with a 100 MB limit.
3. Each blog owner will be assisted with initial account setup, blog configuration, and ongoing support by a blog sponsor before blog goes live.
4. Students will not be allowed to blog unless doing so in their capacity as interns, and they must be supervised by a staff member. Blog sponsors should ensure approval for student bloggers.
5. When a blog owner is no longer at the university or no longer teaching, AU reserves the right to disable, delete, or archive content as necessary.

C. Technical Support

1. Technical support is available on all topics from blog sponsors and through the HelpDesk for issues related to proper functioning of the application.
2. OIT will select and update blog owners and sponsors on online training/resources.
3. OIT will assist with patches and upgrades, and will assist UCM with assessing new features recommended by blog owners and sponsors.

D. Other Support

1. Users are encouraged to consult the considerable and growing amount of online documentation through the WordPress open-source development community.
2. Questions relating to how to use the system, how to add functionality, and acceptable use about the blogging system should be directed first to the blog sponsor, and if not resolved, then to the HelpDesk to be directed to the appropriate responsible party.

E. Privacy & Security

1. Access as a blog owner or sponsor requires registration via email address. Blog owners must set up blogs to require that commenters register via email address or social media, if social media authentication is enabled on the blog.
2. When necessary, Blog owners have the ability to limit the visibility of their blogs by requesting that search engines do not index the site or by marking certain posts as private.

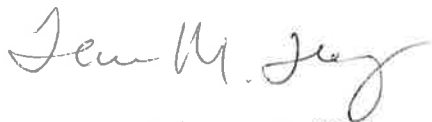
F. Suggested Best Practices

1. Engage with other blogs and your own readers. Link to other blogs and american.edu when appropriate, and make it a conversation and/or information exchange tool.
2. Keep the material fresh by posting on a consistent schedule, and make sure you have the time to keep up with it.
3. Know your audience and write appropriately for it. For example: Should your tone be conversational, academic, or institutional?

VIII. SIGNATURE, TITLE, AND DATE OF APPROVAL

These guidelines need to be signed by the appropriate officer (listed below) before it is considered approved.

Approved: Teresa Flannery, Vice President, University Communications & Marketing

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Teresa M. Flannery".

Date approved: August 13, 2013