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MCAA Blog: Editorial guidelines and rules

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1. Aims and scope of the MCAA Blog

The **MCAA Blog** is a channel for sharing insights, experiences, and perspectives on relevant topics to and about the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) community. The blog is a publication venue for public outreach. It covers experiences from past and current Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) projects; takeaways from MCAA activities and events; and insights about research and/or research life in general.

The primary readership comprises **all MCAA members across disciplines and sectors**, with overall readership extending also to non-members. The submitted text should be understandable not only to scholars and professionals working on topics very different from yours, but also to a wider public. Therefore, please adjust your style accordingly.

2. Premise

The MCAA Blog accepts submissions from MCAA members[1]. Members who want to publish in the blog agree to the following:

- Authors accept and follow the **MCAA Blog editorial rules and guidelines** as stated in this document.
- Authors accept that the reception of their text **does not oblige the MCAA to publish it.**
- Authors accept that the MCAA Blog Team may **decline publication at any time**.

3. Editorial guidelines

3.1 Blog submission types

The MCAA Blog welcomes a vast range of texts, for example:

- Texts presenting **current MSCA projects**, providing a general overview and/or initial or mid-term results.
- Texts on **MSCA projects that have already concluded**. In this case, especially if the project ended more than two years ago, please do not simply present the project and its results, but provide some additional background, such as how being part of an MSCA

[1] Submissions from other than MCAA members will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

project has impacted your career or how your research has set the stage for current work in the field.
- **"Where are you now"** type of texts, with an emphasis on how being an MSCA fellow or a member of the MCAA has impacted your career.
- Texts about **recent or upcoming events and activities** organised by the MCAA or its Chapters or Working Groups.
- Texts on **personal experiences as an MSCA fellow and/or MCAA member**.
- Texts regarding diverse topics related to **academic life** (e.g. researcher careers, science communication, or well-being and mental health).

If your topic does not fit the list above, please write to the MCAA Blog Team with your pitch.

3.2 Blog text length

The MCAA Blog accepts texts of **500–1,200 words**. Texts outside this range may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3.3 Submission

Submit your blog text and images using **this form.**

3.4 Publication schedule

Your text will be published in the first free slot available, meaning it may not be published during the month of your submission.

3.5 Blog text structure

a) Title

Short and snappy is best. The title should not exceed eight words. It should be written in the active voice and the present tense.

- ***YES**: An MSCA project educates youth*
- ***NO**: Youth are educated by an MSCA project*

In general, the title should be relevant to the subject. Try to avoid question marks and/or exclamation marks.

b) Teaser

One or two short sentences, **maximum 60 words**. Do not use complex terms or jargon. Before writing, ask yourself: "What is the essence of the text?" The teaser should convey this main message in an understandable way. Together with the title, the teaser should pique the reader's interest and encourage them to continue reading.

c) Body of the text

3.1 Subheadings

The text should be split into parts with subheadings, which help readers scan the text and have a clearer overview of the topic and discussion. Subheadings should not exceed five (5) words.

- *Examples of subheadings:* ***A tale of two scientists*** and ***What's next?***

3.2 Active voice

Aim to write your text using the active voice. Ideally, sentences should not exceed 35 words.

3.3 Bullet points

Bullet points add variety to the layout. It is best to present a list using bullet points rather than commas. However, use bullet lists sparingly.

3.4 Bold text

Use bold to highlight important keywords or sentences.

3.5 Style/tone/language

Please consider the following style and grammar-related guidelines when writing your text:

- The MCAA Blog accepts texts written only in the Association's main language, English. Please use British English (see point "Spelling" below).
- Please write in simple English. Explain things in a way a broad audience can understand. Avoid jargon, or, if it is necessary, explain it.
    - You can test how accessible your text is to lay readers using a readability checker tool. A good score to aim for is 65.
- Please note that during the review process, the MCAA Blog Team or the reviewers may suggest or request language and style changes.

3.6 Spelling

Write in British English. Writing in another style of English can result in a substantial delay in publication, or, in specific cases, rejection of the text. Please note that submissions can also be rejected if the level of written English is not deemed adequate by the MCAA Blog Team.

3.7 Scare quotes

Do not use scare quotes. Against the use of scare quotes, read Greil Marcus, Larry Trask, or Susan Haack's work on the topic.

3.8 References

References, if any, should be put as endnotes. They should follow the APA 7th edition style.

There are free tools for generating APA-compliant references, such as this tool by Scribbr.

3.9 Images

Please submit the text and two images as separate files. Images should be high definition and accompanied by:

- Credits: "Photo by XXXX", "Image from XXXX," etc.
- A short caption.

Authors should own the images or have formal authorisation to use them.

You must not use images from generic online sources (such as Google Images) that do not include credits to the authors and authorisation for free use.

If you don't have images of your own to accompany the text, we suggest using websites such as www.unsplash.com to obtain images with no copyright.

4. Editorial rules

4.1 Initial checks

All submitted texts will be **reviewed by the MCAA Blog Team** to determine whether they comply with the editorial guidelines and rules outlined in this document. Texts that do not fit the ethics policy or meet the standards of the MCAA Blog will be rejected before peer review. Manuscripts that are not properly prepared will be returned to the authors for revision and

resubmission. After these checks, the Blog Team will determine whether the manuscript fits the scope of the Blog.

4.2 Peer review

All texts that pass the initial checks will undergo **review** by the Blog Team. To promote transparency, the MCAA Blog adopts an open peer-review process in which the identities of the author and reviewers are known to all participants throughout the review process. Peer review is carried out by **at least two reviewers**. Authors can refuse to follow or implement any request for change made by the above-mentioned reviewers or by the MCAA Blog Team. However, the MCAA Blog Team reserves the right to decline publication at any time.

Following the review, the text can be:

- Accepted with no revision
- Accepted after minor revisions
- Reconsidered after major revisions
- Rejected

4.3 Editorial responsibilities

The MCAA Blog Team considers and reviews the publication's policies, standards and publication mechanisms as well as any editorial decisions for each submission to the MCAA Blog. Members of the Blog Team discuss ethical issues and contentious publication matters, such as cases of plagiarism or potential retraction of texts. All members of the MCAA Blog Team are committed to treating authors with fairness, courtesy, objectivity, honesty, and transparency.

The Blog Coordinator has ultimate responsibility for the editorial process and final authority over editorial decisions, including accepting or rejecting a text.

4.4 Plagiarism

Plagiarism, i.e. the appropriation and/or presentation of thoughts, ideas, inventions or work of others as your own, **will not be tolerated**. It is therefore very important that all sources are presented appropriately. Authors must **state the source** even if they quote indirectly or paraphrase the work of someone else, and regardless of whether the source of the original is in written, spoken, online or other form. The MCAA also requires authors to **avoid self-plagiarism**.

4.5 Open access policy

The MCAA Blog provides immediate open access to its content.

4.6 Publication fees

Publication in the MCAA Blog is free. Authors publishing in the MCAA Blog face **no financial obligations** for the publication of their text.

4.7 Copyright notice

Authors who want to publish in the MCAA Blog agree to the following:

- Authors **retain copyright** and grant the MCAA Blog the right of publication licensed under the **Creative Commons licence Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)**, which allows others to share the work on the condition that the work's authorship and initial publication in the MCAA Blog are appropriately credited.
- Authors are able to enter into separate, additional contractual arrangements with other publishers for the non-exclusive distribution of the version of the work published in the MCAA Blog (e.g., post it to an institutional repository or publish it in a book), with an **acknowledgement** of its initial publication in the MCAA Blog.

4.8 Privacy and data management

The personal data provided by the authors during the submission of their text will be processed in accordance with the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** of 27 April 2016, in accordance with the details and procedures provided in the **MCAA Blog Legal Notice.**

By submitting their text, authors consent to the **processing of their personal data for the purposes of publication of the text** and the publication of their personal data (name, surname, affiliation, email address) on the MCAA website. Moreover, the blog post, including the author's name, surname, and affiliation, can be distributed through the MCAA social media channels and the MCAA Newsletter for promotional purposes.

The names and email addresses entered in the MCAA Blog will be used exclusively for the stated purposes of this publication and **will not be made available for any other purpose or to any other party.**