

Newcastle University Blog Service

User Guide (v1.0)

Support: it.servicedesk@ncl.ac.uk

Feedback: wordpress-feedback@ncl.ac.uk



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Section 1: Creating your blog

The Newcastle University Blog Service is available to all staff and students with a campus login ID.

Follow these steps to log in:

- Go the blog service homepage:
<https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk>
- Click **Create your blog now**, followed by **Login** on the right side menu
- Enter your campus login ID when prompted

Once logged in, you'll be returned to the blog service homepage where you will see the WordPress toolbar displayed across the top of your browser window.

Currently one personal blog per user account is allowed while team blogs may be requested using this form: <http://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=3304>

Follow these steps to create your personal blog:

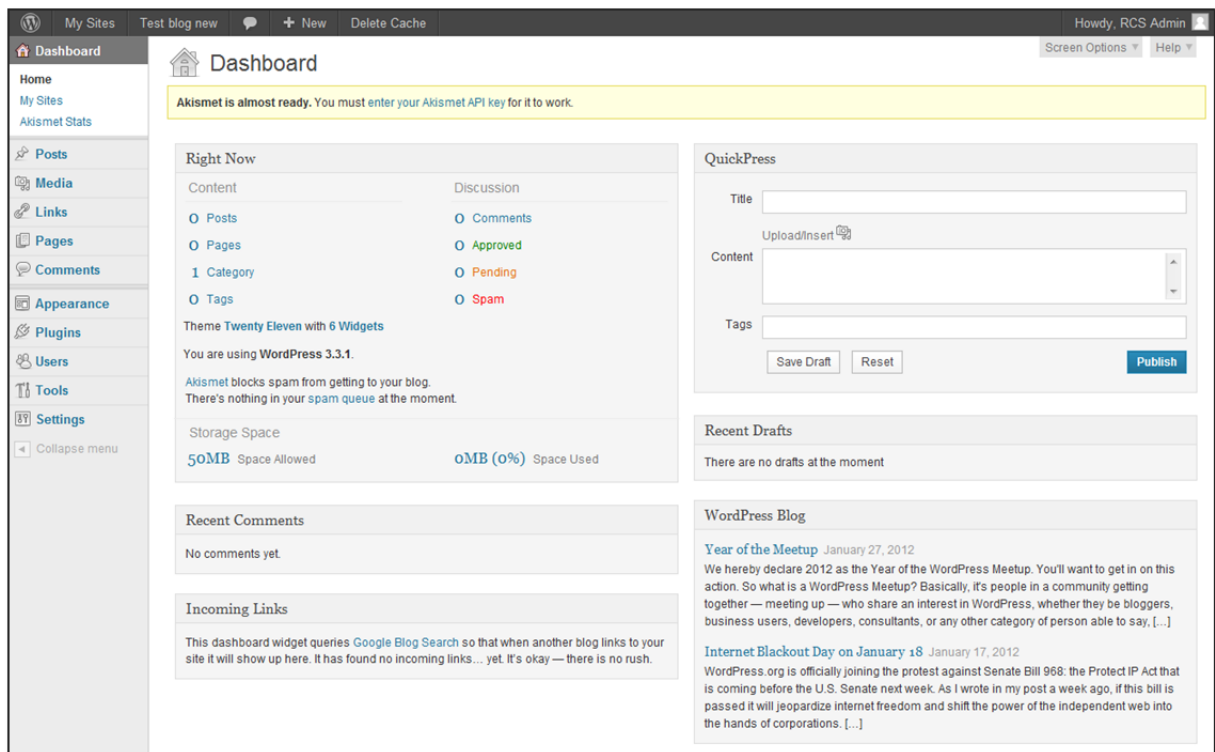
- Click the **My Sites** link on the header toolbar
- Click the **Create a New Site** link
- Enter a title for your blog (this will appear as the page heading), then click the **Create Blog** button

Please note: The web address for your blog is selected automatically and consists of your forename and surname, e.g. if Joe Bloggs created a blog, their address would be <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/joebloggs>.

Section 2: Accessing your blog Dashboard

You now have owner access rights to the personal blog you created in the previous section. This means you can add, edit and remove posts, manage comments, categories, tags and links and customise various aspects of your blog. All of the above is carried out from within your blog Dashboard.

To access your blog Dashboard, click the **My Sites** link on the header toolbar. On the next page click the **Dashboard** link displayed below the title of your new blog. You will then be taken to a screen similar to the one below:



The left pane of your Dashboard contains a menu linking to the main areas of your blog, including:

- Posts
- Media
- Links
- Comments

The central area displays modules such as blog statistics (number of posts, categories, comments and remaining storage quota), QuickPress (a cut down and conveniently placed version of the post editor), a list of drafts and recently submitted comments.

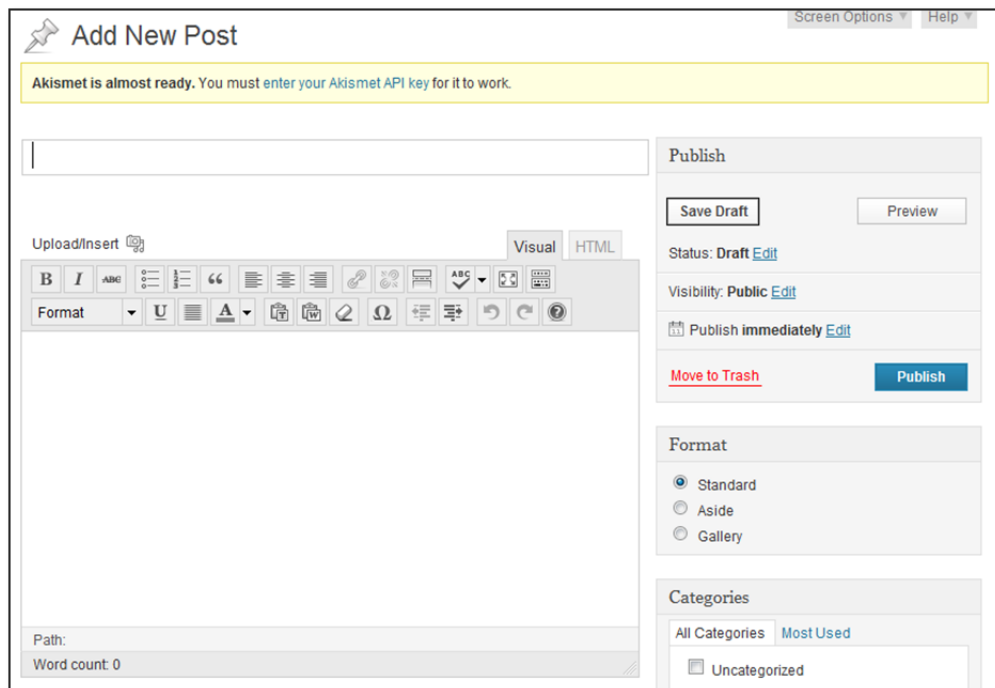
It is possible to rearrange the Dashboard panels by clicking and dragging them to different parts of the central Dashboard area. You can also toggle individual panels on or off by clicking the **Screen Options** link at the top right of the Dashboard.

Section 3: Posts, Categories and Tags

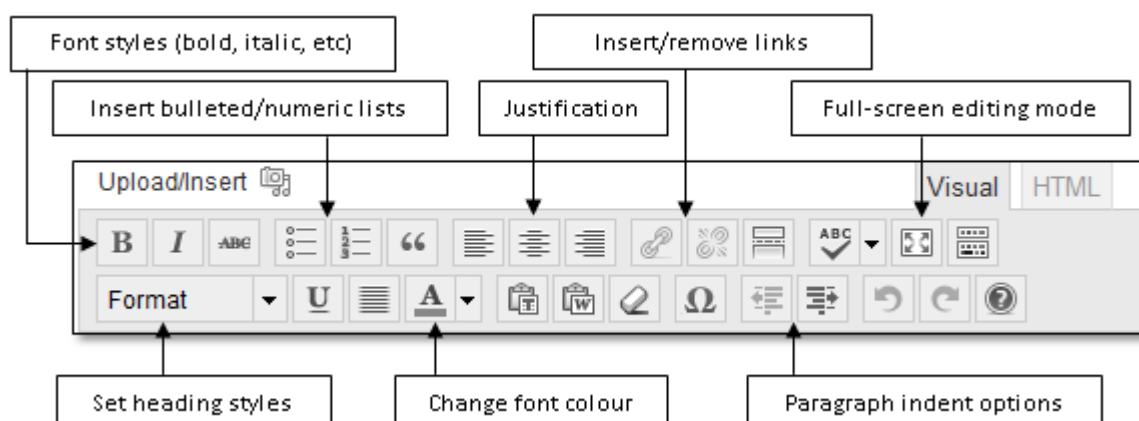
This section will look at the process of creating blog posts and adding semantic information about their content with categories and tags.

Creating and editing blog posts

To create a post, click the **Posts** menu item on your Dashboard followed by the **Add New** option. This will take you to the **Add New Post** screen (shown below) where you can begin adding content.



The **Add New Post** screen provides you with a Rich Text Editor which offers similar formatting tools to those found in word processors such as Microsoft Word. From the text editor toolbar you can change font styles (i.e. apply headings, bold, italics, underline or justification), create bulleted lists and insert web links or images. Some commonly used options are highlighted below:



Please note: You may only see a single row of options on your toolbar, to access the extended toolbar as shown above, click the **Show/Hide Kitchen Sink** button on the far right of your editor toolbar.

Creating and editing blog posts (cont.)

Whilst you're writing, WordPress automatically saves a draft of your post every 2 minutes. If you should lose Internet connectivity or experience a problem with your web browser at any point, a recent backup of your post will be available in the **Drafts** folder within the **Posts** section.

When you have entered a title and some content, you can use the options on the right hand side of the text editor to preview your post, save an unfinished draft or publish your post live.

WordPress keeps a revision history of each of your posts, allowing you to move back to an earlier

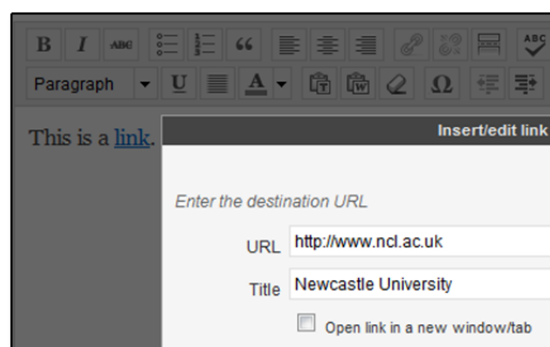
version if necessary. If you need to move back to an earlier version of a post, go to **Posts**, then click **Edit** below your post title, expand **Screen Options** and finally click **Revisions**. You should now see a list of all previous versions of that post displayed in a pane below the text editor (see example on the left).



Inserting links

You may wish to insert links to other web sites, blogs or reference sources of information. The text editor allows you to easily insert both internal and external web links.

To insert a link, type some text (maybe the name of the site you're going to link to) and then highlight the text with your cursor. Now click the **Insert/Edit Link** icon in the toolbar and either type a web address into the **URL** box, or click **Link to Existing Content** to select an internal blog post.



Inserting images

It is possible to easily add and manage images within WordPress. You can upload images directly from your computer, import from another website or insert existing files from your Media Library (covered in Section 5) into your posts.

To insert an image into a post, first click the **Upload/Insert image** link above the text editor.

- To upload from your computer, click the **From Computer** tab followed by the **Browse** button, navigate to and select the image you'd like to insert, then click the **Upload** button. Once the file is uploaded, you can change attributes such as the alternate text (displayed when hovering over the image or if the image is unable to be displayed), the image size and positioning on the page. Finally, to add the image, click the **Insert into Post** button.
- If you'd like to insert an image from another website, click the **From URL** tab and then paste in the URL of the image you'd like to insert. Enter a title and some alternate text and choose the appropriate positioning on the page. Finally, to import the image click the **Insert into Post** button.
- In order to add an existing image from your Media Library, click the **Media Library** tab followed by the **Show** link next to the image you wish to insert. Before inserting the image,

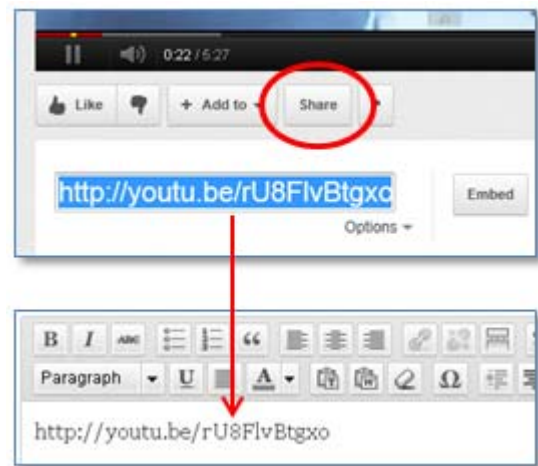
you can change attributes such as the alternate text, the image size and positioning on the page. Finally, to add the image, click the **Insert into Post** button.

If you have added a number of images to a blog post, you may wish to display them as thumbnails (which will display a larger version when clicked). To do this, select the **Gallery** option from the **Format** menu of the right side of the text editor.

Embedding video

In most cases it is possible to add embedded video to blog posts by simply copying and pasting in the URL of the video (as shown in the example below), which is known as auto-embedding. Media from the following services are automatically embedded in WordPress blog posts:

- **YouTube** (publicly-visible videos only)
- **Vimeo**
- **DailyMotion**
- **blip.tv**
- **Flickr** (videos and images)
- **Viddler**
- **Hulu**
- **Qik**
- **Revision3**
- **Scribd**
- **Photobucket**
- **PollDaddy**



If you are using a different media hosting provider and would like to embed content, you will need to obtain the **Embed** code for the media from your provider and manually insert this into your post. To manually insert a video, click the **HTML** tab above the text editor and paste the embed code at the very beginning. Now click the **Visual** tab to return to the normal WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) view, and reposition the video by dragging the yellow container or by cutting and pasting it to a different area of your post.

Adding Categories and Tags to your Blog Posts

Categorising and tagging your blog posts makes it easier for visitors to navigate your blog and find related information. This is especially useful for blogs with large amounts of content covering a diverse range of topics.

Categories

Categories are used to list the general topics covered by your blog, and allow users to filter by these areas. It is good practice to categorise your blog posts as you create them, reusing existing categories wherever possible. For example, a blog about IT may contain posts split into categories such as hardware, software, networks, and so forth.

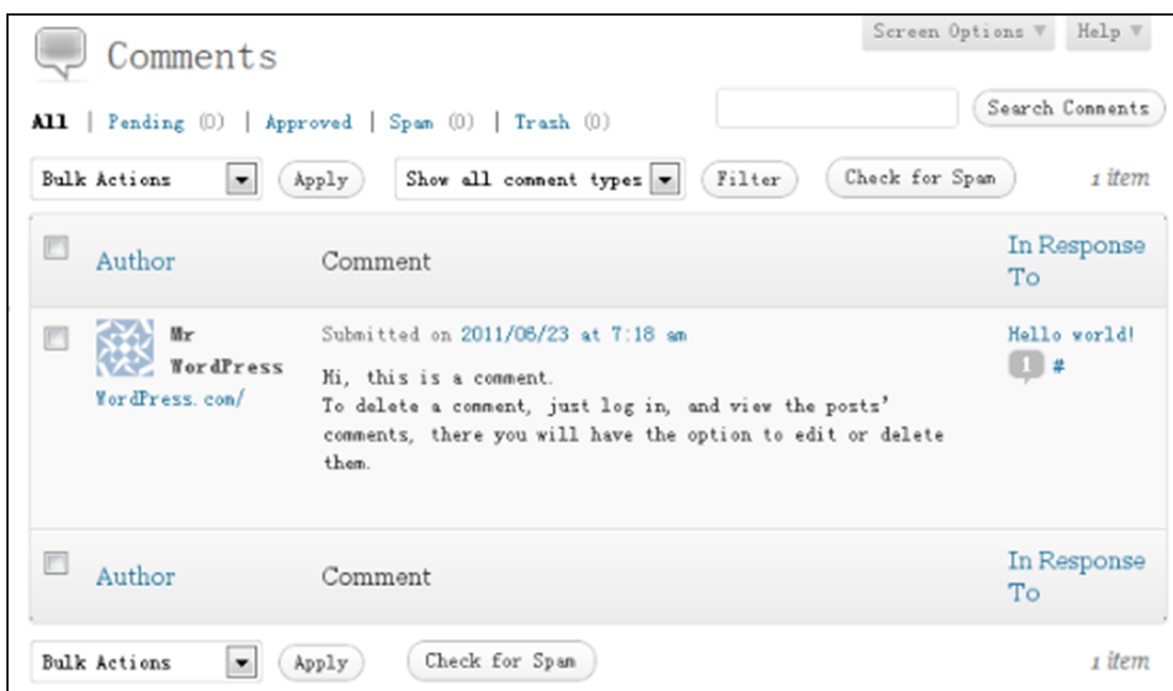
On the right hand side of the WordPress post editor screen you'll see the **Categories** panel, where you can select existing categories or create new ones. You can manage (add, edit and delete) your categories by going to **Posts** and then **Categories** from the left hand side menu.

Tags

Where categories describe the general topics covered by your blog, tags highlight keywords of a specific topic within a post. For example, a post categorised under software may have tags such as WordPress, MovableType or Edublogs. On the right hand side of the WordPress post editor screen you'll see the **Tags** panel, where you can enter comma-separated tags that are relevant to your post content. You can manage (add, edit and delete) your tags by going to **Posts** and then **Tags** from the left hand side menu.

Section 4: Commenting

Post commenting encourages active debates on the topics discussed in your blog posts. By selecting the **Comments** menu item on the Dashboard, you can see the list of submitted comments left in response to your posts, as shown in the image below:



If you move your mouse over any of the comments in the list, you will have the option to **approve**, **reply**, **edit** (to remove unsuitable words), **mark as spam** or **delete** the comment.

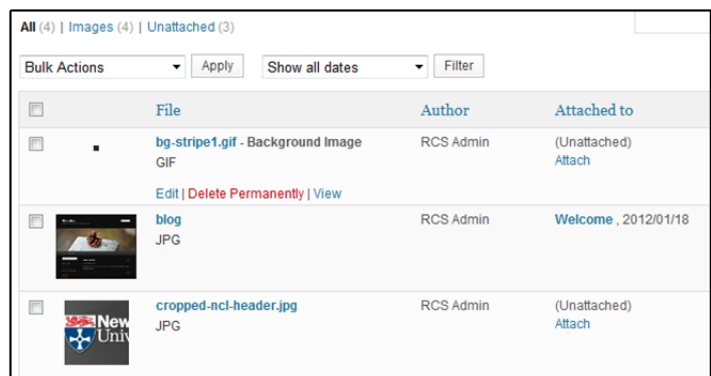
Comment spam is a common problem with blogs and has led to our decision to use the Akismet comment filtering plugin. However, although this plugin is effective we would still recommend checking your comments periodically as some spam may still get past the filter. Guest commenting is disabled by default on all new blogs created in WordPress, however it is possible to enable this feature from the Dashboard by going to **Discussion** within the **Settings** menu, and deselecting **Users must be registered and logged in to comment** followed by **Save Changes**.

Section 5: Media and Link Libraries

Media library

The Media Library is a central place to manage your uploaded content, which may include images and documents.

Each blog is provided with **50MB** of storage space by default. To avoid using up your storage allowance too quickly, please try to ensure that image and document file sizes are kept to a minimum. We do not encourage uploading large media files such as video and audio as these will very quickly consume your available space, and would be better hosted externally using services such as YouTube, Vimeo, etc.



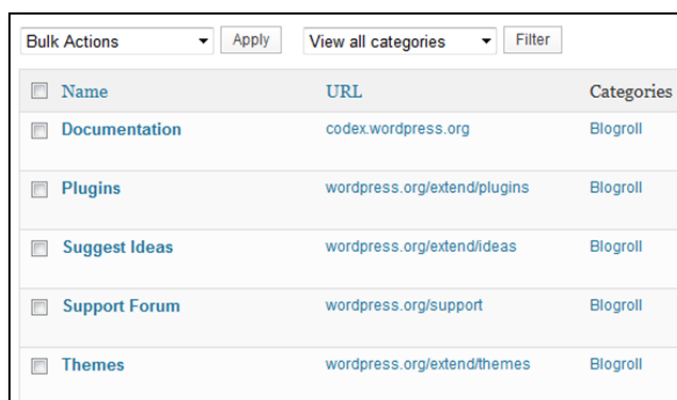
Content can be uploaded to your Media Library directly or when adding a new post (as described in Section 3). To upload a file, select the **Media Library** link from the left hand side menu of your Dashboard, followed by **Add New** link. Now click the **Browse** button and select an image file or document, then click **Upload**. You will now be returned to the Media Library listing page where you should see the uploaded file.

You can manage items in your Media Library by moving the mouse over individual media items, which will expose a submenu allowing you to **View**, **Edit**, or **Delete** files. By clicking **Edit**, you can resize, rotate, flip or add alternate text to images.

Files you add to the Media Library will be visible when using the **Upload/Insert image** option on the post editor screen.

Links library

Essentially a basic link management tool, this library allows you to add, edit and categorise links to external websites. The links you create within this library can then be added to your posts using the



Insert/Edit link option on the post editor screen, or may displayed in a list within the **Links** sidebar widget.

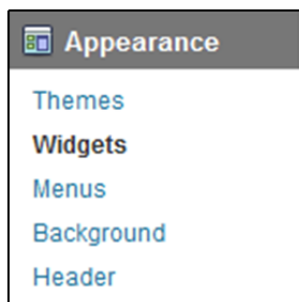
To add a new link, go to the **Links Library** on the left hand side menu of your Dashboard, and then click **Add New**. Enter a **Name** and **Web Address**, then select any appropriate categories and lastly click **Add Link**.

Section 6: Themes and Widgets

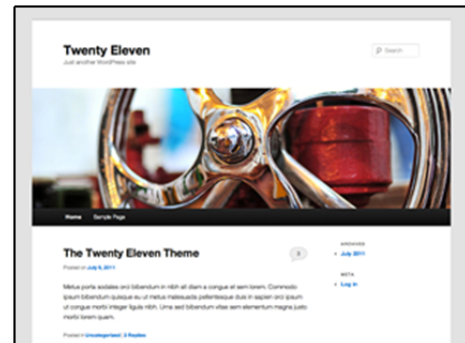
Themes

You can change the look and feel of your blog by customising or changing its *theme*. Themes are essentially a way of 'skinning' your blog to change its look and feel. There are two themes available to you at present: **TwentyEleven** and **Suffusion**.

TwentyEleven is our recommended theme mainly due to its ease of use. If you've used WordPress already you may already be familiar with TwentyEleven, which is the standard skin provided with the application. The design is crisp and clear with a modern feel and allows custom



header and background images. You can upload header and background images for this theme within the **Appearance** menu in your blog Dashboard (see left).



Suffusion is a third party theme which offers a highly customisable layout. Options include multiple column layouts

and Widget areas along with 18 pre-defined colour schemes. This theme can be enabled by selecting **Activate** under the **Suffusion** heading within **Appearance > Themes**. Full documentation for this theme is provided within the Suffusion control panel.



Widgets

Widgets are small blocks of functionality or content which usually reside in either the sidebar or footer of a blog. Examples of standard widgets available to you in WordPress include a calendar, search box, tag cloud and recently posted comments. You can add or remove widgets from your blog by going to the **Widgets** section within **Appearance** from your left hand Dashboard menu. On this page you can drag and drop Widgets to or from your sidebar or footer areas.

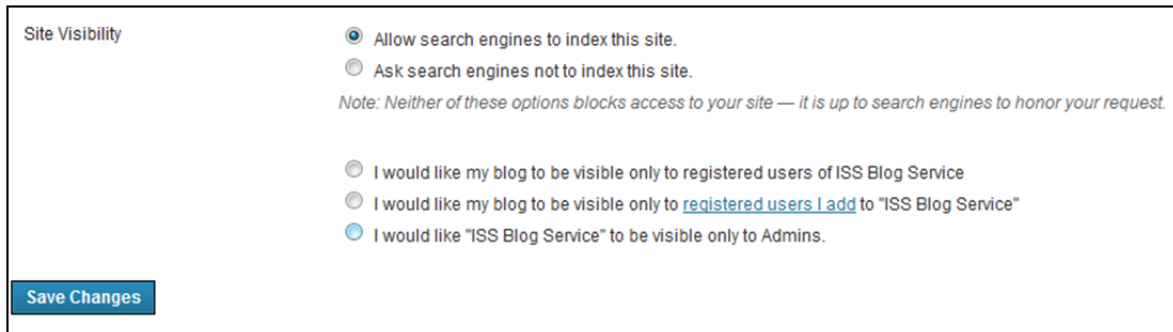
Section 7: Users and Privacy Settings

Adding users to team blogs

If you have already requested a team blog and would like to add more contributors, please contact the IT Service Desk (it.servicedesk@ncl.ac.uk). When logging a request, please provide the user email addresses along with the name of your team blog.

Blog privacy options

You can change the privacy settings of your blog by going to **Settings**, followed by **Privacy**. From here you can enable or disable public access and search engine indexing of your blog, the available options are shown below:



The screenshot shows a 'Site Visibility' settings panel. It contains two radio button options for search engine indexing, a note, three radio button options for user visibility, and a 'Save Changes' button at the bottom left.

Site Visibility

- ☒ Allow search engines to index this site.
- ☐ Ask search engines not to index this site.

Note: Neither of these options blocks access to your site — it is up to search engines to honor your request.

- ☐ I would like my blog to be visible only to registered users of ISS Blog Service
- ☐ I would like my blog to be visible only to [registered users I add](#) to "ISS Blog Service"
- ☐ I would like "ISS Blog Service" to be visible only to Admins.

Save Changes

Please note: When your blog is initially set up, it will be visible to the public and allow indexing by search engines and blog directories.

Further Training

Co-working sessions (with support) can be booked at <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/t4/training-and-support>
Additional support is available via the IT Service Desk on 0191 208 5999 or it.servicedesk@ncl.ac.uk