Press Release Guidelines and Marketing Kit

Contents

Press Release Guidance

Press Release and Material Approval Process

- The PR Guidelines and Marketing Toolkit an easy-to-use tool for creating and distributing content for press, whether at the beginning or end of your journey with Microsoft Learn for Educators.
- Follow the PR guidelines herein to draft a press release highlighting your institution's participation in the Microsoft Learn for Educators – Educational Institution program.
- **Press release drafts must be approved by Microsoft**. Please send your draft in English to mslepr@microsoft.com for review. We cannot accept draft press releases in non-English languages.
- Please submit your draft press release **at least 15 days in advance** of your desired release date to allow time for Microsoft review and approval.

Press Release DOs and DONT's

DOs:
- **Do** use Microsoft approved messaging, quotes, and data to support your press release
- **Do** include relevant calls to action and hyperlink to supporting material/websites when appropriate
- **Do** reference Microsoft Learn for Educators, Microsoft Learn, and Microsoft Certifications
- **Do** make connections to your faculty, your institution, your students
- **Do** consult the [Microsoft Corporate Logo Guidelines](#) for use of our logo

DON'Ts:
- **Don't** position it as a joint press release with Microsoft
- **Refrain** from using the word "partnership"
- **Don't** use non-approved Microsoft messaging or quotes
- When speaking to media, schools should not promise they can offer interviews with Microsoft spokespeople, but instead should flag any media opportunities to their Microsoft Learn for Educators Training Program Manager or in the Press Release and Material Approval Process

Press Release Sample Template

Member institutions should use the following press release template as a starting point or guideline while developing press releases or public course announcements. Institutions should customize respective releases while still following the outline below to ensure you are using approved messaging, quotes, and correct brand information.

Include School Logo Here

[NEWSWORTHY HEADLINE INCORPORATING NAME OF YOUR INSTITUTION AND MICROSOFT and/or MICROSOFT LEARN FOR EDUCATORS]
[Insert Subhead Here]

[CITY, STATE, DATE] – **[INTRO PARAGRAPH]** *Set the stage with two or three short sentences about the news – your school's offering of Microsoft certification courses and participation in the Microsoft Learn for Educators program. Include sentences that make the news relevant to readers and include the most exciting information. [Example intro paragraph: Today, XX announced participation in the Microsoft Learn for Educators program. With access to the tools and materials included in the program, XX will be able to offer courses for students to obtain industry recognized Microsoft certifications for various technologies.]*

[SECOND PARAGRAPH] *Give additional information by using the Five W's: Who was involved? What happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen? Why did that happen? This paragraph should dive into more details about the program offerings, timing and availability, and how students are able to participate. Add calls to action and links. [Example language: Microsoft Learn for Educators takes the best of Microsoft Learn online learning paths and supporting instructor-led training materials and brings it into the classroom. Eligible educators and faculty members can access Microsoft ready-to-teach curriculum and teaching materials aligned to industry-recognized Microsoft Certifications.]*

[THIRD PARAGRAPH] *Required: Insert quotable statements from leaders at your institution. Also, consider including approved quotes from Microsoft spokespeople (listed below) or other education and tech thought leaders. Quotes from your institution must come before the quotes from Microsoft spokespeople.*

[FOURTH PARAGRAPH] *This paragraph should include how this program is empowering students to learn Microsoft technology fundamentals and how these certifications augment a student's existing degree path and validate the skills needed to be successful across a variety of technical careers. Offer proof, statistics, data, etc., that show how your offering is solving an unsolved problem that affects a wide audience. Add calls to action and links. If possible, describe how your solution is different from the competition, i.e. your students will have access to a variety of courses. Consider including quotes from students who benefit from access to Microsoft Official Curriculum and Certifications.*

[OPTIONAL FIFTH PARAGRAPH] *Insert quotable statements from other leaders or students at your institution, approved quotes from Microsoft spokespeople, or validation from industry partners to provide legitimacy to the news.*

[BOILERPLATE PARAGRAPH] *Insert your school's standard three or four sentence bio/description here.*

CONTACT [Contact Name & Title]
PHONE [Phone Number]
EMAIL [Email Address]
WEB [Website]

Microsoft Approved Key Messaging, Stats & Quotes

Key Messages/Topics

- Having access to Microsoft Learn for Educators and being able to offer Microsoft certification courses is a **differentiator for institutions** in the recruiting process, and a differentiator for students who learn these skills and enter the job market
- Schools that are participants in Microsoft Learn for Educators will have access to training opportunities and materials from Microsoft that will enable them to teach these courses
- Institutions can leverage Microsoft Learn for Educators to **empower students.** These courses will provide students with tools and trainings to develop future-ready skills and arm them to take charge when they enter the job market; these advanced skills and industry recognized, Microsoft Certifications can help students make a difference; empower students for the "jobs of tomorrow."
- Microsoft Learn for Educators enables institutions and faculty members to be **flexible** in how they teach curriculum, allowing educators to teach wherever and however they and their school feel comfortable – whether that's in the classroom, online or synchronously

Approved HED/EDU Stats to Leverage

- **NOTE: When referencing the data below, please hyperlink to the respective sources.**
    - When referencing data from Global Knowledge, please provide a backlink to the associated report.
    - When referencing data from the Pearson Vue 2018 Value of Certification survey, please include the following citation: *© 2019 Pearson Education, Inc. or its affiliate(s). All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission.*
- According to an IDC Whitepaper: Cloud Skills and Organizational Influence: How Cloud Skills Are Accelerating the Careers of IT Professionals (May 2017):
    - Certified employees earn 15% more than those without certification, are nearly 20% more productive, and have longer tenure.
- According to an IDC Whitepaper: Business Value of Digital Transformation and the Contribution of a Growth Mindset in IT (May 2020):
    - IDC believes that leveraging relevant, well-constructed IT certifications from significant technology vendors can help IT leaders build a successful IT organization and effectively execute digital transformation initiatives. Certification programs can also be part of a reliable development road map to help organizations build skills during every phase of a transformation journey.

- According to [Global Knowledge](#), Microsoft Certified: Azure Fundamentals and Microsoft Certified: Azure Administrator Associate are among the 15 top-paying IT certifications for 2021.
- According to the Pearson Vue 2018 Value of Certification survey:
  - Respondents noted the following benefits of becoming certified: 67% said greater self confidence in abilities, 55% said knowledge has been transferable to work situations, 41% said increase in job satisfaction, 35% said salary increase, 44% said higher quality work output.
  - 65% of respondents reported realizing benefits of certification within 3-4 months.
- According to [Azure skills and certifications can boost grads' salary potential](#):
  - As students are working to get real-world experience, technical certifications are a great way to demonstrate not only the coursework but also the validation of the skills in general. Even if the demand is only a portion of the total volume of job postings, the reality is that certifications can be a differentiator for students among employers—even if the employers weren't explicitly looking for it.

Additional Resources on Certification and Employability:
- [Azure skills and certifications can boost grads' salary potential](#)
- [Survey: Cloud engineers say earning certifications pays off with higher salaries](#)

Approved Microsoft Quotes
- *"Faculty members play a pivotal role in empowering students for future success. The students in classes today are the change-makers and innovators of tomorrow. At Microsoft, we are committed to preparing students for success in their future careers by preparing them and the faculty who support them with learning paths, tools and educational resources to support cutting-edge technical instruction and learning,"* said, Rachel Wortman Morris, Ph.D., Future Skills Transformation Lead, Microsoft Worldwide Learning.
- *"For students, adding Microsoft Certifications to their profiles alongside artifacts from class projects demonstrates not only their learning from coursework, but also a commitment to keeping up with the evolving forefront of technology,"* said, Rachel Wortman Morris, Ph.D., Future Skills Transformation Lead, Microsoft Worldwide Learning.
- *"By coupling the expertise and talents of faculty with the technical content available from Microsoft, students will have the opportunity to gain valuable, in-demand skills as well as Microsoft certifications through their school's curriculum,"*

said, Rachel Wortman Morris, Ph.D., Future Skills Transformation Lead, Microsoft Worldwide Learning.

Media Relations Prep & Guidance

Media Relations DOs and DON'Ts

- When speaking to media, please **DO NOT promise** they can offer interviews with Microsoft spokespeople, but instead should flag any media opportunities to their Microsoft point of contact. Media opportunities should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- When communicating with reporters, **DO try to be available** – check your email throughout the day. Reporters tend to be on tight deadlines and will often need to quickly set up an interview.

Interview Tips & Tricks for University Spokespeople

- **DO be energetic and smile** – a smile will come through your voice, even via the phone! You'll also look more calm and pleasant to viewers of broadcast segments.
- **DON'T answer questions you don't know** – it's ok to tell reporters you're not sure about something and that you can get back to them with that information.
- **DO mention Microsoft** – try to include Microsoft into the conversation through examples of specific technology your school will be using and offering certification for, and how Microsoft Learn for Educators supports your students on their path to gaining industry-recognized Microsoft Certifications and ensuring that your faculty members have access to curriculum materials on the latest technologies.
- **DO tell reporters a story** – reporters want to hear about your experience and background. Talk about what you know, how you plan to teach in the classroom. Use vivid stories, examples or analogies to help the audience understand what you're talking about. This will help humanize the experience for readers/listeners.
- **DON'T answer questions in the negative** – for example, always focus on the positives of using and teaching about tech in university courses, rather than any negatives.
  - For example, if a reporter asks: "Any challenges incorporating tech into your classroom?" you can answer with "We did need to take some time to learn how to use this technology, but it's allowed us to be more effective teachers for our students."

- **DO bridge back to key messages** – keep in mind the key messages you want to get across and try to pivot back to least one of them in your answers. Reporters won't use every answer in an article and will likely only highlight 1-2 key points – this will ensure you get your main point across.
- **DO speak clearly and conversationally** – relax and breathe deeply before you do an interview. Paraphrase key messages, but don't memorize them. This can come across as stiff and scripted. If you typically talk using your hands, feel free to do that in the interview. The idea is to be as natural as possible. Avoid jargon that average readers won't understand.

Q&A to Help Prepare for Media Questions

- What is the Microsoft Learn for Educators program?
  - Microsoft Learn for Educators takes the best of Microsoft [Learn](#) online learning paths and supporting instructor-led training materials and brings it into the classroom. Eligible educators and faculty members at colleges, universities, community colleges, polytechnics, and secondary schools can access Microsoft ready-to-teach curriculum and teaching materials aligned to industry-recognized Microsoft Certifications. These certifications augment a student's existing degree path and validate the skills needed to be successful across a variety of technical careers.
- How did the university join the program?
  - Microsoft Learn for Educators is open to all eligible educators and faculty members at colleges, universities, community colleges, and secondary schools around the globe. Institutions seeking dedicated support and premier benefits from Microsoft Learn for Educators may apply to the Educational Institution program. Through this process, your institution was evaluated and identified as a great fit for the program.
- What does Microsoft specifically provide to universities and educators as part of this program?
  - Microsoft Learn for Educators provides access to the Microsoft Official Curriculum and instructor-led training materials for Microsoft Azure, Azure data, Azure AI, and Power Platform fundamentals. Each course covers Microsoft Certification exam objectives through lessons based on real-world scenarios and practice exercises. Supporting resources for the fundamentals courses include:
    - Online training: Self-paced online learning paths and modules via Learn

- Microsoft Official Curriculum: Full course curriculum, module content (including lab components where available), and Trainer Guide
- Course datasheet: Course overview, outline, and learning objectives
- Educator delivery guide: General course information to prepare for teaching delivery