
Digital Diplomacy Training Course: Audience Listening, Content and Crisis Response

7 – 11 December 2026
Geneva





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Programme Summary

Digital diplomacy is the subject of this one-week training course for diplomats, ministry communication heads and senior officials, ending in a digital engagement plan for one foreign policy priority. Ministries now speak to foreign publics, journalists and partner governments on open platforms where messages are tested in minutes, yet many teams post without listening, measuring or preparing for hostile narratives. The programme moves from objectives and audience listening to content practice, crisis and disinformation response, and measurement. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on digital diplomacy for mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

A ministry's online voice shapes how its positions are received long before any meeting takes place. Leaders who set clear objectives, listen to audiences and prepare response routes can correct false claims faster, protect the credibility of spokespeople and direct limited staff time to the channels that reach the people who matter.

- Message Reach Among Target Audiences: Improves as content is planned from audience listening rather than habit.
- Response Time to False Claims: Shortens as escalation routes and approved holding lines are agreed in advance.
- Reputational Exposure: Falls as ethics, protocol and account governance rules are applied consistently.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations: It frames the protocol and conduct rules applied to online communication in Session 4.
- Foreign ministry digital media strategies: Their listening, content, engagement and measurement cycle structures Sessions 1 to 3 and Session 5.
- Comparative research on public engagement with ministry accounts: It guides the engagement analysis and metric choices in Sessions 2 and 5.



Intended Participants

- Diplomats who represent national positions to foreign publics and media.
- Heads of ministry communication who direct accounts, spokespeople and content teams.
- Senior officials who approve online messaging on sensitive policy questions.
- Public diplomacy and cultural affairs staff who run campaigns for overseas audiences.
- Crisis and media relations leads who answer hostile or false narratives.

Typical functions include foreign ministries, diplomatic missions, government offices and cultural agencies.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to construct digital diplomacy objectives linked to one foreign policy priority.
2. Participants will be able to diagnose audience interests and narratives using listening data.
3. Participants will be able to design a content calendar and platform mix for a defined audience.
4. Participants will be able to evaluate an online crisis or disinformation case and select a response route.
5. Participants will be able to justify ethics, protocol and account governance rules for staff and missions.
6. Participants will be able to prioritise engagement metrics that report progress against objectives.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Objectives and Strategy for Digital Diplomacy

What should a ministry's online presence achieve for a foreign policy priority?

- Objective and Audience Alignment Canvas
- Policy Priority to Message Map
- Channel Role Matrix
- Team and Approval Workflow Chart
- Ministry Digital Media Strategy Outline

Day 2: Audience Listening and Narrative Analysis

What are target audiences saying, and which narratives shape their view?

- Audience Segment Profile Sheet
- Social Listening Query Design
- Narrative and Sentiment Coding Frame
- Influencer and Network Map
- Engagement Benchmark Comparison



Day 3: Content, Platforms and Engagement Practice

How are messages shaped and timed for each platform and audience?

- Editorial Calendar Template
- Platform Format Guide
- Visual and Video Brief
- Multilingual Content Checklist
- Community Response Protocol

Day 4: Crisis, Disinformation, Ethics and Protocol Online

How does a ministry respond to false claims and keep online conduct consistent with diplomatic protocol?

- Vienna Convention Conduct Principles for Online Communication
- Disinformation Triage Matrix
- Holding Line and Escalation Ladder
- Staff and Mission Account Rules
- Rapid Response Simulation Brief

Day 5: Measurement and the Digital Engagement Plan

Do the tools hold together when applied to one foreign policy priority?

- Applying the Session 1 Canvas to the Chosen Priority
- Running the Session 2 Coding Frame on Audience Data
- Setting Engagement Metrics for the Session 3 Calendar
- Checking the Session 4 Triage Matrix Against Likely Risks
- Completing the Digital Engagement Plan

Methodology

The programme uses a simulation method built on anonymised account data, narrative samples, draft statements and short written cases from foreign ministries, missions and cultural agencies. Participants work in small groups on one policy priority, rehearse responses under time pressure and receive facilitator feedback on each work product.

- Suggested activity: Coding forty public posts into narratives and reporting the three that matter most.
- Suggested activity: Running a ninety-minute response simulation to a false claim about a ministry position.
- Suggested activity: Drafting account rules for a mission and testing them on three scenarios.



Capstone Output

Each participant completes a digital engagement plan for one foreign policy priority. It holds objectives, an audience and narrative summary, a content calendar and platform mix, a crisis and disinformation response route, account rules and a short measurement set. The plan is used at work to brief a minister or ambassador, brief content teams and review results after each campaign.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this digital diplomacy training suitable for senior officials without a social media background?

Yes. The programme assumes experience of diplomatic or ministry communication, not platform expertise, and explains listening, content and measurement tools in decision terms.

Which models does digital diplomacy training rest on?

It rests on foreign ministry digital media strategies, comparative research on public engagement with ministry accounts and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

How is the digital diplomacy engagement plan used at work?

You use it to brief a minister or ambassador, guide content teams and review results after each campaign on your own priority.

How does digital diplomacy differ from a programme on traditional diplomatic negotiation?

It centres on audiences, narratives, platforms and online crises, while traditional diplomatic negotiation centres on bargaining positions and agreements between delegations.