

Webinar Best Practices

Webinars are synchronous online seminars, presentations or talks. The University of Nottingham uses Adobe Connect for webinars, online tutorials and other synchronous meetings: other such software such as Google Hangouts and Blackboard Collaborate are available.

More information:

<http://workspace.nottingham.ac.uk/display/Moodlehelp/A+guide+to+learning+technologies+at+the+University#AguidetolearningtechnologiesattheUniversity-AdobeConnect>

1. Planning

- Select the topic carefully with your intended audience in mind
- Keep the topic and the title interesting, attractive and short
- Invite guest speakers if possible
- Send an invitation & ask people to register in advance of the webinar.
- Send a reminder email with agenda and full instructions about how to access the webinar and how to test their system
- Test, test and test again, with colleagues or friends as attendees, in advance. Technology will still be different on the day, but try to keep everything as close as possible to the way you have set it up and that worked in the test.

2. Pre webinar

- Host and Speakers should join early
- It can help to play music for 15 mins prior to start – to allow users to set their volume level and/or have a countdown timer so people can see they are in the right place
- Have a welcome message set up on the whiteboard
- Ensure technology working correctly and everything is prepared

3. Roles

For a small meeting there's probably only a need for a **Chair** or **Facilitator**, who:

- hosts the meeting
- sends out invitations and reminders
- welcomes people
- leads the discussion
- invites people to speak or ask questions

In a learning webinar there may also be the role of Speaker (often the lecturer or invited speaker), and in larger webinars, there are probably three roles:

Speaker

- All they have to do is present, answer questions and lead the discussion if appropriate

Chair

- introduces the seminar
- introduces the speaker
- deals with the speaker's problems
- may sometimes move the presentation on for the speaker
- summarises at the end
- may lead the discussion for invited speakers

Moderator

- welcomes people individually (in text chat if there is a presentation going on)
- deals with attendee problems
- uses the text chat to make sure nothing interrupts the main speaker/discussion
- summarises quietly (via text chat or private message) the proceedings so far for latecomers and reminds them of the rules of engagement

4. Format

- Keep it as short as possible
- Don't try to fit too much in (such as too many activities or slides) – a rule of thumb is that you will get through about half of the activities you would in a face to face event
- Interact with attendees, such as polls, chat etc. - if it's just a lecture it could be a webcast
- Allow arrival time at the beginning and have some kind of introductory activity to keep early arrivals busy while they wait for the latecomers.
- If the webinar is being recorded remind everyone that this is happening

5. Ice Breakers

- Ask attendees to introduce themselves
- Use a poll or survey to find out about them
- Have a map to indicate their location

6. Audience Participation

Establish the rules at the start

- the mechanics of using the software
- the procedure to follow, if any, for making a contribution
- how the chair will signal the need to move on
- the rules for using private, one-to-one messaging
- any rules for acceptable behaviour

Presentations

Most webinar applications allow you to import a Powerpoint presentation – this is often the core of the webinar

- Keep it under the control of the main speaker.
- Keep it visual and follow good practice for presentations

Whiteboard

- Interactive whiteboard allows the audience to collaborate on a project/document in real-time.
- Draw attention to important areas of the screen
- Many webinar applications include a whiteboard
- Useful for introductions on a map

Polls

- Create a poll during the event to receive live feedback – can be Yes/No or A, B, C, D depending on sophistication of the software
- Adjustments can be made during webinar based on poll results
- Results can help shape future webinars or policies

Audio & video

- For meetings, it's helpful if all participants have audio
- Most systems limit the number who have live microphones at once and the host should assign these microphones appropriately
- In a large group video should be limited to main participants – e.g., speaker and host or it can get confusing, especially if other tools such as presentation or whiteboard are being used.
- In a small meeting, tutorial or coaching session it may help if each participant has video.

Chat

- Text-based chat can be useful
- Can be used to post in links – but be aware that attendees may then visit them immediately and not concentrate on the webinar
- Can be used to get feedback if there are no other tools
- Can be used by participants to ask questions as the webinar goes on, so as not to interrupt the speaker
- Can be used for those who do not have microphones

7. Managing the discussion

- Provide activities or ask questions that require all participants to respond
- Ask questions directly of quiet participants
- Tactfully restrain any participants who are tending to dominate (e.g. with private messages)
- Use breakout groups if you have a large group and the technology allows

- If your webinar software does not have special tools for polls and taking turns, use codes in the text chat: participants type “!” if they wish to speak: the tutor types GA (Go Ahead) and the name.
- Simple polls can be conducted by participants typing Y or N
- Use people's names when you respond to them to keep the flow easier to follow
- It can help to make a note of the participants and mark off when they have contributed so you can see who is not contributing and ask them if they have a comment

8. Plenary

- End with a question and answer session
- Summarise what has happened
- Describe next steps and calls to action, if any
- Allow everyone to say their goodbyes
- Follow up with an email with a link to the recording and any calls to action

9. Further reading and resources

Adobe Connect

Getting started with Adobe Connect

http://www.connectusers.com/learning_center/getting_started/

Adobe Connect User Guide <https://helpx.adobe.com/adobe-connect/using/topics.html>

Video

MELSIG event Nottingham: Helen Whitehead, Webinars: Inside and outside the institution

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXD2f835GFE>

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