

Adapting Your Classroom Delivery for Virtual Learning – A Brief Guide

Introduction

We have all had to adapt the way that we live, work and think during the global pandemic. Learning has not been spared, and with the onset of social distancing and lockdowns, organisations have been under pressure to convert their learning to enable it to be delivered digitally. Unfortunately simply using the same session but delivered over a virtual platform is not going to work. This document sets out some brief guidance on things to be considered when adapting classroom sessions to become virtual sessions.

Learning objectives and content

It is important to review and adapt learning objectives to fit virtual learning and repurpose learning content to be suitable for the right blend of digital delivery. Unfortunately not all content planned for a face to face / classroom style delivery is going to lend itself to virtual delivery. The learning objectives and session plan needs to be reviewed to check what is critical, and what may be able to be removed as generally virtual learning sessions will not be able to cover as much content. It may be that the learning outcomes are not able to be adjusted, and so the focus will be on how to adapt the content to still enable the learning outcomes to be achieved, but the content suitable for virtual delivery.

The task of transformation is about making the content presentation-led and cutting down the content to make it more about micro-learning. It may also mean incorporating teaching styles and learning activities that work well in a virtual learning environment, for example, less group discussion, more small group discussion in breakout rooms and then feeding back or presenting findings to the whole group, the use of interactive whiteboards and targeted questioning. Suddenly the PowerPoint presentation becomes a key tool and the main driving force behind your session, leading the learners through the session.

Outline the learning path

With virtual learning it's important to keep your learners informed about what to expect from the course and the path they will take through their learning. Learners may have to do more independent learning than they would in a classroom and so it is important they understand what to expect, how to stay on track and the progress they are making. By being transparent with the learner about the learning path, then they can share the responsibility to stay on track.

Choosing the right delivery method to suit the learning objectives

After considering the learning objectives and pathway, the next step will be to choose the right learning method to suit. How much of the learning will take place online and how much will be informal or self-directed activities. What tools will you be able to use to deliver your training, for example:

- Live virtual classrooms with breakout rooms and an interactive whiteboard to deliver instructor-led activities
- Quizzes, worksheets and online guides for learners to work through activities away from the virtual classroom
- e-learning courses to help deliver knowledge, concepts and policies (but remember e-learning is not just creating a PowerPoint and expecting the learner to work through it in their own time)

- Factor in your own and the learners' technical capabilities and access to technology

What is critical is to make sure that when a blended approach is used, it is about intentionally choosing the right delivery method for each topic, for example, simply uploading a previously recorded three hour lesson and calling it pre-work before a one hour online session will not necessarily be appropriate, especially if during the original three hour session the learners had access to resources, handouts and group discussions that are not available to your present learners.

Incorporate social collaboration

Social learning should not be dismissed and removed just because learners are not able to convene in face to face groups. Peer interactions are a very important for fostering collaborative skills, sharing knowledge and expanding on skillsets. It is important to still build in the opportunity for collaborative learning, for example, through the use of breakout rooms during virtual sessions or setting of collaborative work where the learners use online collaboration tools and platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

The importance of feedback

It is very important to provide feedback during your virtual learning. If virtual learning is a new experience for your learners, it is important to make sure that they are all kept on track and engaged. When adapting your session for virtual delivery, consider what will be the most effective and appropriate way to collect and give feedback to and from the learners.

Create an effective assessment plan

Every learning strategy needs some form of assessment to ensure that learning goals are being achieved. Virtual learning offers a variety of interesting and engaging assessment formats, in addition to still having the ability to use many of the tried and tested classroom delivery assessment methods. Quizzes, polls, games and one to one virtual discussions can compliment other assessment methods like writing an essay, creating a report, completing a worksheet that can easily be emailed to the instructor. In addition, video and audio recordings allow for more holistic assessments to take place.

Running a virtual session

Delivering a virtual session uses a very different skillset to classroom delivery and throws up many considerations that have to be thought through and actioned to ensure that the sessions are successful and engaging and allows the learners to achieve the learning objectives. It is strongly recommended that this guidance document is read alongside the Introduction to Virtual Delivery guidance document also contained in this toolkit.