

Introduction to Virtual Delivery

Introduction

Learning through digital delivery was already growing fast and the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/2021 has accelerated its growth exponentially through necessity to enable teaching and learning to continue being delivered. This guidance document will provide a brief overview to introduce and explain virtual delivery. There is also another guidance document contained within the toolkit which will give some useful hints and tips on things to consider when adapting classroom delivery into virtual delivery.

Some definitions

e-Learning - This is self-contained, standalone content that is usually hosted on a web-based platform. Learners have the flexibility to access this at their leisure and complete over a period of time to suit their needs.

Virtual delivery - Involves human interaction over the internet using video conferencing as the main method to deliver content and facilitate learning.

Blended learning - A combination of different delivery mediums that combine to provide a rounded learning experience. Training might take place by virtue of a combination of face-to-face classes, virtual training sessions, online tutorials, webinars and standalone eLearning content.

Digital delivery - Any form of training content that can be accessed electronically, this might be online using the internet or offline with content that has been downloaded for access at a later point.

Online learning - The process of being educated or trained over the internet. There are many different definitions that relate to online learning but for the purpose of this training we will relate to online delivery as per the differentiations outlined below.

Which method of digital delivery to use

With so many digital technologies to choose from, it is essential to identify which of these are the most effective methods to support your learning content and ensure it is delivered in a manner that suits the content and audience:

- Virtual classroom
- Online lecture
- Webinar
- Video
- Audio
- Podcast
- eLearning
- Wiki pages
- Websites
- Blogs
- Social media and online communities
- Shared drives and cloud-based storage

There is almost an unlimited amount of applications for digital technology in the delivery of learning. Applications and software can be used to design contents, deliver sessions, store information, plan schedules, share information and content etc. The most important thing to remember is to use the right tool for the right job and to be wary of any group limitations in terms of technical capabilities.

What is the difference between classroom delivery and virtual delivery?

There are some obvious differences between classroom delivery in a physical environment and virtual delivery. If you tailor your sessions specifically for the designated method of delivery, both delivery methods can be used to achieve the same goals.

Classroom	Virtual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can move around • You can move learners around and change group dynamics • You can set the room up differently depending on the activity • Easier to engage larger groups • Easier to read peoples engagement and mood and adapt accordingly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confined to your webcam • Use of breakout rooms for groups • More likely to be a presenter • More effective with smaller groups • Lack of visual feedback from learners (body language) • Easy for learners to become anonymous • Restricted by your technical capabilities and confidence • Easily record and distribute the session • Learners getting distracted by other device based activities or trying to multitask

Developing your online delivery style

Before you can plan and write content for delivery on a virtual platform you need to know the following:

- Know the platform
 - What can the platform do / What can't it do?
- Recognise your own technical capabilities
 - What am I able to do?
 - What do I need to learn to be able to do (also, what have I seen others do that I would like to be able to do?)
- Understand your own online delivery style
 - How well do you know your delivery style, will telling jokes be as effective on a virtual platform, will pregnant pauses still have the same desired effect, will long anecdotes still capture people's imagination in the same way?

You must adapt or develop a style specifically for delivering on a virtual platform. It doesn't have to be a huge shift from your face-to-face persona, but it should be tailored to ensure that your learners can get the best from the virtual training sessions that you deliver.

Features and functions to engage your group

A good way to start planning engaging content is to ask yourself the question 'What would I like the group to be able to do?' followed by investigating what digital solutions are available that will help you to achieve this:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share screen • Video • Questioning • Breakout rooms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polls • Quizzes • Whiteboard • Audio |
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- Discussions

Making your presentation standout

All of the challenges that are faced with the quality of your face-to-face presentation materials are escalated when delivering virtually. Your learners will be accessing the training on various devices with different size screens and with limited ability to change the view or display. Therefore, it is really important to plan your presentation materials, so they are as visually appealing as possible.

To improve your presentation for virtual delivery, follow this simple guidance:

- Split into chunks
- Select key points
- Make them attractive and visual
- Not text heavy – put the detail in the trainer notes and send the presentation out after the session to ensure the learner has access to all the information, they need
- Think about the colours you are using and whether they are easy to read and not too harsh on the eyes
- Avoid putting text over pictures, it is very hard to read
- Remember with virtual delivery the PowerPoint presentation is the focus of your lesson, make sure that your slides visually reflect the subject you are talking about so that learners are not distracted from your verbal message and if your slide has the answers to a question you posed, use transitions to bring in the question first, and then the answer when you are ready

Best practice

In advance of your session:	At the start of your session:	During the session:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your settings • Ensure all of the features required are available • Check for any restrictions • Set up in a quiet place – minimise interruptions and external noise • Tidy up • Check your tech • Put a clock somewhere visible • Dress to impress • Turn off your phone (and other devices) • Turn off your notifications • Close down any unnecessary applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be there early • Switch your webcam on • Welcome people • Be mindful • Start on time • Remind people if you are recording the session • Introduce the platform (run an orientation if necessary) • Set your ground rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak clearly • Explain thoroughly • Don't ramble or waffle • Give clear instructions • Target questions • Invite questions • Check the chat • Pace yourself • Use micro pauses • Keep it light • Tell people when you are going to be silent • Indicate when to add comments • Thank people for their contributions

Questioning

You should regularly connect with people on a one-to-one basis throughout your virtual sessions

- Ask regular questions
- Use open questions

- Target specific individuals (keep using people’s names)
- Share the load. Make sure there is a balanced approach to ensure all group members are asked questions and involved in discussions and all contribute similar amounts
- If you want the whole group to answer a question quickly – pose the question and ask them to respond in the chat box
- Use the polls, voting and quizzes for quick responses
- In addition to direct questions and answers, develop themes by asking for ideas, experiences, reflections, evaluations etc.