

UKSG Webinars - Speaker Guidance

Practical guidance for UKSG webinar participants

UKSG offers live webinars as part of a broad programme of educational events and training opportunities. Webinar sessions are a dynamic way of addressing the needs of those who cannot attend face-to-face sessions, but still want access to high-quality training and expert speakers. Sessions are hosted live to enable audience participation and recorded to enable registrants to watch the recording at a later date.

UKSG provides full technical support for anyone delivering a webinar. The information below is intended to provide practical advice on how to prepare for and deliver a successful webinar. This should be read in conjunction with any platform-specific guidance which will be provided by the organiser.

1. Planning, structure and content

Delivering a webinar is different to delivering a face-to-face presentation. Good preparation is essential as it will support your confidence and your delivery. We also recommend you consider the following:

- Who is your audience (e.g. from which profession or sector)? Understanding your audience will help you to pitch your presentation at the right level. UKSG webinars can attract audiences with different levels of knowledge so try to make your presentation relevant for all participants, for example by using a range of examples. UKSG webinars often attract an international audience so using clear English, explaining acronyms and avoiding jargon are all helpful.
- What is the purpose of your webinar? Setting an overarching purpose and some key learning outcomes will help you to focus the content as well as ensure that registrants understand what it is they are signing up for.
- Confirm the length of time you have to fill with the organiser and whether this includes Q&A.
- Share your objectives at the start of the webinar. This will help you structure your presentation, keep the content focussed and engage your audience. It will also help you pace your webinar. Some people find preparing a 'script' for the first couple of slides can help with finding the right pace.
- Consider starting with a question or a poll to engage the audience early on. Getting some input early on can be a useful reminder early on of the audience presence.
- In terms of your main content, research shows that humans respond strongly to story: is there a way of structuring your content into/around a story? For example, if you are sharing a process that you (or a team) created or a problem you've overcome, can you share this using a simple story structure (e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-act_structure).
- Think about the sorts of questions your presentation may generate. Can you prepare some answers in advance?
- Discuss roles and timings with any co-speakers and the webinar organiser. The speaker's responsibility is to deliver the content, share their slides and answer questions. All the practicalities are the responsibility of the organiser.



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2. Visuals and Interactivity

Webinars rely on audio and visual and so it makes sense to spend time on your slides and your 'script'. It's easy for the visual attention of your audience to wander so make your slides as visually interesting as possible to maintain your audience's attention. Strong images for example, can be very powerful. You might wish to consider:

- Introductory slides that tell your audience the title of your webinar, your name, and an overview what you will cover.
- If you will use a Webcam. If you have a poor connection then this can slow things down and so you might wish to leave this off and turn it on just for the Q&A. If you are not using the Webcam then you may wish to share a recent photo of yourself.
- Relevant screen grabs and images that help illustrate your topic.
- Other types of media to complement your presentation and make it more interactive (e.g. a short video or animation). However, do make sure you have tested these within the application and have a contingency plan (e.g. screen shots) in the event that they don't work on the day.
- Avoid including long and monotonous blocks of texts in your slides.
- Encourage participation. This can be:
 - Interactive: where your audience votes (technology permitting), asks questions, shares their thoughts etc.
 - Reflective: where you invite your audience to do something at their desk e.g. *note down your main challenge(s) in this area; write down your key learning from this webinar etc.*
- Polls, virtual hands-up, invite audience comments can all be useful ways to encourage audience interactivity and make your webinar more dynamic. However, if you do use a poll then make it meaningful by commenting on the resulting information or using it to lead on to something in your presentation.
- Making your presentation as accessible as possible. Additional guidance notes around the slides can be very useful as this can be provided to participants afterwards.

3. Location

Early on, decide where you will deliver your webinar. You will need a quiet space that is free from noise and disruption. Is this at your office or at home? Do you need to book a meeting room? It's helpful to switch off mobile phones, email alerts and home-phones to minimise distraction.

4. Practice, Practice, Practice!

Spend time rehearsing your presentation. Ideally you should do this in the same environment that you will deliver the webinar on the day so that you can become aware of any potential distractions and take steps to minimise them. We recommend rehearsing with a friend who is unfamiliar with your material and asking for (constructive!) feedback. You will also have the opportunity to conduct a test run of the webinar with the organiser to go through any technicalities.

5. On the Day

On the day of your webinar give yourself plenty of time to get everything organised so you are relaxed, calm and ready to start on time.



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- Provide a copy of your slides to the organiser in advance as a back-up in case of technical problems during the webinar.
- Use the hour before the presentation to review your notes and ensure you have everything else you need to deliver the webinar to hand.
- Turn any devices or telephones to silent mode to and keep them away from your PC to avoid interruptions and interference.
- Close down any other windows open on your PC, making sure that nothing will pop up on your screen during your presentation.
- If you are using your office or a meeting room to deliver the webinar, consider putting a notice on the door to ensure you're not disturbed by colleagues.
- Check that your webcam/speakers/microphone are all working. If you are delivering your webinar from your workplace then you might consider enlisting the help of your AV department to provide AV support.
- Agree with the organiser how you will communicate in case of technical issues (e.g. via e-mail, private chat facility)
- If you find yourself feeling anxious or nervous, this is perfectly normal and very common¹. Practice breathing deeply for a few minutes, ensuring your out-breath is longer than your in-breath. This will help you into a calm, relaxed and alert state.

6. Delivery

Delivering a webinar uses many of the same skills employed to deliver a face to face presentation, and as with any type of presentation a clear and well-paced delivery is key. Speaking to a silent and invisible audience can feel a little strange, and you won't be able to pick up on any of the usual clues from your audience (visual, auditory, energetic) that can help us gauge how a presentation is being received.

- If a recording is being made, the organiser is responsible for triggering it and will let people know when the webinar is being recorded.
- If you're starting with a poll or question, provide enough context to get people engaged and use or refer to the results. If you are weaving a story into your narrative, use any dramatic devices you feel comfortable using (e.g. pausing, pacing, tone of voice, humour etc.)
- Try not to read from the slides, but talk around them and the themes they are demonstrating.
- Throughout your webinar, remember to breathe slowly (although but be wary of breathing too heavily as this can be noticeable). Having a visual reminder pinned close to your computer can be helpful.
- It is fine to pause, but remember that a pause can seem much longer to a webinar audience than in a face to face session where the presenter is visually present.
- Keep a close eye on the time. It can be easy to run over and not leave enough time for questions. The organiser will send a chat message if time is running out so try to keep an eye on this.

¹ Research shows that over 85% of us experience nerves and anxiety when public speaking.

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7. Questions

Questions are written by participants and relayed verbally by the organiser to the speaker(s). Usually some time is allocated at the end of the presentation for questions, but agree with the organiser beforehand how you will deal with this. Providing time for Q&A at the end of the webinar is an important way of allowing participants to actively engage with your presentation. When preparing for a Q&A you might find it helpful to think about the following:

- If you are aware there are a lot of questions to answer then try to keep your answers concise. You can always offer to follow up with more detailed information later.
- If you don't know the answer to the question then make a note of it and agree to follow up after the presentation. Do not make yourself wrong. No-one knows the answers to everything and no-one expects you to be the font of all knowledge on this (or any other) subject. Share what you do know, knowing this will be helpful.
- Offer to answer any questions that you don't have time to answer during the webinar session later, either by email or by writing up the Q&A so that it can be shared on the UKSG web pages.

8. Post-webinar

- After the webinar, be prepared to do some follow-up work, for example answering any questions that couldn't be answered during the webinar, and responding to questions participants send by email.
- Since slides are usually shared online after the webinar, please ensure they include clear links and contact information. Make any edits or additions to ensure your slides can act as a stand-alone resource.
- You may also want to provide a list of further resources (e.g. reading, web links, blogs etc.) that you can share with participants.
- The organiser will collate participant feedback from the webinar and send it to the speaker(s).

We hope you find this information useful. If you have any practical questions, please contact Samira Koelle, Events Assistant: samira@uksg.org. Questions about webinar content should be directed to Sarah Pittaway, UKSG Webinar Officer: s.pittaway@worc.ac.uk

