Guidance for running a smoother online/remote teaching session

Although it is possible to simulate many of the teaching activities and interaction you would have within a face to face meeting or teaching session, there are a few things to bear in mind when delivering and taking part in an online or remote teaching session.

Before an online session:

Everyone:
Choose a suitable location: an area that is away from background noise and where you will not be disturbed for the duration of the session. If you are joining by video, do think about whether you are visible with light in front rather than behind you.

System check: allow time to conduct an audio and mic check beforehand to ensure the correct plugin or hardware has downloaded and is working for the remote working application you are using for your session. Some applications may use a default mic or audio which you will need to calibrate before starting.

Arrive early: aim to be logged in and online at least 5 minutes before the session starts to work out any audio or connectivity issues.

Moderators:
Upload content beforehand so that you can solve any technical issues and do a dry run before the session starts. This can include virtual handouts, poll questions, whiteboard activities and videos or external links. Test these out before you start.

During an online session:

Everyone:
Mic on/off: to minimise background noise you may have to mute your mic if you are not speaking and unmute when you intend to. Those with volume control on headsets may find this easier to do.

Mobile phone: as you would in a face to face meeting, placing your phone on silent and/or putting it away till the end of the session would allow everyone to concentrate on the discussion so that content is not repeated.

Moderators:
Starting the session with a quick list of expectations may be useful. Outline who will be speaking first and what you expect in terms of online interaction and discussion within the session.

As you may have the ability to mute participants' mics, inform them at the beginning that you may mute their mic

if there is unintended background noise. They can unmute their mic at any time.

If you are using a presentation, have this uploaded and on the title page when participants log in, you could incorporate the session structure and expectations in an introduction slide.

Keep them informed: bear in mind participants may not see the same controls as you can, therefore inform them before you upload or change their screen and if you will put them into groups. It's a good idea to keep them informed of what you are doing as this is what they would see in a physical session, such as when you are placing them into groups or typing in the chat.

Participants:
Maintain attention: it is quite easy to get distracted whilst taking part in an online session. Please bear in mind that the moderator is fully involved in delivering the session to you and may need your full engagement and participation. Close unnecessary documents or applications that are unrelated to your session.

Chatting: the chat function is useful in online applications as it allows everyone to have a written commentary during a verbal discussion. However, do remember that unless specifically referred to by your moderator, the chat function can detract from the main discussion. Do think of when it is appropriate to have side discussions and when it may be disruptive.

At the end of the online session:

Participants:
Leaving: you may choose to announce you are leaving the session or just leave without doing so. Choose which seems most appropriate and less disruptive.

Moderators:
Last minute queries: allow time for discussion and questions related to access to online materials or resources. Inform participants where they can access these and have a link to the site or page if possible.

Save online discussion content: if possible, save whiteboard contributions and any recordings before you log out.

Leave only after the last participant has left.

For more guidance on E-pedagogy, please email cilt-ad@soas.ac.uk or contact your assigned academic developer