Guidelines for speakers for online events

Much of this information is relevant to all digital events, but please note that this has been drafted based on using a bespoke platform hosted by 3xscreen media and Event Concept

Internet and connectivity

- It is strongly recommended that you connect the device you will be using via a hard-wired connection (rather than wi-fi).

- Turn off ALL other applications on this device - especially email programmes and email in web browsers; this will reduce internet bandwidth contention and also avoid intrusive irritating email arrival pings during presentations. (Please note if your presentation involves screen sharing you could inadvertently cause data breaches if sensitive email notifications pop up during your piece.)

- It is also advisable to try and avoid streaming or downloading from other devices during the session (and to warn other users of this). Bear in mind that streaming platforms on TVs – such as Netflix – can also impact connectivity.

- For rehearsals, please ensure you log in on the same device as that you intend to use for the live webinar, to ensure you can sufficiently test your connection, and any required hardware or software (such as webcam).

Your surroundings

- As above, try to log in for rehearsals in the same space as you intend to use for the live webinar, so you can test some of the notes below.

- Is the space you're planning on using private? If not, try to inform others at what times you'll need the space to limit interruptions.

- Consider lighting, natural is best, ideally you want to be lit from the front, not behind. Test this with your computer camera or webcam in advance and adjust your position or lighting accordingly.

- Take note of what will be behind you or in your camera shot. Does it contribute to your message (i.e. is it linked to your topic or your work)? If in doubt plain is best – though neutral backgrounds like bookshelves also work well.

- Think about acoustics: turn off unnecessary sound sources like aircon, fans, unused computers, printers, mobile phones and tablets; avoid offices with hard uncovered floors and bare walls with lots of glass - this is to cut down echo. If echo is still a problem, try placing seat cushions behind the computer to soak up some of the incident sound and avoid "slap back".
• Note that often headphone microphones prove more reliable than those built into your computer. If in testing you are experiencing feedback sounds then headphones can also rectify this problem.
• Similarly, if you are likely to experience any background noise we would recommend using headphones to ensure you are able to focus on the facilitator/other speakers/questions.
• During the webinar you will be sat in one place for a definitive amount of time, please therefore consider the ergonomics and comfort of your screen/chair setup in the same way that you would in an office environment.

Camera, slides and audience
• Make sure the angle of the camera is straight on (if possible). The audience will feel much more engaged if you are able to look directly at the camera (and therefore at them), rather than more broadly at your screen or own video playback. Similarly, as with a live presentation, do try not to look down at notes.
• Preparing your slides – remember that unlike a live event, guests may be viewing the slides on a variety of different sized devices. If they are watching from a phone or are visually impaired they may struggle to read busy slides, or those with a lot of content.
• If you do use visual aids like slides, remember that some people won’t be able to see them, and some people might not have video enabled, so avoid phrases like “as you can see here, it’s gone from here to up here” - be explicit “as you can see in this graph the rate has gone from 1000 yesterday to 10,000 today, an increase of tenfold”
• Note that slide transitions will need to be managed by the administrators. It may therefore be helpful to print them to have in front of you as a reminder of what’s coming next.
• Consider how you request slide transitions to ensure this is a smooth process and check in during the rehearsal if in any doubt about how this will work.

On the day
• Try to sign in to the webinar early to check everything is still working as expected.
• Ensure you have followed the connectivity steps listed above i.e. turning off applications. Just as at a live event it is also helpful to silence your phone.
• Make sure you are comfortable, hydrated and have water to hand, and don’t forget to take a comfort break before the event opens.