



PLANNING ONLINE CONFERENCES IN THE ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Widening participation and improving engagement

INTRODUCTION

While online conferences have taken on a particularly important role during the Covid-19 pandemic, there is increasing awareness of the wider and long-term benefits of running academic conferences online due to their environmental sustainability, cost, accessibility and knowledge exchange opportunities (see, for example: [Jäckle 2021](#); [Raby and Madden 2021](#)). However, **organising and attending an online conference requires new thinking to harness the opportunities the online medium can offer and create an engaging, inclusive environment.** This is not just a question of the availability and knowledge of different technical tools, but of planning *how* to use online tools wisely and effectively to engage and energise participants, be inclusive, widen participation and deliver good content. While we are talking about academic research conferences, some of the principles of online learning and teaching can be very usefully applied here.

In February and March 2021, FASSTEST supported a study aiming to identify best practice in the organisation and delivery of online academic conferences in the Arts and Social Sciences. This involved a literature review as well as semi-structured interviews with 20 colleagues at The Open University, who spoke about their experiences as organizers (11), attendees (6) or support staff (3) of online academic conferences. Based on this work, we have put together the following guide with tips and tricks of how to run engaging and inclusive academic conferences online.

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PLANNING AN ONLINE CONFERENCE

Your aims

Why are you holding a conference? What outcomes do you hope to achieve? The answer to these questions needs to be the basis for decisions about which platforms or tools to use, how to structure your event, which speakers to invite and how to promote it. **Decide on your objectives first, and then consider which technological tools are most suited to help you achieve them.**

To help **make the event flow**, carefully consider a narrative that connects the different sessions/ talks. Make sure that you make the aims and intended outcomes of the event explicit to the presenters and audience before and throughout the event. Give the event a clear and exciting focus.

Widening Participation

Widening participation is about both **accessibility of platform and materials**, and about **opening up events to different types of publics**. It is also not just about the dissemination of knowledge, but about the creation of **opportunities for delegates to engage, interact and potentially co-create**.

Holding an academic conference online opens up many opportunities to make an event more accessible to a wider audience because it can be a lot cheaper (or even free) for delegates to attend (because the running costs are lower, especially catering) and doesn't require delegates to travel. This means that it can be much easier for colleagues with disabilities or caring responsibilities, early career researchers, students, professionals or the wider public to attend. It can also make it much easier to attract an international audience - and to invite international keynote speakers. Not only is cost less of an issue, but the time commitment is also less because there's no travel involved.

Be clear about what kind of audience you are aiming to attract and what you are hoping to achieve. Different kinds of set ups can very much influence what kind of audience an event attracts and engages. Who will be attending your conference? Academics? Students? Members of the public? Or a mixture of all three? Each of these will have different needs in terms of technical support and the organisation and structure of the event.



How many will be attending? This will affect which platform you use. Will they all need the same level of access, or could some be watching passively on a streaming service? Do you want delegates to sit or watch or would you like the event to be more interactive?

Online events are easy to record, so **session recordings can be shared** with a wider audience following the event or used in the context of teaching or staff development resources, which can significantly increase their impact and boost their legacy.

Include different stakeholder groups in your conference organising committee to establish effective ways of reaching out to different audiences, make the event more inclusive and increase its impact.

You might consider making a member of the conference organising team that takes on the role of an **'Accessibility Chair'** whose role it is to "establish and oversee best practices of accessibility at the given virtual meeting for the given target audience. Auditory, visual, economic and technological accessibility should all be considered" ([Rubinger et al. 2020](#)).

Useful resources with advice on how to make your conference accessible to delegates with disabilities:

- [Are Your Virtual Meetings Accessible for People with Disabilities? Start with This Checklist | Internet Society](#)
- [IFES, Guide, 'Inclusion Insights: Holding Accessible and Inclusive Virtual Meetings', April 2020](#)
- <https://www.deque.com/blog/virtual-meeting-accessible-zoom/>
- <https://disabilityin.org/resources2/covid-19-response-accessible-tools-and-content/#1cb0a0c1ad06520ad>

Event structure

Getting the structure of the event right is an important factor in serving the key objectives of the conference. Events aimed at different target audiences, involving different numbers of delegates or different levels of audience engagement can suit different event structures.

Rather than asking delegates to spend the whole day online, **shorter days or shorter sessions** spread out over a week or more can work much better for an online conference. What might work as an intense 1-day meeting in person might be more effective spread out in shorter sessions over two or three days, for example.

Some examples of popular structures recommended by colleagues were:

- **A seminar series:** 4 to 8 x 90-minute sessions spread over several months (e.g. a 4 to 10-month period), including an external audience and audience engagement (such as Q&A sessions, where all delegates can interact).
- **A national conference/ training event:** 1-2 days, 5 hours each day, with a single stream, including keynotes and roundtables, with some sessions being recorded to be made available after the event.
- **An international conference:** 1-3 days, 5 hours each day, with 4 parallel sessions, breakout rooms and a space for sponsors; videos of key speakers to be streamed and made available after the event.



For online events
have shorter days
or shorter
sessions spread out
over a week or more

Types of sessions

Online conferences provide great opportunities to experiment with a range of different session formats. There are different types of sessions that can make it easier for participants to stay engaged and avoid screen fatigue. Moreover, you are not constrained by the available physical space, staff, and travel times. So, this is great opportunity to get creative, try out new approaches and think outside the box.

“Have an energetic opening: With online events, it’s important to start strong in the absence of a live atmosphere and build up energy from the very beginning. Consider using a well-produced warm-up video that’s slick, engaging, and positive.”

(How to Succeed at Online Events in Nine Simple Steps (eventbrite.co.uk))

Keep it concise. Attention online is different from in face-to-face circumstances, so to hold the audience’s attention, consider making talks (including keynote lectures) shorter, with more time for discussion.

Consider asking presenters to share their full papers beforehand, either in video-recorded or written format, and then use the online live session to give a short summary of their paper or **5 to 10 minutes ‘lightning talks’** to hold the audience’s attention and **give more space for a longer Q&A session or discussion.**

Consider including some interactive workshops that allow more space for discussion and feedback than traditional panels. For these sessions it might be beneficial to put people into smaller **breakout rooms** to encourage participation in smaller groups.

Other more experimental formats include **world cafes** or **coffee house sessions** which use breakout rooms to generate discussion from the ground up, much like [Open Space Technology](#) workshops where self-selected speakers propose topics, and conference participants are free to roam around from room to room, choosing where to stay and contribute to a given topic.

Alternate different types of sessions (such as keynotes, parallel sessions, short lightning talks, poster sessions, panel discussions and Q&A sessions) to create a more dynamic environment. Host **panel discussions** that include a diverse mix of senior and early career researchers and students as panellists.



Hold panel discussions that include a diverse mix of panellists

Consider setting up online groups that meet before, during and after the conference, to facilitate conversations focused on particular themes or issues relevant to the conference. You could consider hosting an **online discussion forum** for students before and/or after the event to engage undergraduate or postgraduate students with the themes of the conference and encourage them to think about the interface between research and teaching. This could be moderated by a student, with guidance from the conference team.

To prevent screen fatigue and keep the audience fresh and engaged, schedule **regular breaks and plenty of downtime**. Breaks of at least 10 mins length every 60 to 90 mins will give delegates time to take a comfort break and make themselves a cup of tea or coffee. You might also consider making the lunch break longer than you would at a traditional conference – as well as break from screens, this will allow people to take a walk or run errands as well as get something to eat, and this will help delegates to stay alert. With an online event, people have far more distractions, so giving them time to take care of other things is important. And again, think about your audience here – an hour at noon for lunch might be difficult to set if half your audience are in Europe and half are in North America.



Consider preparing a **slideshow that can be displayed during intervals**. This can include slides displaying the conference poster, the conference Twitter hashtag, images relevant to the conference, highlights of the conference programme, news of recent publications relevant to the conference theme or links to online tools used to engage participants throughout the conference, such as interactive WordClouds, notice boards or surveys (see below). You could also consider sharing a screen that displays the live conference Twitter feed. You can quickly and easily create professional graphics for

these backgrounds and for social media using online services like [canva.com](https://www.canva.com).

Many of our interviewees mentioned the importance of **informal spaces** where delegates can chat and network but felt that these opportunities were often missing or neglected in online conferences. Consider setting up **virtual coffee rooms** as informal online meeting spaces where delegates can go to chat with each other. Some conference platforms include facilities that allow delegates to message each other through the conference system to arrange to meet in virtual meeting spaces set up by the conference.

You can also set up activities during scheduled coffee breaks that can help delegates connect with each other informally. (Click here for some [virtual coffee break ideas](#).)

To help create a more informal atmosphere and a **sense of connection and community**, schedule **social events** as part of the conference (perhaps in the evening), where delegates bring drinks of their choice (mimicking a drinks reception). You could, for example, hold an **online quiz contest or virtual pub quiz**. Compose quiz questions based on a topic ideally related to the conference theme (though not necessarily in a serious way 😊). Ideally go beyond texts and use images (and possibly video clips) as part of the quiz questions. Make it as light-hearted as possible and reward winners with a small prize. You can also encourage participants to form teams – or identify and approach quiz panel members ahead of the event.

Consider booking some **live entertainment**, such as music or dance performances, or literature readings that can be live streamed.

Pre-recorded sessions

There are many reasons to offer presenters the option to pre-record their presentation, including avoiding a poor or intermittent internet connection, scheduling issues, family responsibilities or nerves. If your panel has a pre-recorded presentation or a film, you will need to decide whether to share a link to the video online, or whether to play the video live during the event (there are pros and cons to each of these). Be mindful of delegates' accessibility needs – for example, delegates with visual or hearing impairments might need to be provided with subtitles or captions. Pre-recorded videos should ideally be quite short (i.e. 10 mins max), otherwise few people will watch them.

If recording a slideshow, avoid using pictures (or audio/video) that might have copyright restrictions on them in your slides, as it may mean that your recording cannot be shared later.

Sharing pre-recorded videos in advance of a conference can be a good way of **creating more time for discussion and delegate engagement** during the event (following the principles of a 'flipped classroom'). On the other hand, the shared experience of watching a video together with other delegates during the event can also help create a sense of community and help ensure that delegates actually watch the video.

It can help speakers to have **clear guidelines** if they wish to contribute pre-recorded content. Clear guidelines should be given regarding the format of the file, i.e. video files should either be an .mp4 or .mov; the resolution should be at least 1080p (1080 x 1,920) (Do note however that higher resolution formats such as 4k, can be harder to transfer.)

An external camera or webcam will generally result in a **far superior video**, though a newer laptop will also give perfectly good results. Most modern computers come preinstalled with video recording programs (like Apple's QuickTime) that can record and export the video. Another option is to film your talk using a smartphone, which generally come with apps for video recording and high-resolution cameras of excellent quality. Make sure to look at the camera itself, not your own image! A tripod mount for a smart phone is inexpensive and will help give a professional result. Participants should not use VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) services such as Skype, which are not designed for recording fidelity – they can be heavily compressed when internet bandwidth is less than perfect. Whatever option you decide to use, make sure the light source is behind the camera/laptop/phone, shining at you, rather than behind you, shining into the camera. Ensure the picture is landscape (wide), not portrait (tall).



However, **paying attention to sound** is even more important when it comes to producing a more professional presentation. People will forgive a low-quality video – but if they cannot hear you, they won't be able to engage with the material at all. Using a simple pair of headphones with a mic (such as come supplied with a mobile phone – which are also small so won't spoil your appearance on video) or a cheap USB external mic will dramatically improve the quality of your video – and so the success of your presentation. If you can't use an external microphone, make sure to sit about two feet/60 cm from the camera.

There is a lot of **online help for filming oneself at home** - here are some resources you might find useful:

- [This playlist](#), made by The Open University, has lots of short, practical 'How to...' guides on things like [how to video yourself using a phone](#), how to get a more professional result by [understanding lighting](#) and [sound](#), as well as some tips for presentation.

- These [two brief videos](#) from the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture include tips on how to film using a webcam, and how to make a screen recording of a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation with voiceover, using a service such as ScreenFlow or Screencast-o-Matic.

Tools that can help facilitate audience engagement

Many **online tools** are available that can **engage and energise participants** and **make online conferences more interactive**. Here are a few examples which require relatively little effort to set up ahead of the event and can be very effective, either as part of individual talks, panels, interval activities or throughout the whole event.

Some online conference platforms integrate tools like these (or similar versions). However, it is also **important not to overwhelm conference delegates** by using too many different tools simultaneously - so think carefully about when to use these and for what purpose. It is also important to choose tools that are very easy to use to make these activities as accessible and inclusive as possible.

Live online polls can be a quick and easy way of engaging delegates, gathering their views, establishing their interests or gauging their prior knowledge of issues relevant to the conference theme or to a specific session. This can make a session a lot more dynamic interactive and engaging, even with a large audience. There are a number of online tools that let you set up anonymous online polls for real time voting, for example in response to multiple choice questions. Conference organisers or presenters can set up these polls in advance. Participants are given a code and can respond anonymously, with the results shared at the end of a panel/ conference.

Delegates can also jointly create online **word clouds**, where delegates can submit words or phrases in response to a question asking them to think of different words they associate with a particular idea/object/text/question, etc. There are a number of online tools that automatically create word clouds that pull together all responses, with words submitted by more participants appearing bigger in the word cloud. Contributions are anonymous, but the final word cloud can be shared. Word clouds are easy and quick to set up. They are a really simple, visual way of creating something together with other conference delegates and can help participants feel part of a group. It can also be good way of breaking the ice.



Figure 1 - An example of a word cloud produced as part of a FASSTEST event on Tuition in November 2019. Participants responded to a prompt about blue sky thinking and what tuition could be.

Another option is **online notice boards/ whiteboards** that can be set up with prompts (including statements/questions/images/short films/audio recordings) that participants can respond to - either during a particular panel/session or throughout the whole conference. Online notice boards/ whiteboards can be used to curate and facilitate structured online discussions around particular themes or questions amongst participants.

Online notice boards with prompts can be set up via the **Whiteboard** function on **Microsoft Teams**. Here is [a short video](#) explaining how to set up a Whiteboard on Microsoft Teams.



Online questionnaires, quizzes or surveys can be used to collect feedback from delegates about the event, but also to gather participants' thoughts, ideas or suggestions re. particular themes or issues an event explores. This can give delegates, some of which might not have had the chance or confidence to speak at the event, the opportunity to share their thoughts. Online questionnaires can be set up using **365 SharePoint** or **Google Forms**, depending on your requirements and resources. Remember to explain to participants how their feedback and comments are going to be used.

Vevox is an online platform that facilitates live polling, word clouds and surveys that can be integrated within other platforms, such as Microsoft Teams.

Please note that some tools or platforms that can be used for these purposes are not compliant with **GDPR** as they use servers in countries that are not protected by UK data protection legislation. It is best to check with your university which tools or platforms you can sign up for and use.

Conference Bingo

A playful way of **engaging participants** and helping them stay alert during an event can be to create a Bingo sheet with terms or phrases that are relevant to the conference theme. Create a Bingo grid in advance of the event and share it with delegates. They can also include actions (such as 'speaker forgets to unmute microphone' or 'delegate forgets to lower hand'). As the conference goes on, whenever a particular term is mentioned or an action specified on the grid happens, delegates can cross out the relevant box on the grid. When a delegate marks a line of five on the grid, they can type 'Bingo!' into the chat box and/or email evidence emailed to the conference organisers. Winners and prizes can be announced during intervals or at the end of the event.

SRPP	Instrumental impact	Induction	Blog post	Report
Scholarship Lead	'Scholarship OF teaching'	Reed's model: 5 types of impact	Expression of interest	FASSTEST
Scholarship Community	Data Protection	★	SSPP	Capacity-building impact
Conceptual impact	Creative Interactions	Attitudinal or cultural impact	Publication	Support
Scholarship Exchange	HREC	Instrumental impact	Project approvals	Lead to enduring connectivity

Figure 2: An Example of Bingo grid from a FASSTEST event, created by Heather Scott.

Pre-conference information provided by delegates

Asking delegates (speakers in particular) to provide a short bio and profile picture that can be shared with other delegates to help them to get to know each other and identify networking opportunities.

Ask delegates for confidential information about any accessibility needs they might have, so you are aware of any support that might need to be put in place to design an inclusive event.

Take delegates' geographical location into account when scheduling – American delegates presenting at a UK conference will need to go later in the day, for example. You should also bear other responsibilities in mind, such as childcare – delegates may prefer to present during hours they know their children will be at school or nursery.

Pre-conference support for presenters

Given that online spaces can be more impersonal, having an informal cup of tea with the speaker or speakers a week or so before the event can create a sense of familiarity and make for a better online event. This would be an opportunity to rehearse and have speakers **try out the conference technology**, which can make the conference day go far more smoothly. This can allow speakers to familiarize themselves with the conference platform, make sure their equipment is working and make a personal connection with the conference organisers.



People like to see human moments – pauses, stumbles, a little raw emotion

Encourage presenters to **check their camera and sound**. It is much less stressful to discover issues in advance, and have time to fix them, than on the day with the clock ticking.

Encourage speakers to look directly at the camera, rather than reading out a polished paper, to help them connect with their audience.

Reassure speakers not to aim for perfection: *“the more polished your virtual conference is, the*

more boring it risks being. People like to see human moments — pauses, stumbles, a little raw emotion. If you edit all of that spontaneity out, you might as well just share a YouTube video, instead” ([Holmes 2020](#)).

To support the flow of the event, encourage presenters to help make connections between the different sessions. Provide them with information about what is scheduled before and after their talk/ session, so they can refer to what came before and what comes next and situate their presentation/ talk/ session within the wider context of the conference ([Cicakova 2020](#)).

Code of conduct



Online conferences offer new challenges for ensuring that everyone adheres to a code of conduct or conference etiquette, especially since there are increased opportunities for bringing in participants from the general public, as well as students. In order to commit to delivering inclusive and harassment-free conferences for everyone, it is advisable to develop and share a clear code of conduct ahead of the event (for example, [this one](#) or [this one](#)). This needs to clearly set out expectations and ground rules for participants as well as consequences for not adhering to these guidelines. Online harassment can include offensive

verbal comments, intimidation, making recordings without permission, sustained disruption of talks or other events, or unwanted messages. It is important to make it clear to participants where they can report such unwanted attention or any offensive behaviour they may be subjected to, during the event.

DURING THE CONFERENCE

Technical support

It is good practice to name one person as a point of contact in case something goes wrong in a particular room. Make sure all chairs/hosts know where to go when dealing with technical problems – they can then direct individual participants to the support team if necessary.

Conference hosts and co-hosts

Conferences need a lot of behind-the-scenes support for everything to run smoothly on the day – although online events need fewer people than face-to-face. Having a host (and potentially a co-host) standing by can make the conference far more relaxed for everyone. It is a good idea for the host to enter panel rooms well before the start of each panel, to allow presenters, chairs and co-hosts into the session ahead of other participants for a last-minute check that the technology is working, everyone has what they need and understand the session's format.

A re-occurring problem at online conferences is that of sharing both the screen and computer audio, and so it is worth making sure that hosts can remind and help speakers to either 'share sound' or 'optimise video', depending on the platform function, before sharing their screen. Having a bullet point 'script' and 'checklist' that hosts and co-hosts can keep at hand can work well, especially if there are standard messages they would need to post into the chat.

Conference hosts need to make sure that Twitter hashtags and any other social media details are readily available to participants. It is a good idea to have these included with joining instructions and on the conference website, as well as Conference landing pages and hosts and chairs virtual backgrounds. Having the Twitter feed live on the conference screen during breaks/ intervals is a great way to get people engaged with the discussion. You can also consider preparing texts for social media posts ahead of the event, so it takes less time on the day to get them ready and post them on the day. Think about images you can use for these posts, such as profile pictures that speakers provide in advance or screen shots from the event (with the speakers'/ delegates' permission).

Management of online chat facility

Ideally each session needs to have a **dedicated chat room manager** (this role can also be taken on by the host/ co-host or panel chair) who welcomes delegates in the chat room as they join the session, introduces them to each other and draws the presenter's attention to questions/ comments that come up in the chat box. They might also collate comments and questions that come up in the chat box at the end of a session.

Encourage delegates to use **emojis** in the chat box to create a more informal style and as a way of responding quickly or applauding/encouraging speakers.

Although the chat box is a very popular feature, it can be distracting during presentations, and the chair or host could instruct the audience/ participants not to chat at this time. In some platforms the chat can be easily disabled and re-activated (e.g., this can be set to 'host only' during presentations, then changed to 'Everyone publicly and directly' during Q&A). Such flexibility seems preferable although people would need to be reminded that they can use this function again. Private chat and messages between the conference team can help keep everyone on the same page and it may be easier to use a social media application (e.g. WhatsApp) for this purpose as to avoid getting confused between private and public chat.



If participants are muted and the chat is disabled, hosts need to ensure that delegates can indicate whether they have **technical difficulties**. Having a link to a technical one-stop-shop can be a very good way of maintaining one line of communication open at all times.

Designated forums and chatting spaces in online environments do not always take off but new conference platforms (e.g. Whova) offer the possibility of having a page with people's bios and contact and an instant messaging function that can send them a quick email for the duration of the conference.

Guidelines for panel chairs

Provide panel chairs (and co-hosts, if applicable) with guidelines that can help them in their role. For example:

- ask them to enter the room before the start of the panel;
- whether they need to allow speakers into the session ahead of other delegates;
- whether you would like speakers and delegates to be muted and/or cameras off by default (and how to check this);
- explicitly tell the audience when it's time to ask questions, when to clap etc.
- how delegates are to pose questions to the speakers;
- how the speakers can communicate among themselves using the private chat function;
- whether the open chat for the delegates will remain open during the talk, or only after presentations;
- check at the beginning of a session whether speakers/ delegates are happy for the session to be recorded, explaining how the recording is going to be used;

- remind speakers to check ‘share computer audio’ before sharing their screens;
- how to alert speakers when it’s time to wind up their presentation;
- tell delegates to use the “spotlight” feature to keep the focus on the speaker;
- how to get help with technical issues;
- draw presenters’ attention to any special requirements or accessibility needs delegates have declared.

Different platforms have different functionalities for hosts so make sure they are aware and have checked that these, such as sharing screens or audio files. You might also consider including text for the chairs to copy and paste into the chat in this document, such as how to ask questions, asking them to keep their mics muted, and so on.

Technical guidelines for participants

For keynotes and large groups, it is advisable to ask delegates to switch off their camera, unless they are speaking or chairing a session, to avoid a sensory overload and not cause technical issues by using too much band width. However, in smaller groups, it can be a good idea for all participants to switch on their cameras as this can help create a sense of community.

Most people in our interviews mentioned that they prefer to see speakers’ faces, given that so much from the face-to-face interaction is missing in online environments. Seeing the presenter can also help hearing impaired delegates who rely on lip reading.

At the beginning of each session, ask delegates to mute their microphones when they are not speaking. Consider encouraging all delegates to unmute their microphones at the end of a panel or keynote, so they can hear each other clapping when they thank the speakers. This can be a surprisingly uplifting experience and help create a sense of community.

Encourage delegates to introduce themselves very briefly when they turn on the microphone to ask a question – especially important if the session is being recorded.

POST CONFERENCE

Video and Audio outputs

If you are producing audio or audio-visual outputs, you will need to decide (a) will all panels be available, or only a selection, and (b) will they be publicly available, or only available to delegates? Video, in particular, is time-consuming to produce, so you should consider carefully if it is worth hours of time and the cost of hosting if only a few people will want to watch it. If, however, your primary purpose here is enable asynchronous attendance (that is, that delegates can attend panels in their own time), then a “no-frills” uploading of all sessions with minimal editing can be an option.



Recordings of conference keynotes or panel sessions can potentially also be shared with students and used as teaching resources.

If you are recording sessions, **make sure that you have the speakers’ permission** to publish and share the recordings and that delegates are aware which sessions are recorded and how the recordings are going to be used.

For most purposes, YouTube is the best web repository for videos - it maintains a robust server network, ensuring long-term security, and has enough bandwidth to supply smooth, uninterrupted viewing (although there are many other options, of course). If you do not want your video to be publicly available on YouTube, you can set the video as “Unlisted”, which means you can link to it or embed it but will stop people from finding the video through a YouTube search.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

While COVID-19 may have greatly accelerated the so-called ‘online pivot’ to hosting conferences virtually, it certainly isn’t going anywhere. Even as life goes back to ‘normal’, online conferences, meetings and teaching will be a permanent part of the academic’s life going forward, and the sooner we all find our feet, the better. The environmental issues alone make this a certainty. This guide, and the research that informed it, has pooled our experience from this hectic period of transition, that we may all learn from the experience.



Nevertheless, online conferencing offers us a huge opportunity to rethink what conferences are, and what they are intended to achieve. We have here suggested ways we can reach new audiences (the public, school teachers and students, the media, industry, etc.), make events more accessible to those with disabilities or support needs, with additional responsibilities (such as parenting or caring), or with low incomes, and potentially give more opportunities to Early Career Researchers and post-grads who are facing greater

employment challenges than ever. Perhaps, too, it will encourage us as academics to reach out to broader audiences and rethink how we present our work.

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