PB100 presentations
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What was your original course structure?
Originally this was going to be a summative assessment set up as a 3-hour festive public engagement event for our 39 students. Each student would present a tightly rehearsed 3-minute pitch on 'Applying a behavioural principle of your choice to resolve a policy issue of your choice', on stage to an audience welcome to friends, faculty and family, with judges, a chair, 'best speaker prizes' and a drinks reception to celebrate the (near) end year.

How has it changed?
Followed by a live grand rehearsal in real time (Friday week 8), we moved the entire operation to Zoom (Friday week 9). Instead of the event taking place in the flesh, all presenters Zoomed in, in batches of 10-12 on the hour, presenting as they would have on stage, but from their living rooms. Each hour began with a similarly tightly rehearsed 3-minutes pitch, which addressed instructions and concerns by means of example, presented by the lead faculty. We invited other faculty, PhD and PSS members of the department to join the event via a Zoom link sent out to the department.

Why did you change it?
We decided to shift entirely to using Zoom because, although the school was still open on the day of the event, the majority of our students had returned home due to the changes in policy around COVID-19. It was therefore not equitable to have some students present in person and other present online.

How did it work?
Students had submitted their transcript and slides on Wednesday of week 8 and the move to Zoom was announced on Friday of the same week. That day students completed a grand rehearsal in person.

In Class on Friday, I held a 5-minute Q&A on students concerns about the online presentations. I collated all questions which I addressed in a 10-minute video on 'tips and tricks' on how to present on Zoom. This included, where to sit your laptop (e.g. distance from the screen, glare & angle), how to deal with faulty internet (e.g. dial in option) and what they could do to get familiar with Zoom.

Two days before the event, in week 9, the organizing faculty and PSS staff had a few available PSS staff drop-ins as mock students on a Zoom dry run of the event, to practice smooth narration. Students were instructed how to minimise chances that the internet failed, how to position the screen and test the quality of sound etc, to help ease their transition.

Assessment criteria were the same, as all students would be expected to be able to deliver in line with the marking criteria to the same new (more complex virtual) level. Prizes will now be awarded based on grades, plus a faculty prize (awarded by the faculty that attended throughout).

Were there any issues?
The count-down timer, which students pin to their screen, failed at one point. We had another faculty member recreate the timer by holding up her phone to the camera of her screen. We had a slight interruption on the line for one student, but, with the transcript of their talk, were able to continue as normal.

Any feedback from the students/other academics so far?
 Yes. Faculty and students emailed to say that they were very impressed with the smooth turn around, timeliness and quality of most of the presentations. That they learned new things, were proud of themselves and enjoyed the experience.

Two lessons learned or tips you'd like to share

1. Replace body language by narrating your actions and naming tasks/functions/people concretely, so that viewers and co-hosts understand what is happening and to avoid confusion. For example: "I just handing over to my colleague [name], who will give you access to share your slides next". This also applies to team work: If there is joined responsibility for a lecture or evet, assign clear tasks 'I will help students off the stage, you will help the next person on' and hand over to each other verbally.
2. At the beginning of the session, encourage participation by 1) giving a quick tour of Zoom use of 'reactions', 'participant functions' and chat and 2) by encouraging students to put their camera on so that you can see their reactions. Then encourage use of these functions throughout, being responsive to them and narrating their use for other students to see that it is working "Great to see you in person, [name]! Thank you!", "[name], I think, you had your hand up?", "[Name], you got so many applauses for that, did you see!".
3. Finally, I would say, I really try to leave time at the beginning or end of a session to note that this is an unusual situation, and applaud them for even being there! I ask students a question to answer at the beginning of a Class for example, which allows them to practice these functions one by one (turn on camera, raise hand, unmute, speak, mute), but at the same time signal to other students 1) where they are "what time is it for you right now?", 2) what they are doing "One thing you are looking forward to today" to cultivate mutual respect and community, in a way that they would usually do in class naturally. This is working really well to encourage participation.