The Royal College of Pathologists
Pathology: the science behind the cure

RCPath's guide to running an online event

Introduction – what is this guide for?

Thinking of running an online event? This guide aims to help you plan and deliver an online public engagement activity or event. It outlines:

- things to consider when organising your event
- activity ideas – some suggestions to get you started
- tools and technology options including links to information on how to use them
- further information – links to resources, activity ideas and examples.

Things to consider when organising your online event

1. Aims – what is the purpose of your event? What information do you want your audience to take away from the event?

2. Audience – who will be in your audience? Consider age, level of science/medical knowledge or interest (also known as science capital), number of attendees, etc. Do you intend to target a broad or specific audience demographic?

3. Who are your speakers? Make sure your speakers are engaging and will tailor their information for the intended audience.

4. Audience interaction – aim for as much as possible! This can be achieved in many ways, such as polls, question and answer sessions, chat functions and breakout rooms. We recommend assigning a chairperson if you can, who can host the webinar and direct questions to speakers.

5. Child safeguarding – does your audience include any under 18s or students? If yes, it may not be appropriate to allow the audience to share their video/audio during your online event. If collaborating with a school, they may be able to advise on the best platform to host your event, for example the webinar version of Zoom or YouTube. For more information, visit the NSPCC's page on safe activities and events.

6. Format – how long will your event be and what structure will your event take? We've suggested some activity ideas later in this guide to get you started.

7. Partners – think about who you could link up with for your event to help involve a range of speakers. For example, there might be a health charity that focuses on an area relevant to your work in pathology that you could approach. Or consider working with the communications team in your trust to share the task of setting up and running your event.

8. Consent – for example, you will need to ask for consent from speakers and attendees if you are recording the meeting or if you intend to publish video/photos/screenshots of the meeting (e.g. on social media/YouTube). You're welcome to use our photography and filming consent form.

9. Marketing – how will you be promoting your event? Social media, email marketing, word of mouth, posters? Make sure you have factored in enough time to spread the word about your event.
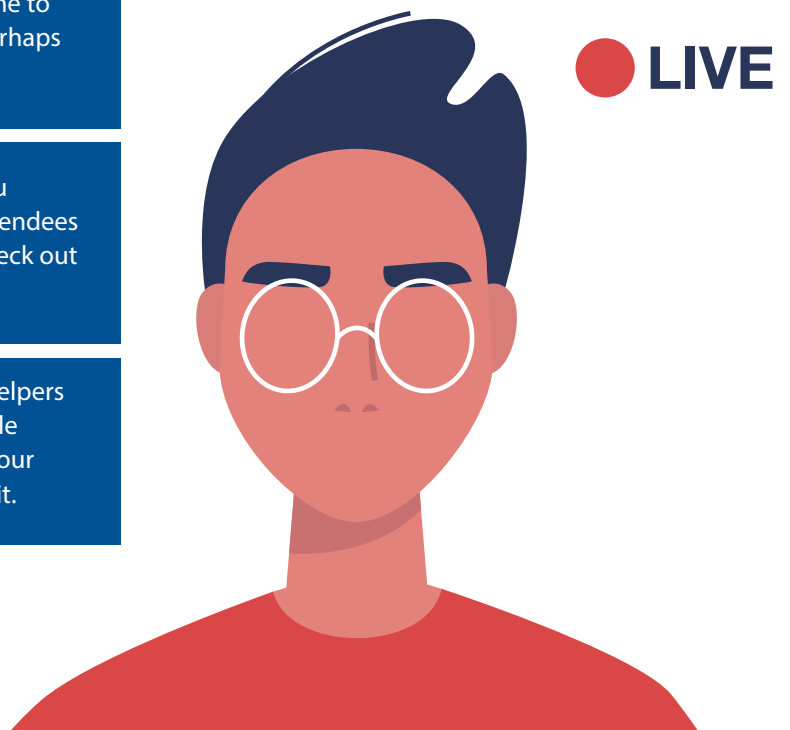
10. Turnout – how can you ensure that everyone turns up? As a general rule of thumb, free events are likely to have about a 50% drop-out rate. Fewer people drop out if they are asked to buy a ticket or pay a deposit when registering for the event (this can be refunded back to them if they attend). Consider adding your event to Eventbrite, which allows you to track and easily refund deposits. This is covered in the 'Managing Orders' section of Eventbrite's help pages.

11. Sound, lighting and backgrounds – it's important to think about these in advance of your event and to help any speakers optimise the quality of their video and sound. Find out more in our top tips document.

12. Behind the scenes – consider who needs to be working behind the scenes to ensure that the event runs smoothly (e.g. for a Zoom webinar). For example, do you need someone to field questions from the audience to the speakers or perhaps someone to run the interactive polls?

13. Feedback and evaluation – what feedback will you collect and from whom? For example, you could ask attendees and speakers to fill in a simple Google forms survey. Check out our Guidelines for Evaluation of Public Engagement.

14. Post-event – don't forget to thank your speakers, helpers and audience. If the event was recorded, how will people access the video? For example, you could upload it to your website/YouTube channel and send delegates a link to it.

LIVE

Activity ideas –
some suggestions to get you started

Panel discussion or live interview
For example, our 'Discussing histopathology – past, present, future' video.

Quizzes
Our quiz examples are free to use or you could use these as a template for your own quiz.

Careers talks
Inspire the next generation of pathologists. Find out how to set one up on our careers talks page.

Live demonstrations
For example, you could explain how pathology testing works, run a pathology-inspired creative session such as folding an origami beating heart, or live stream a Living Autopsy.

Hands-on activities
The activities in these video guides are a fun way to explore pathology.

Recorded lab tours
Why not show your audience around your lab and explain what a typical day would look like?

School workshops
These can be delivered to a classroom of students with a live link to a pathologist.
Our 'Your Body Your Consent' activity pack is an example of a workshop that could work well online.
This can be modified so that interaction with under 18s is via the polls and Q&A functions in Zoom.

Tools and technology options

There are various platforms you could use to host your online event. When choosing the right one for your event, it's useful to consider the following:

- Does your institution, company or school recommend or have any restrictions on using any particular platforms?
- What functions do you need the platform to have? For example, will you need to have interactive polls during your event, allow screen sharing, or be able to have two-way communication with your audience?
- Are you looking for a free platform, or do you have some budget to pay for a premium account?
- How many participants do you want to include in your event?

Below are some examples of platforms you could use.

Zoom
Zoom offers features to make your event interactive including breakout rooms, polls, Q&A and chat functions. You can host meetings with a maximum of 100 participants for up to 40 minutes with the free version, or up to 500 participants per meeting with no time limit using the paid version. Some NHS trusts do not permit the use of Zoom.

Microsoft Teams
Microsoft Teams provides full integration with Office 365 and is compatible with NHS trust IT policies. The maximum number of participants per meeting is currently 250. Free and paid versions are available.

Google Meet
Google Meet is fully integrated with Google apps. The free version allows meetings up to one hour long with a maximum of 100 participants.

PowerPoint presentations
You can pre-record slides and narration (either on PowerPoint or a video conferencing platform such as Zoom). We've put together a guide on recording and adding narrations to PowerPoint slides.

Live streaming
Live streaming via YouTube, Facebook, or Instagram. Find out what live streaming is and how it could help you engage your audience. All of these platforms allow your audience to react to the content (e.g. via a chat function), but you will not be able to see or hear your audience.

Pre-recorded selfie videos
Pre-recorded selfie videos (e.g. of speakers) can be shared via social media, YouTube or even during the live online event. You don't need any expensive equipment for this; you could use the camera on your smartphone and a hands-free headset. We've put together some top tips for creating selfie videos.

Here's a handy comparison of Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams.

Further info – links to resources, activity ideas and examples

1. Our successful RCPath COVID-19 seminars were run during the lockdown. The format of the seminars would work for a number of different events.

2. RCPath/BDIAP Foundation and Undergraduate Taster Event–pathology through a COVID lens. This event consisted of a series of pre-recorded video presentations, which were made available to delegates prior to the event via a YouTube playlist, and a one-hour interactive panel discussion and Q&A. A link to the recording of the event was sent to delegates after the event.

3. Our Split Your Genes online workshop uses online talks, videos and quizzes to guide secondary school students through the key aspects of genetics and inheritance by learning about sickle cell disorder.

4. Your Body Your Consent – this is an example of an in-person discussion workshop, which could be adapted into an online workshop.

5. A guide to using virtual events to facilitate community-building: Event formats by the Center for Scientific Collaboration and Community Engagement.

6. Why not plan an event for National Pathology Week?

7. Request free RCPath promotional materials for your event.

8. Visit our activities and resources page for more inspiration.

9. Email publicengagement@rcpath.org if you'd like to chat about your event ideas.