Tips for running your online event

As employers are engaging more frequently with our students and graduates online, we wanted to share our advice on how to make this as effective as possible:

1. What you want to achieve from this event? Why do you want to engage with our students and graduates?

Is the aim to build your brand with target groups? To improve the quality of applications? To explain what an excellent candidate looks like and the typical mistakes candidates make? Give advice about the sorts of skills that are in demand? All of these? It might be that your sector is not a typical destination for graduates and you want to use the session to dispel some myths. What do you want attendees to think, feel and do as a result of attending your event?

Making sure you are clear about this will help to make your online event successful. Like all of us, students are more engaged with resources and events tailored to them.

2. Who is your target audience? Who can share the most useful insights with them?

A hiring manager or graduate recruitment specialist who can answer questions about the selection process and timescales?

Sometimes a senior manager in a live chat is ideal; it demonstrates your commitment to entry level talent- but **generally it is a good idea to include recent grads or alumni** – ideally from University of Edinburgh representing the degree disciplines you are targeting. Alumni are perceived as offering more personalised insight into your organisation and provide honest advice to current students.

We know that recruiting diverse candidates, whether because of their disability, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or social background continues to be an area of significant focus for employers. Make sure you **demonstrate** your diversity at online events too - don't just talk about how diverse you are.

Review our advice on how to reach your target groups.

3. Given the aims and target audience, what type of online event is most suitable?

Are you simply presenting information on your programme/application process with Q&A at the end? Do you want a greater level of engagement and discussion e.g. on emerging job roles/what is happening in your industry.

If you want to show potential candidates what it's really like to work with you, consider having a panel of recent graduates from a variety of backgrounds instead of a graduate recruiter talking about your culture. Perhaps include a virtual office tour. If you're hosting a FAQ session, make sure you have a diverse panel who can answer a wide range of questions.

Will the event live or a pre-recorded video? Offered for streaming afterwards?

As a general rule of thumb, avoid making your events too formal; the less scripted the better. Students want to hear from current employees in a personalised, informal way.

4. Choose your platform

Simple presentations, or Panel/Q&A sessions are best run on a webinar platform, especially if you are expecting 50+ attendees as these can limit who can speak and share their screen.

If you want to get a more in-depth discussion with a smaller group, then consider platforms like GoToMeeting and Zoom which allow everyone to share video and audio.

Watch this 16 minute video for tips on FaceBook Live and live streaming video.

5. Avoid clashes

Take time zones into consideration and try your best to pick a time that works for as many as possible. If that doesn't seem possible, make sure content is accessible afterwards for those who couldn't make it.

View the University of Edinburgh semester dates

6. Tech considerations

Before kicking things off, test your Internet connection—and have your presenters do the same. Prepare backups of visuals and presentations in case a file goes wonky or awol. If possible, run a rehearsal. Do a test- ask participants If they can hear voice and audio and to confirm this in chat box. It is best if presenters can enable video at least at the start of the session so people feel more at ease.

Webinar participants tend to arrive early so regularly post welcome messages in the chat stating when the session will start so they don't see a blank screen. It's best practice to share an introductory slide with key information. If you are planning to record the session, please let attendees know at this stage so that they can provide consent.

View the Digital Curation Service's useful tips on running online meetings and events.

7. Don't assume online=accessible

Just like face to face events, online sessions should be as inclusive and accessible as possible.

Students may have poor broadband and/or no access to a laptop/PC. Many will want to attend your event on their phones. If you're using slides, keep the text on each slide to a minimum, and increase the font size so it's readable from a pocket-sized screen. Use clear language, large fonts, and high colour contrast.

8. Promotion

Face to face or online we want students to know about it! You can list your event for free on MyCareerHub and we can advise on other channels – especially important now when there are lots of online events competing for our students' attention.

A personalised message from a recent graduate (ideally from UoE) explaining why you hire from Edinburgh and what someone with X disciplines brings is more impactful than a generic email. Be clear what the session is/isn't about. And the key take-aways; what attendees will gain that they can't get from your website or following you on social media.

In our experience, around 50% of those who sign up, turn up so don't set your bookings max too low.

9. Make it engaging

Students, like all of us now, are spending even more time online. How do you keep their attention?

Watch using too many slides but equally if you are presenting a lot of info, do include a few bullet points- it's too easy to zone out without something visual to hold your attention.

Have a list of prepared questions ready in case the audience isn't as engaged as you expected.

Bite size chunks via short, snappy sessions are preferable (no longer than 30 minutes input- ideally shorter)

Virtually every online platform has interactive features. Ask people to participate in polls and/or submit questions through the chat tool. Chances are the people who ask questions are going to stick around to see if they get answered. At the end of the event, ask for feedback. Encourage live tweeting.

10. Follow up

Record the webinar and mail students a link afterwards- we've found we often get better engagement subsequently (I.e. more views than attendees at the time)

To request this document in an alternative format, please contact the Employer Team (employers@ed.ac.uk)