



Interactive Webinars – the future of teaching and learning online

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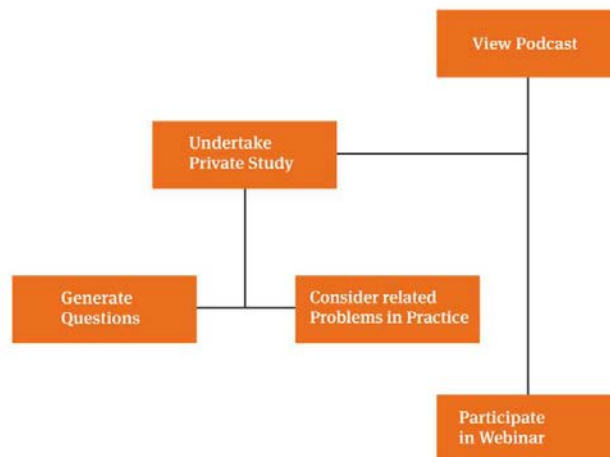
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In recent years, a number of factors have contributed to the growth in both quantity and type of online educational resources made available to online learners. Two of these have been the speed of internet connections and advancing web technology. An example of this is the introduction of web-conferencing software, also known as webinars.

In 2009, the Education Development Unit (EDU) of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) introduced webinars as a collaborative teaching and learning tool for trainees preparing to sit the ANZCA Final Exam. This technology, coupled with the newly introduced video podcasts, offers learners a model of education delivered entirely over the internet with both synchronous and asynchronous elements (as described in figure 1.0 below). This model was developed based on adult learning principles, and building on experiential learning theory.



Web-conferencing technology has significant benefits to ANZCA and ANZCA trainees;

- **Collaborative learning:** Trainees are able to access expert information and support and not only access the information, but collaborate and interact in an online environment.
- **Far reaching contact and equitable access:** Web conferencing technology allows interaction between geographically separated participants. Trainees from remote areas in Australia, as well as those located in New Zealand, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore regularly participate.
- **Participation can occur anywhere:** Learners are no longer required to physically congregate in one area. All that is required for participation is access to the internet and a computer with speakers. This is particularly important for health care professionals with on-call and weekend commitments.
- **Visual:** Video feature gives the learner and trainer the social benefits of face-to-face interaction.
- **Instant messaging:** The 'chat' function allows learners to make comments whilst the trainer is talking without causing disruption.
- **Quizzes:** The 'polling' function allows for on the spot quizzes to test knowledge acquisition and to provide immediate feedback to trainees on their understanding of the concepts presented.
- **Economical** – web conferencing technology is significantly more cost effective than installed video conferencing technology.

Roles

During the webinar, a variety of instructional roles have been developed to provide effective teaching and learning experiences to be provided. The role of moderator (or host) is undertaken by ANZCA staff from the EDU whose main role it is to offer any support that might be required. This has also required significant coaching on online delivery for inexperienced presenters.

The role of trainer (or presenter) is taken by an ANZCA Fellow who is online to make an expert presentation, pose and answer questions from the trainees who assume the role of attendees. To date, it has also been necessary to offer technical / administrative support for participants to assist with other aspects of attendance such as inability to logon, and requests for password reminders.

Trainees are able to ask the online trainer questions by either typing using the chat box feature or by using their microphone and asking their question using their web camera or in-built computer microphone. The process is exactly the same as it was in the traditional face-to-face environment that it replaces– the only difference here is that it is carried out completely online.

Format

During the interactive webinar, the trainer begins by giving an overview of the podcast that has usually been made available 2 – 3 weeks before the webinar takes place. They then invite the attending trainees to ask any questions they had in relation to the podcast topic. There are many features in-built to the online meeting space to encourage interaction amongst the trainees including the recently introduced ‘polling’ segment. This interactive component is similar to an online test where the presenter asks trainees pre-prepared short answer and multiple choice type questions. The trainees answer the questions by voting on the correct answer. The results submitted by the trainees are then shared anonymously and the presenter discusses the results.

The typical webinar format is as follows:

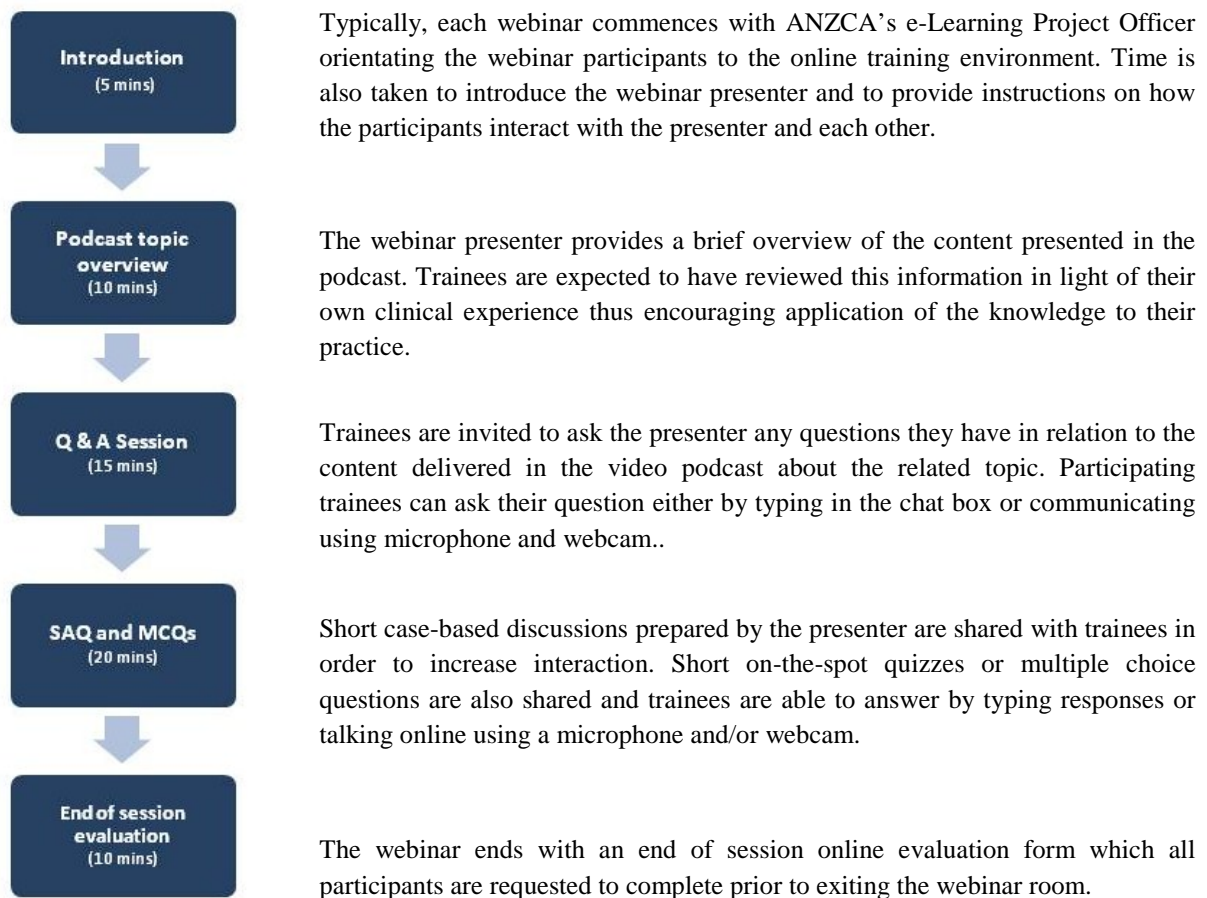


Figure 2: The ANZCA Webinar format

Communication is challenging with a geographically dispersed working cohort and trainees are notified of webinar events through a variety of communications channels including; personal email invitations to Trainees; adverts in the ANZCA Trainee Newsletter, ANZCA website and ANZCA e-Newsletter. Supervisors of Training, Regional Education Officers and ANZCA Regional Staff are also requested to notify the trainees that they supervise or liaise with. Currently, ANZCA Interactive webinars take place on a monthly basis and the feedback from trainees is very positive. Formal evaluation data will be provided. Indicative quotes are provided below:



Due to the success of the current program, ANZCA will continue to invest in this technology to facilitate training for a broader audience, including International Medical Graduate Specialists (IMGS) and Fellows of the College interested in pursuing CPD opportunities and to formally evaluate the applicability of this innovative model in these alternative cohorts.

Please cite as: Batur, S., Lawson, M. & Jones, O.. (2011). Interactive Webinars – the future of teaching and learning online. In G.Williams, P. Statham, N. Brown, B. Cleland (Eds.) *Changing Demands, Changing Directions. Proceedings ascilite Hobart 2011*. (pp.139-142).

<http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/hobart11/procs/batur-poster.pdf>

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