



ICS CANADA WEB DELIVERY BEST PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES

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Web Delivery of Training and COVID 19

Training has taken on a new “face” as we attempt to continue to conduct business during Covid-19 restrictions. Online deliveries of the introductory courses (“I-100, I-200 and I-402”) have been evaluated and determined that it is comparable to a classroom delivered session.

The assessment process was lead by AEMA and supported by ICS Canada and member agencies. 7 different agencies/training providers developed a version of the ICS Canada courses for web delivery using conferencing/meeting applications. Each class was assessed by at least one observer. Each observer completed a document provided to them for the purposes of assessing the delivery. The assessments were compiled, and it was determined that the training provided using video conferencing was at least equal to a classroom session in effectively completing the instructional objectives. Another key focus of the assessment team was the ability to properly facilitate and run exercises in private breakout rooms. All observed deliveries were successful in delivering exercise activities.

The results of the project supported using web delivery for training delivery.

To support A/AHJs in supporting training providers and/or to conduct training themselves via web, this document contains some basic information, best practices and guidelines to aid in developing web courses.

One of the observations that became apparent, the web delivery process provides to the A/AHJ an opportunity to observe deliveries and audit new instructors and courses.

This exercise was to develop a process that will allow agencies to continue training when COVID 19 has limited our ability to meet and function in group environments. After COVID 19 restrictions have been lifted, it will be re-evaluated by the ICS Canada membership and determined if this process continues to be an accepted method of delivery.

The following observations, best practices, guidelines and instructions should be provided to instructors to help guide them through the process should they find themselves with the opportunity to offer training using a video conferencing application.

The A/AHJ can at anytime be more restrictive and/or add to this document to meet requirements deemed necessary for their jurisdiction.

Conferencing Applications for Delivery

ICS Canada does not recommend any one web conferencing format. Whatever the application employed, it should have the following minimum features to facilitate an effective learning environment:

- Breakout Rooms – virtual meeting rooms where groups of students and instructor can participate in private discussions and work exercises. Instructors will determine the size and number of breakout rooms required.
- Video/Audio – the program must support computer video and audio for both the participant and instructor(s).

- Dial in audio line – Consider using applications with an optional “dial-in” toll free number for those connections with limited or slow internet speed/bandwidth. This will allow those with slow internet to participate by reducing the bandwidth requirements to support the application.
- Muting audio – program must support instructor/student ability to mute and unmute audio.
- File sharing/transfer – program must support 2-way exchange of files used for handouts or for completed exercises.

Best Practices

The following bullets are observations and information shared by observers and participants and may help in providing an effective learning environment for the attendee.

- Online training will not make better instructors out of mediocre or inexperienced instructors. As the lead instructor you must be prepared to:
 - Completely know your subject matter and
 - Be able to deal with any IT or technical issue that may arise during a session.
KNOW HOW TO TROUBLESHOOT YOUR PROGRAM!
- Instructors - practice, practice, practice – role play as a student and as an instructor in an attempt learn the program inside and out. Leverage the wealth of YouTube tutorials on many of the popular applications.
- Pay particular attention to rehearsing your exercises to ensure it is presented properly and that the student will understand the objectives and deliverables. The instructor may have to adjust and tweak the exercise to make it work for online training.
- Instructors are to set the ground rules early! Make sure student know and understand:
 - No multitasking, (work duties, SM)
 - No leaving training to attend meetings.
 - Students need to attend and be present for all the units.
- Have the students print off all exercise material and have it hard-copy for the training. It is easier to work the exercise using paper copy than tabbing or paging back and forth on a small screen. Another option that was observed in the Coast Guard delivery of an I200, they created something like a “quad chart” containing all the components of the exercise. It allowed the student to drag and view content, zoom in and out on one sheet without having to page back and forth using multiple pages.
- One training provider observed during our review, scheduled a time (days before the actual training) for each student to log-in with the instructor and work out connectivity issues. It also provided an opportunity to provide an orientation of the application especially if the attendee is not familiar with the program. Getting through corporate firewalls and students using VPN can be problematic and may require the attendee’s IT support to help in getting student access in advance to attending the course.

- Another instructor chose to dedicate the initial hour of the course to run an exercise (not connected to the course) where it engaged all the students at the same time and put them through a process that provided an orientation of the application and it solved most all of any IT issues they experienced.
- Try to maintain a 50 minute instructional time to 10 minute break to allow students to stretch, check calls, etc.
- When creating breakout groups, try to identify and place one person in each group that seem to possess an intuitive knowledge of how the video conferencing program works. Having at least one knowledgeable person in a group can help with any breakout activity.
 - Instructor must instruct each breakout group to designate one person to create a group copy of deliverables for presentation and designate one person to present the group copy of the exercise. Try to alternate roles when possible.
- Everyone – avoid using virtual backgrounds as it just consumes bandwidth and processing power.
- The instructor should use a headset with boom microphone for best audio quality and to minimize feedback. Headset users should check and ensure headsets are compatible with the application (yes some headsets are designed to work with specific applications). Instructors should avoid using wired earbuds. The lapel microphones on wired earbuds can drag on clothing and cause annoying background sound. Wireless connected headsets work well as long as you have a full charge. Some wireless headsets can provide extra batteries for quick swap out if running low. Instructors should not depend on using just speakers and computer microphone for running a course.
- The instructor should be always broadcasting their video feed so that you are visible at as much as possible. Students video is optional but try to promote student video usage. Students sending video help to provide a better immersive experience but there may be individual issues with attendees showing video for various reasons.
 - A good tactic to keep students engaged when they are not showing their video and to also keep them “on point” and paying attention during the course, the instructor should frequently throw questions, what if’s or ask for feedback from the students so that they pay better attention to the instructor. The instructor should create a print out of attendees as a hit list and use the list to keep tally of questions fielded to each student during the training. This will allow the instructor to quickly pull out a name without having to look at attendee lists on the application.
- Test your sound – how do you sound to your students? If you have a “hard room” you may hear echoes or a “tinny” sound to your audio. Carpets, hanging a blanket on hard bare walls, acoustic absorbent tiles all help to soak up echoes and sound reflection.
 - Echoes (feedback) can also be caused by “open microphones”. Instructors and students should always mute microphone when not speaking.

- Lighting – Brush up on good lighting tips. There are lots of resources online to show you do’s and don’ts for web training lighting. The instructor should be well lit and provide a clean, clear, bright image when presenting.
 - If you wear glasses, position lighting so that the reflection of your computer screen isn’t blocking out your eyes.
- Camera positioning – avoid placing camera low (“up the nose shots” should be avoided). Ideally place your camera just over the material you are reading from so it looks like you are looking directly at the student when speaking. Place camera at eye level. Make special effort and get into practice looking directly into camera. Reading the speaker notes, prompts or script while looking off to one side at another part of your screen or a second screen, can be distracting.
 - On one delivery, a training provider staged a podium with a couple of wall charts and a white board. The instructor also had a person to operate the camera and followed the instructor as they moved around the stage. The camera operator also could zoom, focus and frame the video so that it actually provided a very realistic immersive experience. To properly equip this setup, the instructor will require wireless headset/mic combination to be wire free to roam the staged area. This setup allowed the instructor freedom to move about the stage during the presentation ... just as an instructor would move around a class. The camera operator can also be the IT support for the instructor or monitor the presentation during the course.
- Record yourself and replay your presentations to self evaluate your presentation methods. Watch other instructors when possible to learn new techniques. Be aware that recording student participation in a class may not be permitted by many agencies.
- If the client or course host is agreeable, consider breaking up the course in ½ day segments. Schedule it so that the course is a morning or afternoon session allowing the participant to follow up with regular duties within the workplace. Also it will be easier to absorb as student is exposed to shorter sessions and they could easily review material between sessions.
- Consider using “Knowledge Review” quizzes after each unit. It can be facilitated as a group discussion with instructor picking students to respond to questions, or individually using a written quiz. I have seen one facilitator use “ICS Jeopardy” as a way to conduct a review or knowledge check.
- Be aware of “Time Zones” if you have attendees from across the country when scheduling training.

ICS Canada Instructional Material and Delivery Recommendations

- **Do not** reformat PowerPoint presentation to 16:9. Maintain 4:3 format of slides.
- Contractors are not to include their brand or logo on the ICS Canada materials.
- Contractors will avoid incorporating or demonstrating 3rd party applications to demonstrate or facilitate the creations of IAPs or completion of forms within the training. It can be permitted if it is an application used by the organization hosting the training and all attendees are required to become proficient using the application within their agency. It is preferred that 3rd party applications be exercised or demonstrated in a separate session and the instruction remains focused on ICS.
- **Do not** change font, font size, font colour, background or background colour, header and footer content. What is provided is to be consistent with the ICS Canada branding.
 - **An A/AHJ can include their logo** to the material as long as it is **equal to or subordinate** to the ICS Canada branding.
 - Example: An A/AHJ may place their logo opposite to the ICS Canada logo in the slide master header of a PowerPoint slide.
 - Example: An A/AHJ can place their logo opposite to the ICS Canada logo on ICS Canada course certificates.
 - If you have to word-wrap the title of slide to accommodate your custom header, ensure that the letters of the title do not come in contact with the line separating the slide title and slide body.
- **Do not** substitute ICS Canada processes with a discipline's, an agency's, or a company's incident management processes. If an instructor is asked to include a process different than what is taught within the ICS Canada program, they are required to teach to the ICS Canada process first and then follow with "how we do it", to ensure that the student is taught the standard process first followed with any custom processes .
 - Example: Some agencies still use Sector Leaders or Sector Bosses within their organizational structure in Operations. Explain the ICS Canada process first then explain the agency/discipline/company process following.
 - Example: Some agencies use two ICPs in their organizational structure. The instructor will explain that within the ICS Canada standard, is that there is only one ICP for an incident. Then proceed to explain why there is a difference to the discipline/agency/company personnel attending training.
- Replacing pictures in slides is supported so that the instructor can provide familiar imagery for the client. Keep in mind **that ICS Canada is working to improve gender equality and ethnic inclusivity in all our graphics**, and it is required that this is maintained if the instructor replaces imagery.

- **Any changes you make to the power point slides will need to be reflected in the student interactive workbook.**
- Exercises can be substituted **only after approval from the A/AHJ.**
- Additional content **can be added as long as nothing is removed** from the ICS Canada curriculum.
- All final test must be conducted online using an internal LMS or 3rd party online testing services. If there is a scenario where an instructor may have a group in a board room participating in the training rather than each at their own workstation, then testing must be configured so that the student can log on and individually take the test or the instructor will arrange for an invigilator to administer the exam locally, collect and forward the exam to the instructor. **All extra copies of exams not in the lead instructor's possession are to be collected and destroyed or deleted.**
- Recommend a **maximum 10:1** student to instructor ratio. **A/AHJ can be more restrictive.**
 - Monitoring exercises is more difficult in a web environment vs a classroom environment. Once instructor can actively monitor several groups during an exercise and intervene when required to keep the exercise on track. Web deliveries do not provide the same opportunities and it is best handled when each group has a dedicated instructor. A good instructor can manage 2 rooms but will be challenged if they are managing more than 2.
 - It is recommended that one instructor should not attempt to manage more than 2 breakout rooms during exercises. Breakout group size seem best with 4-5 students.
 - If there are more than 2 breakout groups, a second instructor is recommended
- Recommended to distribute student material in advance of course so that it can be uploaded or printed prior to the attendance of training. The student interactive workbook is designed to be viewed on a computer, personal device or printed out hard copy.
- **Highly recommend** that students print out the exercise components for each exercise. It is much easier to work exercises with all papers spread out in front of you.