Evaluating online engagement:
a guide with best practice examples

Best practice examples for evaluating virtual festivals and online Public Engagement with Research events

December 2021

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Contents

Introduction

There are a range of tools and approaches that can be used to evaluate a virtual festival or online Public Engagement with Research event. This guide demonstrates real examples of online evaluation tools that have been used for previous virtual festivals and online events at the University of Oxford.

About this guide

This guide is for researchers and engagement facilitators who would like to evaluate a virtual festival or online event; or those interested in online evaluation tools for other Public Engagement with Research projects. Find out about a range of online evaluation tools that have been used by researchers and engagement facilitators at the University of Oxford, who share their best practice examples and top tips for evaluating online engagement activities.

Why evaluate?

Evaluation is a process to collect evidence, learn from your experiences and can provide you with:

- Evidence of outcomes and different types of impact.
- The opportunity to reflect, learn and improve online activities.
- An understanding as to whether your virtual activity is fit for purpose and target participants.

Selecting an online evaluation tool

Selecting the appropriate online evaluation method and tools depends on the nature of your engagement activity and its objectives; the purpose of your evaluation; your respondents and how you can reach them; and the resources available for the evaluation.

When deciding which evaluation tool is right for your online event, ask yourself the following questions:

- Who do you want to include in your evaluation (i.e. your sample)?
- Which evaluation method will be most appropriate to reach your target respondents? How can you reach them?
- Do you want the participants to complete the evaluation live during the online event, or after the event?
- What people and resources are available to design and carry out the evaluation?

Evaluation tool: Slido

About the evaluation tool

Slido is an online polling platform that uses live multiple choice, open text and rating questions; and can also be integrated into PowerPoint presentations.

Cost:

Free (maximum of three polls/ questions per event). In the free account, results can only be shown on the website dashboard analytics. Price plans from £8 per month are available for unlimited polls and quizzes, and the option to export results as a PDF or Excel Spreadsheet.
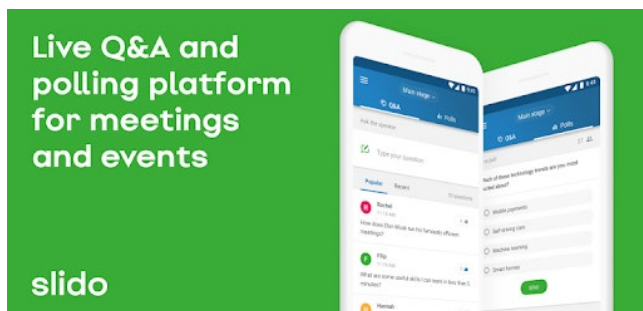
CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:
Won't you look a little closer?
Pain beyond the pelvis in endometriosis

This online educational event took place in March 2021 on Zoom to explore widespread pain through visual art and highlight pain in endometriosis that exists outside of the pelvis. A total of 40 people attended, and the event brought together researchers, clinicians, representatives from endometriosis charities and support groups; together with artists and people living with endometriosis-associated pain, to learn about endometriosis and the unspoken impact it has on the lives of people with endometriosis-associated pain.

What were the objectives of the event?

- To increase public awareness about endometriosis, and highlight research being done in the field of pain, the NDWRH and Endometriosis UK.
- To evoke conversations around endometriosis-associated pain that challenge the heavily-focused pelvis pain narrative surrounding endometriosis.
- To challenge perceptions of endometriosis pain localization amongst people with endometriosis.

Evaluation questions:

1. How many people attended the event?
2. Did people's perceptions of endometriosis-associated pain change?
3. Did people learn about endometriosis research?
4. Did people learn about pain through the means of art and science?
5. What were the successes and challenges of facilitating the event online?

Evaluation tool: Slido

During the event, online participants were given a direct link to a Slido poll and could answer the questions on their own device (respondents could also go to Slido.com and type in the event code). The three Slido questions were designed to be completed live during the event, and the event facilitator activated each question one at a time (i.e. participants completed each question at the same time, before being automatically moved onto the next question).

The following three questions were included on the Slido poll:
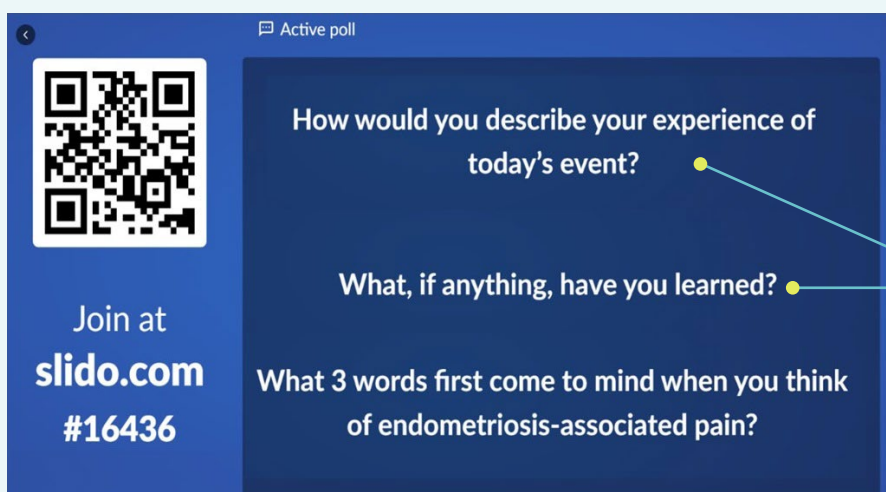
> **Open-ended questions on Slido. The responses to these questions were kept private and hidden from other audience members.**

Slido includes the option of creating a word cloud to visualise participants' responses to a question. The following word cloud was used to highlight the responses to the question, 'What 3 words first come to mind when you think of endometriosis-associated pain?'.
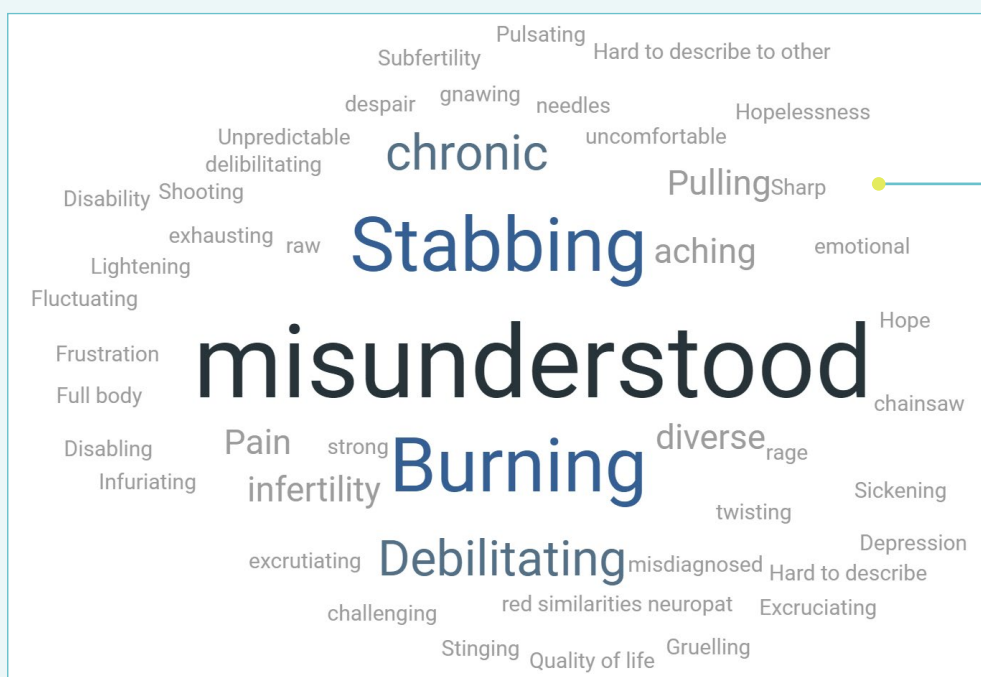
> **In the word cloud, the more common the word, the larger it is represented. This word cloud was shared with audience members live during the event.**

Response level:
24 (60% response rate)

What did the results tell us?

Overall, respondents had a positive experience of the event and described this as interesting and informative. Outcomes on the attendees included: increased understanding about endometriosis and endometriosis-associated pain; raised awareness of art as a way to communicate experiences of pain; and feeling connected and supported by the endometriosis community. At the end of the event, the word "misunderstood" most frequently came to people's minds when they thought about endometriosis-associated pain.

Top tips and reflections

'Slido was a simple and light-touch evaluation approach that felt part of the overall event, rather than an add-on. Logistically we needed to have another person to facilitate the poll and flip between questions during the event. Slido gives you the option to either hide the results from participants, or to share the responses. We decided to share the results to the final question ('What 3 words first come to mind when you think of endometriosis-associated pain?'), which created a simple word cloud to highlight the most commonly used words.'

Danielle Perro
(DPhil Student, Nuffield Department of Women's & Reproductive Health)

Links and resources

Slido poll webpage
**Pain beyond the pelvis project webpage**

Evaluation tool: Padlet

About the evaluation tool
Padlet is an online sticky notes board, which allows individuals and groups to post their comments, questions and resources in one place. Participants are invited to add virtual post-it notes that can include words, links, videos, images and document files.

Cost:
Free (up to 6 Padlet boards). Responses can be exported as a PDF, Excel Spreadsheet or image in the free account. Paid accounts are available from £10 per month, which include unlimited Padlets.
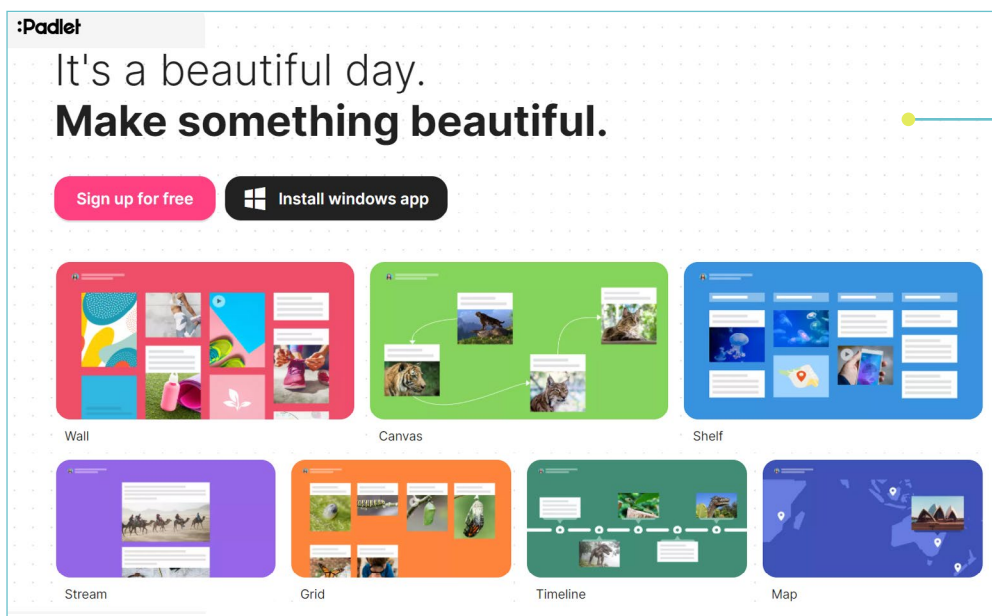
Padlet has a range of different layouts you can use to create an interactive board.

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:
White Rose Circle Café

The White Rose Circle Café took place via Zoom in November 2020, as part of the *Being Human* Festival of the Humanities. This event aimed to raise awareness of the White Rose resistance group, 'Die Weiße Rose', who between 1942 and 1943 wrote and disseminated six pamphlets calling on the German people to resist Nazism. A total of 8 members of the public attended the event.
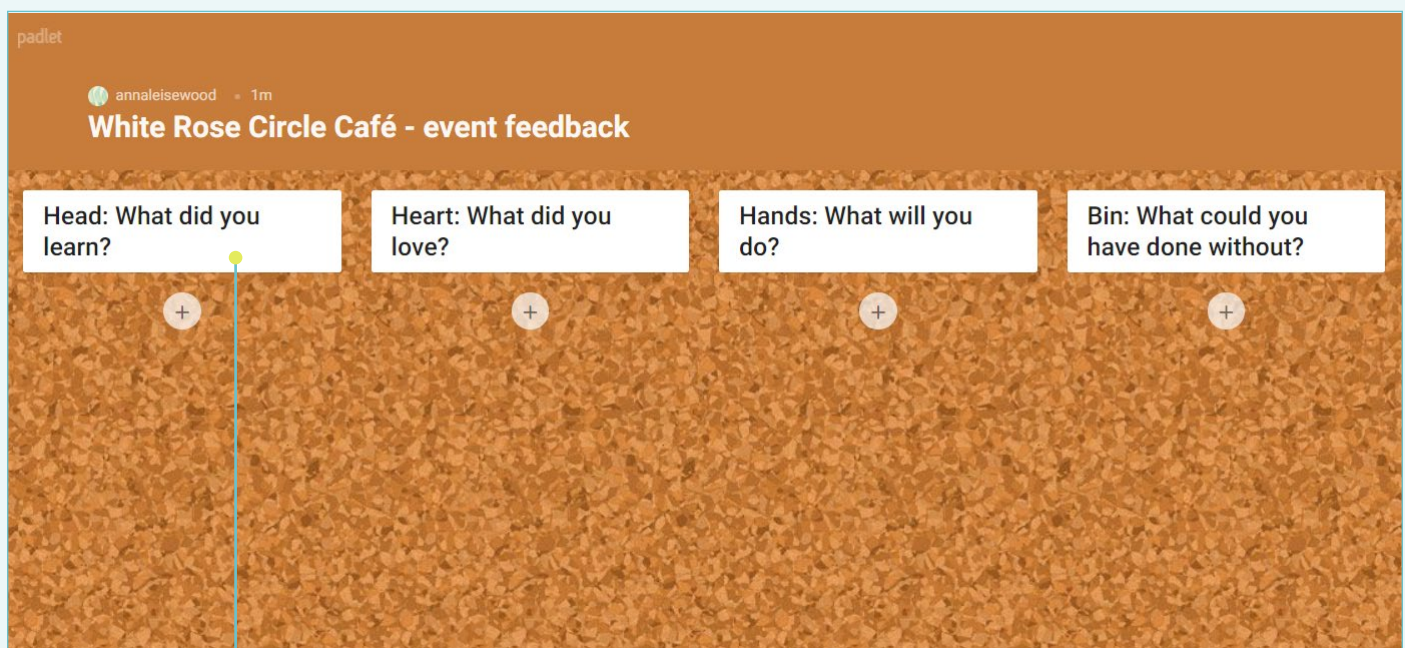
What were the objectives of the event?

- To raise awareness of the White Rose resistance group.
- To facilitate an opportunity for participants to discuss how culture can inspire us to create a better world.
- To encourage participants to think about the value of culture and the humanities.

Evaluation questions:

1. How many people registered; how many people attended?
2. Did participants learn about the White Rose resistance group?
3. Did participants feel inspired by the White Rose resistance group?
4. What learning and recommendations can be made for future online Humanities activities and events?

Evaluation tool: Padlet

Participants were invited to share their thoughts and experiences of the event through Padlet. When creating the Padlet board, the 'Shelf' layout was used in order to include four questions as headings along the top of the board. Participants were invited to respond to each question by adding a post-it note under each heading. Responses were anonymous and hidden from other participants by using the 'approve all posts' function in the Padlet settings.

padlet

annaleisewood · 1m
White Rose Circle Café - event feedback

Head: What did you learn?

Heart: What did you love?

Hands: What will you do?

Bin: What could you have done without?

Open-ended questions are used on Padlet as headings.

Response level:

4 (50% response rate)

What did the results tell us?

Overall, respondents emphasised that the event was enjoyable and thought-provoking. Attendees highlighted that the event increased their knowledge and awareness of the White Rose resistance group; while they enjoyed the opportunity to engage in discussion with the researchers and other participants and felt inspired by the enthusiasm and creative thinking of the group.

Top tips and reflections

'Padlet was an interactive tool and straight-forward for participants to engage with. The participants were asked to complete this as part of the event, and the activity was integrated into the session to encourage responses there and then, rather than relying on them completing it afterwards. The open-ended questions were designed to encourage people's open and honest reactions to the event. As with many online events, there was a drop-out towards the end of the session and fewer participants were present in Zoom to complete the Padlet. In future, it could be beneficial to ask questions via Padlet during the event, for example to explore attendees' knowledge, understanding and perceptions about the topic.'

Dr Alexandra Lloyd (Fellow by Special Election in German Studies at St Edmund Hall)

Links and resources

Padlet interactive whiteboard
White Rose Project webpage

Evaluation tool: Vevox

About the evaluation tool

Vevox is a real-time audience engagement platform, which includes multiple choice questions, open-ended questions and word cloud polls; and is easy to use and visually appealing. Vevox is also recommended by the University of Oxford and is available for free for University staff and students. Results can be exported as an Excel Spreadsheet or image, and Vevox can be integrated with Microsoft Teams and PowerPoint. Participants can be anonymous or identifiable, and password protection can be used if needed.

Cost:

Free for University of Oxford staff and students. To request a free Vevox account, visit **Centre for Teaching and Learning – Vevox**.
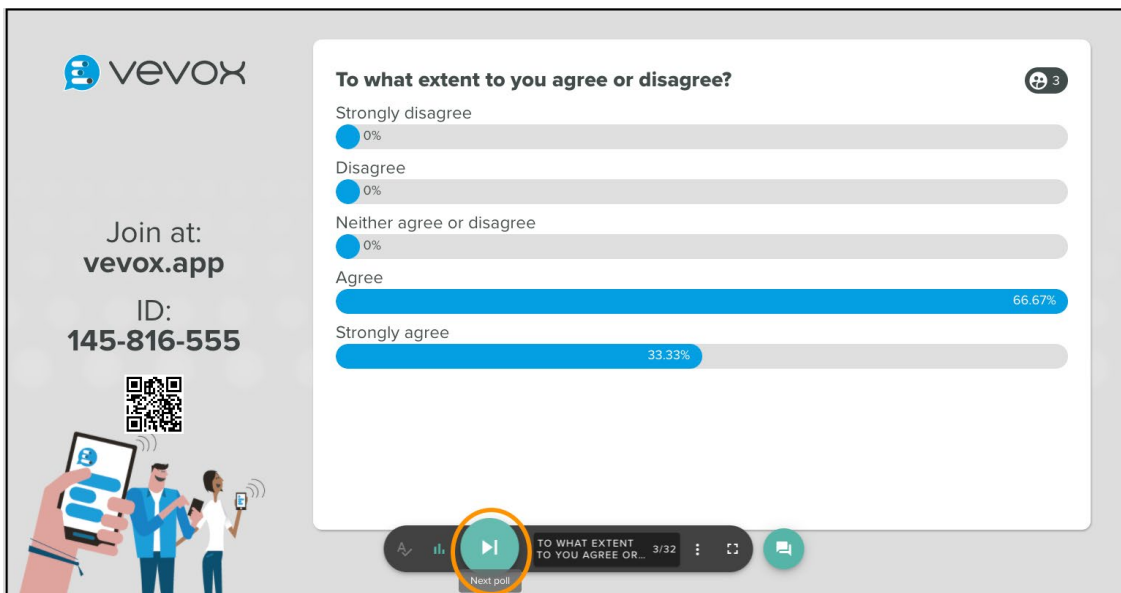
CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:
Project Managers Network Meeting

The Project Managers Network is group of project managers in the Department of Psychiatry, which meets each month to share information and provide opportunities for networking. The 1.5-hour meetings take place online via MS Teams, and consist of guest speakers who present around a particular topic followed by group discussion and networking.

What were the objectives of the meeting?

• To provide an opportunity for networking amongst project managers.
• To encourage information sharing on software, processes and protocols.
• To provide peer support on project related issues.

Evaluation questions:

1. How many Network members attended the meetings?
2. What topics are members most interested in discussing?
3. How could the format of the meetings be improved to encourage more interaction between members?
4. What would members most like to get out of the Network?

Evaluation tool: Vevox

Meeting participants were invited to share their thoughts through Vevox and could join the poll either by the direct link or entering the ID code via the Vevox website. The online poll included six questions, such as "what topics are you interested in?", "what shall we do to promote more interaction between members?" and "what would you like to get out of this network?". An example of one of the questions and the responses is illustrated below:
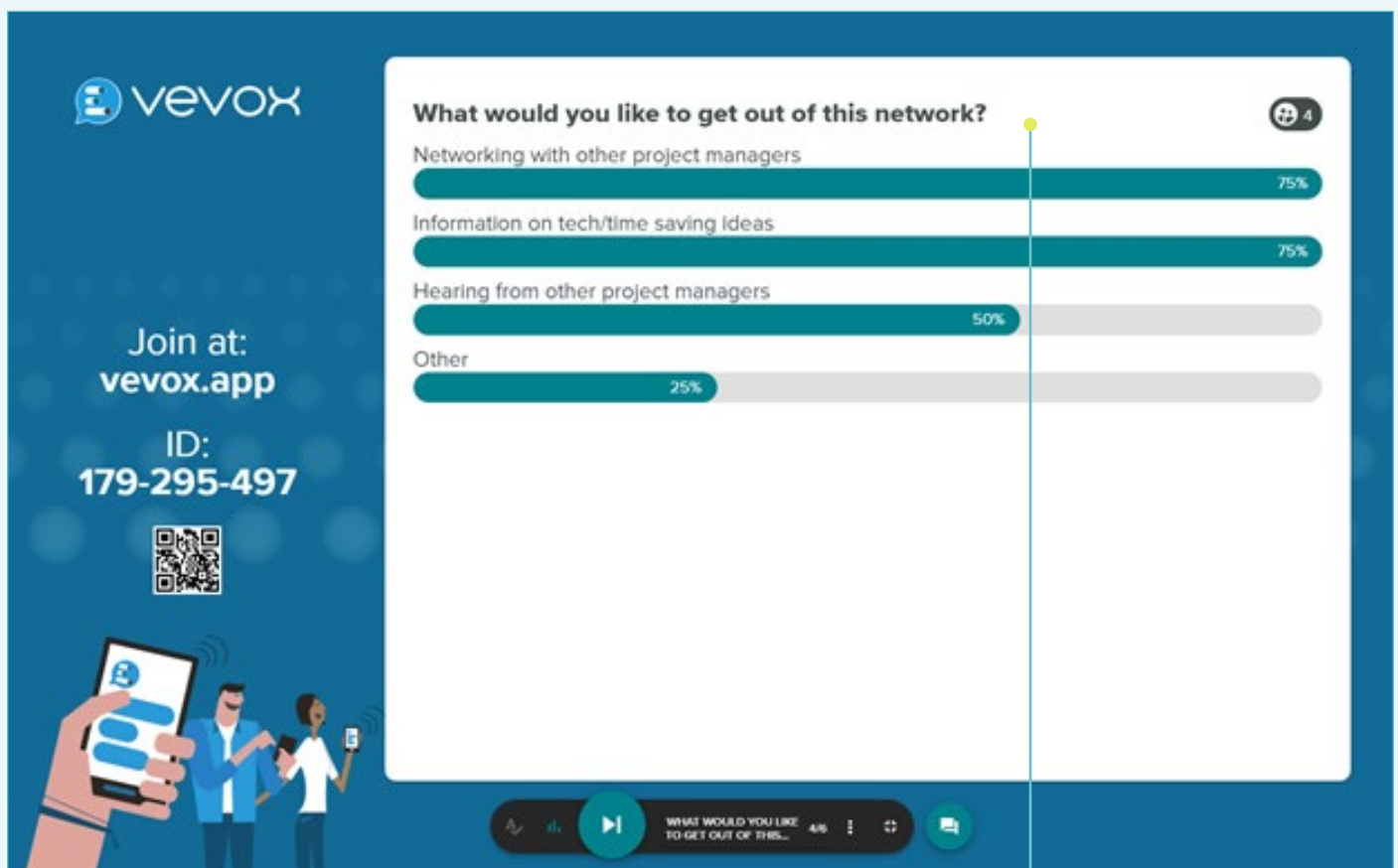
Here, a closed question with multiple choice answer options was used

Response level:

12 (100% response rate)

What did the results tell us?

The results highlighted the specific topics that project managers were most interested in and ideas for how to promote more interaction between members. The insights helped to inform the development and direction of future meetings, and to ensure that these met the needs of attendees.

Top tips and reflections

'Having previously used an online (limited to two questions & not University approved) interactive tool I was keen to try a University approved tool. We chose VEVOX available through our inhouse Microsoft Package. We wanted to use something with an interactive approach that makes it a bit more interesting for attendees, as they see the results changing live and it feels more encouraging to participate, much more than a boring email evaluation sent out after the event, which generally has a very poor response rate. By logging in the app via ID on a phone makes it easy, fast and it is a nice piece of software for both participants and evaluators to use.
This is a good tool, but it takes a bit of getting used too, I would definitely do a proper run through a couple of times first to make sure you are confident in using it.
The layout and style are pleasant, however with the free option you cannot format colour themes, which is a downside, but the visuals are nice and the questions formation was simple to follow and gives a good broad range of multiple choice, open text and the chance for people to make only one or multiple entries which is a helpful feature, along with Q&A space. The allowance for multiple answers was a helpful feature.'

Claire Renshaw (Project Officer, Department of Psychology)

Links and resources

Vevox audience engagement platform
How to access a free Vevox account for University of Oxford staff and students
Guidance on integrating Vevox with Microsoft Teams

Evaluation tool:
Mentimeter

About the evaluation tool

Mentimeter is a web-based polling tool with real-time voting and questions to engage your audience. The question options include multiple choice, open-ended, quizzes, Q&A and live word clouds that emphasise the most popular words submitted by an audience. Mentimeter can also be integrated into PowerPoint presentations.

Cost:

Free (up to two questions are included in the free account and responses are visualised in a PDF and presentation screenshot). Price plans from £8.99 per month are available for unlimited polls and use of the export results to Excel feature.
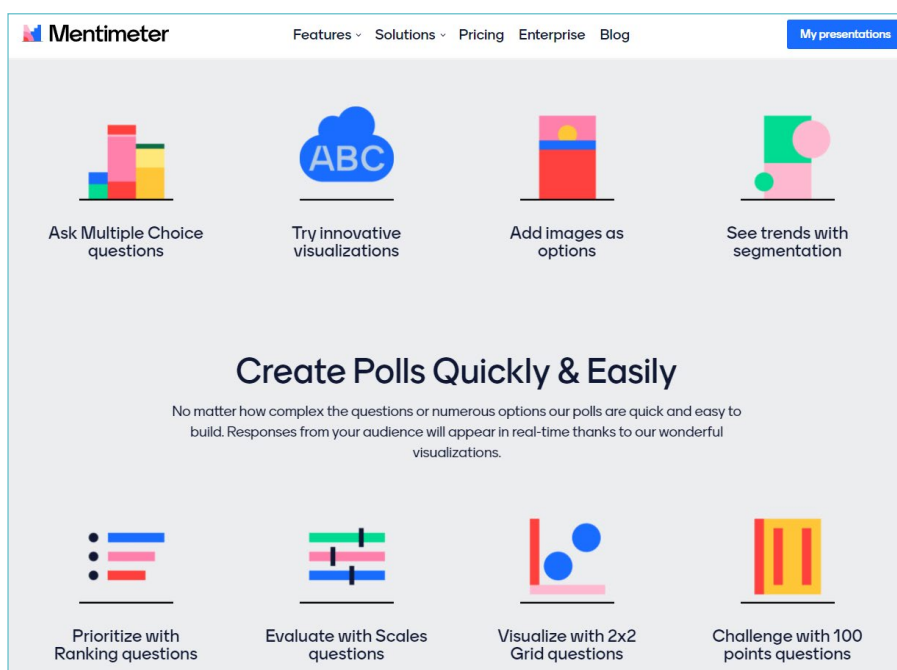
CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:
Leopards, Mountains and Politics

This virtual talk took place in March 2021, as part of the Oxford Martin School series of online events. During the event, Dr Mohammad Farhadinia explored the critical role of mountains for biodiversity conservation amidst international political concerns. A total of 180 delegates watched the event live via the CrowdCast platform (314 registered), which was recorded and uploaded to YouTube.

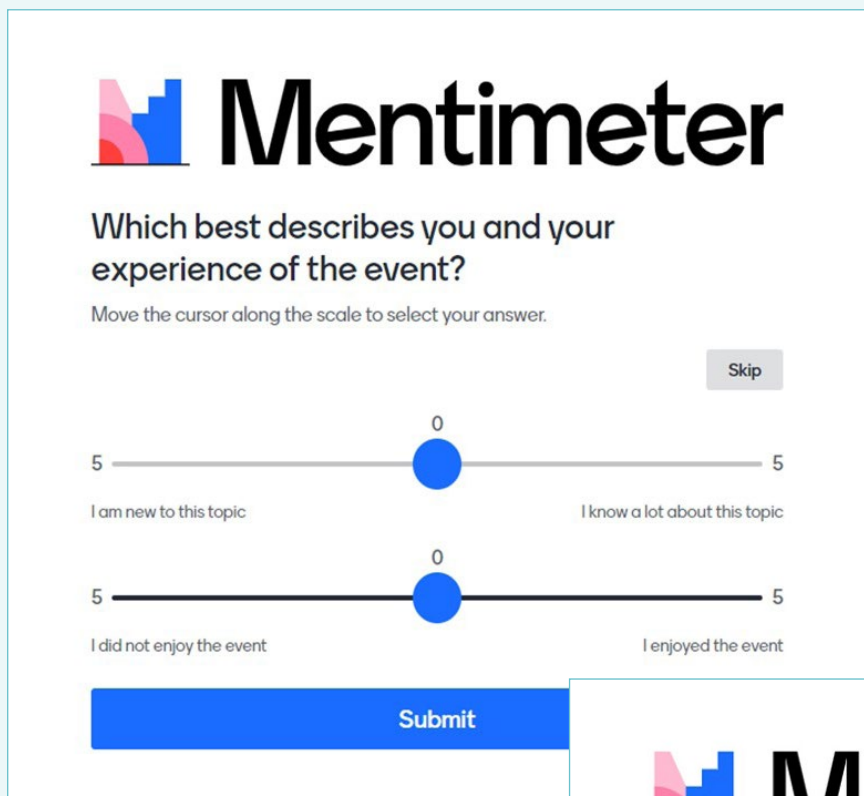### What were the objectives of the event?

- To share results from ongoing research around leopards, mountains and politics with researchers and members of the public.
- To raise awareness of the relationship between leopards, mountains and politics.
- To raise awareness of the importance of transboundary conservation; and the opportunities and challenges facing this.

Evaluation questions:

1. How many people registered; how many people attended? Who attended (i.e. University of Oxford researchers; members of the public).
2. Did people enjoy the event?
3. Did people learn about the connection between leopards, mountains and politics?
4. Did people learn about the challenges and opportunities for transboundary conservation?

Evaluation tool: Mentimeter

Audience members were invited to share their thoughts about the event via a Mentimeter poll, which was shared with attendees at the end of the event. A link to the poll was added as a pop-up box in CrowdCast live at the end of the event. The following questions were included in the Mentimeter poll:
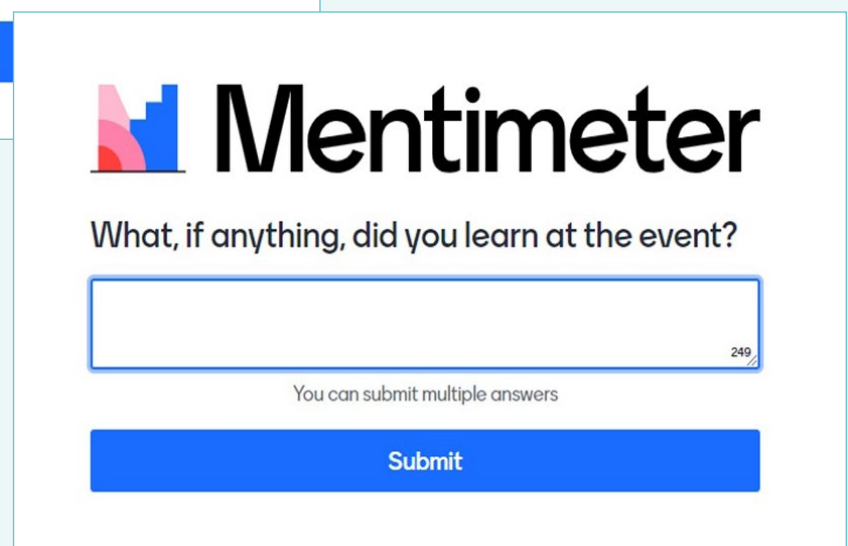
Response level:

55 (31% response rate)

What did the results tell us?

Overall, 48/ 55 respondents highlighted that they enjoyed the online event, and the majority of respondents had some previous knowledge about the topic. Respondents shared that they learned about the importance of transboundary collaboration and co-operation, and the significance of transboundary areas and international borders in leopard conservation. Participants emphasised that they are now more aware of a range of challenges facing the conservation of leopards, for example, border fencing, sovereign borders and border conflict.

Top tips and reflections

'The Mentimeter questionnaire was simple to set up, user-friendly and easy for audience members to complete live during the event. This was a light-touch evaluation method and enabled us to interact with the audience members using real-time voting/ questions. The main downside of Mentimeter is that the free version is limited to two questions, which can limit its interactivity; and that the results cannot be exported as an Excel spreadsheet in the free version.'

Dr Mohammad Farhadinia
(Research Fellow, Oxford Martin School and Department of Zoology)

Links and resources

Mentimeter web-based polling tool
Oxford Martin School recording of Leopards, Borders and Politics event
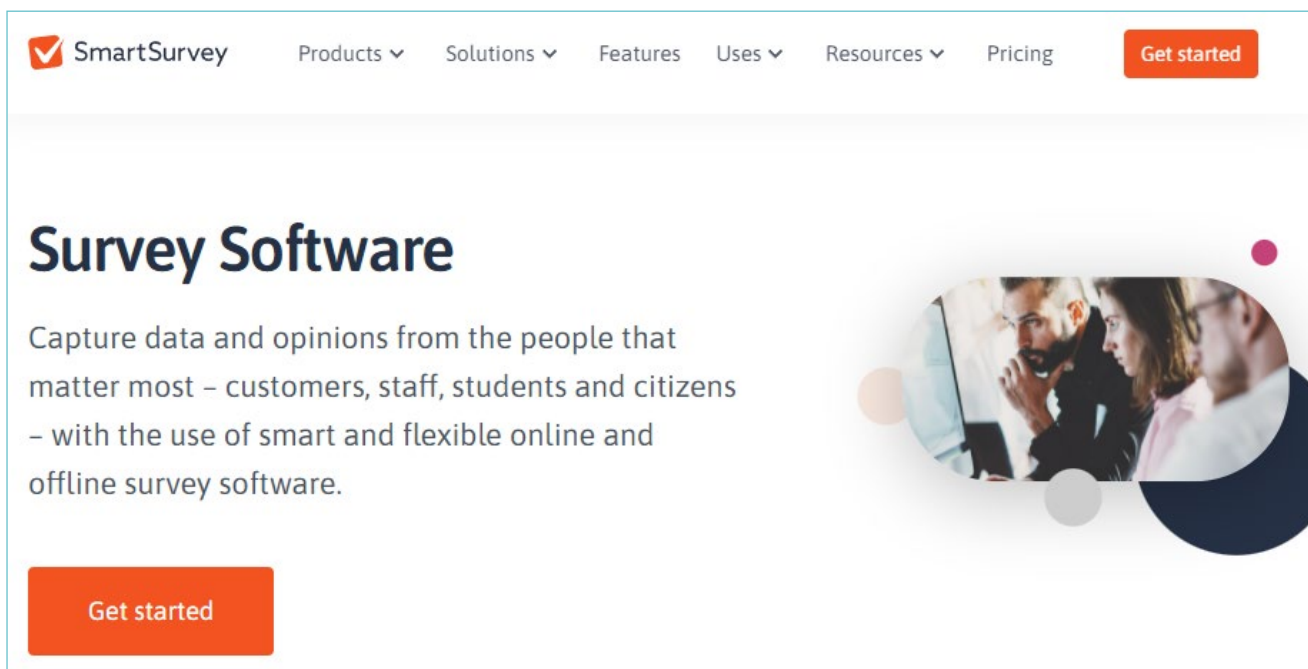
Evaluation tool:
Smart Survey

About the evaluation tool

Smart Survey is an online survey tool that offers a range of questions types such as ranking, rating and open-ended questions. The platform also provides the option to design questions that allow respondents to engage with videos, audio or images embedded within surveys.

Cost:

Free (the basic free account includes up to 15 questions per survey; and up to 100 responses per month). Paid plans start from £30 per month and include unlimited questions, unlimited responses and results can be exported to Excel, PDF or Word.

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:
Pitt Rivers Museum webinar series

The "Radical Hope, Beyond the Museum" webinar series was the Pitt Rivers Museum's first series of digital webinar events. Started in Autumn 2020 to maintain connection with audiences while the museum was closed, the series has grown to be a regular program, featuring discussions, presentations, film showings, and other events highlighting the Museum's research, community partnerships, and decolonization efforts.

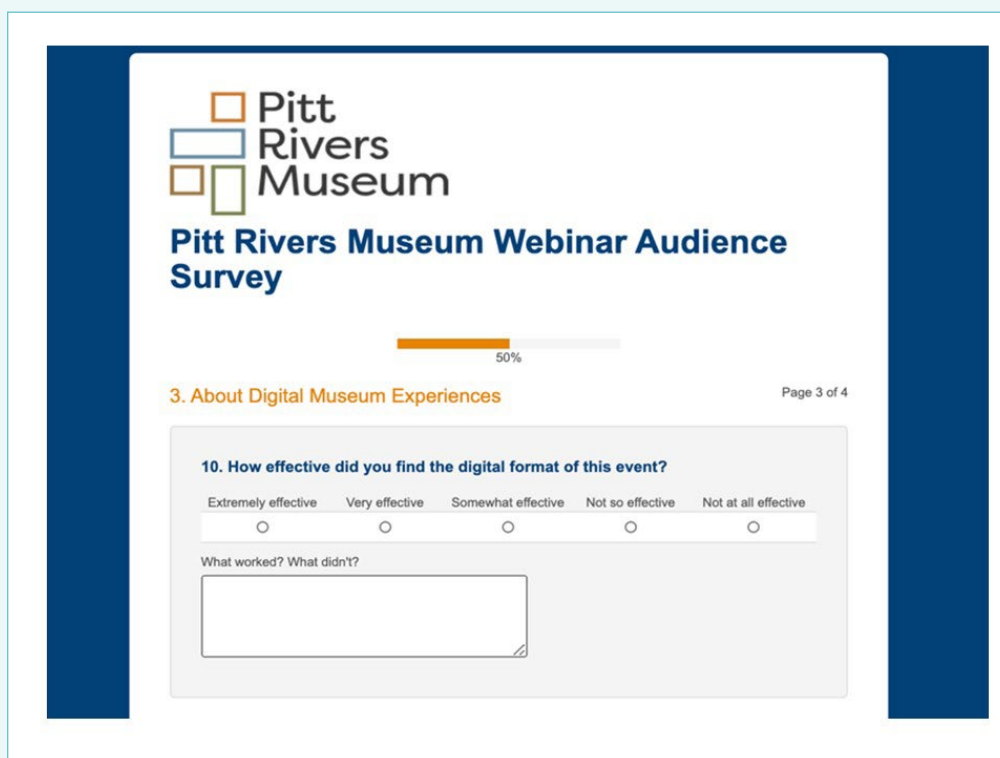### What were the objectives of the webinar series?

- To reach a wide, diverse audience through the online platform.
- To support involved community partners and to facilitate conversation and learning among participants around the Radical Hope concept.

Evaluation questions:

1. How many people and who attended the webinar events?
2. What worked well and what did not work well?
3. How did the event change people's perception of the topic or of the Museum?
4. Why did people attend the event?

Evaluation tool: Smart Survey

The online platform, Smart Survey, was used to design and administer a post-event survey that was circulated to participants after each webinar event.
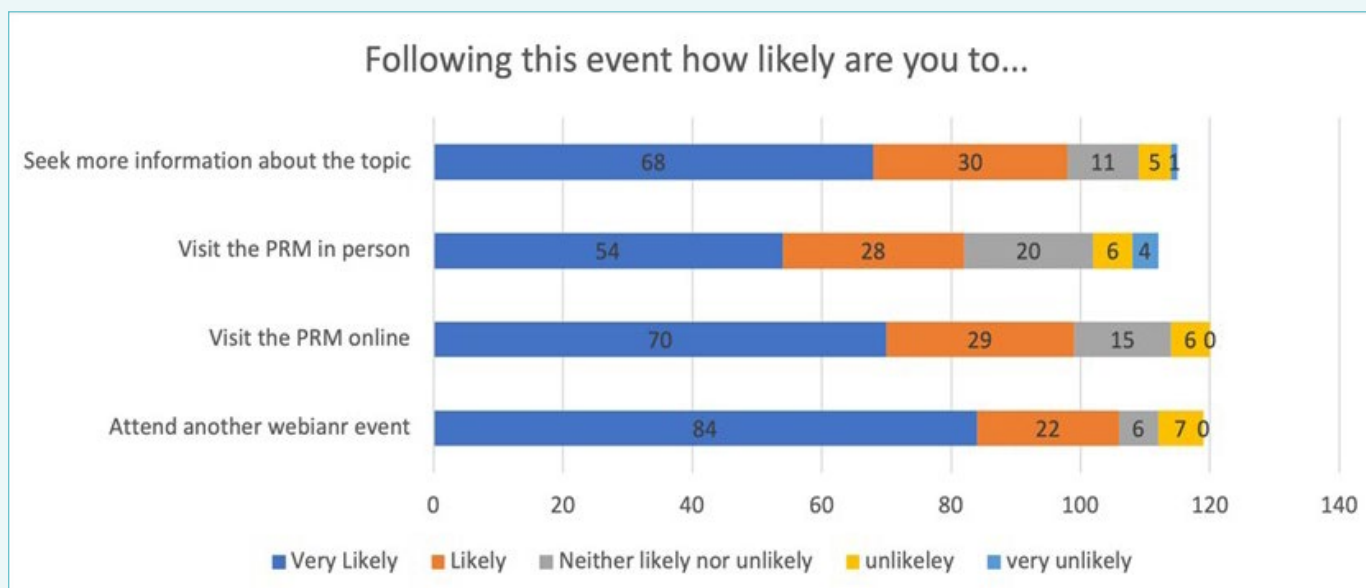

Response rate:

181 survey responses across the 8 events (the response varied between 5 – 15% of attendees per event).

What did the results tell us?

The results provided an understanding of who the digital attendees were and from where they were joining. The majority of respondents were from the UK, but attendees also came from as far as South Africa, Argentina, Egypt, and India. There was a mix of attendees who had visited the Museum as well as those who had never visited in person. Responses indicated that the accessibility of the digital events allowed many to participate who would otherwise not be able to attend in person. Feedback was largely positive, though there were complaints about certain technical elements of the events — i.e., respondents indicated they preferred live discussions over pre-recorded elements.

Following this event how likely are you to...

	Very Likely	Likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	unlikeley	very unlikely
Seek more information about the topic	68	30	11	5	1
Visit the PRM in person	54	28	20	6	4
Visit the PRM online	70	29	15	6	0
Attend another webianr event	84	22	6	7	0

Top tips and reflections

'The biggest difficulty with any kind of online survey, especially one that comes after the event, is participation. While some of these events attracted hundreds of attendees, a relatively small percent actually completed the survey, and it seems to be a somewhat self-selecting group (many mentioned being professionals or academics in the museum field). I think the Zoom Webinar survey function might allow for greater participation because attendees won't have to go to another platform. Our survey was also quite long (18 questions) because we were experimenting with the format and trying to collect information on a broad range of topics. A shorter, more targeted approach would probably work better. But Smart Survey was a useful survey tool in allowing many different kinds of questions and being straightforward to design and use.'

Brittany Ellis (PhD Student in History, Theory, and Criticism)

Links and resources

Smart Survey online survey tool
About the Pitt Rivers Museum webinar series, Radical Hope, Critical Change

Evaluation tool: Google Jamboard

About the evaluation tool

Google Jamboard is a digital interactive whiteboard tool whereby participants share ideas and thoughts by writing, drawing, inserting images and adding post-it notes. Participants can sketch out ideas, problem solve, or collaborate in real time.

Cost:

Free (Google account is required)
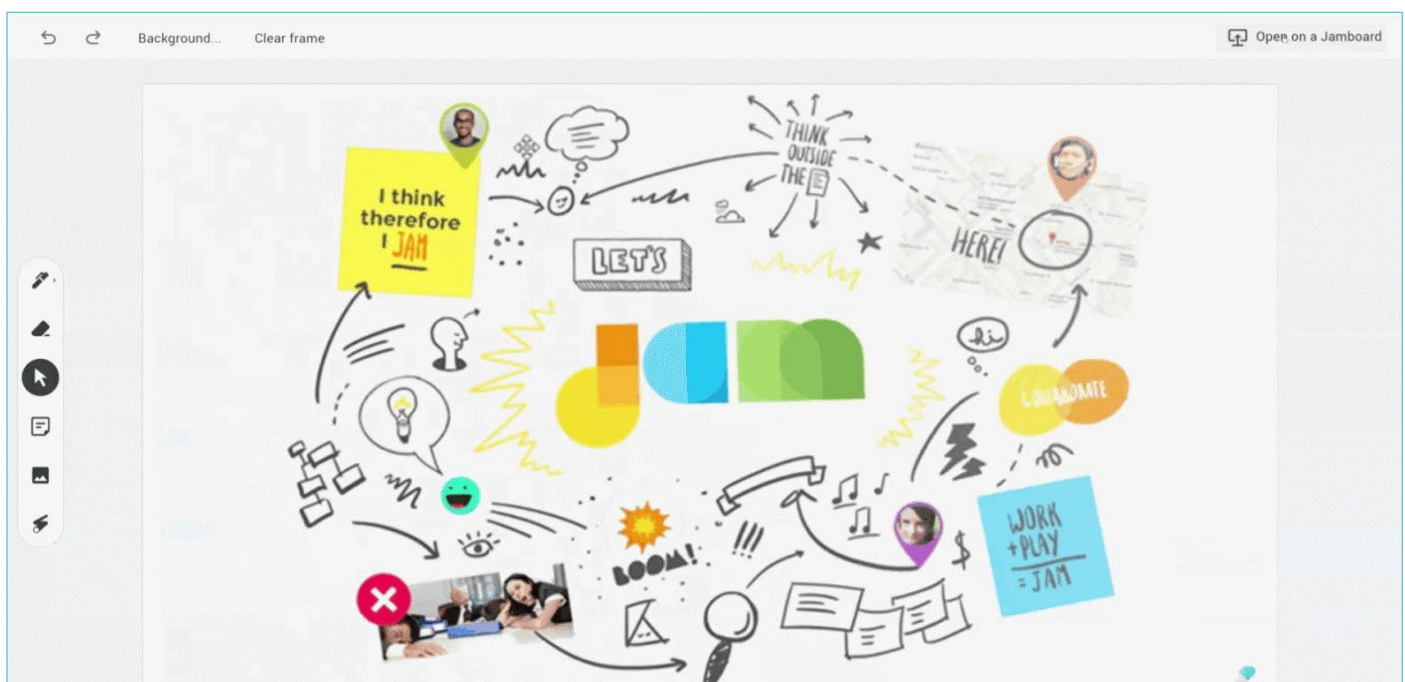
CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:
Creative Translation workshops

This was a series of online sessions run by the Queen's College Translation Exchange, training undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Oxford and University of East Anglia to become 'Creative Translation Ambassadors'. Ambassadors design and deliver 'creative translation' workshops for young people either in classrooms or via virtual means which aim to enrich language-learning and teaching; and increase intercultural awareness and aspiration.

For each cohort of students, there were two Zoom sessions lasting 3 hours each, with around 20 participants in each.

What were the objectives of the event?

- To introduce participants to the principles behind Creative Translation.
- To give participants the experience of participating in a Creative Translation workshop.
- To equip participants with the skills, tools and resources to design and deliver workshops.

Evaluation questions:

1. Did the participants sufficiently understand what Creative Translation is and what it is for?
2. Were participants convinced of the value of Creative Translation?
3. By the end of the training, did participants feel confident to design and deliver workshops themselves?
4. Did participants enjoy the training?

Evaluation tool: Google Jamboard

Participants were invited to share their thoughts about the training by adding post-it notes to four Jamboards throughout the online sessions in response to simple questions. A Jamboard was used at the beginning and end of the first session, to explore any changes in participants' conceptions and expectations. At the beginning of the second session, a Jamboard enabled the facilitators to gather reflections on the previous session and any queries or concerns that needed to be addressed. A final Jamboard at the end of the second session collated responses to the whole training programme.
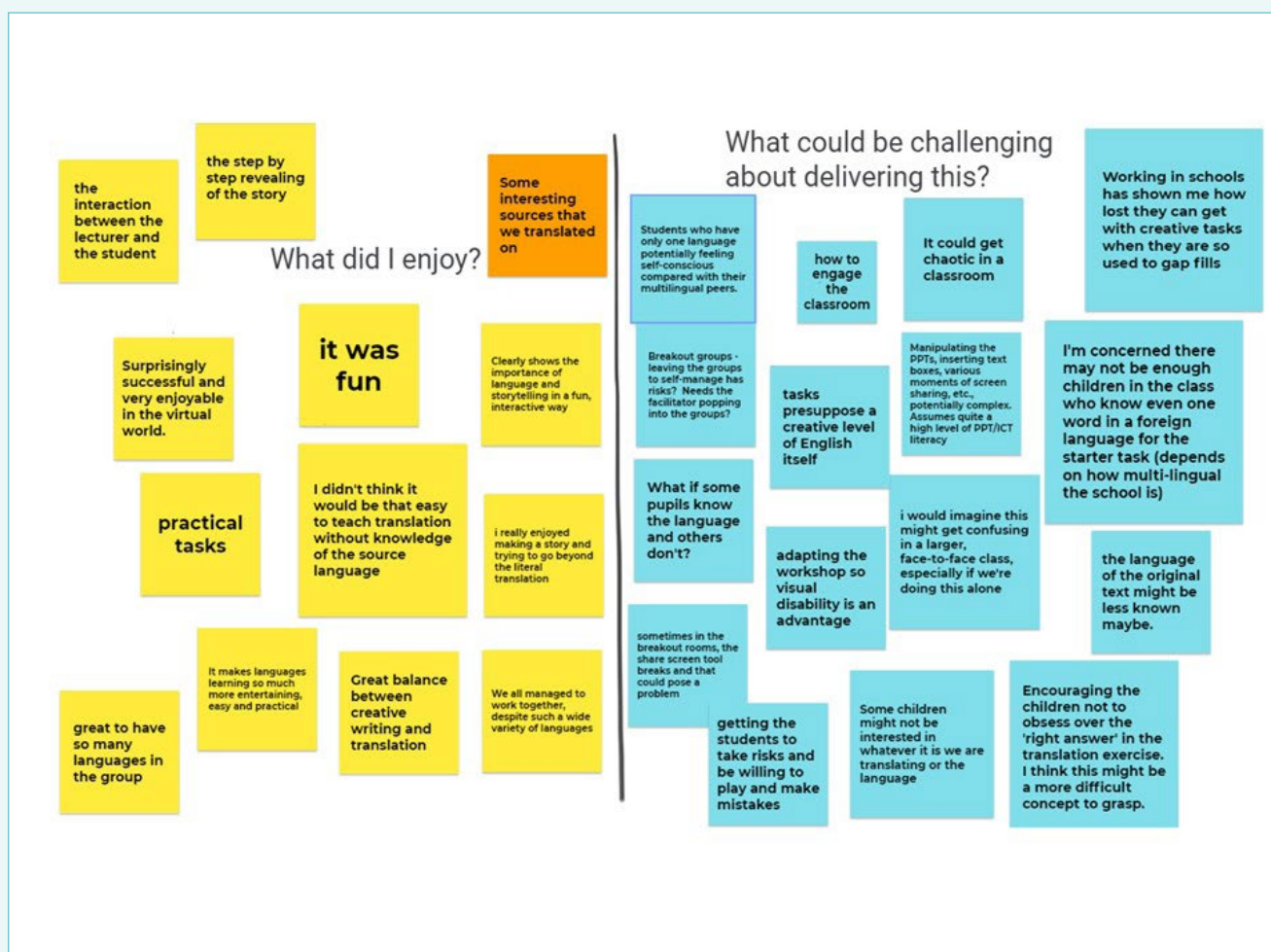
Response level:

65–80%

What did the results tell us?

The results provided a great impression of the richness of the experience for the participants, and some of their concerns about the session delivery. The results showed how enjoyable and inspiring the experience was for participants, and how they can appreciate the impact on its target young learners.

Top tips and reflections

'We have found Jamboards a brilliant way of doing immediate, anonymous feedback. It helps that others can see what is being added in real time, as it seems to give them confidence to add their own responses. It means that the workshop facilitator can immediately respond to some of the feedback. They create a very effective snapshot of a shared experience. The way we use them, Jamboards are not great for very structured/ detailed responses to individual questions, nor for collating the responses afterwards.'

Dr Charlotte Ryland
(Director, Queen's College Translation Exchange)

Links and resources

Google Jamboard interactive whiteboard tool
Queen's College Translation Exchange webpage

Evaluation tool: Zoom Poll

About the evaluation tool

The polling feature for Zoom meetings allows you to create single choice or multiple-choice polling questions for your meetings. The poll can be launched during the Zoom meeting to gather the responses from your attendees. Results can be downloaded in a report of the poll after the meeting. Polls can also be conducted anonymously, if you do not wish to collect participant information with the poll results.
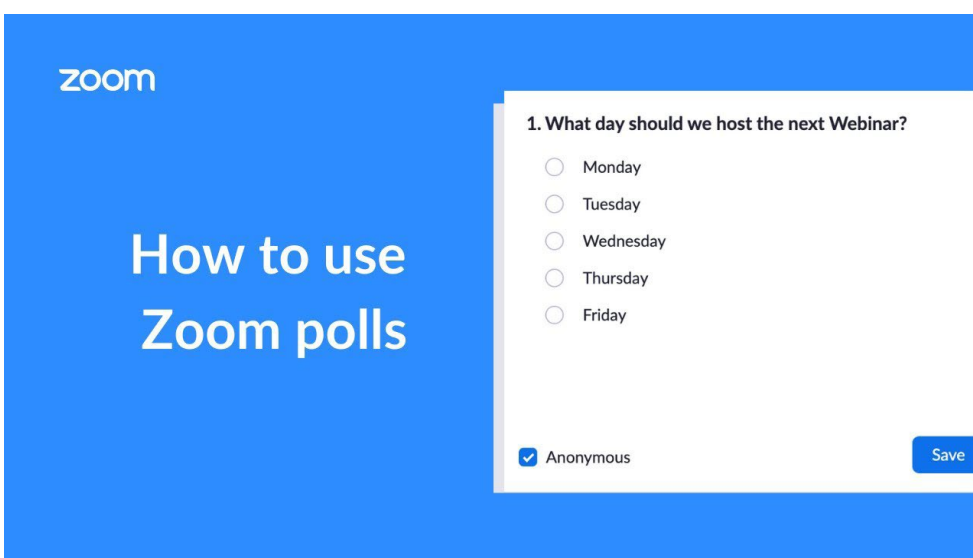
Cost:

Zoom polls are not available for the free version of Zoom. In order use the Zoom poll feature, the host of the meeting needs to be a Licensed user, meaning they must be using a paid Zoom account (prices start from £11.99 per month).

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:
Quantum Materials Seminars

The Quantum Materials Seminars (run by the Quantum Materials (QM) group in the Department of Physics, facilitated by their group outreach officer) were a series of free, 30–40-minute online seminars which took place via Zoom webinars in July 2020 for GCSE and A-level students studying or interested in Physics. The seminars consisted of a short 20-minute talk given by one of the QM researchers followed by 10–20 minutes of interactive Q&A between the students attending and the speaker. In total, 640 students attended across the 4 seminars, some joining from all over the world.
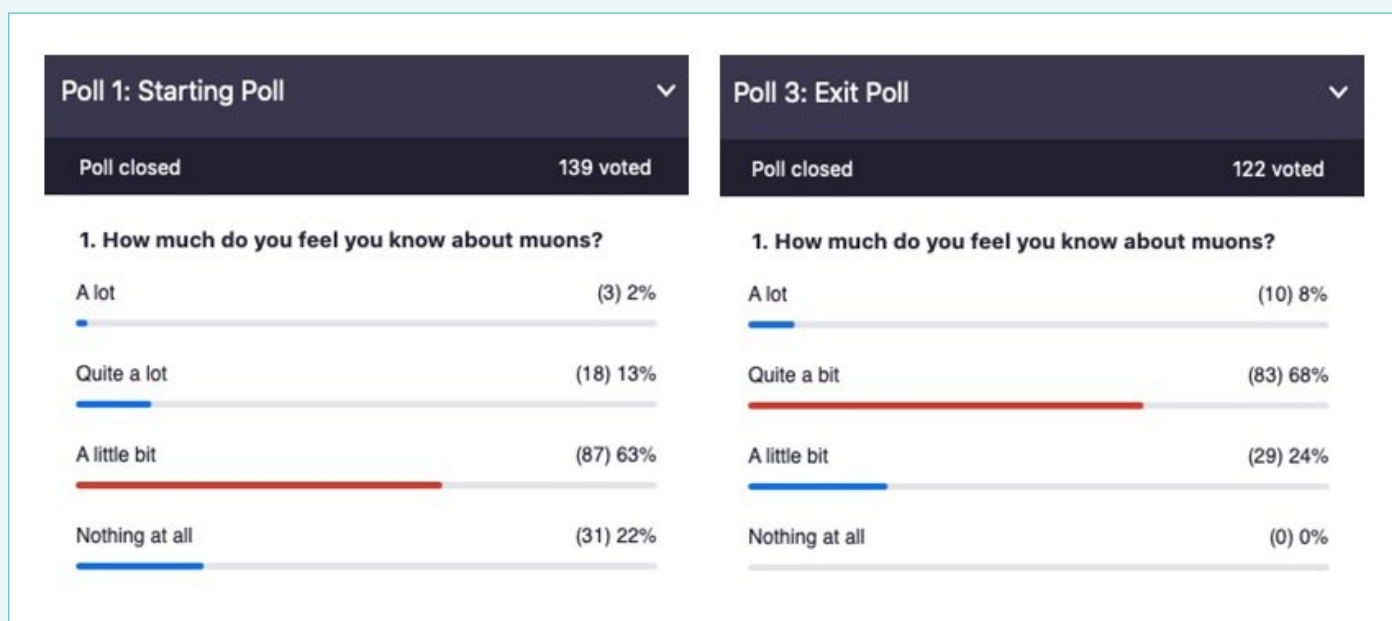
What were the objectives of the seminars?

- To communicate cutting-edge Quantum Materials research to students.
- To enrich student's learning in Physics through increasing subject knowledge, allowing them to ask questions and interact with researchers, and by introducing them to topics beyond what is taught in school.
- To provide support and enrichment to learning during school closures and lockdowns by providing a new form of virtual events which allow students to engage in super-curricular Physics activities even whilst doing remote learning.
- To trial a new form of virtual outreach/ public engagement with research with a view to continuing this series in future years, even once face-to-face engagement is again possible.

Evaluation questions:

1. Did the students learn something new about the topic?
2. Was the event an enjoyable experience?
3. Did the format work?
   i.   Was the level of content appropriate?
   ii. Was the length/format of the event appropriate?
   iii. Were there any improvements we could make in the future?

Evaluation tool: Zoom Poll

The Zoom Webinar polling feature was used to gather before and after feedback from attendees. The poll feature was integrated as part of the Zoom platform, which meant that attendees did not need to navigate away from the event on screen to answer as the polls. Once launched by the host, the poll simply appeared on the attendee's screen where they could click on the answers and submit. The first poll was launched after initial introductions, and the second poll was launched after the talk and Q&A.

Poll 1: Starting Poll

Poll closed   139 voted

1. How much do you feel you know about muons?

A lot   (3) 2%

Quite a lot   (18) 13%

A little bit   (87) 63%

Nothing at all   (31) 22%

Poll 3: Exit Poll

Poll closed   122 voted

1. How much do you feel you know about muons?

A lot   (10) 8%

Quite a bit   (83) 68%

A little bit   (29) 24%

Nothing at all   (0) 0%

Response level:

Across the 4 seminars, an average of 82.8% of attendees answered the first poll, and an average of 70.0% answered the final evaluation poll.

What did the results tell us?

The response was overwhelmingly positive for all four seminars. Respondents' knowledge about the topic was seen to increase from the starting poll to the end poll; and the majority of the respondents enjoyed the session enjoyed the session at least 'a little', with the vast majority in each seminar enjoying it 'a lot' (between 81% - 93%). Audience members further thought that material was presented at the right level. Overall, the majority of students were left wanting more, which was not necessarily a bad thing since one of the reasons behind the structure of the event and the timings we chose was to keep the talk short and bite-sized. However, this feedback was taken into consideration following the first seminar, and additional Q&A time was added for the subsequent seminars.

Top tips and reflections

'Overall, the Zoom Webinar polls proved to be very successful with high uptake from attendees in filling in the polls. The fact that they were very light touch, quick to fill out, and appeared on the participant's screen without them having to click on and follow an external link all most likely contributed to this. From a host's perspective, they were very easy to launch through the Webinar tools and were possibly less stressful that having to copy and paste the correct link in the chat and then deal with technical difficulties of those who couldn't get it to work! The polling function was also used by the speakers to add extra interactivity during their talks, for example by getting the students to carry out a quick calculation and select their answer on the poll.

The main drawback of this method is that (at the moment at least) Zoom Webinar polling only allows for multiple choice answers (although you can select more than one of the answers if you set up the question in that way), so if you are wanting to have longer answer questions or comments, or more visual things like word clouds, you would need to use an additional tool. However, to get around this, we did encourage participants to share their comments and thoughts with us in the chat, which was saved after the event, and people did do this. Another drawback was that the polls need to be set up in advance to the webinar starting and the only way we could do that was through our IT person because they had access to the Zoom account, so this occasionally caused a delay and of course meant more work for them! Not necessarily a deal breaker for this method, just worth noting and planning ahead!'

Helena Cotterill (Access & Outreach Manager, Department of Materials), previously Quantum Materials Outreach Officer, Department of Physics

Links and resources

Guidance on how to use Zoom polls

YouTube recordings of the Quantum Materials Seminars

Evaluation tool:
JISC Online Surveys

About the evaluation tool

JISC Online Surveys is an easy-to-use online tool for creating, distributing and analysing surveys. The survey platform is designed specifically for education and research organisations, and the University of Oxford recommends JISC Online Surveys as it is GDPR-compliant and safeguards your survey data. It also allows surveys to be shared and supports collaborative survey development.

Cost:

Free for University of Oxford staff and students. There are no limits on the number of surveys you can create or the number of respondents you can have. For information on how to request an account for creating surveys, visit: **IT Services JISC online surveys.**

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:
Planet Hunters TESS

Planet Hunters TESS is an online Citizen Science project on The Zooniverse. It was created by researchers in the Department of Physics at the University of Oxford, to enable citizens to search for exoplanets – planets outside of our solar system. With the help of citizen scientists, researchers have been able to find out more about the diversity of planets and how extrasolar systems evolve over time.

What were the objectives of the online Citizen Science project?

- To upload new data from NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) to Planet Hunters TESS, to enable thousands of volunteers from around the world to classify light curves of data captured by TESS.
- To develop volunteers' skills in examining light curves drawn from the data to classify transits from extrasolar planets.
- To inspire volunteers to learn more about astronomy beyond the project.

Evaluation questions:

1. What are the outcomes and impacts of Planet Hunters TESS on citizen scientist volunteers?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of Planet Hunters TESS?
3. How can Planet Hunters TESS become more inclusive of its growing, diverse community?

Evaluation tool: JISC Online Surveys

A survey was created through JISC Online Surveys and disseminated to citizen scientist volunteers via the Planet Hunters TESS email list; shared through a blog post on the Planet Hunters TESS website; and a link to the survey was also added to the Planet Hunters TESS project page. The survey was live for two weeks. The survey included both open and closed questions to explore the motivations, views and experiences of the Planet Hunters TESS citizen scientists; the outcomes of their participation; and to gather some demographic data.

Response level:

A total of 577 volunteers completed the survey (5–6% response rate).

What did the results tell us?

The survey results highlighted that through the process of taking part in Planet Hunters TESS, volunteers developed their knowledge and understanding of Astronomy; information about stars and light; and the importance of citizen scientists in the search for exoplanets. Overall, 74% of respondents learned about Astronomy and the process of searching for exoplanets, 66% reported that they enjoyed learning about Astronomy, and 21% felt inspired to learn more about Astronomy beyond Planet Hunters. Volunteers also provided recommendations to further enhance the online project, such as improving accessibility and interface usability; and providing more feedback and recognition of volunteers.

Top tips and reflections

'The evaluation was a very useful exercise for us! It has helped us to evidence the impact of Planet Hunters TESS and better understand who our volunteers are, what motivates them to take part in our project, and what their desires and expectations are. It has been illuminating for us, and we will use the information gathered to make sure that when we make changes to Planet Hunters TESS they are tailored to suit the needs of our volunteer crowd, as well as our research team.'

Dr Grant Miller
(Project Manager, The Zooniverse)

Links and resources

Find out more about **Planet Hunters Tess on the Zooniverse**
View the full survey and read the **Planet Hunters TESS evaluation report**

Further information and resources

Public Engagement with Research at the University of Oxford

This case study guide is part of a wider building capacity programme at Oxford that aims to equip researchers and engagement professionals with the skills, knowledge and support to plan, deliver and evaluate Public Engagement with Research activities.

For more support on evaluating Public Engagement with Research at the University of Oxford

- Plan your own evaluation using the **Evaluation Planning Template** (single sign-on required)
- See the current **Public Engagement with Research opportunities and evaluation support**
- Contact the Public Engagement with Research team: **publicengagement@admin.ox.ac.uk**

Additional evaluation resources

There are many guides, toolkits and resources to help you evaluate engagement activities, including:

- The University of Oxford's Evaluation Recipes can be found via the **Research Support Evaluation Resources webpage** (single sign-on required). These recipes outline the key steps for planning and conducting an evaluation of different types of Public Engagement with Research activity, and include:

  - **Evaluation Recipe 1:** Online Citizen Science
  - **Evaluation Recipe 2:** Performances and Events
  - **Evaluation Recipe 3:** Exhibitions and Displays

- The **Little Booklet of Evaluation Tools** highlights a series of easy-to-use and creative methods to evaluate activities that aim to inform and inspire the public from the University of Oxford's *European Researchers' Night – Curiosity Carnival*
- Arts Council England provide **guidance on Generic Learning Outcomes** and how to gather evidence of the outcomes of art and cultural activities
- The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) has a range of helpful **evaluation resources for public engagement**

Acknowledgements

UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD