**Introduction**

This case study outlines the use of Adobe Connect (web conferencing software) for students based off campus to make presentations online.

**Context**

Students on the MSc Electrical Power Systems (Distance Learning) must make a ten minute presentation of their Dissertation research proposal and respond to a five minutes of questions. The presentation is assessed as part of the Dissertation unit. It is marked by a panel of examiners.

Students are work-based distance learners who live anywhere in the UK or overseas. Some students make their presentation on campus at a week-long residential school, where other students form an audience. However, not all students are at the right stage of their studies to make their presentation at the annual campus-based event.

Therefore some students need to make their presentations online.

**Choosing a tool**

Adobe Connect is a web conferencing platform supported centrally by the University of Bath e-learning team.

The advantages of using Adobe Connect for these activities are:

- You can easily adapt the screen layout for making presentations and for question and answer sessions.

- There are a range of tools for students to take part in question and answer sessions (using a text chat window or audio and / or video).
It is important to avoid technical problems on the day because the presentations are assessed.

- A technical supporter provided a number of chances for students to log in to Adobe Connect in advance to set up and test their equipment.

- For any test sessions or live events, specify the time zone to students who may be logging in from other time zones (e.g. GMT or British Summer Time).

- Before they log in to Adobe Connect, students may need to select the default audio device in the control panel on their PC. They can then run the audio setup wizard. The same settings apply if they log back in to Adobe Connect from the same computer, so this only has to be done once.

- Students need to know how to turn on their microphone, and mute it when it is not in use (e.g. when taking questions from the examiners), to avoid audio interference. Students need to know how to transmit their web camera (this is a two-step process, first to preview, then to share).

- Students can use the ‘Share Screen’ option to share their desktop. They can use a ‘mini control’ panel to see the examiners’ web camera feed while they share their screen. Some students had problems with screen sharing on the day of the presentation (due to their internet connection speed).

- Instead, students can upload their presentation in advance and share the document within Adobe Connect. The presentation will be changed into a flat file format (similar to a PDF) so any PowerPoint transitions or animations (such as bullet points which appear step-by-step) will not appear.

- If students have connectivity issues, they can temporarily turn off the web camera feed to reduce bandwidth.

- Examiners were based in a room which is set up for web conferencing, with a wide angle web camera and a conferencing microphone. This allowed a panel of three examiners to ask students questions via audio and web camera.

- Adobe Connect provides useful guidance for users to set up their equipment and trouble shoot problems. Support staff created extra user guidance to emphasise key points, to reduce the need for one-to-one support during testing and on the day.

- An example of user guidance for students is available upon request.
Conclusion

Adobe Connect is a user-friendly platform which is designed for hosting remote presentations. The software is easy to use and the layout is easy to adapt to suit the needs of the event.

It is useful to host test sessions with technical support for students to try out their equipment before the event, and to arrange technical support during the live event.

Students may have problems sharing their presentations using the 'screen share' option due to local connectivity problems (e.g. slow or unreliable internet connection). It is therefore recommended that students provide copies of their presentations to load into Adobe Connect in advance.