

Table of Contents

Virtual Training Overview	2
Instructor Presentation Requirements	2
Technology	2
Presentation	2
Adobe Connect Overview	3
Accessing the Adobe Connect Room	3
Participant Types	3
Pods	4
Layouts	5
Status Icons	6
Breakout Rooms	6
SharePoint	7
It's time for class! Now what?	7
Time and Breaks	7
Assessments	8
Tips for Facilitation	8
Adobe Connect Resources	9
Conclusion	9

Virtual Training Overview

Virtual training is utilized so that students and instructors can attend a class from anywhere in the world by logging into the virtual platform. BMRA uses the Adobe Connect platform to facilitate our virtual trainings.

In this section, we will cover how to facilitate a virtual course, as well as explain how to use the platform, its features, and troubleshoot common issues.

Instructor Presentation Requirements

Technology

To properly teach a virtual course, instructors must have the following items for use:

- Computer
 - Having a dual screen is ideal. This allows for the instructor to have the Adobe Connect room open to monitor chats, status icons, etc., while also having the materials open or sharing screen.
 - Must have the Adobe Connect desktop application downloaded.
 - https://bmra.adobeconnect.com/common/help/en/support/meeting_test.htm
- Strong Wi-Fi connection
 - Instructors can use the same link they used to download the desktop application to check the Wi-Fi connection
- Telephone (either a cell phone or landline)
 - Headphones with a microphone is ideal

Presentation

Just like on-site training, BMRA holds instructors to a professional standard of appearance and decorum. Instructors are expected to adhere to the following:

- **Location:** Instructors are welcome to teach virtual classes from anywhere, but there cannot be any background noise or distractions including family, pets, or other background noise.
- **Appearance:** It is at the instructor's discretion as to whether or not they would like to be on camera while teaching. If so, the instructor is expected to dress in business professional attire.

Please note that BMRA Staff, and at times an Agency representative, monitors the Adobe classroom throughout the course, so please be aware that there is more oversight for virtual courses than on-site training. Please refrain from making side comments about the materials, the platform, or any other comments that may be deemed inappropriate in the class.

Adobe Connect Overview

Adobe Connect is the industry standard for virtual trainings. In an increasingly computer-based world, virtual trainings are being bought by the Government more than ever. Teaching a course in a virtual environment takes practice so, the more comfortable and familiar you are with the platform, the smoother the course will be. Some students are apprehensive to taking a virtual class, but virtual classes can be just as effective as in-person training, when the instructor is well-versed in the platform.

If you are interested in teaching a virtual course, please read through this section thoroughly and keep it for reference. Remember that BMRA staff is very familiar with the Adobe Connect platform and can answer questions such as how to use the room and how to replicate an in-person exercise in the virtual environment. Most importantly, stay positive and have fun! Students may be uneasy about taking a virtual class, but if you're prepared, comfortable with the platform, and have a good attitude, then the class will be a lot more enjoyable for everyone.

Accessing the Adobe Connect Room

Once assigned a virtual course, BMRA staff will provide the instructor with login information for the course. This includes the following items:

Link to room: Each Adobe Connect classroom has a unique link. This link will be provided as necessary.

Login credentials: If the instructor has not taught a virtual course for BMRA via Adobe Connect, we will set up an account in Adobe and provide that information. When logging into the room, the instructor will then log in as a registered user with their username and password.

Link to materials: Like on-site training, BMRA Publications staff will provide a SharePoint link to our most current course materials. Please bookmark this link for reference leading up to and during the course. Please email publications@bmra.com for assistance on receiving materials.

PLEASE NOTE: it is BMRA policy to only provide a soft copy of the materials for virtual courses. Neither students nor the instructor will receive a hard copy of the materials for virtual courses.

Participant Types

There are three types of participants in Adobe Connect, each with their own set of capabilities in the room

Participant: This is the view students would have. This view only allowed them to watch what is happening in the room, meaning they are not able to share documents, create and move pods, change layouts, etc. They are only able to chat, download provided files, access provided weblinks, etc.

Presenter: This view includes all of the features of Participants view, but Presenters can share documents, create weblinks, and share video.

Host: This view includes all capabilities in Adobe Connect. Hosts can create and manipulate pods, layouts, and more.

Pods

Pods are panels (like windows on a desktop) that are used throughout the course. They can be added, hidden, or removed from the room, as well as manipulated as needed (including repositioning on screen or resizing). Some classes will require more pods than others, so to avoid disorganization, please name pods as you create them (which can be done by double clicking on the preassigned name).

Available pods in the room include the following:

- **Share:** This pod is used to share documents, a whiteboard, and the instructor's screen.
 - **Documents:** This is the most common share pod used. The file types supported include: JPG, PNG, SWF, PPT, PPTX, PDF, FLV, F4V, MP3, MP4, and ZIP. (Word and Excel are not supported file types. These documents must be converted to PDF if shared on screen)
 - **PLEASE NOTE:** All course materials (including the slides, student guide, and exercises, as applicable) will be pre-loaded into the room by BMRA staff. Any supplemental material must be provided to BMRA (in a supported file format) a minimum of 2 business days before class starts.
 - **Whiteboard:** This pod is used to draw or type on the screen.
 - **Screen Share:** This pod is used to allow students to see the instructor's screen. This is commonly used to walk students through how to use an Excel spreadsheet or view websites.
 - **PLEASE NOTE:** If using screen share, all pop-up notifications (such as email alerts) must be silenced and there should be nothing inappropriate visible on the screen.
- **Notes:** This pod functions similarly to a basic Word document. It can be used to type out messages to display to students such as break times, exercise instructions, and more.
- **Attendees:** This pod shows who is in the room, shows the breakout rooms, and status of students. This is very useful for identifying who is in groups and if somebody has a question or comment.
 - See picture: the blue circle is the main Attendees view, the red circle is the breakout view, and the green circle shows the status icon view.
- **Video:** This pod is used to enable a webcam of the instructor. It is at the discretion of the instructor if they would like to be on webcam at any time throughout the course.
- **Chat:** This pod functions like Instant Messenger (IM). Students can chat questions or comments, as well as start private chats with each other or the instructor throughout the course.
 - **PLEASE NOTE:** It is imperative that the instructor monitor the chat closely, otherwise there can be confusion or missed questions. BMRA often utilizes the chat pod to communicate with instructors throughout the day.
- **Files:** This pod can be used to give students files to download.

- **Web Links:** This pod can be used to share website links with students. BMRA utilizes this to share the course materials via a SharePoint link. Other websites can be added as well but must be provided to BMRA 2 business days before class starts.
- **Poll:** This pod can be used to ask students questions in a multiple choice (MC) or short answer format. This is a good tool for students to introduce themselves, do progress checks on content, and more.
- **Q&A:** This pod can be used by students to ask questions. They can type out any questions they have during a lecture or other time and the instructor can respond as necessary.

It is strongly recommended that you utilize as many of these pods as possible to maximize student participation and engagement during class time.

Should the instructor provide any supplemental files, website link, examples, etc., please note that they are only available for one offering. Each room is scrubbed after use and reverted back to the default layouts (detailed below), so with each offering taught, the instructor will need to provide supplemental materials.

Layouts

In the Adobe Connect room, there will be premade layouts to be utilized throughout class.

- Lobby
- Main Classroom
- Share

Lobby Layout: This is the layout displayed during non-class time. It includes the following pods:

- Notes – for students to see basic meeting information such as the phone number to call into the room, times of class time, contact information, and more.
- Weblinks – for students to access the course materials.
- Chat – for all participants to chat before class starts.
- Attendees – for all participants to see who is in the room and see status icons.

Main Classroom: This is the layout that will be utilized during class time. The following pods are included:

- Attendees – for all participants to see who is in the room and status icons.
- Chat – for all participants to chat with one another.
- Share – for instructor to display documents, slides, and any other materials.

PLEASE NOTE: this layout will be manipulated most frequently throughout the course, so pods in this layout will vary.

Share: This layout can be used to display videos or other media in a full screen view.

Layouts may vary class by class and more may be added as necessary.

Status Icons

Status icons are a very use tool for keeping everyone on track during a course. They can be found at the top ribbon of the Adobe Connect Room.

All participants can view available statuses and change their status as necessary. Only one status will be displayed at a time. The options, and what they mean, include the following:

- **Raise Hand:** This is a small man with his hand raised. If students have a question and/or comment, they can use this status. Using this prevents audio interruption.
- **Agree:** This is a green circle with a checkmark inside. This can be used to indicate when students have completed a task, when they are ready and paying attention, and more.
- **Disagree:** This is a red circle with an X inside. This can be used inversely to the Agree status.
- **Step Away:** This is a white circle with a horizontal red line. This can be used for all participants to show that they are not at their computer for whatever reason.
- **Speak Louder:** This is a speaker icon with three curved lines coming out of it. All participants can use this to ask the speaker to speak louder or adjust their microphone.
- **Speak Softer:** This is a speaker icon with one small curved line coming out of it. All participants can use this to ask the speaker to speak a bit softer.
- **Speed Up:** This is a yellow rabbit. Students can use this to ask the instructor to go faster for any reason, such as they are all very familiar with the section being covered.
- **Slow Down:** This is a green turtle. Students can use this to ask the instructor to slow down and/or repeat anything.
- **Laughter:** This is a yellow smiley face. Students can use this to “laugh” at a comment or joke made.
- **Applause:** This is a pair of hands clapping. Students can use this to “applaud” the instructor or classmates if they’d like.
- **Clear Status:** This is displayed in the drop-down menu as a red X but does not appear next to a participant’s name. This removes the current status shown for a student. It is recommended that students clear their status regularly.

The instructor can see all students’ status in the Attendees pod. Once selected, the status icon will appear next to the respective student’s name. It is important for the instructor to monitor student statuses to keep the flow of class as smooth as possible. BMRA recommends explaining these statuses to students in the beginning of class, so they know how to use them effectively throughout class.

Breakout Rooms

Breakout rooms are an effective tool for group work. Students are put into pre-determined groups and in those rooms, they cannot hear students in other groups, they are granted presenter-level capabilities (meaning that they can manipulate pods), and they can complete group work or exercises together.

When explaining group work, make sure to be clear in directions and expectations. As students are in breakouts, the instructor should be moving in and out of groups to check in on their progress and answer any questions as necessary. Before pulling everyone back into the main room, be sure to broadcast a message to students with a time warning (such as 5 minutes left).

Layout for Breakout Rooms: This is the layout students will see once breakout sessions are started. What breakout rooms are and how to use them is covered below, but the available pods include the following:

- Instructions – for students to reference while doing work.
- Attendees – for students to see who is in their group.
- Chat – for students to chat with group members.
- Notes – for students to type out notes and/or findings during the exercise.
- Share
 - Whiteboard – for students to draw or type.
 - Instructions – for students to refer back to the instructions at any time throughout the breakout session.

SharePoint

BMRA uses SharePoint to distribute materials to students. Each class has its own SharePoint site and some classes have more files than others. It is the instructor's responsibility to help students navigate the SharePoint. If a file is referenced, the instructor must direct students to that file in a step by step progression starting from the parent folder. Other than restricted files, all student materials are included in the SharePoint, so any file sharing will be done through SharePoint alone, unless the instructor includes supplemental files. Any supplemental material must be provided to BMRA (in a supported file format) a minimum of 2 business days before class starts.

In the event a course requires handouts to be shown to students at specific times throughout the course, the instructor must notify BMRA staff of which file(s) should be shared on which days. The materials will be added to the Web Links pod at the appropriate time.

The instructor is responsible for being very familiar with the student SharePoint to readily able to assist students with finding the proper files.

It's time for class! Now what?

Time and Breaks

Most virtual courses follow an 8-hour class timeframe. Start times may vary, so be sure to double check all times and dates in the instructor letter.

Students will typically get an hour lunch break each day. Other breaks throughout the day are subject to instructor discretion. BMRA recommends taking a 5 to 10-minute break every hour to hour-and-a-half. Virtual training can be draining for students since they have to stare at a screen all day, so "read the room" and take breaks accordingly.

Assessments

Some courses may have exams or quizzes associated with the materials. For electives or other courses that do not have mandatory assessments, exams and quizzes can be administered through the Polls pod in Adobe Connect.

For mandatory exams, or if the instructor prefers, exams are administered through Microsoft Forms. BMRA Staff will generate the exam in Forms and will share the link with students when appropriate. For most exams (multiple choice), Forms will auto-grade exams. However, instructors may be asked to grade exams as necessary (e.g. if Forms is having technical difficulties or if there are short-answer questions).

Tips for Facilitation

Not being able to see the students you are teaching can take some getting used to. Virtual teaching is not the same as teaching on-site. Because of this, teaching styles will need to be adapted to the virtual environment.

It is very important for instructors to remain positive about the Adobe Connect platform throughout the training. We understand that technology can be frustrating at times, but remember, students are in the same boat and will adopt a negative attitude if you do. If you encounter technical difficulties or are unsure about how to adapt an exercise or in-class action within the virtual environment, please reach out to virtual@bmra.com for options and suggestions.

Here are some tips for being an effective virtual instructor:

- Take it slooow
 - Telling students that you're going to give them 20 or 30 seconds to pull up a document or take time to have everyone confirm with a green checkmark that they are on the same page, etc.
 - Continually check in with students about whether or not they have questions or require clarification. Since you're not able to see confusion on their faces, you will have to be proactive in checking on them.
- Walking students through using the Adobe Connect tools is a great way to start class off.
 - This ensures that students are not only aware of how to use all of the tools at their disposal, but will increase participation and make students more comfortable using the platform
- Remember that there may be a lag between when you ask a question and when students respond, so don't take a few moments of silence as though they don't understand or didn't hear.
- Feel free to put questions on hold if necessary. Sometimes students may ask questions that will be covered later, so do not feel the need to answer every question as they come.

- It's the instructor's job to facilitate class, so if you receive any questions about the platform or if a student approaches you about a technical difficulty, please refer them immediately to virtual@bmra.com so we can troubleshoot the issue and make note of it. If BMRA staff is not informed, then we cannot help, and the student may face attendance issues or other penalties.

Adobe Connect Resources

Here are some other resources about Adobe Connect and how to use it.

- [Best Practices for Adobe Connect](#)
- [Tips for Instructors](#)

There are also lots of videos and other resources available on the internet.

Conclusion

It is expected that the instructor reviews this document thoroughly prior to performing any virtual trainings. For the first or second virtual training, BMRA staff will contact the instructor about walking through the platform and answering any questions. There will also be a producer in the room for the entirety of the course. Producer/instructor interaction will be discussed and clarified during this meeting. After the first class or two, it is expected that the instructor will be familiar with the platform, and a producer will only be on hand during the first day of class to assist with starting the course.

All communications regarding virtual training should be directed to virtual@bmra.com. This way BMRA Staff can address the issue or question and prevents emails from slipping through the cracks. Please reply-all to any and all correspondence with virtual@bmra.com.

For any questions regarding this section, virtual training, or Adobe Connect, please ask BMRA staff in advance, so we can properly assist.