2018 Annual Conference on Clinical Legal Education

Guidelines for Concurrent Session and Workshop Presenters

The 2018 AALS Conference on Clinical Legal Education will involve 90-minute concurrent sessions, including sessions that combined or merged multiple accepted proposals, and four multi-session workshops. The guidelines here are designed to help presenters in all of these formats as they plan their sessions. Part 1 contains models and ideas for presenters of full 90-minute concurrent sessions. Part 2 contains models and ideas for presenters of combined and merged sessions with multiple presenters. Part 3 contains information, guidelines and advice for leaders of multi-session workshops.

In every case, we should be mindful of what we know from our work as clinical teachers: clinical methods promote learning. The techniques and insights that we use in our teaching are transferable to our presentations at the conference where clinical teachers come to learn and grow. In contrast, sessions that involve serial lectures by individuals who have prepared discrete talks, after no more than perhaps a single conference call in which people identify and divide up the subject matter, are far less useful than well-planned interactive sessions.

We encourage close collaboration and creativity in the development of concurrent presentations. Whether the session involves the comparison of several different approaches to the same issue or a multifaceted analysis of different aspects of a common question, we ask all presenters to work together to devise an integrated and shared presentation that uses clinical methods. All of us know from our work preparing classes that we learn from the process of analyzing how to go about the task of teaching the material that we think important. In considering how to teach material, we understand it better. We trust that presenters themselves will benefit from the increased understanding that comes from working together to devise ways to use clinical methods to transmit concepts and ideas.

For those attending sessions that use clinical teaching methods, the benefits are evident. One of the purposes of all our conferences is to expand our repertoire of clinical teaching methods. When we experience the use of clinical methods in conference sessions, we learn new ways that clinical methods can be used effectively to increase understanding and appreciation of a particular subject. Presenters have the opportunity to teach both content and process when they creatively convey principles and ideas using clinical methods. As audience members, when we have the opportunity to learn from experience, we understand better what and how our students learn through our clinical methods. From a collection of these presentations at a workshop or conference, we can see new and different ways to improve our teaching. We can then draw upon these ideas when we return to our programs at our home schools.

The process of developing a presentation that uses clinical teaching methods can be time-consuming, demanding, and risky. It can be particularly challenging when collaborators have not worked together before. But we trust that all of you will engage in creative planning to assure that your sessions reflect clinical methodology. We encourage you to use these guidelines and suggestions and to call on your session liaison if you want help in the planning process. We look forward to an exciting and creative conference.

A/V setup

Neither Projectors nor Laptops are provided at for concurrent sessions or workshops. You must bring your own Projector and Laptop or arrange to share one with another presenter. Please note that Macs, Surfaces, and Tablets all require an adaptor to connect to the meeting projector which is VGA. You are responsible for bringing a VGA adaptor compatible with your device. PC laptops do not require adaptors. If you are not bringing a PC laptop and do not own an appropriate adaptor, we recommend checking with your school's library or IT team to find out if there is one available to borrow or where you can purchase one.

Complimentary hotel WiFi is available. If you are planning an internet-based presentation, we recommend you download your presentation in advance. A high volume of users at the meeting may cause a slow connection on the hotel WiFi.

Part 1: Concurrent Sessions: Presentation Techniques

To help each group of concurrent presenters develop effective presentations, we set out below four time-tested techniques, all of which are adapted from familiar clinical teaching techniques. These techniques (a suggestive, not an exhaustive, group) can be mixed and matched, adapted, and expanded, based on the goals of the presentation, to create an effective presentation rooted in clinical methodology. We encourage you to develop and use other innovative techniques for ensuring engagement and learning for those who attend your session.

1. Case Studies

Case studies are carefully focused, narrative stories that provide a particular example of a concept or model by detailing relevant facts and processes. Rather than focusing on the bare elements or characteristics of the concept or model, the case study shows those elements or characteristics by embedding them in a particular story. Case studies are particularly useful in creating a rich and textured context for learning. They need to be carefully structured to present the raw material for the general points that the presenter wants to show without introducing extraneous information. Therefore, they should be quite short in order for the audience to be able to absorb and work with the information within the time constraints of a presentation.

The narrative for the case study can be presented via movies, prepared videos, written text or live performance. Since a presentation almost always involves a short period of time, the case study needs to be used with care to allow the audience to absorb and process the information presented in the case study in a short amount of time. Having all (or most) of the presenters develop and work off the same case study helps make it a useful vehicle for developing complex ideas or varied perspectives that relate to a shared reference point. It is often helpful to adapt a case study used in class or to build one out of a familiar clinic situation so that you have already tested out the material in some way. Case studies often involve several drafts and adaptations in order to make them work well. The "Critical Incident" is a related presentation technique, but it is more circumscribed and focused than the case study.

An example: A presentation involving cause lawyering could incorporate a case study of a particular problem or issue that students grapple with concerning whether or how to engage in cause-related activities other than or in addition to direct client representation. The study could focus on many different aspects implicated by the decision the clinic students face: for example, the differences/similarities in skills involved (for example, how working with a client group on deciding on a course of action is different than/similar to working with an individual client); visions of lawyer role; the assumptions of the students about themselves, the client group, the people affected, the cause; the goals of the supervisor; the role of the supervisor). Presenters with different views about, or approaches to, cause lawyering could develop the case study to highlight a critical moment in handling a matter where the different views/approaches manifest themselves.

Once the case study is presented, different exercises can build off of it. For example, the audience could be divided into small discussion groups, with an assignment given to the groups and the results brought back to the large group for discussion and analysis. Or the audience could participate in a simulation in which everyone plays a student in the class discussion of a skill involved or in a case rounds discussion in which students present their issue for help from the rest of the clinic in deciding on a course of action.

Benefits:

- Examples reinforce transmission of important points. For many learners, detailed and concrete learning is best. These learners are comfortable moving from the specific to the general.

- Detailed and contextualized examples demonstrate the importance of facts and context. They direct participants to examine the concept or the model in light of particular facts and a particular situation.

- A case study provides a common reference point for discussion of a broader model or concept. It gives participants a shared body of material that permits either a detailed discussion of that particular case study or a jumping off point for exploration of variations on the model.

- Case studies should be designed to transmit transferable lessons. The detailed and contextualized case study can provide a powerful tool for helping participants see the issues involved in translating the case study into a different context.

Challenges:

- Effective case studies take time to develop.

- Capturing real world texture and context in a short segment can be hard.

- Avoiding extraneous material can be hard.

- Designing the case study to transmit points that the presenter wants to highlight requires careful drafting with goals constantly in mind.

2. Critical Incidents

Critical incidents are carefully focused narratives that are less complex than case studies but share many common elements with them. They can start from experiences that you or students have had. Like case studies, they are focused on an issue or issues and provide a particular example of a concept or model by detailing relevant facts and processes. They are usually quite short and need to be carefully structured to present the raw material for the general points that the presenter wants to show without introducing extraneous information. The narrative can be presented via movies clips (short clips - the story of the movie does not matter), prepared videos (no more than a few minutes), written text (a page at most and often a paragraph) or live performance (by asking someone to identify/demonstrate/portray an experience that fits a particular issue). Critical incidents are particularly useful for setting up or introducing a scenario that then provides opportunities for various endings to/continuations of/reactions to the incident presented.

An example: If you want to explore how clients and students/lawyers react differently to the same event and what students/lawyers can do to surface and deal with these differences, you could make a videotape with the client reacting angrily to a proposed settlement that a lawyer is recommending. From this critical incident, presenters could develop a discussion about assumptions, about planning for counseling, about identifying different student/lawyer responses to the client's reactions, or about planning for supervision of the counseling session. The session could also move to different sorts of role plays, for example, with participants doing supervision of the students (either in the large group or in small groups) or using the tape for a simulated class with participants as students.

Benefits:

- For many learners, detailed and concrete learning is best. These learners are comfortable moving from the specific to the general. For others, these critical incidents direct participants to examine the concept or the model in light of particular facts and a particular situation. Detailed and contextualized examples demonstrate the importance of facts and context.

- A critical incident provides a common reference point for discussion of a broader model or concept. It gives participants a shared body of material that permits either a detailed discussion of that particular incident or a jumping off point for exploration of variations on the model.

- Critical incidents should be designed to transmit transferable lessons. The detailed and contextualized critical incident can provide a powerful tool for helping participants see the issues involved in translating the critical incident into a different context.

Challenges:

- Capturing real world texture and context in a short segment can be hard and participants may be unable to generate principles.

- Avoiding extraneous material can be hard.

- Designing the critical incident to transmit points that the presenter wants to highlight requires careful drafting with goals constantly in mind.

3. Simulations/role plays

A simulation is the creation of a learning experience that maintains maximum fidelity to the real world context. To the extent possible, the people in role are supposed to imitate real life. The experiences and reactions to the experiences that the simulation generates are meant to evoke what occurs in life outside the simulation. The simulated experience is never a replica of experience in the world. However, the process of being in role and working to enter the world depicted in the simulation is designed to produce a variety of different kinds of understanding about that world. For example, by being in a simulation involving performing a lawyering activity, the participant may gain insight into the skills involved in the activity, the feelings connected to performing the activity, the reactions of the person in the role of the client, the assumptions brought to the activity, etc. Similarly, as teachers playing the role of students in a simulated class, participants can get insight into both what the teacher is trying to do and how the students are experiencing the teaching activity.

A role play, although similar to a simulation, differs in that it does not involve the creation of a reasonably complete real world experience. It is not necessarily designed to replicate reality the way a simulation is. A role play can be any exercise in which participants play someone other than themselves. While the role play is meant to give participants insight into the reality of which the role is a part, it does not depend upon the creation of the world surrounding the role. Therefore, the role play is a more flexible tool, although generally less effective at making context an explicit part of the exercise.

Both simulations and role plays involve putting participants in role and defining tasks for them to do. The role instructions can be detailed or not depending on the purpose of the simulation/role play. In a presentation, the simulation obviously cannot involve elaborate definition of the world within which the activity occurs. However, the definition of the real world context can be quite short if it is carefully designed to further the purposes of the exercise. A role play that is not dependent upon context can be constructed around just a few key details.

Simulations and role plays can be done in small groups going on simultaneously or can involve the entire audience in one large simulation. They can also be done as demonstrations in front of the entire group. In a simulation in front of a large group, multiple participants can take turns doing small aspects of the activity being performed. Identifying the purpose of the simulation or role play is key in deciding upon the best format.

Simulations and role plays both involve feedback or some other processing of the experience. The feedback can have a detailed and personal component even in a presentation. For example, if people are asked to do a brief simulation in small groups, one or two people in the group can be designated as observers whose task is to give feedback to those in role. Particularly in a presentation, the instructions need to include a guide for the observers as to what they should be observing and commenting upon.

Following a small or large group simulation or role play, the presenter needs to have a way to collect the insights that came from the simulation or role play. The material collected can, if the presenter wants, be the basis for discussion among the whole group. For example, following the small group simulation or role play, the presenter can ask for reports from the small groups, can identify areas for discussion about the different experiences in the small groups or can ask for a show of hands about specific aspects of the small group experience. Where the whole audience is involved in a role play, the group needs to go out of role to process the experience according to the topics identified by the presenter.

Benefits:

- Experience in role provides insight into one's own conception of societal roles, for example, the lawyer role. Therefore, if the subject is lawyering, being in the role of the lawyer can be a way to identify assumptions people bring about that role. Being in the role of client creates insight into the point of view of others who must deal with lawyers.

- Experience in role can increase empathy by helping people adopt a different perspective than their own and explore how their feelings in role relate to the feelings they associate with experiences in their own lives. For example, if the simulation involves a classroom activity, the experience of being in the role of students can give participants insight into how students experience some aspect of a teaching activity.

- Change of viewpoint often generates new and creative ideas. Using a different frame of reference can help people see things differently.

- Allows practice in a reasonably safe environment.

- A very carefully constructed simulation or role play can allow complex tasks/ideas to be introduced and rehearsed in incremental steps, if the simulation/role play is designed with the incremental steps in mind.

- Having participants actively use a concept can help them recall that concept.

- Having participants apply a concept in role can promote sophisticated application of material being presented. Participants often experience the relationship among different aspects of an activity or idea. They may experience connections that can be difficult to convey in more abstract presentation modes.

Challenges:

- In presentations, simulations and role plays need to be carefully designed to further the specific goals of the presentation. Otherwise, they can be unwieldy diversions from the main ideas of the presentation.

- The logistics of simulations and role plays need to be carefully worked out so that they do not absorb unnecessary amounts of time.

- Developing ways to collect and process information generated by the simulations or role plays is critical to making these techniques contribute effectively to the overall goal of the presentation. The processing requires significant attention so that the lessons of the simulation are developed and clarified. Without this processing, the experience generated by the simulation or role play has a random quality.

- Role plays and simulations often involve multiple aspects of an activity and require the use of many concepts simultaneously. Therefore, presenters can find it difficult to control the sequence in which material is addressed in the processing of the simulation or role play.

- Participants may be distracted by the ways that simulations and role plays diverge from reality. Rather than providing insight about reality, the divergence can generate frustration.

- Generalizations based on a small number of simulated experiences can be wrong and can lead people astray.

- Some participants feel silly in simulations or role plays. Others focus on the "acting" aspect of simulations or role plays and find it hard to switch into analytic or reflective modes of thinking.

4. Mini-writes

A mini-write is an activity involving participants' writing something on their own in which they can concentrate for a brief period on their own reactions to some part of the presentation or can identify their own ideas about a subject that is the focus of the presentation. For example, participants can be asked to answer a question, write down ideas as part of a brainstorming activity, chart an idea using a one-to-five-minute silent time period, identify the feelings that an issue provokes, even draw a picture. Mini-writes can be used effectively both to introduce another activity, such as a role play or a small group discussion, and to create a response period after another activity. Both stress the importance of individual reflection, either in anticipation of another event/activity or in response to that event/activity.

Mini-writes are particularly useful when the presenter thinks that a subject would benefit from a period of silent thought; where people may be hesitant about revealing something, even in a small group; or where the subject is likely to be highly charged or controversial. The framing of the question or task for the mini-write is particularly important in using the mini-write effectively as a tool for moving a presentation forward. The amount of time allotted should be sufficient for the task, but not so long as to make the presentation drag. The mini-write fits easily with other presentation techniques, either to generate individual thoughts for a further discussion or activity or to process individual reactions to another activity or discussion.

Benefits:

- Giving participants time to collect their thoughts, rather than just react immediately can increase or improve participation. Those who need/want time to think before participating are particularly helped by this technique. Also, by identifying their own connection to the material in the presentation, participants may see the ways that their own thoughts are related to the ideas and concepts involved in the presentation.

- Mini-writes are a way to include even those who are silent in the dynamic of the group. No one is just an observer.

- Writing often clarifies thinking. Creating even a minute of quiet for thinking during a presentation can increase clarity. It can also warm people up for more sophisticated thinking. The increased clarity can benefit later discussion.

- Having people write in response to a prompt, particularly when the content of the writing serves to create the content for later discussion, increases active learning. Almost everyone will focus attention on the prompt and then write something related to the presentation.

Challenges:

- Mini-writes take time.

- They may keep the follow-up activity too focused on what people have written instead of encouraging them to generate new ideas during a subsequent discussion or other activity. People may feel that they need to stick to what they have written.

- Definition of the task and timing matter so that participants do not lose interest in the dynamic of the presentation.

Part 2: Merged and Combined Concurrent Sessions Presentation Techniques

At the 2018 clinical conference, some presentation teams have been asked to share the time and room space for a concurrent session. In designing your merged or combined concurrent session, presenters should consider one of two primary options: First, you can decide with all the co-presenters in the time slot to present each proposed concurrent in a condensed form. Second, you can work together with the other presenters in your concurrent session to create a single, unified presentation on the traditional concurrent model.

In most instances, we hope that you and your co-presenters will work together to create a single presentation using the techniques and guidelines described in Part 1. We encourage you to look for the genuine and fruitful commonalities among the proposals assigned to your single session. Feel free to explain to the audience the nature and origins of your collaboration, so that everyone understands that the combination is an accidental but welcome opportunity generated by a request from the conference planning committee to work together on the concurrent.

Only if you have determined that it is not possible to shorten your presentation, or to combine it effectively with the other concurrent to which you are assigned, should you consider the option of dividing your meeting space into separate sub-spaces, each with its own dedicated audience. In this way, each presentation could use the entire allotted time. But you should bear in mind that many of the concurrent meeting rooms are small and sound will be a concern. It may be difficult to ensure that each group is able to interact appropriately, yet not interfere with the other groups. For that reason, we discourage this approach until you have seriously considered the viability of the other options.

Whether you decide to shorten your concurrent, blend it with the other concurrent which you have joined, or as a last resort, divide the meeting room between the two, we ask you to use the same clinical teaching principles that we detail in Part 1.

Part 3: Multi-Session Workshops Preparation and Presentation Techniques

This year's conference will include four two or three-session workshops on clinical design and teaching issues. The information in this part is for the leaders of those sessions.

As we do for the concurrent presenters at the conference, we urge workshop conveners to make full use of their clinical teaching skills for their sessions. Like concurrent sessions, the workshops can use any combinations of the techniques described in Part 1: case studies, critical incidents, simulations/role plays, quick writes, and other engaging teaching methods.

But the multi-session workshop format can and should provide more value to participants than is possible in a single concurrent session. Ideas and insights can be developed over time, participants can work together in a more focused way, and session leaders can adapt and adjust their planning over the course of the conference. We encourage workshop leaders to make the most of the format and to ask the participants to make a real investment of time and focus in the enterprise.

1. Enrollment

The AALS has requested that interested registrants sign up for the workshops by March 23, subject to the registration maximums you have specified. The AALS will forward the names/affiliations/emails to you on March 26 so you can begin communicating with your attendees.

2. Before the Conference

Please contact your workshop participants as soon as possible to direct their pre-conference workshop preparation. We expect all workshop participants to make a commitment to all of the 1.5 hour long sessions. With pre-enrollment (unlike a one-time concurrent open to all) you can, and you should, ask people to hit the ground running.

Ask workshop participants to come to the first session having already completed whatever preparatory tasks you think will be useful. These tasks could include as little as one or more readings, to more substantial writing exercises, to actual interactions among the group. As always, relating the preparation to the specific goals that you seek to achieve will make for the most productive experiences.

Consider using technology in this process. A service such as Survey Monkey might allow you to poll your participants in advance, giving your information about relevant goals, preferences and practices. Shared file services such as Dropbox permit participants to post documents for advance review. Shared document editing services such as Google Docs can permit the development of goals through a collaborative editing process. And of course, audio/video conference calls and Skype allow you the ability to interact flexibly and to introduce your participants to the conference work in advance.

3. At the Conference

We know that all workshop leaders will have planned well in advance for the content and the interactive format of each of your sessions, but we encourage you to meet between sessions to assess progress, make adjustments, and refine your next steps.

Do not hesitate to ask for homework from your participants between workshop sessions, but recognize that the conference will be packed with other opportunities and temptations. Balance the advantages of asking participants to work between sessions with the reality that the conference is a venue rich in distraction.

4. After the Conference

While the AALS will ask all conference participants to fill out standard evaluations of the conference as a whole, you should consider supplementing that information by getting feedback on your workshop in particular. You can use hard-copy evaluation forms or electronic methods such as Survey Monkey. We are certain that you, like all clinicians, are eager for individualized feedback.

We leave it to you to decide whether to foster post-conference ongoing contact among the participants in your workshop. Some subject-matter working groups at spring clinical conferences have remained in touch for a while after the conference and have found the relationships, the brainstorming, and the problem-solving opportunities to be very valuable.