

Grand Challenges Guidance for Facilitators

1. What is Challenges Online?

Challenges Online is a hands-on, high energy project week, based on the long running face-to-face Grand Challenges programme. Challenges Online ran for the first time in 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic, and will run again 7th-11th June 2021, entirely on Microsoft Teams. Challenges Online is open to all undergraduate students, regardless of discipline or year of study. There are also a small number of students joining the programme as guests from other Universities around the world. This year, students from a partner institution in North America will take part alongside our own students.

The Challenges will engage students in innovative learning experiences working in cross-disciplinary groups to address some of the most significant issues facing society in the 21st Century. Students will hear from top academics and invited speakers, as well as designing an innovative and creative project that tackles a real-world challenge. This year's topics include climate emergency, sustainable food, planetary health, social inequality and fighting fake news. Each group will present their work to other students, academics and invited guests at the end of the week.

2. What is the role of a facilitator?

Facilitators are an essential part to the overall success of the Challenges Online programme. The facilitators work closely with undergraduates, academics and external guests/speakers to ensure that the experience is well co-ordinated and that all students maximise their educational experience and potential. It is likely that every Challenges Online group will be different in focus, content, dynamics and experience of the students and staff alike.

The definition of facilitate is "to make easy" or "ease a process". What a facilitator does is help plan, guide, and manage a group to ensure that the group's objectives are met effectively, with clear thinking, good participation, time management and full buy-in from all students involved. It is different from traditional 'transmission' teaching, and facilitators are not expected to teach subject content to students in their groups.

Facilitators will be the first point of contact for students; coordinating and facilitating small group work. Facilitators on the same Challenge will share ideas and discuss their work. In this role, you need to understand more about how people learn than about the subject the students are investigating.

Your responsibilities will include the following:

a) Before Grand Challenges week:

- Attending training sessions in late April/May
- Attending planning workshops with academics on your Challenge in late April/May
- Working closely with academics to support setting up a week-long programme for their Challenge, in accordance with the Grand Challenges principles



- Providing content to Central Team for communicating with students who have signed up
- Posting content to the Challenges specific Teams site

b) During Challenges Online week:

- Being present with Challenges Online activities for the duration of the Week.
- Facilitating group activity and supervising students throughout the week.
- Supporting students to work in a 'research like' way, making sure students understand evidence-based approach
- Ensuring that an enquiry-based learning approach is adopted in the Challenge activities
- Supporting student reps in ensuring that correct administration is performed (e.g., registers taken; resources required available, consent forms signed, risk assessments done etc.)
- Ensuring that the group is prepared to present outputs at the end of Challenge week

c) After Challenges Online Week

- Helping with the write-up of Challenges Online after the week is over.
- Attending a discussion session of their experiences to help evaluate the programme.

3. Skills/Person Specification

To facilitate effectively in Challenges Online, you must be objective. It really means that, for the purposes of the group, you will take a neutral stance regarding the subject. You will be happy to step back from the detailed content and away from your own personal views/expertise and focus on the group process. The "group process" is the approach used to ease discussions, aiming to get the best from all members and bring the event through to a successful conclusion in term of outputs, however these are defined. How you design this depends on many factors, and we will explore this in more detail in the briefing session. The secret of great facilitation is a group process that flows, and with it will flow the group's ideas, solutions, creativity, capacity, capability, and decision-making.

Your key responsibility as a facilitator is to create this group process and a positive and constructive environment in which it can flourish.

Person specification:

Highly Desirable Criteria

- Good facilitation skills and experience
- Completion of LTHE Stage 1
- Experience in using Microsoft Teams for teaching and learning
- If you are applying for the Food for Thought Challenge, you should have relevant research experience and expertise in this area.
- If you are applying for the Social Inequality Challenge, you should have some skills in textual analysis, an ability to analyse images, and to engage critically with culture and politics.

Desirable Criteria

- Ability to work effectively with a wide range of staff, students and external contacts with diverse interests and needs to deliver multiple objectives
- An understanding of the benefits of interdisciplinary, employability-related, research-led education and student-led learning in a university education
- Ability to engage the interest and enthusiasm of students and inspire them to learn
- Excellent organisational skills, including time management and planning within the framework of the agreed programme
- Excellent team working skills
- Proactive 'can do' attitude with good problem solving skills

In addition to the above, a good facilitator will need to be creative and innovative and a good listener/observer.

4. Training and remuneration

Successful applicants will attend training sessions, covering detailed information about the Challenges Online Week, and how Microsoft Teams is utilised during the programme. The role of the facilitator and the facilitation of enquiry-based learning will be explored in more depth, equipping you with the skills and knowledge you will need to support students taking part in Challenges Online.

The rate of pay is £17.21 an hour. Facilitators will be paid £602.35 for Grand Challenges Week, for 35 hours work (those on Tier 4 visas will be paid £344.20 for 20 hours work). The role of the facilitator outside of Challenges Online Week will depend on the requirements of the individual Challenge but will likely involve between 10-15 hours work. Facilitators should be able to commit to working 7th-11th June 2021, and have availability to attend training sessions and planning meetings in late April and May.

5. Contacts

The main contacts for Grand Challenges related queries are the Grand Challenges team (challenges@exeter.ac.uk). During the Challenges Online Week, your challenge academic will be your first point of contact as a group facilitator. You will also be working with student reps allocated to your Challenge, who will be your first point of contact for practical, logistical, and technical queries.