

# Debriefing Sessions

Sharing recent learning among colleagues



Hi everyone. My name is Jennie Ferris and I'm an academic associate at [Teaching and Learning Services \(TLS\)](#) at McGill University in [Tiohtià:ke](#), Montreal. In this show-and-tell video presentation, I'll be describing a knowledge-sharing strategy you might be interested to try with your colleagues, whether you work at a teaching and learning centre, in a Faculty, or in another institutional context. At TLS we call it the "webinar, conference, and reading debriefing session," or "debriefing session" for short. This brief strategy aims to provide opportunities for solidifying and sharing recent learning among colleagues, while building community, making connections, and permitting reflection. It takes about 45 minutes – which is long enough to share recent learning among colleagues, but hopefully not so long that it becomes an impediment to participation.

The onset of the pandemic resulted in an exceedingly generous outpouring of webinars, online conferences and other resources responding to the transition to remote teaching and learning. As we and colleagues at universities around the world prepared to teach or to support teachers and learners in the massive, rapid shift to remote learning, time was – and still is – at a premium. While the number and scope of webinars and other resources available is impressive, there is not enough time to engage with them all.

Recognizing that it could be valuable to share what we'd learned from the webinars that we *were* able to attend, and in the absence of virtual "hallways" that would've permitted impromptu conversations and making connections in the past, in Fall 2020 we began having debriefing sessions at TLS, once a month for 45 minutes via Zoom.

This invitation was circulated to all TLS colleagues. I'll read it aloud, which take 35 seconds. If you'd rather read at your speed, feel free to mute the audio.

You're invited to a conference and webinar debrief! You are welcome to come to share, to listen, or both. Please feel free to join even if you need to arrive late or leave early.

This is an opportunity for...

- folks who have gone to conferences / webinars to informally and briefly (7 minutes or less) share ideas or resources that really resonated for them.
- folks who didn't attend those conferences / webinars to glean some "in a nutshell" ideas from colleagues. Let's face it, there are so many amazing learning opportunities out there, and not enough hours in the day to take part in them all!
- discussion all around.

At the beginning of each debriefing session, we welcome everyone, determine how many participants have something they want to share, and divide the time accordingly, so everyone had a chance to contribute and discuss.

This transcript accompanies the "Debriefing Sessions: Sharing recent learning among colleagues" video available on the [Teaching for Learning blog](#).

The debriefing sessions are informal, in part because we want them to be an opportunity for making connections among colleagues and ideas, and don't want them to be stressful. The sessions are optional. We typically have 6-12 people at each session, and people usually share orally, so there's no expectation of a formal presentation or slides. Sometimes colleagues come with questions or discussion starters inspired by webinars as well.

The debriefing sessions allow colleagues to benefit from one another's recent learning. If colleagues were not able to attend a webinar or online conference for any number of reasons – time, childcare or other personal responsibilities, scheduling reasons – these debriefing sessions mean they can still engage with, and benefit from, the ideas shared.

These debriefing sessions were a re-imagining of our pre-pandemic “conference round-up” sessions: those were occasional meetings where colleagues who had been to a conference could share their take-aways, such as ideas, resources, and so on.

In the current remote context, the scope was extended to online conferences and webinars attended, and as of December 2020, to articles read, as well. We can imagine in the future something like podcasts being really interesting to incorporate, too.

The debriefing sessions aim to share new knowledge, build community and foster connections, and to be a reflection opportunity, for those choosing what to share, and for those participating in the discussion as they engage with colleagues.

In this slide, I've summarized our approach, as well as some possible adaptations that you might consider.

	<b>Our approach</b>	<b>Possible adaptations</b>
<b>Who</b>	Interested colleagues at TLS	Interested colleagues in a department or other unit Cross-unit or cross-university
<b>What</b>	Conference/webinar/reading debriefing session	Broaden or limit focus by various topics or resource types
<b>Where</b>	Online	Online or in-person
<b>When</b>	During the workday 45 minutes Monthly	Timing, duration, and frequency that best meet your needs
<b>How</b>	Outlook (invitation) Zoom (discussions) Teams channel (resource sharing)  Fairly flexible, fairly informal	Software tools of your preference, or in person  Choose the level of flexibility and formality that makes sense for you and your colleagues

**Who:** As far as who is involved, this structure could be adaptable to departments or other units. This could be a way of connecting across units – say, if two teaching and learning centres wanted to meet virtually to share their recent learning in community, or if colleagues in different departments with a common interest wanted to meet to share their evolving understanding of a specific topic. For the what, where, when, and how, there's a lot of flexibility depending on your needs and preferences.

**What:** The topics or resource types that will be addressed are fully up to you.

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**Where:** While we've been doing this fully online lately, this is another area where there's flexibility, depending on your preferences and public health guidelines informing local practice.

**When:** The timing, duration and frequency of debriefing sessions can be customized so they work well for you and your colleagues depending on your context and aims.

**How:** various software could support debriefing sessions, depending on what you use at your institution. The level of flexibility and formality is entirely up to the unit.

I hope this debriefing session strategy is of use for you. Thank you!