Technology Enhanced Learning

Virtual Classroom - UCD Lecturer Guide

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Introduction

A Virtual Classroom (VC) is an online environment that enables lecturers and students to communicate synchronously (in real-time) using a number of methods i.e. audio, video, text chat, interactive whiteboard, application sharing, instant polling etc.

There are three steps to consider when preparing for the Virtual Classroom delivery as outlined in the diagram below.

1. Pre Virtual Classroom Delivery

1.1 Hardware & System Requirements
Before delivering a VC make sure you have the following:

1. Desktop/laptop with a reliable Internet connection (28.8 kbps speed or more-preferably broadband) and 20 MB free disk space
2. Web browser – it is recommended you use the Google Chrome browser for delivery as it supports complete functionality.
3. Headset with a microphone
4. Webcam

Go here for a complete overview of the system requirements
1.2 Bb Collaborate Ultra Setup

Bb Collaborate Ultra is the UCD supported VC tool and it has been integrated with UCD VLE (Blackboard). You need to take the following steps to set it up a VC in Blackboard:

1. Login to UCD Blackboard
   [https://elearning.ucd.ie/](https://elearning.ucd.ie/)
2. Open your Blackboard Module, go to Course Management→Control Panel→Course Tools → select **Blackboard Collaborate Ultra**
3. Now you can access your VC and set up Collaborate Ultra
4. Select **Create Session** to start the VC set up.
5. Once you create a session, make sure you go through **Event and Session** Settings
6. Within **Event Settings** start with naming your session → consider the Guest Access (if you are inviting participants from outside of UCD) → Set the session timings and provide a short VC description for your students
7. In **Session Settings** – decide on the Default Attendee Role (your students should be joining as Participants) then consider settings for: recordings, moderator permissions, audio-visual settings for the participants and private chats. Note that the enabling of session telephony is not currently available to UCD staff.

You need one session for your module as you can use it multiple times
1.3 Making the VC accessible via Blackboard
All students will access the virtual classroom via Blackboard. There are two ways of displaying it in Blackboard to make it available to students. The way you position your VC depends on the approach you take to it.

1.3.1 VC as the Main Channel of Communication in the Module

Once selected, a pop up window will come to screen:

Name the Tool Link as in the picture and choose **Blackboard Collaborate Ultra** from the **Type** in the drop down menu. Tick **Available to Users** and **Submit**.

Your Virtual Classroom will be now available to students in their left hand side panel.
1.3.2 VC as a One-off Activity/Method of Content Delivery

Go to your Learning Materials and select **Tools → Blackboard Collaborate Panel**

Blackboard will bring you then to an activity set up which will enable you some more customization.

It is suggested to add here an image that would represent your session (e.g. first slide from your presentation or a conceptual image related to it).

In Options you can add restrictions to your session. Make sure you set this activity as AVAILABLE.

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1.4 Technical Check

Before starting a VC please make sure your camera and microphone are set up. Check if your headset is connected to your device (check audio settings both for the speakers and microphone).

In order to check these within the tool, launch the session and go to the Collaborate Panel.

**Session Menu** enables to:
- record the session
- report any issues
- exit and finish the session

**Collaborate Panel**

**Media Space**

Select Settings → start the set up

Here you can manually adjust the volume of your speakers and a microphone

Exit the settings

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1.5 Uploading Slides

It is important to upload all presentations prior to the start of the session. To upload Power Point slides to Collaborate Ultra go to Collaborate Panel and select Share Files.

You can share the following files:

- For presentations: only ppt, pptx – but not PowerPoint Shows (pps, ppsx)
- PDF documents
- Images – only jpg, jpeg, png and gif

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2. Virtual Classroom Delivery

2.1 Collaborate Ultra Layout
In your Blackboard module go to Course Tools, Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, select the Session Title, Launch Session. Then familiarize yourself with the layout of the tool i.e. Media Space, Session Menu and the Collaborate Panel.

Make sure you record all your sessions (Start Recording in the Session Menu); launch the session minimum 15 minutes before your VC.

2.2 Media Space – is the space that allows you sharing content with your students. At the bottom of it you will find some useful tools which you can use while delivering your VC.

Your Status and Feedback - an engagement tool that allows your students to use emoticons to provide you with some feedback on your class. Student feedback can be then seen in the Attendee section of the Collaborate Panel.

Raising Hand – you can raise a hand if someone else is presenting

Microphone – when transmitting it is green, to mute select the icon

Video- switches on your webcam and enables you to stream video

It is recommended you upload your picture to your profile and set your status. Encourage students to do the same to personalize their learning.
2.3 Collaborative Panel Overview

To open the Collaborative Panel select its icon located on the right hand side once you launch your Collaborate Ultra session.

The following panel will become visible with 4 sections:

- **Chat Room** – allowing the presenter to chat and address queries in real time
- **Attendees** – here you can mute all students or give them presenter’s rights for sharing content
- **Sharing** – allows to share content, poll and break students into groups
- **All settings related to the Collaborate Ultra Session and your profile**

To move between the sections and manage your VC effectively, have the Collaborate Panel open at all times while presenting.
2.3.1 Sharing Content

The Share Content section enables you to share slides for presentation (see file upload in section 1.5), a blank whiteboard (allowing you to type text, brainstorm etc.), share an application from your computer (it can be either your whole desktop or software you are using to demonstrate something).

Sharing slides is the most common way of VC delivery and while sharing you will see the following:

Please make sure you test the full functionality of slide sharing before the live VC session.

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Sharing **Blank Whiteboard** can be used for brainstorming, typing and showcasing.

Sharing **Application/Screen** can be used for presenting websites, tools (online and applications).

**Stop Sharing button**

**Tools available to you while presenting**

**Controls for resizing the shared space**

**Share Application/Screen**

Which do you want to share?

- Entire Screen
- Just an Application
2.3.2. Secondary Content and Interactions

Polls would allow you quiz the students and check their comprehension, engage them while VC delivery

Breakout Groups allow you for group work (including brainstorming, presenting in groups, giving peer feedback)

Polling options – prepare your questions in a visual form. To quiz your students, you have the option to go for a Yes/No poll or a MCQ question (ranging from 2 to 5 choices).

Polls set up:
1. Plan ahead for this type of interaction to engage students at the beginning, while or at the end of your VC delivery
2. Go to your Collaborate Panel → select the type of poll suitable for your session → START
3. The poll will automatically start and the students will be able to select their answer(s).
4. Since you are the presenter, you will see when students start voting
5. Once finished polling, share your outputs with the group and comment on it

Finish the poll
Polling icon is added to your Media Space

Go here to see a tutorial on Polling set up
**UCD Teaching and Learning Resources**

**Breakout Groups** – are ideal for facilitating group activities and collaboration. Breakout rooms have their own private audio, video, whiteboard, application sharing etc. so the collaboration that takes place in a breakout room is independent of the Main Room (and other breakout rooms).

Breakout Groups set up: 
Set up the breakout group in the Collaborate Panel and once ready →START

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**Decide how will you assign the students to the groups**

**You can drag and drop the students to assign them to a group**

**Name the groups and add more groups**

**Move between the groups here**

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**Once you start the group work you can go between the groups and monitor what individual groups are doing and provide them with feedback and support if needed.**

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**Go here** to see a tutorial on Breakout Groups in Collaborate Ultra

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[Link: www.ucd.ie/teaching]
3. Post the Virtual Classroom Delivery

3.1 Recording and Sharing the Session

Once you finish delivering your Virtual Classroom stop your recording in the Session Menu (top left hand side).

The recording will be in Blackboard, so all you have to do is close the window with Collaborate Ultra and go to the side panel and select RECORDINGS. The recordings are generated some time after the class and will not be available immediately after the VC.

The link to the session can also be shared with the attendees if they were logged in as guests.

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3.2 Useful Tips and Further Information

Useful Tips

- It is recommended that your session aims and objectives are clearly defined while planning your session
- Establish VC protocols with your students (how you will communicate with them, interaction patterns, the flow of your VC)
- Your first VC session should be an introductory one and remember to build your students' confidence around the use of the tool gradually
- Have a contingency plan for technical issues (both for you and your students)
- Start the VC on time and check if all students can hear you
- Keep the session on track in terms of timing and your objectives
- Breakout Groups/Polls – use these interactive tools to maintain full participation of your students
- Conclude your session with the whole group (thank for participation) and arrange next steps for your groups
- Evaluate your session after your VC delivery and reflect on how well it went and what could be improved

Further Information

- Familiarize yourself with the Collaborate Ultra Tools further information available via Bb Collaborate website (https://goo.gl/6KkYHV)
- UCD IT Services for technical support go to: http://bit.ly/UCDITsupport or email: mailto:ithelpdesk@ucd.ie

Further Reading

- Christopher, D., 2014. The Successful Virtual Classroom; First chapter available online https://goo.gl/UTflbT