LECTURER GUIDE TO THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

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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.

This lecturer’s guide will focus on these three steps with the use of Collaborate Ultra, the virtual classroom tool currently available in UCD.

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 Virtual Classroom Setup in Brightspace

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

Login to UCD Brightspace: [https://brightspace.ucd.ie/](https://brightspace.ucd.ie/)

1. Open your Brightspace module and navigate to the My Learning page.
2. **Create a new unit** titled ‘Virtual Classroom’ or select an existing unit within your module where you wish to add the link to the VC
3. Click the drop arrow for **Existing Activities** and select **External Learning Tools**
4. Under Add Activity select **Virtual Classroom Launch** and a new link to the VC will be added as an item within the selected Unit, edit the title if required.

**COURSE ROOM & SESSIONS**

By default, each module automatically has a **Course Room** created, this virtual classroom is always open unless you disable it and anyone within the module can access it any time. By contrast **Sessions** have to be created, and access can be restricted to specific dates and times, you can set up multiple sessions. If you choose not to use the Course Room, you can lock it and create sessions as required.
5. To make any changes to the Course Room, click on **Session Options** and select the appropriate option.

![Session Options](image)

6. To create a new session, click **Create Session** and a scheduling window will open, within the Event Details section, enter the session name, select **Guest Access** (if you will be inviting participants from outside of UCD). Select a start and end date if applicable or select **No End (Open Session)** session to keep room open for entire semester. Select **Repeat Session** to create multiple iterations of the same session. Enter a description of the session if required and save.

![Create Session](image)
You need one session for your module use the automatically created Course Room, if you need scheduled sessions lock the room and create multiple sessions.

7. Once the session is created, in the Session Settings, review the Default Attendee Role (your students should be joining as Participants). You can choose to Allow Recording Downloads and set Moderator and Participant Permissions. The following Participant options are selected by default. Click on the check mark next to each option if you do not want students in the session to be allowed to: share their audio, share their video, post chat messages, draw on whiteboard and share files. When you have reviewed all session settings, click save.

*Note: that the enable session telephony option is not currently available in UCD.

You need one session for your module use the automatically created Course Room, if you need scheduled sessions lock the room and create multiple sessions.
1.3 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

**Media Space**

**Collaborate Panel**

Select Settings® start the set up

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

Exit the settings
1.4 Uploading Slides

It is important to upload all presentations prior to the start of the session. To upload PowerPoint 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
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.

2. 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:

- Controls for resizing the shared space
- Tools available to you while presenting
- Slide Navigation

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

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
**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**

**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.**

- **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**

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