Questions on using Blackboard Collaborate for remote teaching

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1. Will students be informed of the requirement to use Collaborate?

Schools or programmes should provide their own information to students if they are intending to use Collaborate for teaching sessions.

As well as informing students on how to access your session(s), you can direct them to this set up page:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/communication/session-preparation

2. I teach sessions that are not part of an undergraduate course and do not use Learn.

If you do not use Learn then you can set up a Collaborate session in MyEd and share a link to your participants. See this page for further details:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/communication/virtualmeeting

3. I already have a link to Blackboard Collaborate Ultra via the Course Tools menu. Do I need to add a course link as is being demonstrated?

We recommend adding a link to your Collaborate session in a content area on Learn so that students can access it. They won't have access to the course tools menu as this area is only available to Instructors on the course.

4. Could the open Course Room be used for office hours, for instance?

The Course Room in Collaborate is open 24/7. It could be used for all your sessions without you having to set up any specific ones in Collaborate.

It could also be used for open office hours sessions but bear in mind that it is open to everyone on the course. If you want to have 1-1 sessions with students you can either ask extra students to leave and return later if you are already talking with someone or once a student has entered quickly go back to Learn (the Collaborate room should be open in a new tab) and lock the course room so no-one else can enter - remember to unlock again once finished.

For more information on using the Course Room, see:

https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Join_Sessions/Blackboard_Learn#course-room_OTP-4

5. Can students set up their own sessions?

Yes, they can.

https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/communication/collaborate-students

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6. Participants cannot hear (when presentation has started)

If you're having problems hearing, first make sure you don't have your computer audio set to mute! Please try F5 (PC) to refresh the browser or close the browser window and re-enter the session. If you are not using Chrome then also try switching to that browser. Finally, try the trouble shooting tips:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/communication/troubleshooting

7. If people dial in does it cost anything in terms of their phone bill?

The number provided is a UK number but it is not a free number so they will be charged. For more help on dialling into sessions, see:

https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Join_Sessions/Collaborate_Teleconference

8. Are PowerPoint animations available after uploading slides to Collaborate?

No, animations, web links and embedded video are all flattened by the conversion process. When you present slides with any of these features they will not be available to you when the slide is displayed through Collaborate.

9. Are there slide display issues with fonts and page size?

Collaborate may not recognise all fonts and will substitute fonts which in turn may affect the layout of a slide. If you have a need to display content using a particular font then it is recommended that you save your document as a PDF before uploading to Collaborate. See our guidance here:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/communication/best-practice-powerpoint-files-collaborate

10. Can different moderators share a single presentation and have control of it during their section or do they each need to share their own content?

All Moderators can see all uploaded content and can interact with it. You can either upload separate presentations for each speaker or a single slide deck and let each Moderator lead on presenting at the appropriate stage of the session. Please bear in mind the size limits on file uploads to Collaborate – a single presentation can be no more that 60MB and all presentations added to a session can be no more than 125MB.

11. There seems to be a lot of disruption due to dropouts.

Collaborate is a web-based technology and the experience is only as good as everyone's connection. Some activities use bandwidth more heavily – such as video and screen sharing – so it might be better if these were not used or used sparingly. If you record sessions as standard then, as long as the presenter has no issues, the recording is always available to the students afterwards. For Blackboard's recommendations for the best experience, see:

https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Support/Network_Connection#best-practices-for-best-experience_OTP-2

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The alternative is to pre-record screencasts and upload to Learn. Use the recording tool in Media Hopper Create and then embed the recording in Learn to share with your students. You could then have an audio only meeting to discuss the content or discuss it asynchronously in a Learn discussion board.

For help on using Media Hopper Create to record presentations and upload to Media Hopper, see:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/media-hopper-create/help-and-support/guides-and-support-documentation/media-hopper-portal

For help on adding Media Hopper Create videos to Learn, see:

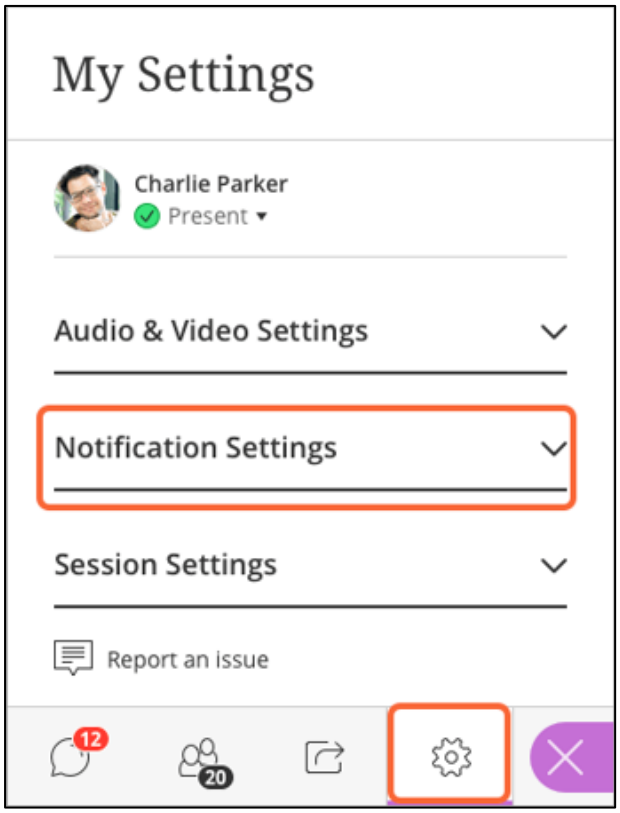
https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/media-hopper-create/help-and-support/guides-and-support-documentation/media-hopper-learn

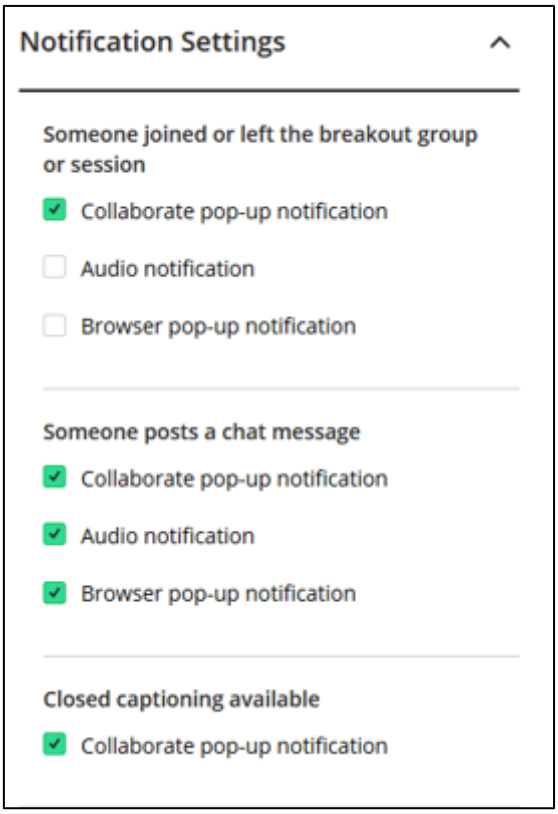
For help on creating discussion boards in Learn, see:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/learning-technology/virtual-environments/learn/instructor/communication-instructor/discussion-board

12. The constant notifications (audio and visual) are a distraction. Can I switch them off?

In the session expand the options menu (tab at bottom right), click on the cog wheel below the chat. Expand Notification Settings and disable any not required.





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13. Can pop up notifications be turned off for all students?

Notification settings can only be changed by the attendee and not by admin (it's not a session wide setting).

14. Can participants screenshare if you turn on share video?

No, only Moderators can share screens. To allow a student to share their screen they would need to be promoted (briefly) to the Moderator role. For help on promoting Participants to Moderators, see:

https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Manage_Attendees#promote-attendees_OTP-8

15. Could I work on a spreadsheet shared with me by the student and could they view what I am doing?

No, only the person sharing the screen can change items shared. They cannot give control to another. You would have to direct the student to take actions rather than carrying them out yourself.

If you want to work collaboratively on an Office document then use Office 365 to work with the student live on the same document. You could then share this via Collaborate. For help on sharing documents in Office 365 see:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/help-consultancy/it-help/email-and-office365/onedrive-for-business-faqs

16. Can I have more information on sharing video?

Here are Blackboard's help pages:

https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Share_Content#share-audio-and-video_OTP-1

17. Can I have more information on breakout rooms?

Here are Blackboard's help pages:

https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Breakout_groups

18. Any limits on using Poll questions?

Poll questions have a 110 character limit. Questions cannot be uploaded or prepared in advance in Collaborate but you can leave the question blank and give it verbally instead.

You can have up to 5 answer choices. Answer choices have a 90 character limit.

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19. Is polling anonymous?

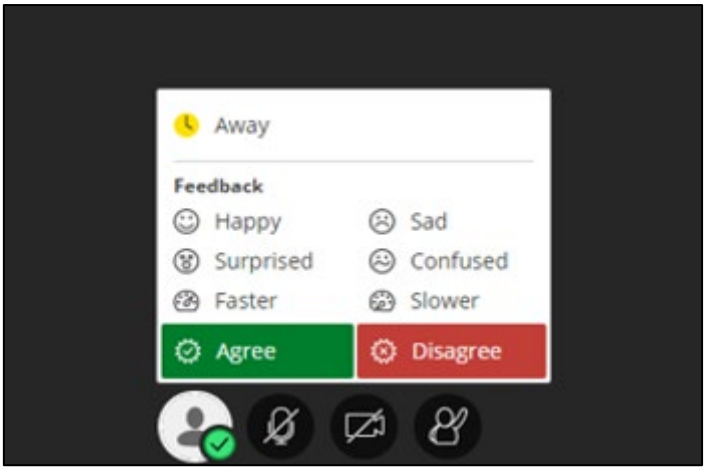
Participants only see the choice they make. Moderators see an overview of the choices made. They can also see the specific choice made by Participants in the Attendees area as well as who hasn't responded. For more help on polls see:

Help for Participants:
https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Participant/Participate_in_Sessions/Polls

Help for Moderators:
https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Polling

20. Where do you find the 'away' button?

Click on the participant icon in the middle of the screen. The Away indicator is at the top of the pop-up above the feedback options.



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