Zoom Best Practices

This guide is intended to offer suggestions of best practices for using Zoom to teach live, synchronous sessions. Please note that some activities are dependent on the security settings in your Zoom account, such as allowing annotations, chats, and participant screen sharing, and should be used with caution.

Planning a Live Session

- Plan your sessions in advance. Script your lecture and prepare all the materials you will use, including polls. Create an agenda for the session and make this available to participants before the meeting, preferably within the course itself. (Zoom: Polling for Meetings)
- Design your sessions to be interactive by providing opportunities for participants to interact and collaborate with each other. Some activities include polls, discussion questions in the chat, non-verbal feedback, and breakout rooms.
- Avoid duplicating content from the online modules in your live-session presentations. Use the live sessions as an opportunity to take a deeper dive into a topic and engage participants in discussion, practical exercises, and group work.
- If you use PowerPoint to create lecture materials, remember to include one slide as a placeholder for each poll, discussion question, or interactive exercise.
- Recommend ahead of time that all participants who will be speaking during the session use a headset with a built-in microphone.
    - Please note that if participants do not have a headset with a microphone, they can still use earphones during the Zoom session. This will prevent their laptop or PC microphones from picking up sound from their speakers, which causes disruptive noise interference during the session.
- Manage your audio and the aesthetics of your webcam view. Use a microphone and minimize background noise (fans, air conditioning, pets, children, etc.). Lighting should come from in front of you, never behind. Your background should be interesting but not distracting. Try to set your camera at eye level.
- Test all the features you want to use before the meeting.
- Have an emergency plan in place in case of technical difficulties and communicate this to your participants. How will you contact them if you can't join the session? How should they contact you? Post the help contact information somewhere near your computer for easy access.
- If you don't have a TA, consider asking students to help you moderate the session by checking the chat, or helping other students with tech issues. You can rotate these duties each week.

Sharing Lesson Materials:

- **Screen and Application sharing**: You can share your screen, a portion of your screen, or an application. This is useful for presentations, software demos, or demonstrating tasks to participants. Have all windows and applications ready before the session begins.
- **PowerPoint presentations**: Zoom does not allow for direct file uploads to share. You can share your screen or an application. We recommend setting up dual monitors so that you can present PowerPoints in Presentation mode. This will enable you to view your notes and upcoming

slides on one screen and the presentation slides on the shared screen. If you don't have dual monitors, you can find out how to share a PowerPoint on a single screen by visiting this Zoom help page.

- **Whiteboard**: You can share a whiteboard which you and the participants (if allowed) can annotate with various tools. You can save all the annotations on the screen as a screenshot, which is then saved to the local recording location. If you engage simultaneous screen sharing, multiple participants can share a whiteboard at once. However, in order to see two whiteboards at once, you must have dual monitors enabled.
- **Share Computer Sound:** If you want to share audio from your computer (either through a video or an audio file), you can enable this setting by checking the box in the bottom left of the Share options. Otherwise, the sound will be filtered to participants through your microphone and the quality will decrease. You need to do this after clicking the green Share button during a meeting but before clicking to share the content.
    - Please also prepare to share links to videos and audio files. While playing videos will usually work well, videos may not always come through smoothly or may be blocked by HD protection. Students usually report a lag, and this can be distracting.

Moderating a Session

- Keep your camera on, and ask students to use their webcams if possible. Synchronous sessions are a great opportunity to connect with your students and establish a sense of community. This is easier if people can see each other.
- Show your students how to toggle between Gallery and Speaker view so they can see the whole class during interactive discussions, or just the speaker during presentations.
- Greet participants as they join your session, or have some music playing with a related question posted on the screen.
- Remind participants to test their microphones and speakers. You can post a screenshot of how to do this in your intro slide at the beginning of the session.
- At the beginning of the session, explain the use of Raise Hand, non-verbal feedback options in the Participants panel, and Poll response buttons.
- Establish a protocol for asking questions (e.g. raise hand, then when called on unmute your mic and ask the question).
- Include time for a break if your session is longer than 1 hour. 2-hour sessions usually include a 10-15 minute break at the halfway point. Ask participants to mute their microphones for the break (you can also mute them in the Participant panel).
- Look at the whole screen and not just the presentation window. Watch the chat window for messages, and the participant window for new members joining the session.
- Ask questions and provide opportunities for interaction to engage participants. Conduct brainstorming activities on a shared whiteboard.
- If you're using breakout rooms, you can have Zoom automatically distribute participants into rooms, or you can manually add them. You can also load them in advance at the time when you schedule the meeting by uploading a CSV file. You can also enable a timer for breakout sessions; when the allotted time has elapsed, participants will automatically re-enter the main session room.
    - **Note:** Participants who joined the meeting via the Zoom Desktop Client, Zoom Mobile App, dialing in, or H.323/SIP devices can participate in breakout rooms. Participants

who joined via the web client, Chromebooks/Chrome OS or Zoom Rooms are unable to join breakout rooms, but the main room can be used as an alternative session for those users.

- Always record your sessions in case someone is unable to attend. Record the whole session, including the break. If you stop/start the recording, you will need to upload or stitch together multiple files. Local recordings are recommended for weekly live sessions longer than 1 hour due to size and date limits in the cloud. You can then embed these files into your course for students to watch at a later date. Cloud recordings are fine if you don't hold regular meetings and you don't need to save the recording for longer than 120 days. You will need to share the cloud link with students.

Post-Session Follow-Up

- Wait to allow the session recording to process and download to your local computer.
- Embed the recording file to your course for student review.
- Upload any saved whiteboard images to your course to share with students.
- Download session reports, such as polling or attendance/usage reports, to help gather data for grading.
- Input any grades from the live session, such as participation credit, as soon as possible rather than waiting to upload them all at the end of the course.