Instructor Guide to Collaborate Ultra at UBC

What is Collaborate Ultra?

Collaborate Ultra is a video/audio web-conferencing and collaboration tool that lets you deliver real-time lectures in courses with up to 250 simultaneous participants in Canvas, UBC’s learning management system. During a lecture, Collaborate Ultra allows you to: present using whiteboards, share screens and resources, interact by voice or text chats, break students into smaller groups, and use polling features. The sessions can be recorded to make them available after the real-time event.

Collaborate Ultra can also be used as an online office space, where you can host open office hours or meet with students for private one-on-ones.

What do I need to use Collaborate Ultra?

Collaborate Ultra is an option you need to turn on in your Canvas course, in order to give everyone access to this shared space for real-time interactions.

ENABLE COURSE USE

1. Log in to your Canvas course, and click Settings in the Course Navigation.

2. Click the Navigation tab.

3. Find the Collaborate Ultra menu item, click the options menu (i.e., the 3 vertical dots), and choose Enable.

4. Save your setting changes.

5. The Collaborate Ultra menu item should now be available in the Course Navigation. (If it’s not, refresh the page.)

Tips

- Once Collaborate Ultra is enabled in a Canvas course, a default web-conferencing session entitled “Course Room” is available for you and your students to join at any time.

How do I run real-time lectures with Collaborate Ultra?

Because Collaborate Ultra provides a default “Course Room” session for you to use, you do not have to schedule lecture sessions separately; students can join you in the room at the designated lecture time. If you prefer, you can also set up individual sessions for each lecture.

Last updated: 2-Apr-20
RUN A LECTURE SESSION

1. Log in to your Canvas course, and click Collaborate Ultra in the Course Navigation.
   - If you don’t see this option, follow the steps for enabling real-time interactions above.

2. Choose the default “Course Room” session by clicking it or create a new session by clicking Create Session.

3. You will see a pop-up with session options to choose from that may include:
   - Setting a start and end time
   - Repeating the session
   - Allowing students to phone in to the session
     - As the phone number for joining is a U.S. one, it’s best if students don’t attend by phone.
   - Allowing early entry
   - Specifying what participants can and can’t do
   - Allowing recordings to be downloaded

4. Once you’ve set your options, click Save.

5. Once you’re ready to start your lecture, click the name of the session you want to join (“Course Room” or the new session name), then click either Join Course Room or Join session at the top of the pop-up.

6. During the lecture, you can share your video and audio using the menu at the bottom of the screen. Click the purple arrow tab in the lower right corner to open the Collaborate panel, where you’ll see options for:
   - Monitoring and participating in chat (first icon)
   - Managing participants (second icon)
   - Sharing whiteboards / screens / files, polling students, and managing small group discussions called breakout rooms (third icon)

7. If you are recording the session, let students know this at the beginning, so they are aware any participation will be captured as well.

Tips

- Host your online real-time lecture at the same day and time as you would normally hold class.

- Test your audio and video before running your session. Consider using headphones with a microphone to ensure good audio quality.

- If you choose to manually record your session, Canvas will automatically upload this afterward in the Collaborate Ultra area of your course.

Last updated: 2-Apr-20
Students can also access Collaborate Ultra on their mobile devices to attend lectures. This is easiest to do if they first download the Canvas Student app.

Collaborate Ultra offers several useful controls during sessions, including:

- **Video sharing**: Share up to four participants’ videos simultaneously
- **Screen sharing**: Share your screen or a tab in the Chrome web browser
- **Managing participants**: Control participants’ audio and video, make participants presenters or moderators, and monitor participants’ participation in the session
- **Text chat**: Chat with all session participants or privately with individuals or other session moderators
- **Breakout rooms**: Randomly or manually assign students into up to 20 smaller groups

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**How do I meet with students in Collaborate Ultra?**

**HOST A VIRTUAL OFFICE**

1. Log in to your Canvas course, and click **Collaborate Ultra** in the Course Navigation.
   - If you don’t see this option, follow the steps for enabling real-time interactions above.

2. Click **Create Session**.

3. Enter a session name (e.g., “Office Hours”), start time, and end time.

4. Check the **Repeat session checkbox**.
   - Your office hours can be set to repeat on a daily/weekly/monthly occurrence. Click the days you would like to repeat.
   - Use the “End after Occurrences” drop-down to set an end to your recurring sessions.

5. When you are ready, click **Save**.

6. After you save, you’ll see a new series of sessions. You can view and modify upcoming sessions by clicking the **down arrow icon** to the right of the session title.

7. On the day of the session, you can use the session room you’ve created as a waiting room. (Think of it like the space outside your physical office.) You’ll then invite students into a private space using a Breakout Group.

8. When a student enters the session, click the **purple arrow tab** in the lower right corner to open the Collaborate panel.

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1 [https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-4048](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-4048)

*Last updated: 2-Apr-20*
9. Along the bottom bar of the panel that expands, click the **third icon** for sharing content, and select **Breakout Groups** from the options presented.

10. Move the student and yourself into a Breakout Group by dragging both names into “Group 1”. Click **Start**.

11. Conduct your private one-on-one with the student. When you have finished, ask the student to leave the room by clicking the menu in the upper left corner of the screen and selecting “Leave Session” at the bottom.

12. To return to the main session room yourself, click the **stop icon** next to “Breakout Groups”. Repeat this process for the next student.

**Tips**

- Breakout Groups have their own private audio, video, whiteboard, screen sharing, and chat.
- To make the most out of the virtual office hour, you can create a discussion beforehand for students to post questions they would like to address.
- If you’ll be using the waiting room approach for office hours, make sure your students know to expect this when they show up or allow them to sign up for time slots beforehand.
- Consider having a teaching assistant help you manage moving students in and out of Breakout Groups.

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**What are key considerations for using Collaborate Ultra?**

**TECHNICAL BEST PRACTICES**

- Find a private, quiet, well-lit room to avoid interruptions or distractions.
- Avoid having your camera pointed directly at a light source (e.g., window, lamp) or you will likely appear silhouetted. Instead, sit with the light shining on you directly or at an angle.
- Wear plain and neutral-coloured clothing. Clothes with strong detailing such as plaid shirts can create distortions in the video and remove visual detail from your face.
- Use an external microphone (i.e., one that you plug into your computer) to help improve the audio quality of your presentation. This could be headphones with a built-in microphone or a standalone microphone.
- Make sure there is nothing behind you that will be distracting or revealing for students to see.
- If you experience lag time when hosting, try turning off your video, if you can.
● Ask students to join the session a few minutes early to test their connection, microphone, and camera.

● If possible, get someone (e.g., teaching assistant) to help monitor questions and handle technical troubleshooting with students during the lecture.

● Review the 3-minute recording tips video provided by UBC Studios².

PROMOTE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN LECTURES

● Look at the camera to create eye contact with your students. This helps foster a more personal connection.

● For your first class, set aside time to introduce your students to Collaborate Ultra (you can share UBC’s Collaborate Ultra student guide with them), ensuring that they’re able to connect and understand their options for participation. Let students know they can download the Canvas Student app³ to their phone as an alternate means of accessing sessions.

● Set and discuss your online etiquette and expectations of the students during lecture sessions, and periodically revisit these to make sure everyone keeps them in mind. This should include setting communication protocol, e.g., instructing students to raise their hand before asking questions and responding to questions using their microphones.

● Ask students to mute their microphones again after asking questions or responding to avoid interruptions, echoes, and background noise.

● Consider the bandwidth limitations some students have and try to rely less on high-bandwidth tools such as video and screen sharing.

● Share a document or slide at the beginning of each class that lays out an agenda or plan for the session. This gives students a clear idea of how the class will progress, what will be covered, and what online activities they should be prepared to engage in.

● Utilize the whiteboard or annotating feature for shared documents. When sharing a whiteboard, document, screen, or image, invite collaboration on specific problems and/or have a student use annotation to highlight parts of work, e.g., grammar mistakes in a paper you’re sharing.

● Use the polling feature to increase interactivity in the class by asking students their opinions or current comprehension of the topic you’re covering.

● Frequently have students answer questions or react using emoticons, moods, or with text in the chat. When sharing images, files, or video, also give your students a moment to open what you’ve shared.

● Divide the class into smaller groups for discussions on certain topics. You can use breakout groups and either pre-assign or auto-assign students into each group.

² https://keepteaching.ubc.ca/lectures/#recording-tips
³ https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-4048
Consider allowing students to take over screen control and present or share projects with the class. This allows students to show what they’re working on, while practicing their presentation skills. It also allows students to hear from one another instead of just the instructors.

Where can I get more support with Collaborate Ultra?

- You can reference Collaborate Ultra’s support documentation for moderators⁴.
- You can reach out to support staff via the Keep Teaching support page⁵. They can help you or help with issues you’re having with students accessing Collaborate Ultra.
- You can also share UBC’s Collaborate Ultra student guide⁶ with your students.

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⁴ https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator
⁵ https://keepteaching.ubc.ca/support/

A Guide from UBC’s Keep Teaching Website (keepteaching.ubc.ca)

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Last updated: 2-Apr-20