

Video & Web conferencing options for staff & students at the University of York

i Audio Visual no longer support hardware based video conferencing systems but we can assist with software options such as Zoom, Meet or Skype.

IT Services have also provided a guide to [Working Remotely](#) including further information and tutorials on conferencing and remote working software.

Blackboard Collaborate is integrated into the VLE and should be used for online teaching. More information can be found from the [Program Design and Learning Team](#).

Zoom is a web-based video conferencing tool that allows users to meet online and is now available as a supported University service.

It can be accessed via a web browser, mobile app, or desktop app. The browser experience allows multiple users to communicate via video, audio, or live-chat, screen-share, and share control of a shared screen. The desktop app contains a number of additional features, such as virtual whiteboards, breakout rooms and custom backgrounds.

More information is available on the [IT-Services webpages](#)

Google Meet (sometimes referred to as Hangouts Meet) offers a simple way of conducting video meetings with up to 25 participants, as well as screen sharing.

You need a Google account to start a meeting but the other participants don't need an account to join a meeting. This makes it easy to conduct video meetings with people outside the University. Participants can join using the Google Chrome web browser or the Android and iOS mobile apps. Meetings can also be scheduled in advance through Google Calendar.

Visit meet.google.com.

Skype is a domestic alternative to video conferencing and can be used from a campus PC. It is available to download in Software Centre but you may need to speak to your DCO about installation of the software. You will need a USB webcam for this which [Audio Visual can provide](#) if required. Alternatively most laptops have a built in webcam and microphone.

There is also a web version of skype - web.skype.com although this doesn't currently support desktop sharing in Internet Explorer. You may also need assistance installing a plug-in on supported PCs to make the software work.

Videoconferencing is a social activity. As with any social activity, there are acceptable as well as expected behaviours that accompany it. Some of these behaviours are the result of culture or the environment whereas some may be said to reflect 'common sense'.

When compared to other well-established social activities that combine people with technology (e.g., talking on the telephone, watching a film in a public theatre, driving a car), videoconferencing has not been around as long or had as much exposure.

There are some basic etiquette tips that will improve your own videoconferencing experience as well as that of the people you are conferencing with:

Pay attention to how you look - you are on camera

The first tip is to pay some attention to how others will be seeing and hearing you. In videoconferencing, much of the experience at one end is affected by conditions at the other. The key point is to ensure that the camera is set as close to eye level and as close to the centre of the screen as possible. This ensures that it appears that eye contact with the far end is being maintained as much as possible.

Most videoconferencing clients include a 'self-view' window. This lets you see how you appear to the remote end whether or not you are completely viewable on camera, if there are distractions in the background, whether you are looking straight forward at the remote caller, 'gazing down from above' or 'peering up from below'. Even if the self-view window is not going to be kept up during the call, it's a good idea to preview your image in the window and adjust accordingly prior to the call.

Natural light coming in through one side of a room can have a detrimental effect on the quality of the image and curtains or blinds should be closed when possible.

Test and manage the audio - you are being heard

A quick audio test with the other participants in the 5 or 10 minutes before a meeting is starting is always advisable.

During a meeting is recommended that you use the 'mute' function for your microphone when one of the other parties is speaking. Remember that your microphones don't just pick up what you intend to be heard but also the sound of drinks being poured, the rustling of papers and any other background and ambient noise. Such noises can be distracting to those speaking.

Factor in testing time

When booking a meeting room for a videoconference remember to leave adequate time to test the connection before the meeting starts. Booking a meeting to start from the moment the previous meeting is scheduled to finish gives no time to make any adjustments.

Don't fiddle

Once adjustments have been made at each end to produce optimal call conditions, the advice is to converse naturally and make as few additional adjustments as possible.

Unnecessary fiddling with the audio or video can have very distracting results to the participants at the far end. Excessive movement or position shifting at the local end can also increase ambient noise.

Remember: you are being watched

Once your camera and incoming view window have been correctly positioned so that 'eye contact' has been established between you and the remote site, you should remain focused in that direction.

Shifts in attention such as looking out a window, looking at other applications on the computer screen, 'multi-tasking' with other work in your office, have the same effect as not looking someone in the eye when talking to them in person.

It's important to realise that videoconferencing is much more like a face to face exchange than a telephone call - body language and facial expression count.

Talking out of turn and anticipating the delay

The video and audio that you are sharing with other participants is travelling a long way through cables and networks. Be aware that there will be a slight delay between contributions; allow a brief pause, (perhaps a couple of seconds) before you interject.

It will feel a little unnatural at first but it will reduce the likelihood of speaking over the other participants.

The chairperson has an essential role in maintaining the flow of the meeting. The following procedures are recommended for anybody chairing a meeting -

- Asking each participant on each site to identify themselves.
- To ask participants to raise their hand if they want to speak and to wait until they are invited by the chairperson.
- To take questions from each site in turn, carefully looking for people trying to get his/her attention.

The etiquette of a face to face meeting applies

A final but very important point of video etiquette is that when you are in a videoconference meeting, though participants are located in physically different places, it should still be treated as a face to face meeting.

This means things like 'you should be on time', 'you should pay attention', 'you should make sure everyone has the same information going into the meeting', 'you should bring enough materials for everyone' still apply.

In the case of a multipoint meeting, these considerations are more complicated in delivery but increase in importance.

For example; if hard copy materials will be used in the meeting they should be sent to all locations ahead of time or if desktop sharing is to be used during the meeting you should ensure that all remote sites have this capability.

Videoconferencing is a social activity. As with any social activity, there are acceptable as well as expected behaviours that accompany it. Some of these behaviours are the result of culture or the environment whereas some may be said to reflect 'common sense'.

Remember you are on camera and need to be seen clearly

Most videoconferencing clients include a 'self-view' window so you can see if you are completely viewable on camera. The self-view window does not need to be kept up during the call, but it is a good idea to preview your image in the window and adjust accordingly prior to the call.

Once 'eye contact' has been established between you and the remote site, you should remain focused in that direction. Shifts in attention such as looking out a window, looking at other applications on the computer screen, 'multi-tasking' with other work in your office, have the same effect as not looking someone in the eye when talking to them in person.

Remember that you can be heard (unless you remember to use the mute button)

During a meeting is recommended that you use the 'mute' function on the remote control when one of the other parties is speaking. Remember that your microphones don't just pick up what you intend to be heard but also the sound of drinks being poured, the rustling of papers and any other background and ambient noise. Such noises can be distracting to those speaking.

Talking out of turn and anticipating the delay

The video and audio that you are sharing with other participants is travelling a long way through cables and networks. Be aware that there will be a slight delay between contributions; allow a brief pause, (perhaps a couple of seconds) before you interject. It will feel a little unnatural at first but it will reduce the likelihood of speaking over the other participants. It is recommended that participants raise their hand if they wish to speak and wait for the chairperson to invite them to do so.

Don't fiddle

Once adjustments have been made at each end to produce optimal call conditions, the advice is to converse naturally and make as few additional adjustments as possible. Unnecessary fiddling with the audio or video can have very distracting results to the participants at the far end. Excessive movement or position shifting at the local end can also increase ambient noise.

The etiquette of a face to face meeting applies

A final but very important point of video etiquette is to remember that when you are in a videoconference meeting, though participants are located in physically different places, it should still be treated as a face to face meeting. The same courtesies apply.

 There is an overview [here](#) of how Audio Visual run a Zoom webinar as a live event