# Interactive teaching using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

Things to consider when planning a Blackboard Collaborate Ultra teaching session:

## Before the session starts.

* Do you want learners to watch something, read something or engage with the module content / peers beforehand? For example, watch a DMU Replay recording, read an article or contribute to a discussion board before the session.
* Invite learners to engage with resources on how to use Collaborate Ultra.

## The Collaborate Ultra session.

* Ask students to enter the room 10 mins before the session to ensure that their audio setup is working.
* Remind your students that once the session is running you will not be able to answer questions about technical issues.
* On the first slide ensure that the module and session are clearly identified and include instructions for students to check and test their audio connections.

## Warm-ups,

* Checking in with the group: Ensuring that learners are comfortable and gaining confidence in an online environment. This type of activity can also be particularly useful to help students to identify if the device that they are using, such as a mobile phone, has any access limitations.
* Use emojis to check in with how learners are feeling / ask learners to respond to a low stakes / humorous question. You can include emoji images on the slide as a multiple choice question and ask which best describes how the students are feeling about the virtual space.
* Use multiple choice questions to identify academic interests or concerns.
* Invite learners to identify aspects of the session that they are most / least looking forward to or where they have the most or least understanding (this can be particularly useful if there has been some recommended reading or viewing in advance of the session).

[There is information about setting up Multiple Choice Quizzes (MCQs) in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra at this link.](https://celt.our.dmu.ac.uk/collaborate-ultra/)

* Provide an image on a slide and ask students to write a humorous tag line in the chat panel – set a word limit

\* Note: If you have large numbers of students in the Collaborate space and all start to type in the chat at the same time those with poor or limited internet connections may lose functionality (including audio) or be kicked out of the room. It is often better to use the polling function, which is more accessible to all learners who are using a computer.

## Learning outcomes

Once the session has started provide a simple PowerPoint slide that contains the learning outcomes for that session (this slide can also be added toward the end of the session to reinforce the learning - plenary).

## Knowledge checks

* Use Multiple Choice Quizzes (MCQs)

Multiple choice questions can be used in a number of ways from the simple true / false to more complex questions and associated multiple distractors. Blackboard collaborate can be used with up to 5 possible answers. A useful approach to MCQs is to ask the question and give students time to think of an answer. Provide an answer for them to vote (show the answer statistics) if a number are wrong, consider the theory again and move to a slide with the answer options repeated vote again. For some questions there may not be a correct answer!

[There is information about setting up MCQs and polling in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra at this link.](https://celt.our.dmu.ac.uk/collaborate-ultra/)

* Ask questions – invite students to respond in the chat window. If you ask knowledge check questions try to have these prepared on slides as a part of the session presentation. If you are inviting students to respond in the chat window set a word limit. Prepare a second slide that gives your answer (within the word limit). This can help students who are watching a recording of the session and helps students to develop their ability to write concisely.
* Looking at the responses – can they be grouped or sorted as a part of the session. Ensure that you include sufficient time in your session plan for the learners to give answers and for you to consider the responses.

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It can be difficult to manage and read a large number of chat messages / questions or answers and so if you have a large group it is always worth including regular stops to give yourself a chance to address any important issues.

* Ask questions (and include on a slide) – invite students to think about their response but to keep these to themselves. This can work very well for questions that may, for instance, require reflective thinking on personal and ethical matters, calculations or the application of scientific theories. Subsequent slides can consider answers or theories linked to the question.
* Invite questions using chat / audio. Provide a word count limit for responses in the chat window. If using audio – invite students to raise their hands to be invited to speak - be aware that you may need to switch off students microphones after they have spoken to limit background noise.

\* Note: In the virtual classroom you cannot take visual clues as to the level of understanding and so it is important to check this regularly using other means.

If the session is to be recorded prepare a slide that includes the correct answers or comments about ideas that have been discussed. [There is information about ordering, raising and lowering hands in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra at this link.](https://celt.our.dmu.ac.uk/collaborate-ultra/)

## Use group working in a breakout room.

Suggestion 1:

Divide learners between Collaborate Ultra breakout rooms, one room per topic, and nominate a student to record results of group activity on a PowerPoint slide which is shared with the whole group in the main room.

\* Note: For large groups this type of approach can be problematic to manage where there are many groups or a smaller number but with more learners present. It may prove to be more effective to undertake the group work in advance of the session and use the session for each to feedback – see Suggestion 2, below.

Suggestion 2:

In advance of the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra session divide your students into sub-groups, with each sub-group allocated a part of a larger topic to research. In the Collaborate Ultra session, divide learners into breakout rooms, with each room containing an ‘expert’ on a different part of the topic. Each ‘expert’ then shares their knowledge with the other learners in the room.

Suggestion 3:

Set up a circus style event where students move themselves between breakout rooms to consider a number of questions or ideas (set a time limit for each room). The group may then come together in the main room to discuss outcomes.

Suggestion 4:

Use the Groups function in Blackboard to set up learner groups: these groups can then connect to Collaborate Ultra, giving them their own Collaborate Ultra rooms to work together.

Team teaching

Split your student group into breakout spaces (during or as they arrive in the session) each facilitated by an academic. They may then consider ideas and questions as groups or as a whole after a facilitated group session.

[There is information about setting up Breakout spaces in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra at this link.](https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Breakout_groups)

## At the end of the session.

Reinforce the learning

Highlighting the key points – this can be linked to the learning outcomes slide given at the beginning of the session (it is often useful to use the same slide again as a prompt).

Signposting further resources and support

Use a final slide to highlight resources on Blackboard, e.g. DMU Replay recordings / DMU Resource Lists or extension activities.

You may want to let learners know about the best ways to contact you or for follow up session or pastoral support: eg. a drop-in session on Collaborate Ultra where they can ask questions or via a forum thread for asynchronous discussions.