Tips for Using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

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This document contains a lot of information. Please allow yourself time to process it. The students will also need some time to learn how to operate in remote courses, but the knowledge and technology skills will help them in their future jobs. Make sure to point this out to them.

WARNING: In any course, it is safer to use the software that the university purchased and supports because

a. security issues are minimized or at least someone other than the instructor is responsible for them
b. upgrades are rolled out in a controlled way and services are more stable (more up-time)
c. the helpdesk provides support; either the university helpdesk or the software company helpdesk

If the instructor uses free software all the above responsibilities are his/hers – have this in mind.

General recommendations for remote classes

1. TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATION: The instructor should have dual monitors or one very large monitor to be able to view multiple windows comfortably.
2. INCLUDE A STATEMENT ABOUT Class Recordings IN THE SYLLABUS: In remote sections, some (parts of) class meetings may be recorded and saved for later viewing. Both instructor lectures and student participation may be captured in the recordings. Students who have privacy concerns need to discuss this with the instructor.
3. The videos for Basic Algebra students about how to use Collaborate Ultra (they can be used in other classes too):
   Video (3 min): How to log into Collaborate for the first time.
   Video (5 min): How to handle multiple tabs open in one class.

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Setup - Virtual Classroom – Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

Unless there are special circumstances, add Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to each course in Blackboard Learn. To do this, go to Tools -> More Tools and click on Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. It is recommended to name the link the Virtual Classroom – Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

The link may look like: [Virtual Classroom - Blackboard Collaborate Ultra]

After you click on the link you get:

[Course Room
Unlocked (available)]

Create Session
Filter by
All Upcoming Sessions

CONFIGURATION for Course Room or Session

1. In most cases, it is enough to use “Course Room” for everything but if you find the use for Sessions go ahead and create them as needed. Click on “Course Room” or create a Session.

2. **IF YOU WANT STUDENTS TO BE ABLE TO SHARE THEIR DESKTOP OR APPLICATION WINDOW**, do this **ONE-TIME**

   2.1 click on [ ] and then set the “Default Attendee Role” to Presenter (the default is Participant)

   2.2 click on [ ] to get back and, if you want to allow guests, check “Guest access,” and set the “Guest role” to Presenter

   2.3 click [Save] to save the changes; this will allow students to share their desktops every time they log in

   2.4 join the Course Room or Session only after the above is done

3. **IF YOU WANT STUDENTS TO WORK IN BREAKOUT GROUPS**

   After you join the Course Room or Session, **EVERY TIME** you want to use Breakout Groups, do this:

   3.1 click on [ ] and then click on [Breakout Groups]

   3.2 If the students need to be able to enter and exit groups by themselves, the groups must be created with “Allow attendees to switch rooms” checked.

   3.3 create as many Breakout Groups as needed by clicking on [ ] on the last Group (otherwise, the Groups will not be in numerical order). You may rename Groups – if you only have a few, renaming may work well.

   3.4 **the above steps must be done EVERY TIME you use Breakout Groups.** For example, if in one class period you want students to work in groups at 3 different times with the lecture in the main room in between, you need to do the above steps 3 times:
To help students get started and minimize technical issues, the description under Virtual Classroom – Blackboard Collaborate Ultra link may have the following text:

For the basic functions of Collaborate Ultra see the PDF document Attending a Real-Time Lecture or Class Discussion.

General recommendations on how to connect
1. Reboot the PC or close all windows (including browsers) on your PC before joining the class.
2. Open the new browser window, go to the course in Bb Learn. Click the link to Virtual Classroom, click the Course Room, and click Join Course Room.
3. Mute your microphone except when you need to talk. The camera should be disabled.
4. When you work in Breakout Groups (the instructor will assign you to a group):
   - Go to your group, enable the microphone and camera.
   - To troubleshoot the microphone and/or camera, review the PDF document Some microphone and camera troubleshooting tips.
   - Start any other program required by the task, such as MyLab Math or MS Word.
   - Be ready to show your work to the instructor and other group members via your camera or by sharing the application or desktop window.
   - The instructor will visit Breakout Groups to check the progress.
5. For immediate help either send a private message to the instructor or "raise hand"
6. Whenever you leave the session, close the browser tab as indicated on the screen: "You can close your browser window". If you lose connection during the class, close the tab of the connection and join the Course Room again.

Alternatively, you can join this session via phone: +1-XXX-XXX-XXXX PIN: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Multiple Sections Using the Same Virtual Classroom

This setup is used in Basic Algebra courses but it can be used whenever multiple sections attend at the same time.

Virtual Classroom – Blackboard Collaborate Ultra must be set up in one of the courses. In all the other courses the “Guest link” from the Virtual Office Hour Room must be added as a web-link.

Use case 1 – Lecture Delivered Remotely – Collaborate Ultra (+ Kaltura)

The instructor can share the desktop or window during the lecture. Files can also be shared so that students can easily access them. It is a good practice to break lectures in 5-15 minute chunks to allow for the practice or discussion in between.

When the recording is started in Collaborate Ultra, it is a good practice to mention to students that recording starts and also when the recording is stopped. The recordings have names such as recording 1, recording 2,... The recording names need to be changed to be more descriptive – see the names below.
Another option is to download the recordings, then upload them to Kaltura, and then incorporate it into Bb Learn as mashups or web-links. This allows the videos to be grouped in appropriate folders in the course.

Use case 2 – Breakout Groups – 2-3 students in a group – Collaborate Ultra

Most courses will have time for lectures (see above) and group work (described here). For example, in the Introductory Statistics, short lectures will be mixed with the assignments in MyLab Statistics. The students will be in the Main Room and from there they will be sent to Breakout groups by the instructor.

1. Students can be assigned to groups using different criteria such as desired grade preference, major, or randomly; **If the students need to be able to enter and exit groups by themselves, the groups must be created with “Allow attendees to switch rooms” checked.**
2. One student from the group shares the desktop and all group members work on his/her problem; then either another student shares the desktop or other students complete their version of the problem on their own. As they work, the students switch between the Collaborate Ultra window and other windows. Another option is to re-size windows so that they are visible at the same time.
3. When the student needs help, he/she sends a private message to the instructor or raises his hand.

Unless called by some group, the instructor switches from group to group and helps each group of students.

The students and instructor swap sharing screens. The “Screen snip” function in Windows is very useful in capturing the problem and pasting it in, for example, into MS Word. If the instructor has a touch screen the instructor can write or other methods can be used such as typing in MS Word, using Ziggi camera and write on paper, project tablet on the PC and write on tablet (software Mobizen allows that)... Observe that “Screen snip” cannot be pasted into Whiteboard.

Use case 3 – Breakout Groups – 1 student in a group – Collaborate Ultra

This setup is used in Basic Algebra courses where each student works individually in ALEKS software. The number of Breakout rooms is limited to 20.

The instructor creates Breakout Groups before the class as indicated in the paragraph for Virtual Classroom. The rooms are created with “Allow attendees to switch rooms” checked.

When the student logs into the class:

1. he/she goes into the empty breakout room, enables camera and microphone, and shares the desktop
2. in the separate browser window, the student starts ALEKS software and works
3. when the student needs help, he/she sends a private message to the instructor or raises hand

Unless called by the student, the instructor switches from Breakout Group to Breakout Group and helps each student individually.

The student and instructor swap sharing screens. The “Screen snip” function is very useful in capturing the problem that student works on and pasting it in, for example, MS Word where the instructor can go on and present the solution. If the instructor has a touch screen the instructor can write or other methods can be used such as typing in MS Word, using Ziggi camera and write on paper, project tablet on the PC and write on tablet (software Mobizen allows that)... Observe that “Screen snip” cannot be pasted into Whiteboard so if the Whiteboard is used then the problem must be pasted into Word and both Word and Whiteboard must be on the instructor desktop.

This setup can be used for the proctored exams too as the instructor can randomly visit students in their rooms.