The purpose of this slide deck is to provide a few helpful considerations and strategies when remotely facilitating synchronous events and activities.

Our examples will relate to the tools and technology currently supported by the University of Toronto since you are most likely to adopt those tools for your environment.

Pros and Cons for Live Events

Pros	Cons
• Engagement, potential active discussion between participants • Dynamic learning and immediate feedback • Supports community building and strengthening of relationships • Easy to move presentation/group activities to webinar platform without building new content	• Scheduling less flexible/time zone issues • Technical challenges • Potential for participant fatigue (watching screen continuously) • Participants sometimes reluctant to engage, particularly using cameras and mics

Choosing a Synchronous Platform

For synchronous events, use of institutionally or divisionally supported platforms is recommended. These have been vetted for security and technical support is available.

For information about centrally supported tools:

- Enterprise Video Conferencing Meeting Resources [ITS-ACT]

For advice on choice of tool:

- Which Webinar Tool Should I Use and When [FASE]

Perceptions About Event Quality

The following factors contribute to positive student perceptions about the quality of their online learning experience:

- Strong presentation and facilitation skills – the importance of these skills is magnified in an online medium.
- Higher frequency with which students have a chance to talk and exchange ideas.
- Extending student interactivity/exchange beyond the online learning session.

Synchronous Event Facilitation Strategies

Set the stage for a successful event

- Practice using the tools loading content, etc, prior to the live event.
- Encourage participants to test equipment and login early to ensure their tech set up is configured correctly.
- Provide an orientation to the environment as an opening slide (see next slide for example).
- Establish expectations and norms around online interactions (e.g., hand up, Q&A in chat, muting mics when not speaking).
- Aim to develop a sense of inclusive community within the online learning environment and model as possible.
- Running a successful event is a **team effort**; have facilitation assistant to help with the chat, troubleshooting, etc.

Example Activities for Remote Events

- Open with an icebreaker (poll, intro question response in chat)
- Present slide content
- Website tour
- Poll audience using poll tool or emoticons feature
- Hand up for Q&A
- Participants share your idea in the chat
- Brainstorm on the whiteboard
- Use breakout rooms for small group or buddy discussions
- Record for those who cannot attend

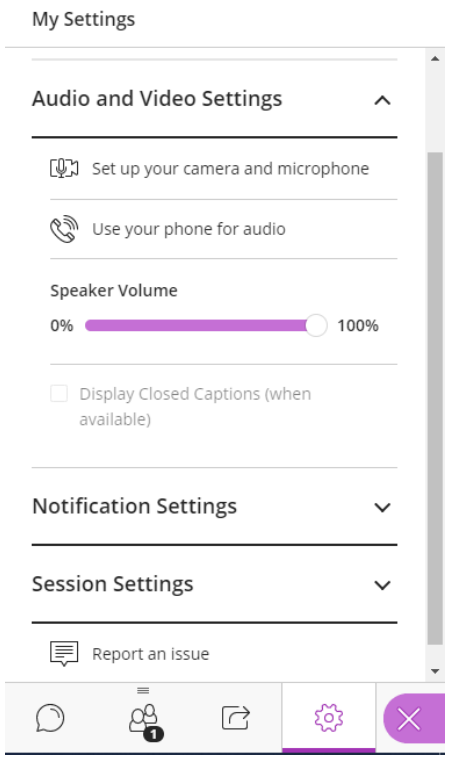
Example Orientation Slide

Before we get started:

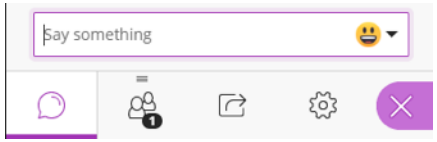
1) Open the Collaborate panel (bottom right of screen)

2) Click on the gear icon for settings

3) We will do periodic audio tests before we begin.



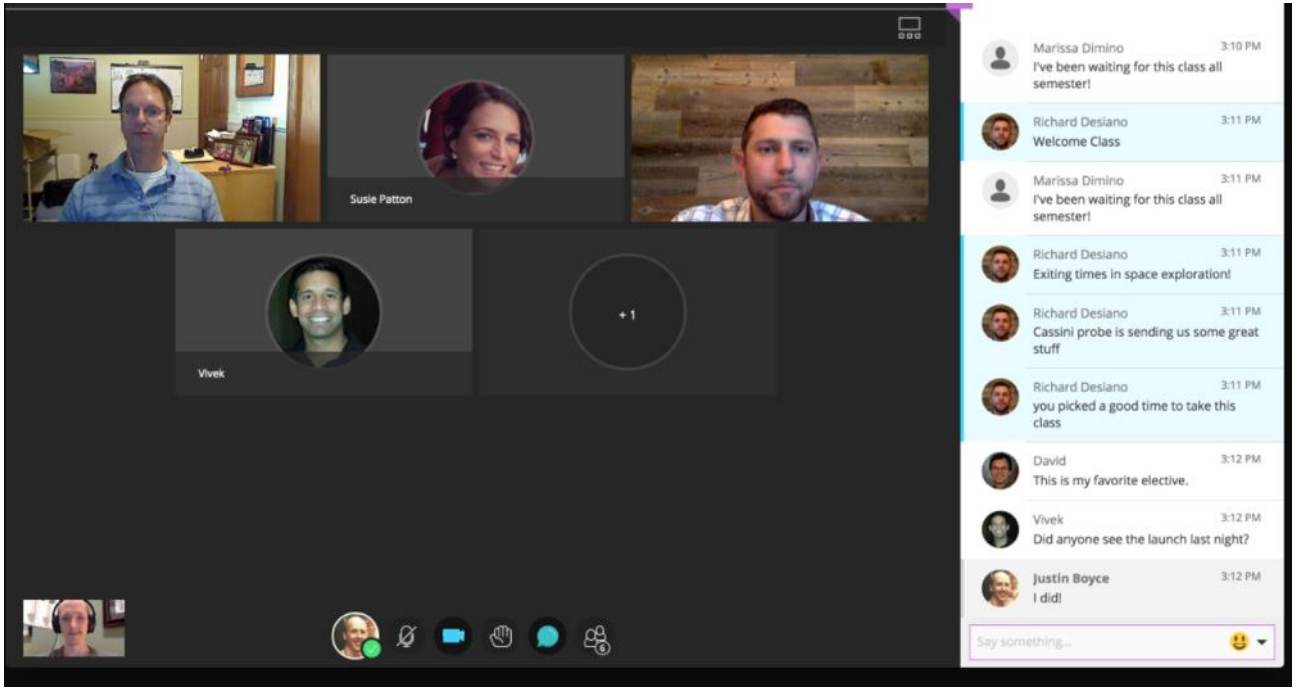
Controls: Please keep your microphone muted.



Chat: We will be monitoring the chat for your questions and comments.

Facilitation Tips

- Prompt participants to engage in activity or solicit feedback frequently (ie every 10 minutes).
- Fill in bullet points with narrative to keep learners engaged rather than reading slides verbatim.
- Gallery view is recommended layout for to avoid fatigue (only current and recent speakers large on screen, others minimized).
- Allow time for participants to process, respond and ask questions.
- Try new ways to ask questions. (i.e., "Send your questions to the chat area" or "Please give me a green check mark if you are ready to move on.")



Maximum is 5 participants on screen with most recent speakers displayed.
This is effective for optimizing bandwidth, preventing distraction and causing screen fatigue.

Inclusive Design and Facilitation

- Ahead of the session, invite participants to make you aware of any requirements that will help them participate, where possible.
- Keep the design of your session simple and provide easy ways for your students to interact.
- To ensure inclusive experience, describe or explain what you are showing on the screen.
- Captioning:
  - MS Teams provides a live caption option activated by the individual participant.
  - BbCollaborate allows a captioner role to be assigned.

Security

- Do not share the meeting link publicly (e.g., social media) – share the link via Quercus/email only to participants.
- Become familiar with how to mute all participants and/or end the meeting.
- Become familiar with how to remove participants.

Additional Zoom References

- Zoom Best Practices [FASE, Med Sci and UTM]

- Use a password-protected option for participants joining via a link.
- Disable the “join before host” function in the class.
- Enable the waiting room function and admit only participants registered in the course.

Contributors:

- **Arjuna Thaskaran,** Student Development Coordinator, Finance, Management Co-op, University of Toronto Scarborough
- **Julia Zarb,** Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream and Program Director, Master of Health Informatics, Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation, Dalla Lana School of Public Health
- **Laurie Harrison**, Director, Online Learning Strategies
- **Lauren Hudak**, Special Projects Officer, Office of the Vice-Provost, Innovations in Undergraduate Education