Facilitating Effective Remote Discussion Sections

Teaching + Learning Commons
Academic Achievement Hub
Engaged Teaching Hub
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Webinar Topics

- Getting to Know Zoom
- Good Pedagogy in the Zoom Classroom
- Supplementing Zoom Sections

**Intended Process/Outcomes:**

Model aspects of a remote discussion section
Give you ideas/motivation for going forward
You will still have questions, that’s okay!
Be Explicit about Guidelines

Discussion Guidelines
- Keep yourself on mute to minimize background noise
- Send questions to the chat first
- “Raise hand” before interjecting
- Be respectful
- Be open to new ideas
- Be thoughtful in sharing your ideas
- Avoid all-caps typing

Community Guidelines
- Check your emotional response to the technology/circumstances
- Model the kind of interactions you want students to have
- Be mindful of your interaction style
- Contribute mindfully
- Don’t be afraid of silence
- Try not to multitask, turn off other technologies if you can.
Zoom Navigation Basics

Click here to copy this slide
We want you to Participate!

Everybody, try raising your hand!
(now lower your hand)

In the chat box, type in your:
Name
Department
Favorite comfort food

Starting section with a quick “human check in” is a great way to build and keep community.
What might Discussion Section be like in a remote environment?

- Different!
- Clunkier than in-person (the seams are more visible)
- (Much) more explicit than we’re used to; requires more reflection, intention, communication
- Requires more flexibility towards students (in different time zones and home environments, with different access to internet, etc.)
- Everyone can get easily frustrated; practice and model empathy, compassion, and self-awareness at every step of the process
Let’s Get Into It

Getting to Know Zoom

Features in Zoom

Important considerations
Basic Zoom Features

Participant Feedback - nonverbal ways of expressing a feeling to the host
- In participant window, all can see these symbols
- These linger until the participant changes it (or host)
- Host can see quantity for each of these symbols

Raising hands - a nonverbal way to signal a question or comment
- In participant window, all can see who has raised their hand
- Zoom queues raised hands so that you can keep the order
- Host can resolve a raised hand, or participant can lower their hand

Polling - an interactive way to ask questions and get responses from the group

Let’s try it.
Testing Out Some Features

Audience Polling
How confident are you for hosting remote sections? (scale question)
Have you used Zoom to host a group meeting before? (yes/no question)

Non-verbal Feedback Demonstration
We’ll offer a statement, you react to the statement with thumbs up/down

Statement: *Dogs are smarter than cats.*

Care to share? **Raise your hand** if you don’t mind explaining your answer. (we’ll wait for at least 3 hands)
Remote instruction requires more flexibility toward students.

Many students will not be able to attend “live” discussion sections in real time (also called: *synchronous instruction*)

- Different time zones (may be drastic for international students)
- Home/family care responsibilities
- Wi-fi connectivity problems

Many students will not have access to a totally quiet, distraction-free environment for discussion section.

- Expect that pets, roommates, family members might be overheard; use muting function and encourage students to mute themselves
Now that you have interacted with Zoom

Considerations for good pedagogy in the Zoom classroom

Utilizing small groups

Setting expectations + giving guidelines

Give clear starting points for discussion
Utilize Small Groups

In Zoom, you can:

- Assign students into break-out rooms
- Go into break-out rooms to monitor/contribute/be available
- Go between rooms and back to main session
- Have students toggle between group and whole-class discussion
- “Call” participants back to the main session with a broadcast message
Utilize Small Groups

Assigning break-out rooms
Utilize Small Groups

Assigning break-out rooms function

1. Automatically (random)
2. Manually
Utilize Small Groups

Assigning participants into break-out rooms
Utilize Small Groups

Host can go into break-out rooms to monitor
Utilize Small Groups

Host can go between rooms and back to main session.
Utilize Small Groups

- Host can move participants from one breakout room to another

- Broadcast message- Host can “call” participants back to the main session.
  - Why? Participants and hosts can only chat people in the same meeting room

- Host can close all break-out rooms and redirect all participants back to the main session
Utilize Small Groups

Each participant and host can only be in one meeting space at a time

Click for video on Zoom Breakout Rooms
Practices to Help Facilitate Discussion

**Build in time** for you and the students to test and get to know the technology together.

Make things **more explicit than implicit**.

On the first day and often thereafter, help set students’ expectations for the technology, for you, and for each other.

Explicitly review **discussion and community guidelines** in the first several sessions, and make them available on Canvas.
When Initiating Discussions
(especially if breaking up students into rooms)

Give clear and explicit starting points for the discussion

- You won’t be able to “see” if your question is over their heads.
- Get specific with your questions, let the students build the complexity.
- Give students a sense of how the discussion should progress in the group.
- Signal to students how they will “share out” after their groups.

Consider assigning students roles in the breakout rooms.

- Manager(s) - keeps the conversation on track, shares out
- Scribe(s) - takes notes, ensures accuracy for group-mates
- Skeptic(s) - offers counterarguments, further questions
- Promoter(s) - builds on others’ thoughts, extends, offers “Yes, also...”
Let’s Experience it as a Student

- We will put you into a breakout room
- In a minute, but not yet: accept and join the room, turn on your video if possible (it’s easier to talk to people!)
- We will end the room after 5 minutes
- You will have a 1-minute warning before we end the rooms.

Discussion Question:
Which fictional villain do you most identify/empathize with?
What did you notice? What do you wonder?

Raise hand to join the queue
Lower hand to leave the queue
Jump in without raising your hand if it feels appropriate

What did you notice about being in the breakout room?
What did you notice about the necessity of clear guidelines, a clear starting point for discussion, something else?
Participation beyond Zoom
Recordings
Virtual office hours
Small group office hours

Zoom is Your Classroom,
Not your Teaching

Other pedagogical choices can supplement Zoom sessions
Additional Options for Participation

Synchronous discussion is not the only method... discuss with your course instructor other options for participation...

**Participation can be encouraged synchronously or asynchronously, through:**

- Asynchronous discussion boards in Canvas
- One-on-one discussions/feedback with you, asynchronous questions/feedback
- Group projects, peer review, virtual group study sessions
- Writing projects, journals, reflections, applications
- Creative projects

Course activities are a necessary supplement to Zoom meetings! They will help catalyze and sustain discussion in the Zoom session.
Recording Options

- **Broad**
  - Ex. Record Zoom discussion section meetings and upload/distribute for those who cannot attend
  - Note: Zoom does not record every meeting element

- **Targeted**
  - Ex. Short, topic-based recordings with Kaltura Capture
  - Note: student persistence w/ long recordings is limited

- **Consider Accessibility**
  - Ex. Captioning or transcripts for audio recordings
Virtual Office Hours

- **Plentiful Options** (supported by campus)
  - Canvas: Chat, Discussions, Collaborations
  - Google: Meet (formerly “Hangouts”), Docs
  - Slack, Zoom, Microsoft Teams

- **Key Considerations**
  - Manageability: avoid overwhelming email volume, etc.
  - Fit: what suits the context for you/your students?
  - Clarity: schedule & expectations of remote OH
We Want to Reiterate...

Remote discussion sections can:
● Be interactive, encourage varied types of participation, and make space for meaningful conversation

Remember that you are a model for the students
● Model the emotional response you hope students will have, especially in these stressful times.
● Embrace a growth mindset - you will become very skilled in doing this, with time and practice!
● Reflect on these experiences, learn from them.
Still have questions?

Reach out to us!