



## Recommended Practice for Inclusive Virtual Interactions (including lectures, seminars and meetings)

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### If you are running a virtual session, consider these points:

#### Meeting etiquette: have an agreed meeting etiquette for all small and large virtual meetings.

Meeting etiquette refers to an agreed process of communication within a virtual interaction. At the start of large meetings we often specify the meeting etiquette (such as how to ask a question or whether cameras should be on or off), but this is often not done for less formal, or smaller meetings. Having a specified meeting etiquette can be helpful for neurodivergent people as it gives confidence in knowing how to contribute in smaller meetings.

We appreciate that all Teams meetings have different aims and requirements so a 'one-size-fits-all-approach' will not work. Review the recommendations below to decide what the best meeting etiquette for your session should be.

#### Use of Cameras: In large meetings, only the person/people who are speaking should have their camera on.

Visual information from the camera is very helpful for lip reading, viewing social cues, maintaining attention, and interpreting moods or emotions. Where possible the **speaker should turn their camera on while they are speaking**. We acknowledge that this may be difficult in individual cases however, and flexibility is required on this point.

Multiple video feeds on the screen can make it difficult to tell who is speaking and can be an overwhelming sensory stimulus for neurodivergent people. To reduce the sensory processing demands in large group interactions, **turn your video off if you aren't speaking**. In smaller interactions where everyone is actively participating, it may be preferable for everyone to have their cameras on.

*Tip: A useful feature in Teams is the [spotlight function](#). If you are the only person to be speaking, you can spotlight yourself and then only your video will be displayed full screen to everyone.*

**Use of Microphones: Only the person/people who are speaking should have their microphone on.**

Extraneous auditory information can be particularly distracting for neurodivergent people. To avoid this, make sure that people who aren't speaking mute their microphones (even in small meetings). If it is appropriate, you can set the meeting settings in Teams so that everyone joins muted.

*Tip: In Teams, you can quickly mute / unmute using "Ctrl + Shift + M".*

**Inviting Contributions: Specify a method for inviting contributions (raise hands / chat). Specify the appropriate time for contributions (i.e. at specific timepoints / interruptions throughout the meeting).**

Knowing when and how to contribute to a discussion is more difficult online as we can't use nonverbal cues to indicate that we want to say something. Neurodivergent people may be less confident in deducing how to contribute appropriately. By pre-specifying a contribution method, the expectation for how to contribute to a meeting is clear to everyone. This is important for small and large meetings.

Neurodivergent people can find it very difficult to monitor and attend to multiple streams of information simultaneously. For example, using the chat box for questions or social commentary alongside verbal presentations / discussions has been highlighted as a particular difficulty. Indicating a specific method and time for contributions can reduce information processing into a single stream. Alternatively, you could nominate a 'chat monitor' who reads out important questions so that participants don't have to read and listen at the same time.

Note that there may be strong individual preferences towards verbal or written contributions. Where possible, consider which form might be most appropriate and/or try to accommodate both if necessary.

*Tip: In Teams, it is possible to disable the chat for your meeting if you do not want people to use it.*

**Asking questions: Provide opportunities for questions in different formats, including an anonymous option (i.e. verbal, text, Padlet).**

Give frequent breaks for people to ask questions and pause for longer than you might in-person.

Don't expect students to ask questions in front of a large group. Try to create alternative opportunities to ask questions in one-to-one or anonymous contexts (i.e., remaining on a

video call at the end of a session for a few minutes or providing a Padlet for anonymous questions).

*Tip: It may be helpful to assign a specific person to monitor chat / padlet and read questions aloud to reduce the streams of information being monitored.*

### **Recording meetings: Wherever possible offer to record all meetings.**

[Recording meetings](#) has several inclusivity benefits. Participants can replay the meeting in Stream at a slower speed, and with captions. This can be useful for reviewing notes, double checking understanding, and for individuals with English as a second language. It can also mean that participants can pay full attention to the meeting, knowing that they can make notes later if needed. Having recordings of meetings can reduce anxiety for neurodivergent people.

*Tip: Clearly identify whether a meeting will be recorded or not from the outset.*

### **Providing Information: Provide all slides, notes and documentation in advance of meetings.**

Send as much information as possible before a meeting so attendees know what to expect and what their contributions are expected to be.

Provide slides, notes and other documents in advance, rather than sharing links during the meeting. This gives people time to organise their documents and arrange them in a way that helps them.

### **Distraction and Attention: Keep sessions short and interactive. Provide relevant visual prompts when delivering verbal information.**

Try to keep all meetings under 1 hour, and ideally finish at 10 to the hour to allow for a break between meetings. Include short comfort breaks in meetings longer than 1 hour.

Relevant visual prompts can help participants to maintain focus. If delivering a lot of verbal information, consider complementing it with a visual presentation. Simple animations on slides can help to keep the participant's attention on point.

*Tip: Use a laser pointer during presentations (available during screenshare with powerpoint).*

**Structure of Sessions: Provide a visual overview for each session in advance, including timings and expected contributions.**

Identifying the structure of a session can help participants maintain focus. Give a rough indication of timings for the session and provide breaks if the meeting will last longer than 1 hour. Provide an outline of what the participant's role in each section will be (i.e. make it clear if and when they will be asked to speak).

**Add the following pro-forma to the top of your meeting invite in Teams to pre-specify the meeting etiquette, provide a session outline and relevant meeting documents.**

**Meeting Etiquette:**

Cameras: ALL ON / ALL OFF / Presenters Only

Microphones: ALL ON / ALL OFF / Presenters Only

Contributions: via CHAT / RAISE HANDS / VERBAL - at ANY /SPECIFIC times

Meeting Recording: YES / NO

**Meeting Agenda:**

Item/Activity	Time	Who

**Link to slides:**

## **If you are participating in a virtual session, consider these points:**

Check the meeting etiquette so that you know what is expected of you.

### **Set up your computer before joining the meeting.**

Join the meeting in the place you intend to participate and avoid walking around with your device to prevent others from feeling motion sick. Make sure your camera angle is natural, displaying your head and shoulders.

### **Think about what is showing in your background, try to make it visually minimal and uncluttered.**

Your video feed can be distracting to others, try to set up your computer so that you have a plain and uncluttered background. Try not to have a bright light or window directly behind you. If you can't find a suitable space, you could apply a [blurred or virtual background](#). Choose something that is minimal and not too busy or bright. Blurred backgrounds tend to be less distracting to others than virtual backgrounds. Avoid moving virtual backgrounds.

### **If you find sensory information during virtual sessions overwhelming or distracting you could try the following:**

Control video feeds by:

- Minimising your Teams window (so you just have auditory information available).
- Turn off incoming video (this means you don't see other people's videos, but you can still see the meeting chat and presentations).
- [Pin people](#) (this allows you to select one person to view full screen).
- Place a Post-it note over your own video / any other video which you find distracting.

Control audio information by:

- Reducing the volume on your computer.
- Turn off computer sound and [apply live captioning](#) or [live transcription](#) (although the accuracy of these may not be completely accurate).
- [Mute chat notifications](#) (you still see the chat but it won't 'ping')
- Consider others by muting yourself when not speaking ("Ctrl + Shift + M").

### **If you are easily distracted at home you could try the following:**

- Try to zone your home environment by making a work-specific space which is separate from the area you relax in.
- Try to de-clutter this area, freeing it of visual distractions.
- Make cardboard barriers to reduce peripheral visual distractions.