BLACKBOARD
COLLABORATE ULTRA
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Getting Started with Bb Collaborate Ultra
Live online classroom

NUI Galway's main web conferencing service is Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. This is a real-time video conferencing tool that lets you add files, share applications, and use a virtual whiteboard to interact. It can be used for virtual office hours, remote teaching and study groups.

The Blackboard Collaborate Ultra experience opens right in your browser, so you don't have to install any software to join a session.

A Quick Orientation for Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

At NUI Galway, Blackboard Collaborate is embedded into the Blackboard Learn platform. This means that a Blackboard Collaborate meeting room is automatically created and ready for instructors and student to use at the start of the academic year in all Blackboard modules.

This is located on the main course menu, under the name "Virtual Classroom".

You can use Blackboard Collaborate Ultra for:

- An unlimited number of virtual/live online sessions for use in remote teaching, office hours and study groups
- Each session supports up to 250 students
- Each session includes collaboration feature such as whiteboard, chat, breakout groups and polls, sharing PowerPoint.
- It operates within your browser – no plug-ins or downloads required.
- In addition to supporting live real-time teaching and learning, live sessions can be recorded and archived for review.
Support resources for presenters

- A video tutorial by Fearghal Morgan for NUI Galway staff [https://youtu.be/Jhs75pw94ew](https://youtu.be/Jhs75pw94ew)
- There are also some ‘Cheat Sheets’ for Instructors (Moderators) and for Students (Participants).

Want to share help with your participants?

- [Participants' Portal](https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Get_STARTED/Basics): help for participants on getting started, joining a session, viewing recordings, etc

Report an issue

💡 If you are giving a Blackboard Ultra Collaborate session, it is recommended you access it up to 30 minutes prior to your session start time, in order to prepare and upload any presentation slides. If you have any technical difficulties prior to or during your session, please [report the issue](https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Get_STARTED/Basics) to Blackboard directly from within the application, or check out their troubleshooting advice.
Getting started with a Virtual Classroom

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

It's now easier than ever to lead virtual classes, office hours, tutoring and mentoring sessions, departmental meetings, tutorial space, student discussions, informal chat, seminars, private or public webinars, and more.

How to locate your virtual classroom on Blackboard

To access Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, go to the course on Blackboard you want to use. On the main menu, select Virtual Classroom
We recommend that you use Google Chrome™ or Firefox® (versions 49+) for the best experience. Collaborate Ultra works in most web browsers, but the best experience and full functionality use either of the above.

To instantly begin using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, select Join Room to join the dedicated room set up in every Blackboard course.

Collaborate Ultra opens right in your browser, so you don’t have to install any software to join a session.

Audio and Video Set up

You must give the browser permission to use audio and video so that you are seen and heard when you participate in a session. You’ll be asked to do this when you first join a session or when you first go to share your audio or video. A wizard will launch to guide you through the steps, although you can access these settings at any stage within the application.

Select Set Up Your Camera and Microphone. (Note: You can also use your phone for audio, although this may incur charges on your phone is not the typical option selected)

Choose the microphone you want to use. Collaborate tells you that you sound great when it is receiving your audio. Select Yes, it’s working to proceed.

Choose the camera you want to use. Collaborate tells you that you look great when it is receiving your video. Select Yes, it’s working to proceed.
By default, you are hidden and muted after you complete the setup. Select the microphone and camera icons to begin full meeting participation.

Finding your way around the meeting interface

The Collaborate Ultra meeting interface is organised into three areas: a Media space, the Session menu, and a Collaborate panel.

1. Media Space

The Media space is where the content of the session is displayed. The content you share is automatically the main focus of your screen – either you, or your slides.

For example, you may be sharing a PowerPoint or PDF file and this will display in the main media space. Or you may simply be using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to speak face to face. In this instance, the speaker will appear, along with other participants.

You have access to share your audio and video from the icons on the bottom of the Media Space interface. Look for the following icons to adjust:
**Audio and video**: Click *Share Audio* and *Share Video* icons to turn those tools on or off. If you use your keyboard to navigate, press Alt + M to turn your microphone on and off. Press Alt + C for your camera.

**Hand raise**: Raise your hand to answer a question or get another moderator's attention. Click *Raise Hand*. If you use your keyboard to navigate, press Alt + H.

**My Settings**: If you click on your avatar, you can also quickly access and adjust your audio or video settings at any time.

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**2. Session Menu**

The Session menu opens a collection of high level session actions and information. Open it using the Session menu button at the top left of the screen. Tools and features you use only once or twice a session are grouped here, including:

**Record sessions**: Click *Start Recording*. When completed recordings can be accessed, on your Blackboard course, under the Virtual Classroom link (look for the menu icon).

**Report an Issue**: If you experience any problems during your session, you can report this directly to Blackboard.
3. Collaborate Panel

The Collaborate panel takes your session experience to the next level. Here you can engage other participants with all the great collaboration tools. You will need to click to open it.

The main collaboration tools include the following:

**Chat**: Chat with participants. Click *Open Chat*.

**Participants panel**: View the list of participants. Click *Open Participants List*. You can also check the strength of their network connection during a session by looking here.

**Share Content**: You can share a blank whiteboard, an application, PDFs, PowerPoint® presentations, and images. Click *Share Content*.

**Session Settings**: Decide what you and others can do in your session.

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**Share your room with guest lecturers or students by email**

- You can send the guest link to the session to anyone. This will effectively give them a shortcut to the session and not require them to log in and authenticate through Blackboard. Tutors should access the session via the Blackboard module to ensure you have moderator permissions. Be careful about who you email the link to, as they will then have access into your session based on the start and end times you use.

- You can also send the guest link to external people such as guest lecturers once the session has started you can then promote them to enable them to present. Send a reminder an hour or so before the session is due to start with the guest link embedded again.
How do I ensure only authorised participants can join my session?

The most secure way to join a Collaborate session is through your students accessing it directly from your Blackboard course. Sessions in a course require attendees to sign into the course to access the session. Blackboard authenticates the user and creates a unique session link that helps each session identify the user. Each link is associated with an individual session and a specific user in that session. This means that the link only works for that user in that moment. The link to join session can't be used again or shared with another user. Session links expire after 5 minutes.

Guest links provide an easy way to provide access to a Collaborate session. However, guest links for your virtual classroom can be shared and anyone with the link can enter your session. If you do decide to use guest links, make sure guests are assigned the participant role and that you restrict participant access.

Moderators can also control participant permissions while in an active Collaborate Ultra session. Instructors can control a participants ability to enable their audio, video, type in the chat or draw on the whiteboard, and add files. This is intended to prevent disruptive behavior from participants.

More on session settings for moderators
Watch a video overview
Watch this video tutorial by Fearghal Morgan (8mins)

Further information
For more information, see help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator.
Uses & Benefits of Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

Benefits

Blackboard Collaborate can be used for:

- Blended Learning delivery, providing a virtual classroom from anywhere both on and off campus
- Collaborative projects in research or administration providing virtual offices/meeting spaces both on and off the campus

Use Cases @ NUI Galway

At NUI Galway we have worked with teaching staff to identify four common use cases that Blackboard Collaborate is being used for:

**Teaching and Learning online / Webinars** allow flexible approaches to on and off-campus live online learning. This offers a useful solution for students who may be working and studying at the same time; for programmes with work placement components; and for those taking an Erasmus break overseas.

Blackboard Collaborate can be used to enable external experts to contribute to teaching and learning programmes as Guest Lecturers. In this way they can deliver live webinars, participate in real-time question and answer sessions; and permit those sessions to be recorded. A great way to enhance the teaching and learning experience.

**Learning Support Tutorials** can be managed online through scheduled timeslots allowing flexibility for instructors and students. Indeed, students can use Blackboard Collaborate to provide live online peer support to each other and for group work - all at the convenience of your keyboard.

**Drop-In Student Time (Office Hours)** allows instructors to operate a casual drop in session online. This can be scheduled for particular periods for students to soundboard ideas, difficulties and to provide updates to their research work.

**Online Workshops** can be facilitated through Blackboard Collaborate through direct instruction, break-out group rooms, flipped classroom and open discussions by using the shared tools and live audio/video facilities afforded by this learning platform.
Joining a session from your mobile phone

It is now possible to access a Blackboard Collaborate Ultra session directly from your mobile phone without needing to download the Blackboard mobile app. When you access a link from your email, or from Blackboard Learn in your mobile phone web browser, you will be given an option **Join from Browser** to immediately access a session.

![Join from Browser screenshot](image)

**Note:** If you're not seeing the **Join from Browser** option above, make sure you're opening the session in a full web browser Safari (on iOS) or Chrome (on Android). When opening a session from within another app (e.g. Slack) the join from browser option is not available. You'll need to copy / "open with" the session in the web browser.
Mobile browser experience for Collaborate Ultra

Chat using the mobile browser experience
Polling using the mobile browser experience

Users joining from a link will still be able to open a session in the Blackboard and Blackboard Instructor apps and sessions accessed from Learn will still be launched from the Blackboard and Blackboard Instructor apps.
Preparing for your first Bb Collaborate Session

You should have received a link via email directing you to join a Blackboard Collaborate conferencing session on a certain day at a certain time. Let’s make sure you have no troubles getting online and making yourself heard!

Check your browser settings

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra requires the use of an internet browser that supports WebRTC. We suggest using Google Chrome or Firefox for the best results.

You will need to check that your browser is up to date on the computer you will use for the conference.

💡 Blackboard Collaborate Ultra runs best in Chrome and Firefox – see Blackboard's information on browser support.

Google Chrome

1. Open the Chrome browser
2. Locate the three dots on the top right of the screen and click to open menu
3. Click on ‘Settings’
4. On the settings page, locate and click the ‘About’ button
5. When you access the ‘About’ page, the browser will automatically check for updates and update automatically.

Firefox

1. Open the Firefox browser
2. Locate the three lines on the top right of the screen and click to open menu
3. Click the question mark icon [?] at the bottom of the menu
4. Select the ‘About Firefox’ button

5. Opening the About Firefox window will, by default, start an update check. If an updated version of Firefox is available, it will be automatically downloaded
Check your computer settings

Answer the following questions. If you answer no to any questions, please make sure that you are able to resolve the issue yourself or that you can receive help to resolve the issue.

1. **Is your device audio turned on?** (vital)
2. **Is your device mic turned on?** (vital)
3. **Is your web-camera operational?** (not vital, but ideal)
4. **Do you have a headset or earphones?** (not vital, but ideal)

Before the event

How do I test my access to the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra software before an event?

You maybe requested to check your systems before a webinar, to ensure you can access Blackboard Collaborate Ultra and participate during the event. We strongly recommend that you do so in advance, as the moderators will only be able to offer limited technical support once the session is in progress.

💡 See [https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Participant/Get_Started](https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Participant/Get_Started) for additional information on how to get started and find your way around.

I don’t have a microphone – can I still take part in a webinar?

Yes – you don’t have to have a microphone to be able to participate. To ask a question, you will be able to raise your hand or write in the chat window, and to agree or disagree with a
comment you can use the happy/unhappy face icons or the tick/cross. These can all be found in the Collaborate panel, using the icons below the list of participants.

**Do I need earphones?**

If you do intend to use your microphone to speak in the session, please find a headset or earphones to use to prevent audio feedback when it is turned on. This is much preferred to using your computer’s in-built speakers.

**During the event**

**I can’t hear the speaker – what should I do?**

If you can’t hear the speaker, you can turn up the speaker volume using the controls in the Collaborate panel MY Settings (bottom right-hand corner). If this does not work, try using the audio setup wizard (‘Set up your camera and microphone’). You can also troubleshoot audio issues with this Blackboard support page or try to use another browser (e.g. try in Chrome and in Firefox).

If you still can’t hear, please post in the chat window and a moderator will help you.

**My microphone isn’t working – what should I do?**

If your microphone is very quiet or is not working, check it is not muted on the icon in the bottom middle of the screen. You can turn up the volume using the controls in the settings tab. If you still can't be heard, please post in the chat window and a moderator will help you. Note that the maximum number of simultaneous speakers is often limited in a session, and you may need to wait until others have turned off their microphones before being able to speak. You can also troubleshoot audio issues with this Blackboard support page.

**How can I ask a question?**

You can ask a question by typing in the chat window or raising your hand by clicking the hand icon in the bottom middle of the screen. The speaker or moderator will then allow you to ask your question.

**How can I chat to other participants?**

If you want to chat to another participant without all other participants seeing your message, you can select who receives your message using the function above the chat window.
How can I chat to the moderators only?

You can send a message to the moderators of a session by selecting ‘moderators’ from the chat box.

How can I agree/disagree with something?

To agree or disagree with something, you can use the happy/unhappy face, the tick/cross or the clapping icons. These can all be found in the bottom right-hand corner, in the drop down next to the text input box and in the settings tab.

What if I have a technical problem?

If for any reason your session drops out – don't panic! Make sure you close your browser down completely, then go back into the session again – if you don't close the browser you may still be logged on in another window.

AFTER THE EVENT

Where can I find a webinar recording?

Recordings of webinars will be added to the added to your Blackboard page when they become available, or emailed to you by the moderators.

💡 Have a question not answered above?

See https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Participant/ for additional information help.
Record your Blackboard Collaborate Ultra sessions so that your participants can access presentations whenever they need them. Stop and restart whenever you need to, and when finished, locate them to share.

Recorded sessions are compressed and saved as MP4s. Recordings include activity in the live session.

- Audio
- Any content shared or active speaker video. If both are shared during the session, only the content shared is recorded.
- Chat messages in the Everyone channel. Private messages and chat messages in breakout groups are not recorded.

Only moderators can turn recording on in sessions. Everyone can view the recordings from any device as often as they want. There are no view limits.

Recordings need to be converted into a playable format before viewing. The first time a recording is accessed the conversion begins. **It may take a few minutes but once is has been done the recording can be viewed by everybody.**

💡 If you want chat messages to be anonymous in the recording, make sure you select that option in Session Settings before you start the session. To learn more, see Session Settings.

Where do we access our recordings?

Both you and your participants access your recordings under the Virtual Classroom menu on your Blackboard course.
Open the Menu, and select Recordings.

Recordings won’t be available immediately after the session as they can take a while to process, so if you check back an hour or two after your session, you should see it appear.
You can also change the filter to see all recordings. Otherwise, only recordings from the last 30 days will appear by default.

![Recordings filter](image)

You can also access a register to see who attended the session and how long they were signed in for. From your sessions page change the filter to all previous sessions:

![Filter by All Previous Sessions](image)

Click on the button at the end of the session you want to access and choose “View reports”
Need more help or information?

See the Blackboard Help notes on recording your session:

https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/Moderate_Sessions/Recordings

What next?

Do your participants know how to access your recordings? There are some steps you can take to make this even easier for them.

Downloading your recordings

As a moderator, you can change your session settings to allow recording downloads.

Select Edit settings:
Select allow recording downloads:

![Session Settings]

- **Default Attendee Role**
  - Participant

- **Recording**
  - Allow recording downloads
  - Anonymise chat messages

- **Moderator permissions**
  - Only show profile pictures for Moderators

This will enable you to go back to all of your session recordings and download them.
You might wish to download your session for editing or to allow you to upload the recording to Kaltura, to caption them or embed more visibly on your course, or reuse at a later time. You can adjust this setting back after you have downloaded your session file.

Emailing links to recordings

You can also copy and email a direct link to the recording to participants.
This makes it even easier for your students to find and view session recordings.