

Practical recommendations for teaching online using Adobe Connect

Connect provides synchronous Virtual Classroom environments for staff and students. The system involves Moodle, an integrator and a hosted Adobe Connect service. All staff and students enrolled in a Moodle course are automatically enrolled into the virtual classroom service upon creation, and synchronisation occurs periodically to maintain access for late enrolments. In addition to automated enrolments, a static link is also available for those users who lie outside of the Moodle environment, such as guest lecturers, industry participants etc.

Configuration

CLIPP support staff recommend that you utilise only the External Classroom tool's Course Meetings for conducting live student activities. Please do not use the virtual Office Hours for teaching, as this environment has several anomalies that will likely cause issues.

The standard **Course meetings** space is automatically available to all staff and students within the course. FedUni has purchased 1200 simultaneous seats which should cover our largest classes with ease. However, the virtual classroom does not recognise different student cohorts, (such as Moodle location groups), so access to the classroom needs to be controlled through posted timetables or other administrative methods.

Note: Adding additional Adobe connect links within the course does not add additional classrooms. Instead you are simply adding extra doors to your classroom. Everyone still ends up in the same room.

The **Office Hours** room belongs to the user who set it up. It does not belong exclusively to the course. If a user sets up Office Hours spaces in more than one course, then students from all these courses have access to that same room. Other staff who enter this space will be treated as a participant, not as the host.

Considerations

All online tools, regardless of providers, are likely to suffer from the increased demand and this will potentially affect the student experience with poor audio quality, lagging video or longer upload times. This should be considered when utilising any online service, not just virtual classrooms.

- **Do I need to use a virtual classroom for this presentation?**

If your class is predominantly a presentation with didactic content delivery and limited student interaction, consider making a series of short (5min or less) topic videos using Kaltura Capture. Have students watch the videos in a lead up to a VC based tutorial that will discuss the content they have already seen. This also provides a level of contingency when things don't go the way you expect. Eg. Network or service outages.

- **Do I need to stream video of myself or my desktop?**

Sharing your desktop is very similar in bandwidth to streaming video. Adobe connect is sending a stream of your mouse moving to every student in the room. Is this really necessary? If you're using a slide deck (eg. Powerpoint) could you upload and share from Adobe Connect instead? Consider pausing your webcam to limit bandwidth. Connect is very clever at managing bandwidth, but we have no control over our student's connections.

- **Record**

Advise your students you're recording the class and that it will be available after the presentation for review. Provide instructions on how to access recordings, outside of the virtual classroom, for those who may be unable to attend.

Preparation

As with any good class, preparation is key. Do you have your notes ready, slide deck, models, technology? The best presenters are ready for whatever is thrown at them, regardless of the situation. Be prepared. Test before use.

- **Send your students to the Adobe Connect Virtual Classroom test room**, which is linked at the top of Moodle under Study Help. There are a range of self-help resources here, as well as the ability to log in for a live check at various times of the day.
- **Set up your classroom and test yourself.** Ensure that you have set up the link, (seek assistance from CLIPP if you have trouble) and ensure that you are able to use all features before presenting. Activate your webcam, test your audio (there is a built-in test) try screen sharing. Invite a colleague in to double check if possible. Information on using connect is available here: [Connect Help](#), or contact CLIPP for assistance.
- **Upload documents in advance.** To save bandwidth Adobe Connect converts your Powerpoint slides into an online presentation pack. This occurs when the slides are uploaded using the Share document tool. Conversion is generally quick, but if you have a large presentation, or many transitions, this may take a long time. By uploading in advance, the file will be there ready to go. Upload any other resources in advance as well. (Please adhere to copyright requirements, if unsure please consult the library)
- **Invite your students into a virtual classroom for an ice breaker prior to the lecture/tutorial.** It's a great way to make sure everyone will be ready to go when needed.
- **Open your classroom at least 5 min before you are ready to commence**, to ensure students have adequate time to get in and resolve issues.

In summary, what can you do?

- Preference a flipped model of teaching with pre-recorded lecture materials, over a live virtual classroom by using Kaltura for delivering lecture-like content instead of the live virtual classrooms.
- Use Adobe connect to support active student-centred learning and record for students that are unable to participate.
- Avoid using the **Office hours** room to conduct virtual classrooms
- Create and share a timetable of scheduled virtual lecturers/tutorials
- Be aware that systems may be affected by the increased load on them.
- Limit your use of bandwidth hungry content (e.g., use webcams sparingly, say hello to welcome and establish presence and either pause the cam or switch off - advise your students when you do this so they don't think it's "not working" or that you have "frozen").
- Switch off student microphones, when not required, the control is located under the Audio menu.
- Share files rather than screen-sharing where possible by pre-loading files like PPTs ahead of your scheduled virtual class time.
- Avoid relying solely on live virtual classrooms for assessment e.g., student presentations - accessibility and stability of this environment may be problematic with staff and students working from home with varying connectivity challenges as well as other variables faced by staff/students caring for young children at home etc. - be flexible and always have contingency plans in place.

End of document