Enhancing Interaction in Live Online Classes
EDTL Resource

**Enhancing
Digital Teaching
and Learning**
Irish Universities Association

Enhancing Interaction in Live Online Classes
EDTL Resource

Writing in the chat box

Using emojis in the chat box

Participating in breakout groups

Answering a poll

Turning on webcam

Contributing to a shared document

Interaction in live online classes can be...

Talking using microphone

Writing on a shared whiteboard

Tips for Educators

Setting Up Interaction

- Share responsibility for interaction with students, be explicit about the necessary behaviours.
- Use orientation/induction to shape expectations and clarify the rules of interaction e.g. use of chat box or 'hands-up' functions.
- Seek student feedback — what works can be context specific and may need tweaking.
- Be cautious about compelling the use of webcams - not all students are in suitable settings or comfortable on camera and can opt out of class entirely to avoid webcam use.
- Calling on specific students can generate interaction in the short term but cause longer term class avoidance for fear of being put on the spot.
- Ensure recording policy is transparent and consider stopping recording for certain segments.

Responding to Contributions

- When you seek interaction leave enough time for contributions, it can take a while for students to gather their thoughts.
- Ensure that you 'do' something with contributions e.g. read out comments in the chat box.
- Acknowledge all contributions - not just one person or just one type of contribution.
- Signal to students that you recognise their efforts e.g. 'I see your hand up, I'll come to you next', 'great response on the whiteboard'.
- Use names e.g. 'as Emma said earlier'.

Ways of Interacting

- Use low stakes interaction to begin with e.g. informal chat before class, easy questions to start.
- Use anonymous interaction e.g. open whiteboard, polls.
- Use simultaneous interaction e.g. shared Google Doc or 'chat bomb' in text box.
- Make private interaction possible e.g. questions about assessment.

Breakout Groups

- Can require a lot of planning and support so use only where there is specific learning value AND/OR specific relationship value from the interaction.
- Can suffer high drop-out if only used at the end of a session, use them earlier in the session.
- Sustained group or pair allocations over time can help to develop relationships rather than random allocation to a different group for every class.
- Keep time in groups short initially c. 10 mins.
- Be clear about the task set and outline a protocol for completing it.
- Ensure adequate time for 'report back' or use dynamic capture e.g. shared document in overview mode so everyone can see the interactions grow.
- Drop in to each group if possible. Ensure students know how to get support even if you can't drop in.

What our Student Interns Say

Ways of Interacting

- Responding in the chat box can feel less daunting than turning on your microphone and camera. It also avoids the awkwardness of trying not to interrupt others when they're speaking. Acknowledging chat box contributions too encourages further interaction.

- Being called out by name to answer a question can help a wider range of students to participate. Let us know that you will be doing this at the start as this sets the tone for interaction throughout the class.

- 'Warm-calling' is an alternative to calling individual students out by name. Randomly select a few students at the start of class who can then present their opinions on the topic at the end. This gives us a bit more time to collect our thoughts and develop our ideas.

- Chat bombing is another enjoyable way to get everyone involved. This is where students are given time to type an answer into the chat box and then everyone sends their contribution into the chat at the same time.

- Shared ways to communicate, such as polls or whiteboards, can be a great way to get everyone involved without having to volunteer to speak.

- Asking short or easy questions helps us to contribute especially when you give us different options to respond in a way that feels comfortable.

- While it's great to have access to recorded classes, we can be nervous speaking when class is being recorded. This means that interaction may be more likely in a small breakout group which isn't being recorded.

Breakout Groups

- Breakout groups are most useful when they are short, have a clear task and consist of 4 students at a maximum.

- Sometimes it can be useful if the lecturer nominates a spokesperson for each breakout group to report back their findings to the class. This avoids the possibility of nobody volunteering. Setting expectations of how we should interact in the group is helpful too and gives us direction on what to do if group members are unresponsive.

- We don't always know the others in our class very well and breakout groups are a great way to tackle this. But keeping groups consistent for a while at least allows us to become familiar with each other and this helps us to feel comfortable and learn with each other.

**Enhancing
Digital Teaching
and Learning**
Irish Universities Association