Student Guide: Top Tips for Learning Communication Skills Teaching Online

STUDENT GUIDE: TOP TIPS FOR LEARNING CONSULTATION SKILLS ONLINE

Online learning creates a valuable opportunity for us to support you in developing your clinical communication skills whilst at the same time learning to consult remotely in preparation for your future careers as healthcare professionals.

What follows is a practical guide aimed to help you maximise your learning using the online format.

Proposed structure of online teaching

Being in an online setting for prolonged periods of time demands considerable concentration and can challenge even the keenest students to remain engaged!!!

We will therefore be delivering shorter sessions. To reflect the shorter time frame the vast majority of your online sessions will be dedicated to role-play, hence the vital importance of completing the necessary theoretic content beforehand as described above.

Ground rules/Group agreement

The ground rules for face to face communication skills sessions are well established and include important considerations such as confidentiality, respect, participation and the principles of constructive feedback. In considering online communication skills training these same ground rules still apply but some additional items should be added.

- Preparation
  - Complete any pre- session tasks prior to attending the session
  - Keep to time (arrive online at least 5 minutes before start)
- Environment
  - Ensure phones, email notifications and other devices are off/on silent during the class to avoid sound interference
  - Reduce background noise wherever possible (Use headphones if available)
  - Be aware of background lighting/view – Use a plain neutral background and resist the urge to use the range of artificial backgrounds which can be distracting.
  - Dress appropriately
  - Avoid eating during sessions
- Confidentiality
  - Sessions will be password protected & will not be recorded or shared.
  - No screen capture or recording please, unless this has been agreed with your teacher and group.
  - Where possible please try to ensure your environment is as private as possible – a supportive and safe environment is key to your learning and being overlooked by others not in the session is not appropriate.
- Honesty & support
  - This is new for all of us so please be supportive of each other.
- Participation
  - Willingness to engage in both the role-play and feedback process

- All video cameras and microphones should be on/unmuted during group discussion so that your tutor can see all members of the group, you can see everyone else and to encourage group interactions & dialogue.
- Please view the class in **gallery view** (see 'Technology' section below)

To help increase authenticity during the role-play:

- If you are not role-playing please turn off your camera and mute your microphone
- Select **Hide non-video participant** option in video settings or use Speaker view so that just the simulated patient and role-playing student are on the screen. (see 'Technology' section below)
- If you feel uncomfortable with seeing yourself on screen there is an option to **hide self-view**
- You may be asked to focus on **patient perspective** during some sessions. If this is your 'task' then use the **pin** function to view the patient video tile only.

Your teacher will negotiate how you should indicate you would like to speak during discussion (e.g., either physically raising hands or by using zoom icon).

- **Chat Function** (see 'Technology' section below)
  - Your teacher will negotiate the use of the 'chat' function.
  - You can use the chat function during the feedback process to elaborate on your verbal feedback
  - One student may be nominated to monitor the group chat and be invited to summarise questions and comments periodically to the rest of the group.
  - Chat function will be set so that participants can only chat with the 'teacher- host' or 'everyone'. No private messaging, especially during role-play as this may impact of feelings of safety or vulnerability for your peers.
- Be honest and constructive
- Make notes of specific phrases or behaviours during the role-play.
  - What was working well and what might be improved?

Technology

For your CS teaching the platform we will be using is Zoom.

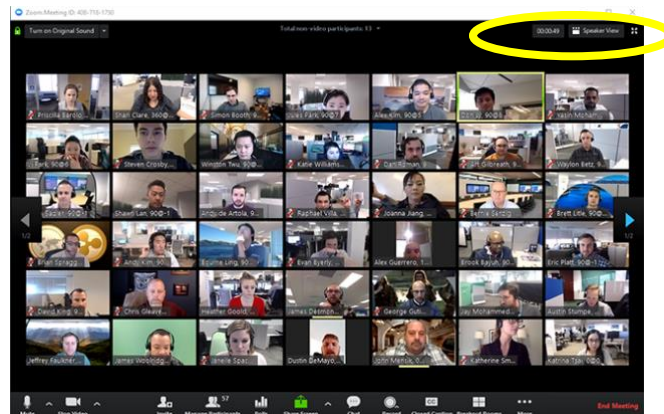## Online Features to Enhance Your Learning

Devices

Using a Laptop or Desktop computer offers a greatly enhanced experience over a tablet or phone and we would strongly recommend using one for your sessions if possible.

Views

There are 2 main video layouts on zoom

- Speaker view– This is the default setting on zoom. It will switch the large video window between to the person actively speaking at the time.
- Gallery view - This is the preferred setting for your consultation skills sessions as it allows you to see displays of all of your group and your tutor in a grid pattern.
- To switch from Speaker view to Gallery view go to the upper right corner of your Zoom window and click on the grid icon.
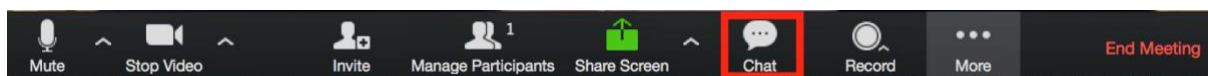

To find out more visit the link below:
https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362323-How-Do-I-Change-The-Video-Layout-

Chat function

The in-meeting chat allows you to send chat messages to everyone within the group. Due to the sensitive nature of role-play, we will configure the settings for online classes to only allow sending messages to everyone.

Opening the icon shown above will open the chat on the right. You can type a message into the chat box. Press enter to send your message.

To find out more access the link below:
https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/203650445-In-Meeting-Chat
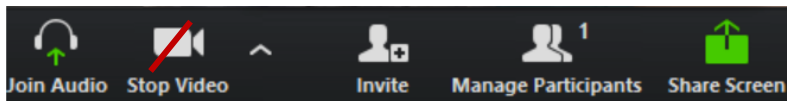
Troubleshooting- When Things Go Wrong

As we all know there is the potential for things to go wrong when using any type of technology. Below are some of the frequent questions that students have raised so far about using zoom. Do let us know if you have other questions.

My video camera isn't working

If you cannot get your video to start working look at the bottom left hand corner of your screen to see if a red line is showing. If it is, click on the video camera icon to remove the red line, this will open your camera. It will take a few seconds.

To stop your camera, click on the video camera again, the red line should appear. Clicking on this during role-play means you will stay connected to the class via audio but cannot be seen. Your profile will show as a blank screen with your name in the bottom.

If you are using a camera other than the one integral to your computer, you will need to ensure you have selected the correct video source. This can be done by clicking on arrow next to video and picking the camera you wish to use.

If camera problems persist make sure that all other programs that utilise the camera are closed. If all else fails, try restarting your computer.

There is echo with my audio

Generally, if you are hearing echo, it means that there is a device nearby that is channelling your audio back.

As with the camera, if you are using a microphone that is not integral to your computer you will need to ensure that the correct one is selected in settings.

Use of headphones may reduce both external noise and echo.

Can I use a headset?

Yes, as long as the device is compatible with the computer or mobile device that you are using. For some computers you might have to adjust the external headset. To adjust the headset you have to go to `System preferences´. Here you can change the audio-/microphone system from computer-based to external headsets.

What do I do if during the session my internet connection is poor?

If the picture and audio remain poor quality and freeze you can try;

- Use the Chrome browser setting if possible and ensure that 'Enable HD' is deselected in your video settings.
- Temporary turn you video off and continue to session with audio only.
- Leaving the zoom class and re-entering which sometimes solves the problem.
- If this doesn't work then you may have to remain on audio only for the rest of the session. This needn't be a barrier to engagement with role-play as telephone consultations are also an important and valuable skill.
- If you are experiencing difficulties, please can you let the rest of the group know via the chat function.