Teaching with BbCollaborate™

Southern Cross University

What is BbCollaborate™

BbCollaborate™ is an audiographics software that provides a teaching and learning space with the potential to link participants in real time, no matter where they are located. BbCollaborate™ is commonly used at Southern Cross University to facilitate engagement and interaction by participants who are distributed geographically and not in attendance at the same campus. The software provides opportunities for multiple speakers to engage in conversation using audio, text, application sharing and a number of other tools. It enables speedy interaction through a polling capability, quiz function and direct messaging. Participant-led and teacher-led presentations can be managed in the main "room" or in break-out rooms for smaller groups of participants.

Getting started with BbCollaborate™

Getting started with BbCollaborate™ requires familiarisation with the software and some professional learning in regard to your intended teaching plans. Be sure to follow the BbCollaborate™ set up instructions and complete initial training in its use. Consult experienced colleagues who are comfortable in its use. You may also access the Collaborate User Group (Collaborati) sessions every Friday from 12–1pm for on-the-spot assistance and creative ideas from other users. You will find a direct link to this group in your Bb Information and Workgroup area of MySCU.

At-a-glance

BbCollaborate™ is an audiographics software that provides a teaching and learning space with the potential to link participants in real time, no matter where they are located.

Pedagogical use of the tools in BbCollaborate™	
Whiteboard	Allows for writing, drawing or annotating with a variety of symbols and diagrams. Initially, try to use the whiteboard just as you would for your face-to-face class, until you become familiar with its functionality and full potential. Remember also that **all** participants can use the whiteboard, just like the chat area. You can maximise this accessibility by having participants generate material or undertake activities so they become active participants rather than passive observers of what **you** do on the whiteboard.
Audio	Plan to ensure you achieve the session structure you require. If you plan to always deliver a one-way lecture in BbCollaborate™ you may find that participants will not make the effort to attend, choosing instead to listen to the recording at a time that suits them best. On the other hand, if you plan for dialogue and interaction, you'll need to allow time for all to engage in the discourse. You'll need to pace the session to suit and advise students about what will be expected of them.
Text chat	The chat tool is useful in that: (a) it allows participants without microphones to participate, and (b) many participants will contribute text chat. This gives us a window into what is actually happening behind any silence!
Presentation slides	It is **highly recommended** that you load your slides directly into BbCollaborate™ rather than share the application from your desktop. The benefit of this is that you have the full suite of whiteboard tools at your disposal to annotate and highlight points throughout your presentation. Participants can present and annotate slides as either a live or recorded presentation to fellow students. Remember, to promote engagement, keep it simple.
Application sharing	Allows all participants to track activity on the presenters' desktop such as entering data into Excel™ or focussing discussion on a paragraph in Word™. Participants are given moderator privileges to allow them application sharing. You can utilise this to stimulate student participation into a screen activity.

A common question is "how many participants is ideal for managing an BbCollaborate™ session?" As with a face-to-face environment, the answer depends on your teaching objective. If your objective is to present information (lecture style), then the number of people in the session will not be of concern. However, if your

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objective is to run a more interactive session such as a tutorial, then an upper limit of 20–25 would be ideal. Bear in mind that, similar to a face-to-face setting, the majority of participants are likely to be passive unless you design your pedagogical use of the tools with an aim to activate engagement.

Pedagogical possibilities with BbCollaborate™

Teaching activities	How to use BbCollaborate™ tools	Details
1. Noting who is waiting to ask a question or comment – who was first to indicate they wish to speak?	"Hand-up" icon or Direct-messaging	Each hand-up will appear in number sequence. Monitor direct-messaging, and every now and again turn to the comments/questions to be inclusive of all in attendance. It can be useful to have a co-moderator in larger groups to assist in monitoring the direct-messaging area in a timely way.
2. Taking questions as they arise	Multiple microphones and direct messaging.	By using **Tools** > **Audio** > **Allow Simultaneous Talkers** and choosing 2 or more, you can allow communication to flow like a multipoint phone conversation. The direct messaging is useful for participants to "ask" their question or make their comment as soon as it arises rather than feeling the need to "wait" until an opportunity is offered.
3. Responding to questions and using the whiteboard to highlight points on our slides or whiteboard – alternatives for "pointing"	Whiteboard tools	Pointing hand – as a 'wand' on screen, click and drag it to point/move it **Crayon** – select colour and thickness for highlighting **Empty square** – size it to contain your point **Filled in square** – choose colour and then cover points; reveal each point as you present.
4. Using presentation slides – teacher and students	Use "load presentation" tool to convert Powerpoint slides to whiteboard images; normally takes <30secs for very large files.	Mark-up slides and point as you or your students present. One disadvantage is that you lose animations/transitions. You would need to "share application" if these were core to your needs.
5. Using the whiteboard for interaction e.g. brainstorming, taking notes, collaborative activities	Create a blank whiteboard page and use all the associated tools.	Create new whiteboard page anytime without losing existing content; no limit to space; brainstorm and capture ideas in-session; any participant can use; navigate between pages; move objects, resize and edit.
6. Consultation time	Use main room as waiting room and Breakout room for consults.	Just-in-time help can be provided regardless of location; privacy is maintained; documents can be viewed and annotated jointly.

For BbCollaborate™ set-up and familiarisation check the DRC website and follow the instructions for installation.

Sources

Much of the information in this document has been provided by Stephen Rowe, Southern Cross Business School.