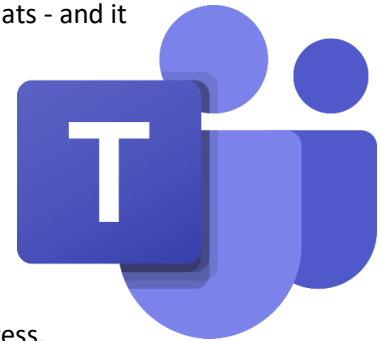# Online Platforms- Pros, Cons & Tips

The move to online activities has raised many questions for our student groups, one being "What is the best platform to use to meet?" Therefore, we have put together a guide to help you decide which online platform is best for your activities.

MS Teams

MS Teams is a video conferencing and Instant messaging service you can use to virtually meet with others - either by video or audio-only or both, all while conducting live chats - and it lets you record those sessions to view late
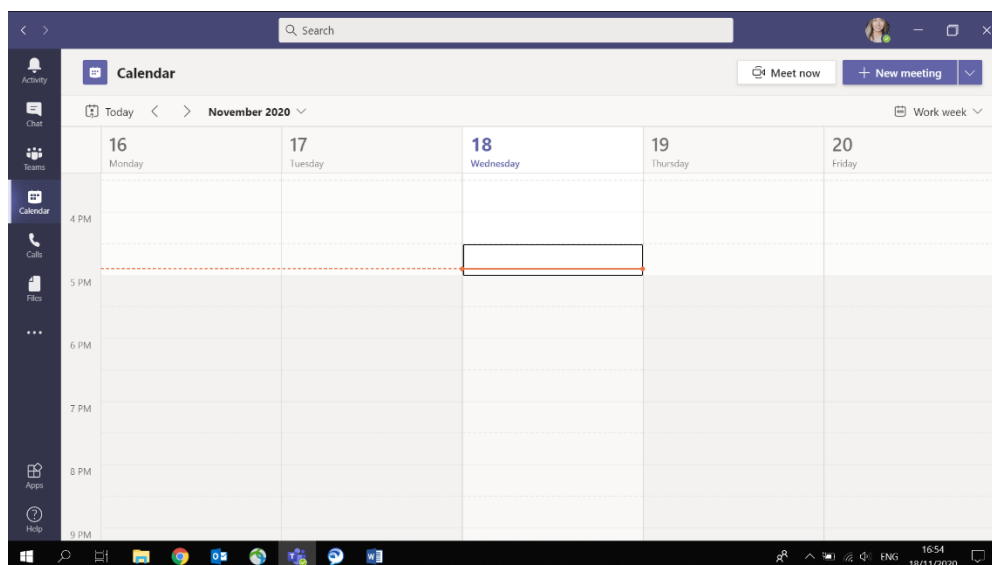
Pros

- 250 People can join the meeting
- Chat function
- Screen share
- File share
- Easily accessible via your @GCUStudents or university email address.
- Free
- Regularly being upgraded
- Calls can be recorded to view later
- Easy to share link
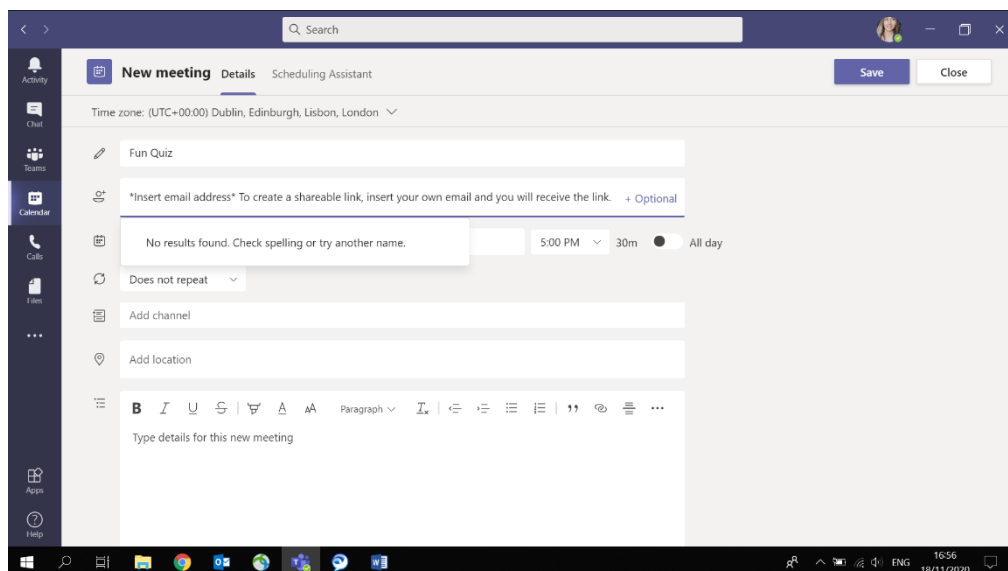- Wide variety of apps can be integrated e.g. whiteboard

Cons

- User interface is poor unless using the app.
- Can be difficult if many users are on the call.
- No break out rooms (yet) this is coming towards the end of 2020.
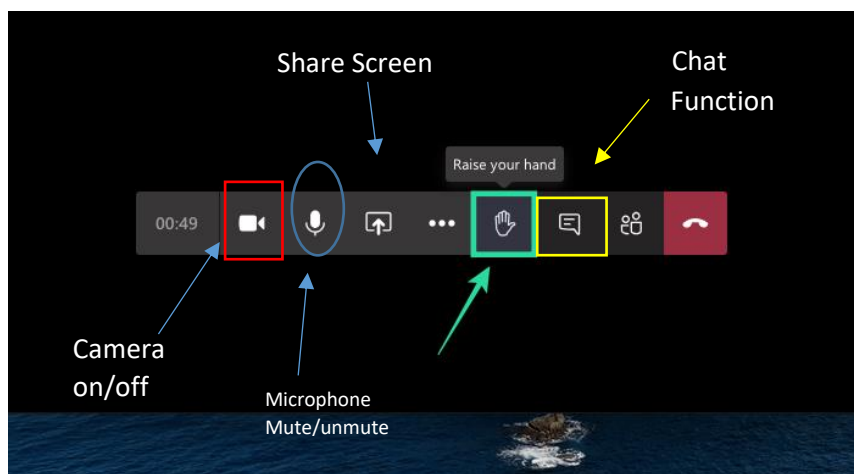
How to Schedule a meeting:

- Using the calendar tab
- Click New meeting

- Insert the details
- Here you can enter the email addresses of those you wish to invite, if you would like to generate a link which can be shared on social media instead. You should enter your own email address, the link will be sent to you which you can then copy and paste.

On the Call

Zoom

Zoom is a cloud-based video conferencing service you can use to virtually meet with others - either by video or audio-only or both, all while conducting live chats - and it lets you record those sessions to view later

Pros

- Attendees can join by the shared link from anywhere, and joining does not require downloading any software
- 100 Participants

- Widely known and used
- Option in chat to message host only or everyone.
- Calls can be recorded to view later
- Chat function
- Screen share
- File share

Cons

- Free version has a 40-minute call limit
- Full version costs £9.99 a month.
- Privacy Issues- there has been cases where people have hacked the call and the user's computers

Facebook Messenger Rooms

This is a new feature added by Facebook over the summer, allowing users to create a video call room and add various different users.

Pros

- Share Screen function
- Users can be personally invited or you can share a link.
- Most people already use Facebook so ease of use

Cons

- Can only add 50 people.
- More suited to casual chats rather than an actual activity.
- Can be slow
- Doesn't feel very private due to a joining link being displayed on newsfeed, however you do need to approve a user before they can join.

Discord

Discord is a group-chatting platform originally built for gamers, but has since become a general use platform for all sorts of communities. Discord is divided into servers, each of which has its own members, topics, rules, and channels. Servers are filled with text and voice. You can also share videos, images, internet links, music, and more.

Pros

- Free
- Easy to join servers
- Desktop & Mobile use
- Chat function
- Voice chat
- Video Call
- Own dedicated server

Cons

- Originally built for online gamers and so some features are more suited to this
- People tend not to be as familiar with this platform

Facebook Live

Facebook allows any user to live stream to their friends/followers. This is a one-way form of communication and the host will be on camera without seeing anyone else. This can be used for certain types of activities e.g. to convey info to members or show a particular activity e.g. an exercise class but is not well suited to events like quizzes.

Pros

- Easy to join as it displays in Facebook newsfeed
- Quick
- You can save the video to your Facebook page to remain permanently.
- Works well on all devices
- Facebook typically notifies users that an account is live

Cons

- Less interactive as others can only contribute via comment section
- No privacy
- No ability to "ticket" e.g. have control over who comes along.

There is a great service called Streamyard which can be used with facebook live which allows up to 6 people to host the live, and can make the stream look more professional with information across the bottom and many other great features. https://streamyard.com/

Instagram Live

Instagram allows any user to live stream to their friends/followers. This is a one-way form of communication and the user will be on camera without seeing anyone else. This can be used for certain types of activities e.g. to convey info to members or show a particular activity e.g. an exercise class but is not well suited to events like quizzes.

Pros

- Easy to join as it displays on Story section of Instagram.
- Quick to join, and also for the host to launch.
- Works well on all devices
- Instagram typically notifies users that an account is live, people more likely to join

Cons

- Others can only contribute via comment section
- No privacy

<u>Skype</u>

Similar to Zoom and MS Teams, Skype specializes in providing video chat and voice calls between computers, tablets and mobile devices.

Pros

- Free
- Widely known
- Sound quality is very good
- Easy to use
- Screen share function
- Instant Messaging
- Free

Cons

- Maximum number of people on one call is 50.
- Not as easy to invite others to meeting.

Collaborate Ultra Via GCU Learn

This is the platform you will be familiar with for learning. The Students' Association has a community on GCU Learn, through this we can set up collaborate rooms. Please contact your staff support if you would like to use collaborate ultra for an activity. Please note, it as it the discretion of your staff support to facilitate this and is not guaranteed.