

Guidelines to support schools using live video with students

This document provides guidance to schools that are operating in a learning from home model on the use of video when teaching and learning from home. The department has revised its recommendations and guidelines around using video in response to increasing number of student and teachers learning and teaching from home. Given the benefits of using the video to support student learning, it should be a strong consideration for principals and teachers when planning learning from home or remote lessons. NSW principals and teachers should read this document to help decide when and how to best use live video in their lesson delivery.

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Background and context

NSW principals and teachers can use “live video” or “video streaming” to connect and engage with their students during LFH periods. It is important to work closely with your school community before making a final decision.

The department recognises the educational value of using live video to support and enhance educational outcomes and student wellbeing where students are unable to be at school and are learning from home.

In response to COVID-19 and the rapidly changing landscape of the classroom, these guidelines incorporate advice from the eSafety Commissioner regarding duty of care for students' online safety, taking into consideration applicable national and state laws, policies and procedures.

To help ensure the delivery of online learning that encourages safe, responsible and respectful use of digital devices and online services, principals and teachers should familiarise themselves with the [Student Use of Digital Devices and Online Services](#) Policy and their school's procedures supporting the safe use of online services.

To further support schools, additional resources focussed on supporting students' online safety are available from the [digital citizenship](#) and [eSafety Commissioner](#) sites.

Setting up the technology and video conferencing environment

- Provide clear instructions to students on how they can access the video lesson and if passwords are needed to access the online classroom. Instruct students/parents to keep passwords secure.
- Staff must comply with the department's cyber security procedures when creating and securing passwords and dealing with confidential information.
- To avoid feedback loops teachers and students should test their audio, webcam and speakers in advance. Most applications have inbuilt testing wizards.
- Teachers should pre-set video lessons to mute student's/participants' microphones automatically upon entry. Teachers can then choose to switch microphones on selectively to allow student participation.
- It is important to start with the teacher's camera turned on. This reinforces to students that this is a live session, and establishes a more personal connection with students. However, after a short while, the camera can be turned off to preserve bandwidth and focus students on learning.
- Where possible students and teachers should be in a quiet space with a simple background behind them. The background, where possible, should not include thoroughfares or active spaces behind the participant that might accidentally lead to

inappropriate vision or distractions. Teachers and students should blur or set their background to an appropriate static picture at the beginning of the lesson.

- More information on the key video lesson platforms can be found here:
 - [Microsoft Teams](#)
 - [Zoom](#)
 - [Google Meet](#)
- More information on the key accessibility features can be found here:
 - [Microsoft Teams \(accessibility focus\)](#)
 - [Zoom \(accessibility focus\)](#)
 - [Google Meet](#)
- More information on the key platforms and communications methods available to teachers in the digital classroom as well as techniques, online learning dispositions, 'how to guides' and links to on demand professional learning can be located on the ['Learning from home' website](#).

Preparing for a video conference class

- As part of lesson preparation, we recommend that students download learning materials to be used in the virtual classroom before the lesson.
- As with all learning, teacher must make reasonable adjustments, where required, for students with disability.
- Set up a lobby environment where students can engage with the class group while waiting for all students to enter the room. For example, a quick poll, reading the learning objectives or a countdown can be used.
- Prepare an agenda or plan for each class that you can share at the beginning. This gives students a clear idea of how the class will progress, what will be covered, and the activities they'll engage in.
- Provide students with information on how to access the virtual classroom. Including specific information for students who need to access the session with alternative means, for example via keyboard shortcuts or through voice assistance.

Running a video conference classroom

- The video conference room is a school learning environment with the same expectations of safe, inclusive and respectful behaviour. Students must be reminded that the video conference room is a virtual classroom and the same school behaviour and discipline policies apply to this environment, as they would in a regular classroom, and students should be advised of the consequences of this not occurring. Acceptable standards of behaviour must be enforced.
- Allow access to the video conference room to those approved to attend prior to the class. Parents may need to help their child set up devices, but should not join any group/class chats being moderated by the teacher. If access is also required to

assist a student with disability this should be agreed prior to the online lesson and as part of planning the student's learning.

- Check whether any adult guest speaker is required to have a WWCC clearance and validate currency.
- Most video conference platforms will enable the session host to remove participants if needed, or put a participant on mute. These options should be exercised in response to unacceptable behaviour from a student or parent also.
- Add a password to the room to ensure extra security when using Zoom. Keep the password secure.
- A teacher should enter the room before the start time. Do not leave students unsupervised during audio chats or online video sessions.
- The use of breakout rooms is not permitted during a lesson, as a teacher will be unable to supervise students in different rooms at the same time. If a teacher believes it is necessary to use break out rooms this should only occur with the prior approval of the principal or by ensuring supervision of each group for the duration.
- Once the online session is underway, you may choose to turn off students' cameras, if there are connectivity issues. This process decreases the impact on bandwidth. Otherwise, the use of cameras may help to recreate the authentic classroom experience.
- When using screen sharing it can be easy to accidentally share confidential information during the lesson. To prevent this, it is strongly recommended to shut down any email programs, confidential information and Teams chat options, prior to starting the online lesson.
- Limit students' ability to chat amongst one another during a lesson unless it is required for group work. An in-meeting chat can be disabled by most video conference platforms for the entire lesson.
- All Department video conferencing technologies require students to log in with their departmental credentials. Students should not be anonymous, as it is part of a teacher's Duty of Care to know who is in the room. Any incident regarding anonymous log ins should be reported for investigation through EdConnect.

Doing a languages (oral) examination online

- NESAs advise that languages (oral) examinations are necessary this year. Languages (oral) exams should be organised by schools, and conducted online or at school (where permitted) at a time that suits their local needs.
- The following arrangements are permitted only for online languages (oral) examinations arranged by the school [as per NESAs advice](#).
- Prior to the examination, parents need to be notified of the arrangement, advised the examination will be recorded for marking purposes and told they should not be present during the oral examination. The communication should be through departmental platforms and email addresses to ensure transparency.
- The online examination sessions need to be recorded for marking purposes. This is critical as it is not possible for the teacher to mark the exam whilst it is occurring.
- The Head Teacher (or other suitable member of the school executive) is informed

of the scheduled examination and is invited to the examination. Both teacher and student are notified that someone may “enter” the meeting without notice (this should occur randomly).

- During the exam, it is strongly recommended that another staff member is virtually present, to ensure the safety of all present.
- The examination must begin at the scheduled time and be terminated immediately once the examination has been completed.
- Teachers are reminded of their obligations under the Code of Conduct and child protection policies and should notify the principal of any incidents that occur during an oral examination.
- NESA will provide schools with guidelines and marking support packs to help teachers mark the exams.
- Learn more about [COVID safety rules](#) for language (oral) exams, and the [latest COVID updates](#) for HSC students.

Pre-recording your lesson

- Do not record your lessons if students can be seen or heard
 - Privacy law restricts the circumstances in which information about students and other persons who may be present during an online session can be collected (i.e. recorded) and imposes obligations relating to access, use and the securing of the information it collects
 - It is impracticable to get the consent of all the people who may be recorded during a lesson.
- To protect the privacy of other members of the teacher’s household, the background should be blurred or a standard backdrop should be used for pre-recorded and live lessons. This is to reduce the risk of them being filmed accidentally without their consent.
- Keep a record of the students participating in the session.
- Ensure all class pre-recordings are published only on department-authorised systems such as Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom. These are known and supported secure systems. Use the password protection built into the applications or use as a password protected online platform to link to the recording. Do not publish class lessons publicly.
- More information on how to pre-record video or audio content can be found on the Learning from home’ website.

Video conference platforms

To ensure that teachers can engage with students in a safe and secure environment, the department has made live video available between teachers and students and enabled video for all students.

The Child Wellbeing Unit, Legal Services Directorate, School Services and Information

Technology Directorates as well as representatives from the Primary Principals Association and the Secondary Principals Council have worked together to develop recommendations on which platform to use.

The department provides the platforms outlined below, noting adjustments may need to be made depending on a student's capabilities.

The following tables break down the capabilities of each available platform, both in terms of what teachers and students can do, and how each support the wellbeing and privacy of students and teachers. Note the Y and N corresponds to the platform capacity and use within the classroom aligned to relevant policies and procedures.

Table 1 – What functions are available to teachers and students on the different platforms?

Function	MS Teams	Google Meet	Zoom (NSW DoE)
Broadcast video (teacher/student)	Y/Y	Y/Y	Y/Y
Record lessons (teacher/student)	Y/N	Y*/N	Y/N
Blur video background or set to a static image	Y	Y	Y
Group/class chat	Y	Y	Y
Private 1:1 chat	N	N	N

*Until the end of 2021

Note Adobe Connect is not listed, as it is a legacy platform and only used in some specific/unique circumstances.

Table 2 – How do the platforms support student wellbeing, safety and equity?

Feature	MS Teams	Google Meet	Zoom (NSW DoE)
Accessibility: Live captioning (refer to platform links on page 3 of these guidelines on how to activate accessibility platform features)	Y	Y	Y
Accessibility: Can pin video of sign interpreter	Y*	Y	Y
Classroom management: Teacher can moderate	Y	Y	Y
Legal: Can log audit trail	Y	Y	Y
Privacy: Teacher can restrict access to video chat	Y	Y	Y

Online learning tips

The classroom teacher is responsible for the management of any online learning environments they use with their students and similar to their face to face classroom management and practices.

- To provide the optimal learning environment, teachers may consider team teaching the lesson. This provides the opportunity for one teacher to focus on delivering the lesson and the other to provide support by answering questions via chat, posting links to resources or tasks and clarifying instructions.
- As the host teacher, join your class early to ensure students are engaged from the commencement of the lesson and that the technology is working appropriately.
- Welcome students as they enter the lesson and acknowledge them by name. This is a good chance to engage in light conversation as part of a wellbeing check.
- If experiencing connectivity issues, ask students to switch their video off and mute audio unless they are answering, demonstrating or asking a question.
- Discuss online behaviour and expectations of the students in your first virtual class and remind students of these standards.
- Consider whether the Controversial Issues in Schools procedure applies and comply with its requirements if it does.
- Give clear and explicit instruction for the technology so students feel supported and regularly clarify their understanding.
- Embrace the pause. Take a moment after the end of your comments and allow for students to ask questions and engage before continuing on.
- Take time to promote questions, comments, and interactions from your class. Allow time for your students to raise their hand, write their questions in chat, or be unmuted to ask their questions live.
- When students join the class, and if they are expected to turn their cameras on, remind them to blur their background, or change to an appropriate static picture, as the environment of the student will be visible to all in the class and the teacher.
- Speak slowly and clearly, as there may be time delays or audio issues.
- Allow students to lead discussions as they become more confident in the online space. As in a physical classroom, having students take ownership of learning and fostering collaboration is an important part of the learning process. Ensure that the expectations are clear for such activities and that all students know what their role is.
- Provide opportunities for students to present and share projects with the class. This allows your students to show what they're working on while practicing their

presentation skills. It also allows students to hear from one another. Issue clear instructions to students about the content of lessons and behaviour.

- As you become more confident add variety to lessons by experimenting with some more advanced features. This could include whiteboarding tools, annotation tools, polls, screen sharing and breakout sessions.
- Promptly report any issues or incidents of concern, including unintended sharing of confidential information, to the principal.
- More information on the key platforms and communications methods available to teachers in the digital classroom as well as techniques, online learning dispositions, 'how to guides' and links to on demand professional learning can be located on the ['Learning from home' website](#).

Professional learning for teachers

Professional learning for teachers in the use of these platforms has been and continues to be provided to assist teachers in their delivery of online/interactive learning

This professional learning is delivered by teachers who have experience in using these online platforms with students and who have a deep understanding of how curriculum and learning connect in an online environment.

Additional professional learning has been developed by the Child Wellbeing Unit to support Principals and teachers with a focus on students who are learning from home. This [Child Protection Information update, April 2020](#) (NR28102) is available on MyPL.

Privacy and security requirements for teachers and students are taken very seriously by the Department. These requirements are embedded in professional learning provided by the Department. This can be accessed via MyPL or the [Learning from home hub](#) through the [Professional Learning section](#), as well as [the Learning with Technology section](#)

More information on the key platforms and communication methods available to teachers in the digital classroom, as well as techniques, online learning dispositions, 'how to guides' and links to on demand professional learning, can be located on the ['Learning from Home' website](#).

Support for parents/carers

Principals are also encouraged to direct parents/carers to the department's [Digital Citizenship website](#) and the [eSafety Commissioner website](#) where there is helpful advice for parents to help their children have safe, enjoyable experiences online.

You may also choose to share the '[Learning from Home](#)' website with parents, as it also contains links to essential information for parents.

Key Questions

Can teachers use live video conference with students?

Yes, teachers can use live video conference with students with cameras enabled, but must not record students. Live recordings are not permitted (with the exception of language oral examinations).

Recording of live videos are permitted, but only if individual students cannot be identified. Students and other persons in a student's household cannot be filmed/ recorded during the lesson without consent. To protect the privacy of everyone in every household joining the live lesson, only record segments of the lesson in which all student cameras and microphones are deactivated.

To protect the privacy of other members of the teacher's household, the background should be blurred or a standard backdrop should be used for pre-recorded and live lessons. This is to reduce the risk of them being filmed accidentally without their consent.

Live recordings for language oral examinations are permitted (see section on doing language (oral) examination online).

Which platforms can be used for video conferencing?

The following platforms have been approved for live video: MS Teams, Zoom, Google Meet as well as Adobe Connect (for legacy instances only).

These platforms have been tested by the department and some functionality such as live recordings and one-on-one chats have been disabled.

See [Which platform should we choose?](#) for a breakdown of the differences between the available platforms.

More information on the key platforms and communications methods available to teachers in the digital classroom, as well as techniques, online learning dispositions, 'how to guides' and links to on demand professional learning, can be located on the '[Learning from home website](#)'.

When should live video conferencing be used?

There are academic, social and wellbeing benefits for students in using video conferencing software to communicate and collaborate online with their class and teachers when learning from home or from a remote location. In remote learning situations, the use of video provides an experience closer to the conventional face to face classroom environment.

Not all students or teachers will be able to connect to live video due to limited internet service or access to digital learning devices. In these instances, alternative methods such as regular telephone calls, the use of asynchronous and low bandwidth alternatives such as chat messaging, posting pre-recorded video within platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom, or email communication, are strategies that will enable teachers to stay in contact and maintain engagement with students and their families.

Are chat sessions (video or audio) with students allowed?

Whole class or group sessions are the recommended format when using online video, audio or chat. Teachers should not conduct 1:1 video, audio or chat sessions with a student.

Where a confidential discussion with one student is required, teachers should ensure a parent/carer and another teacher are present.

When audio chatting with a group of students does a parent or other adult need to be present?

No. Parents can help their child set up devices, but should not join any group/class chats being moderated by the teacher.

There may be exceptional circumstances where this is required, for example as a reasonable adjustment for a student with disability. This should be agreed prior to group/class chats are held and be part of the student's learning plan.

Do not leave students unsupervised during or on completion of audio chats and live online session. Teachers should close the session or wait for all students to exit the audio chat or online session and then close the session/meeting to all students and or participants This ensures that students do not continue chatting unsupervised after the online session has concluded.

Can teachers use breakout rooms in live video calls?

The use of breakout rooms is not permitted during a lesson, as a teacher will be unable to supervise students in different rooms at the same time. If a teacher believes it is necessary to

use break out rooms this should only occur with the prior approval of the principal or by ensuring supervision of each breakout group for the duration.

Do different rules apply when online video connecting with high school students?

No, the same rules apply to both primary and secondary students.

Do these guidelines apply to distance education teachers and students or hospital schools?

No, distance education teachers and students and hospital schools operate under different protocols. These guidelines are for schools that are temporarily operating in a learning from home model.

How can teacher and student privacy be protected during video online sessions?

MS Teams, Google Meet and Zoom have the ability to customise backgrounds either by blurring the background or loading a static picture.

If you are using Teams or Zoom you should ask all students to blur or set their background to an appropriate static picture at the beginning of the lesson.

Is it compulsory to upload videos to reach teaching and learning requirements?

Pre-recorded lessons and live sessions can be helpful, but they are **not compulsory**. Teachers communicate with students in many ways, including sending home hard copies of work. Principals and teachers at a school should agree on a consistent school-wide approach wherever possible, noting reasonable adjustments may need to be made for individual students with disability.

More information on how to pre-record video or audio content can be found on the [‘Learning from home’ website](#).

Who decides whether and how a school will use video conferencing and which platform?

After considering the needs of the students, teachers and the school community, the **principal** must decide whether teachers can use video conferencing software as an online synchronous tool for teaching and learning and should consult with their DEL if in doubt. These guidelines should align with the digital device’s procedure developed by the school.

For further advice on how to stay safe online, visit the department's [Digital Citizenship](#) website and the [eSafety Commissioner website](#).