



How can I increase student interaction in online Zoom classes?

Set group activities in break-out rooms

Give students a challenge to work through in small groups. Provide the problem, workspace and expectation of how they need to be ready to respond to the whole class. You will need to tell students how to interact within the workspace and how they can reach you if they need assistance.

When students are working in [break-out rooms](#), their use of collaborative tools such as Google docs, Google sheets, Office365, and Padlet can let you see the progress of each group without having to enter their break-out room.

- Cynthia Riginos described the use of break-out group activities in Semester 1 2020 with 3rd year online tutorials in this [webinar recording](#).
- Kelly Matthews shares an edited-together [video from a Zoom session](#) showing a group brainstorming activity, a break-out task with [Google Jamboards](#) and student feedback on the task.

Facilitate discussions with Zoom chat or Padlet

Provide a discussion prompt and directions of how students should respond the first time you do this type of activity. Provide some examples to set the expectations for responses (e.g. everyone should respond and then comment on another student's response); language (grammar, length, spelling, formality); and academic practice (referencing, evidence, collegiality). This can help reassure students they are engaging appropriately. Text-based discussion can support all students to engage, if time and a safe environment is available to them.

You can also use special cues for students to identify when they would like to contribute verbally.

- Maria Itati Dolhare talks about engaging students in 3rd year law in a [webinar recording](#).

Gather summaries of understanding, opinion or experience with active learning tools

Ask students to respond to a specific prompt that challenges them to think. They could respond via polling ([Zoom Polls](#), [Zoom Reaction](#), [UQ Poll](#) or [Ripple](#)); a short text response ([Word Cloud](#) or [Kahoot](#)); or longer response ([Word Stream](#) or [Padlet](#)). This approach encourages every student to share their thoughts.

- Hassan Khosravi uses Ripple to engage his students, checking how they understand concepts about information systems and using Zoom chat with a co-facilitator to identify student questions. [Watch an extract of Hassan's Zoom class recording](#).
- Tutor Afiya Holder shared how she motivated students and created an online community during the COVID-19 pandemic in a [webinar recording](#).

Use whole class whiteboard activities for graphical engagement

Use the [whiteboard in Zoom](#) to encourage all students to respond anonymously to a visual prompt, this could be an orienting activity to demonstrate the diversity of students or to gather feedback from them. Provide students with a background image, directions on how to respond and initial guidance on how to use the whiteboard tools.

- Dr Fiona Rawle, University of Toronto uses [Zoom whiteboards to engage students in identifying features through colouring diagrams as an icebreaker activity](#).



Inserting question breaks

Add into your Zoom session dedicated reminder slides (or similar) to ensure that you are stopping regularly to answer student questions. This process will help make students feel they're an integral part of the lesson and take the pressure off you to constantly watch for student questions in chat.

Engaging activities framework

Careful planning and structuring of the interactions you intend for your lesson can help you to more effectively engage your students:

- Activities are scheduled when planning the class, with sufficient time for each step (a run-sheet can be useful for this planning).
- Interaction is structured with clear instructions as to what students need to do and how, including guidance on how students are to use the relevant technologies.
- There is a response to and feedback on student activity that communicates their involvement is important.

Further reading

- [Higher education learning framework](#) provides further guidance and an evidence base for interactive learning
- More guidance is available online about [teaching online](#) including [communicating with students](#) and [motivating students](#).

Support

- Book a 30-min consultation, [eLearning Solutions Service appointment](#) or contact [learning designers](#) in your area for support.
- Email itali@uq.edu.au if you have further suggestions or questions.