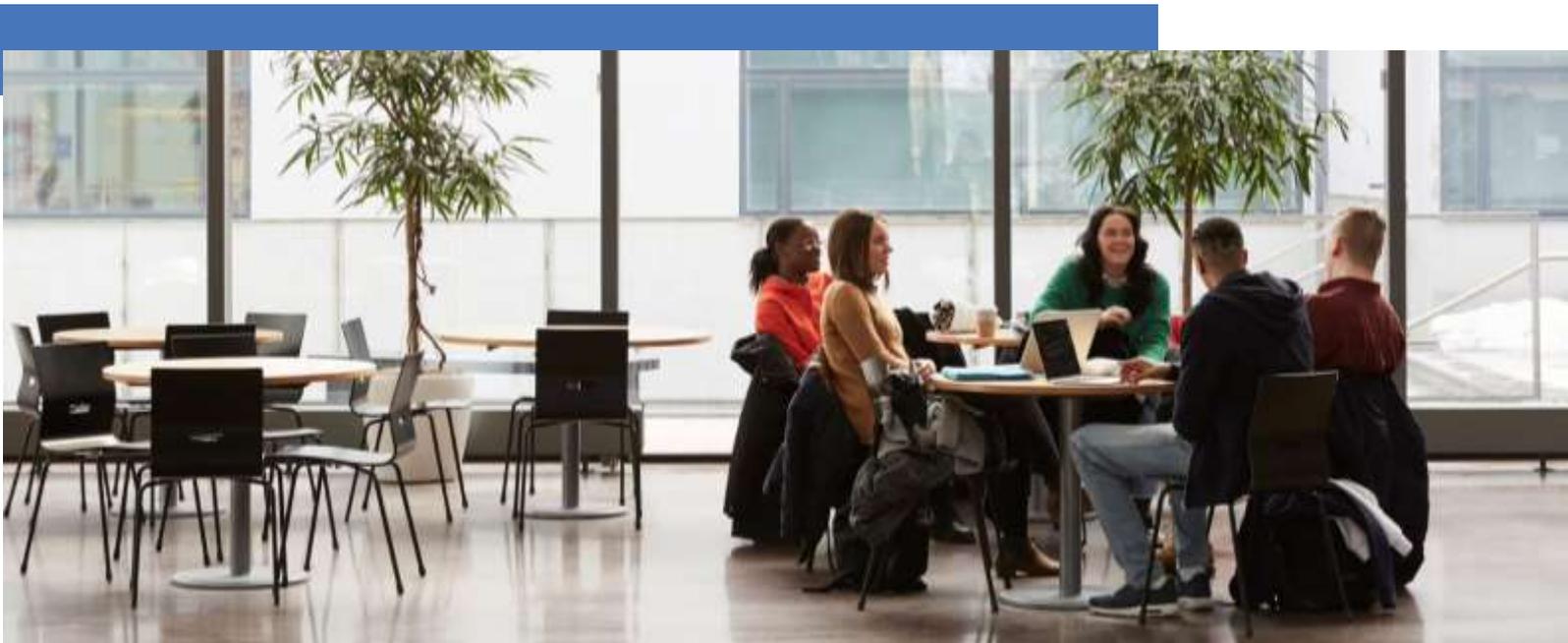# Blackboard Collaborate
Supporting Clients during Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Blackboard®

Overview

This document has been prepared as a guide only, without considering the objectives or needs of any single individual client. The information is only intended to provide a general overview of the matters with which it deals. The information is not intended to be comprehensive or absolute. It is based on our own internal testing (up to the date released) as a means to better respond to client requests. There are multiple factors which we cannot influence, nor control. As this is a fluid situation, with factors beyond our control we are unable to provide this information as a guarantee but instead is provided in good faith at the time of publishing.

Release Date	Published By
10 February 2020	Nicole Wall
11 February 2020	Michael Garner
12 February 2020	Nicole Wall

Blackboard Collaborate

How do I access Blackboard Collaborate in China?
There is no Collaborate instance hosted in mainland China, however at present there are no restrictions preventing users from accessing versions of Collaborate that are hosted in other regions (e.g. U.S., Australia or Europe). There are however a number of considerations for users. Please contact your Blackboard representative to find the best option for your specific case.

Are there connection issues for users in China?
Blackboard Collaborate is accessible from within mainland China, however this does not negate the potential for individual participants to experience connection issues due to local bandwidth availability. The inability for individuals to connect to a Collaborate session or slowness and disruption to the feed during a session does not indicate a problem with load on the Collaborate servers. With reference to the section below on Networking and Bandwidth, there are several factors that affect connection quality. Collaborate does provide automatic bandwidth management and will attempt to reconnect a participant if the connection becomes unable to support the primary audio stream. Due to latency, there may be a lag in users responding via chat or audio.
To maximise the experience, there are a number of items users should consider when using the service. Details can be found in this support bulletin
We recommend that institutions use an instance of Collaborate that is hosted in Australia (first preference) or Europe to improve stability. Usage of Collaborate hosted in a U.S. availability zone is generally considered poor.

How do I set up an instance of Collaborate in Australia or Europe?
Please contact your Blackboard representative to request assistance setting up a pilot instance of Collaborate run out of the Australia or Europe data centre.

What if I don't currently have Collaborate but would like to use it?
If you are not a current Collaborate customer, you may inquire about a 30 day free trial. The trial can typically be provisioned within 48 – 72 hours. It is recommended clients work with their Account team to determine the best approach.

Is Collaborate stable during this period?
During this time, we have noted an increased usage of Collaborate, especially by users located in China. We are aware of the increased utilization in the region and are monitoring it closely. You can read our status update here.

I have courses with large enrolments. How can I manage my online lectures?
The standard Collaborate room can support up to 250 users. If you plan to have sessions in excess of 250 users, we suggest reading this help guide and requesting a large session via Blackboard support.

However, large sessions are generally not recommended when a high volume of users are located within China. We recommend that you have **small sessions (less than 25 users)** with your students in China.
For large sessions, under 250 users, we recommend adopting the following strategies similar to large sessions
- Disable video for participants.
- Ensure the session is recorded as to provide any participants with connection issues the ability to review the content afterwards.
- Refer users to the Dial-in capability is applicable.

I can connect to a session, but it keeps telling me I have low bandwidth or I keep reconnecting. What can I do?

Firstly, users should check their wi-fi strength is good and internet appears to be functioning correctly. Shut down tabs and open a tab to access your University's website or a website outside of China. If you had accessed your University's LMS, try accessing that again.

Access the collaborate room again. If the issue re occurs, try closing all other open applications on your computer. As real time communications such as audio, video and streaming function differently than general website browsing, there could be another application that is using your network connection heavily.

What are the primary factors in bandwidth consumption when using Collaborate with the Ultra experience?

There are many factors, please read this help article to learn more.

How can I reduce the bandwidth of my Collaborate session?
For sessions where bandwidth is a concern, Blackboard recommends that no users share their webcam video unless required for the instruction. We also recommend that the moderator/presenter use file sharing and whiteboard for content instead of application sharing unless required for the instruction. Under this scenario, a user with 128kbps connection will be able to participate fully in the session.
Please also keep in mind that bandwidth is not only a concern regarding the network. Other factors, such as latency, jitter and packet loss can all affect the quality of the session. If a specific session is experience considerable issues by the moderator or end users, they can use the "Report an issue" link in the left hand navigation to report an issue

Moderators can also copy the Session information to provide to their institutional support teams for further discussion with Blackboard support.

What browsers does Collaborate Support?
Collaborate Ultra System Requirements can be found here.

Have you tested the use of Collaborate in China?
We have performed a number of tests with 28 users from major tier1 and tier2 cities within China to better understand the user experience. The results are:

1. 15 users have fluent experience with Collaborate AUS instance. Within a 30 mins session, videos, audios, whiteboard, document sharing, and recordings are all fluent without any reconnections.
2. 8 users have acceptable experience with Collaborate AUS instance. Within a 30 mins session, videos, audios, whiteboard, document sharing, and recordings are accessible with video quality decreasing occasionally; and there could be averagely 1-2 occasional reconnections.

5 users have bad performance with Collaborate AUS instance. Within a 30 mins session, users either couldn't access the session or encountered multiple re-connections with poor performances on videos, audios, whiteboard, and document sharing features. Collaborate recordings from the Australia instance took an average of 6 seconds to load.

However, a stable connection is not guaranteed. Our testing with regards to using Collaborate within China is the poor / inconsistent quality (high latency & lack of bandwidth) is primarily related to internet connection within China.

Among the top three telecommunication carriers in China, users with China Unicom have the best performance with Collaborate, and then China Mobile. Users with China Telecom can experience problems accessing and/or reconnecting issues. (See more test results in next question.)

These tests are our experience only, designed to provide Clients with an indication of the user experience. Individual results may vary and are greatly influenced by personal internet connections and Bandwidth. Please see the question titled 'What are the primary factors in bandwidth consumption when…' if participants are encountering issues in their collaborate session. If issues are still experience after following the help pages on 'Low Bandwidth Management' please contact Blackboard support at https://behind.blackboard.com and ask the participants to use the "Report an issue" link in the left hand navigation to report an issue.