



## Inclusion Insights



As the workplace continues to evolve due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we may encounter an increasing number of hybrid meetings that involve a mix of in-person and remote participants.

The purpose of this short guide is to provide practical advice and good practice tips to ensure meetings in a hybrid working environment continue to be engaging, inclusive and meaningful whilst delivering against purpose and objectives.



## Inclusive Hybrid Meetings

Hybrid meetings are where there is a combination of people within the same room (in-person) and others who are joining remotely (such as via Microsoft Teams). As part of our commitment to building an inclusive working environment it is vital that we take steps to ensure that hybrid meetings are designed to enable the participation and engagement of all colleagues. Here are some practical tips on conducting effective hybrid meetings where all participants can have an equal experience and opportunity to contribute.

## Question if the meeting is really necessary

Be clear about purpose of the meeting (such as decision-making, information-sharing, collaboration) and check it's suited to a hybrid approach. Managers should also be aware of their relative 'power' over convening short notice in-person meetings and question if such meetings are necessary within the context of accessibility. Where it is, communicate the intended outcome so everyone can prepare.

Asynchronous communication and shared digital workspaces mean immediate replies during discussion in a meeting may not be required and can be a way of accommodating different working styles and practices without impacting on progress.

## Accessibility

Make [reasonable adjustments](#) to ensure that people who are neurodiverse or with a disability, impairment, mental or physical health condition can participate in the meeting.

Remember to ask participants if they have any access requirements prior to the meeting date and ensure that the meeting room is accessible and suitable for a hybrid meeting.

Example reasonable adjustments include:

- recording the meeting
- scheduling breaks in the meeting
- providing materials such as slides in advance of the meeting date (this should be done anyway so that all participants can prepare)
- ensuring your resources are [dyslexia friendly](#)

Use a video conferencing platform that provides instant or live closed captioning. Microsoft Teams has built-in [closed captioning](#) that can be turned on from the meeting controls.

It is also possible to produce a transcript of a meeting. Further information on meeting different accessibility requirements is available on the University's [Digital Education Office website](#).

## Responsibilities

### As a meeting participant, you should:

- Test your microphone.
- Check your lighting: for example, is your face clearly visible, or is there a bright light behind you that puts you in shadow?
- Where possible, use a headset. Using a headset with a built-in microphone will make it easier to recognise what you're saying, and to create captions. It's also a great way of filtering out any background noise.
- Use the mute button when not speaking. This reduces unwanted background noise.

### As Chair of the meeting, and in addition to the points above, you should:

- Assign a colleague to monitor the online the 'raise hand' or 'chat' functions to see if the people who are dialling in remotely are trying to contribute. Apply the 'raising hand' principle to all participants, including those who are in person.
- Ensure one person is speaking at a time.
- Encourage all speakers to use video when they are speaking.
- Avoid 'presence disparity' and work to ensure each attendee has a consistent experience. Be mindful of virtual participants and invite them to contribute throughout or ask for their comments/feedback first - don't just bring them in at the end.
- Describe what is happening in the room if remote participants can't see it. Even things that are irrelevant to the main business of the meeting (like a colleague trying to connect cables to the projector) should be explained so that remote participants don't feel left out.
- Steer those in the meeting room away from beginning side conversations that remote participants cannot hear or take part in.
- Remind participants to use [captioning tools](#) if they are required.
- Follow up with a written summary of key points discussed and decisions made.

# Inclusive Hybrid Meeting Checklist

	Tick
<b>Before the meeting</b>	
Ask participants to inform you of any reasonable adjustments that might be required and ensure these are implemented.	
Ensure the meeting has a clear purpose and outcomes.	
Circulate any slides/documents in advance.	
Ensure all are familiar with any software being used in the meetings.	
Ensure someone is familiar with using the technology and equipment available in the meeting room to avoid any delays at the start of the meeting.	
<b>During the meeting</b>	
At the start of the meeting clearly define meeting etiquette and rules such as how the meeting will run, turning off mics when not speaking, how to indicate when people would like to contribute. Remember to extend the 'raising hand function' to everybody – virtual hands, or physical hands.	
Define the use of cameras – there is conflicting advice on whether to have cameras on or cameras off during meetings. Whatever you decide you need to let the participants know and make sure everyone is doing the same thing. Cameras should be turned on for team building meetings or when discussing sensitive subjects or giving feedback (to pick up non-verbal reactions) but can be turned off when the meeting is to provide participants with information.	
Be mindful of virtual participants and ensure that they are invited to provide their comments and feedback.	
People wearing masks whilst in office spaces, but needing to be on a conference call, will also cause issues with non-verbal communication (and even verbal with the muffled sound) – there is no real solution for this but being mindful of this issue is important. The chat function could be used and should be monitored.	
<b>After the meeting</b>	
Circulate a set of concise minutes/notes along with a clear action plan as quickly as possible after the meeting and ensure these are followed-up.	
Use the chat channel generated by the meeting to share any notes/additional information – this is particularly good if it is a recurring meeting as it keeps all associated information in one place.	

If you have tried and are finding hybrid meetings difficult, it could be best that all attendees join the meeting either remotely or in person. Some organisations use the phrase *one remote, all remote*: if one person is attending remotely, then those in the office should all connect online using separate devices. Consequently, everyone has the same experience and are more likely to participate equally.