

Newcastle Beginnings: A new year, a fresh start

Online Etiquette during Learning Events

This document sets out what you can expect from us as your educators, and what we expect from you as our students. To note, this is not a policy document nor is it a light suggestion of what may reasonably happen; it is an expectation document.

So, what is an expectation document and does it have any legal status? The short answer is no, but reasonable expectation is 'a step in the argument for a legal right' and understands that 'the expector believes they have some entitlement to be treated in a certain way and that objectively justified grounds for the belief' (Mitchell, 2003, p. 642).

With this now said we can turn to how we can use these set of shared expectations whilst being online in a learning environment. The following document is in two parts: for each situation there will be what you can expect from us as your educator, and what we expect from you as part of a learning community. Some of the following may be common sense elements of etiquette and you may wonder why they are included, but we would rather be clear (as best we can) than open to door way to confusion (such as, is it okay if I have the video call for my lecture whilst I am having my dinner?, we will let you know the answer to this below!).

Finally, we will all make mistakes when using online environments. This is new to many of us and we all have to start somewhere, so try and be forgiving of other's mistakes and be kind to all participants. And if in doubt, do what you would feel comfortable doing if the event was happening in a learning space on campus.

References:

Mitchell, C. (2003). Leading a Life of Its Own? The Roles of Reasonable Expectation in Contract Law. *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 23(4), 639-665. Retrieved July 27, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/3600690

1. How soon do I have to be online before the session starts?

As your educator

I will be online and ready to start at the time specified for the session, after checking my microphone and webcam. The session will be scheduled as indicated on your timetable i.e. on the hour or half hour and will start five minutes later.

As a student

You may be able to enter the 'room' before the specified time or you may be required to be admitted from the waiting room. You need to have checked

your microphone and webcam (if used) before the session starts. You need to join the session at the timetabled start time i.e. on the hour or half hour so that you are ready when the session starts.

2. How do I address and speak to people online?

As your educator

I will treat all participants with respect and remember that everyone I am interacting with online is a person with feelings. I will not say anything online (whether spoken or written) that I would not say to you in person and will avoid inappropriate language. I will recognise that it is more difficult to interpret tone when communicating online and speak to people appropriately. I will not discuss personal issues during an online session. If I am providing feedback, I will avoid negative comments and use constructive and useful terms.

As a student

It is important to remember that everyone you are interacting with online is a person with feelings. You should not say something online (whether spoken or written) that you would not say to someone in person. It is important to recognise that it is more difficult to interpret tone when communicating online and easier for others to misinterpret or misunderstand what you have said so avoid inappropriate language. If you are providing feedback, avoid negative comments and use constructive and useful terms. Many of your online sessions will be captured, so if you behave inappropriately, it is likely there will be evidence of this.

3. What should I wear when participating in a synchronous online learning event?

As your educator

I will dress as I would for present in person teaching and wear clothing appropriate for face-to-face delivery.

As a student

I will dress as I would for present in person teaching and wear clothing appropriate for face-to-face delivery.

4. If I need a comfort break during the online session what do I do?

As your educator

I do not expect you to ask me if you need to leave the session; just quietly mute / switch off the microphone if it is live and the webcam if it being used,

and return as quickly as possible. If you are wearing a headset, it is advisable to remove this before you enter the toilet.

As a student

I will endeavour to not need to leave the session but will do so quietly if it is unavoidable.

5. Is it okay to eat or drink during the session?

As your educator

It would be appropriate to have a hot or cold soft drink to hand (certainly when speaking it helps). It would not be appropriate to be eating while delivering a learning event.

As a student

It would be appropriate to have a hot or cold soft drink to hand (certainly when speaking it helps). It would not be appropriate to be eating whilst engaging in a learning event.

6. During synchronous online delivery of a learning event do I have to have the video on?

As your educator

We expect to see you during a learning event as it helps us react and gauge your learning through visual clues (if we see lots of faces staring blankly at us we know we need to explain what we are talking about better or in more detail!). We will instruct you to switch to Speaker View to ensure your screen is focused on the educator/speaker during the session and if we move to a discussion in the session we will instruct you when to change to and back from Grid View.

As a student

I will keep and check that my camera is on (unless there are particular issues that mean it must be left off, I will have let my educator know those reasons either in person or through my Student Support Plan) and demonstrate engagement in the class. I will set my screen to Speaker View to focus on the educator/speaker.

7. What should I have on my screen when on a synchronous online delivery of a learning event?

As your educator

I will turn off notifications and email applications that may interrupt any delivery of information.

As a student

I will also turn off notifications and email applications that may interrupt or distract my engagement with the learning event. Further, as a common-sense principle, I will ensure that there is nothing that I wouldn't want the world to see so I will hide any bookmarks, close any tabs that are open, and/or quit any applications running that are personal to me and are not part of the learning event.

8. Is it ok to have two windows open (so I can write electronic notes whilst watching)?

As your educator

I expect you to manage your note-taking however you like.

As a student

I will manage my note-taking individually and ensure that I can still fully engage with the session content at the same time as taking notes.

9. Can I share my screen during a synchronous online delivery of a learning event?

As your educator

Yes I can, but I will ensure that I have nothing running in the background (such as emails) that could be seen during the screen transfer and would compromise or unwittingly share personal information in the workplace.

As a student

Yes you can, and I might ask you to share your window so ensure you have nothing running in the background (such as emails) that could be seen during the screen transfer and would compromise or unwittingly share personal information in the workplace.

10. Do I have to have a green screen or background image when on a synchronous online delivery of a learning event?

As your educator

No, this is not necessary but I may wish to use a simple Newcastle University background if my system has the capacity to produce a background <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/remoteworking/zoom-custom-background/>. If not, Teams, Zoom, and other video conferencing platforms have a default setting which 'blurs' the background and I may use that.

As a student

No, this is not necessary but you may wish to use a simple Newcastle University background if your system has the capacity to produce a background <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/remoteworking/zoom-custom-background/>.

If not, you will find that Teams, Zoom, and other video conferencing platforms have a default setting which 'blurs' the background and we would suggest that this is used. You should not have any background that could cause distraction or offense to either the educator or others in the online learning event.

11. I can see that someone in the group has a pre-recorded video of themselves on loop and is not actually present in the synchronous online delivery of a learning event, what do I do?

As your educator

I will not challenge this during the session but I will contact the student afterwards and enquire if there is a reason they are not able to fully engage with the learning event.

As a student

You should not mention this during the session but if you felt comfortable doing so you could ask the participant in question if there is a reason why they feel unable to partake in the session fully.

12. Can I leave the session early if the content has finished and it has moved into answering student questions?

As your educator

I expect you to stay to at least listen to the questions and answers, and would like you to take part in answering them where possible as collaborative and active learning will provide you with a greater depth of knowledge.

As a student

I will respect the questions from my peers and take an active role in the discussion to answer them where appropriate.

13. Who do I contact if I have issues joining a synchronous online learning event?

As your educator

I will provide you with clear instructions on how to access the session in good time before the start of the session. If possible, please check that you can access the relevant platform (Zoom, Teams etc). I will inform you of who you need to contact should you not be able to access the session.

As a student

I will check the joining instructions and know which platform I need to access in good time before the start of the session. If I have an issue joining a synchronous online learning event, I will follow the information provided and contact the relevant person to inform them of this.

14. My Internet freezes if I have the webcam on, can I leave it off?

As your educator

I recognise that bandwidth issues can be a problem and do not expect you to keep your webcam on if this is the case. You can contact NUIT before the next learning event to gain some support to see if there is something they can do to help.

As a student

I will test whether my internet connection can manage with a webcam on before the session to avoid internet freezes during the class, and keep my webcam off if this is necessary.

15. What do I do if my internet stops working part-way through the session? How will I catch up on information missed?

As your educator

I will have asked for class consent to record the session and will make the recording available to the class via Canvas having downloaded it from the cloud. I will refer to the [University guidance on recording in Zoom](#). [from Suzanne, no presumption of auto-record]

As a student

I will make sure I access the session recording as soon as convenient to ensure I catch up with any information missed.

16. Can I use the private chat function to speak to the educator and/or my peers?

As your educator

I will inform you when I would like you to use the chat function and whether it is appropriate to use the private chat. When using the private chat, any information you share will be captured if the chat transcript is saved and shared with the class.

As a student

I will follow the instructions of the educator and use private chat when it is appropriate to do so. I understand that any information shared in the private

chat cannot be seen by participants during the session, but may be captured if the chat transcript is saved.

17. Do I have to contribute to a discussion or can I use the chat function instead?

As your educator

I will outline the requirements for this at the start of the session depending on class size and type. In many cases I will expect students to use both functions, and if I require chat only I will disable microphones and expect students to 'raise hands' if they would like to speak. However, if I have students that have concerns that are mitigated in a Student Support Plan I will make myself aware of this so I can act accordingly during the session.

As a student

I will follow the instructions of the educator. If I have a Student Support Plan that grants me permission to not have to contribute to discussion, then I can let the educator know this information before or after a learning event if I feel I need to.

18. Will a copy of the chat conversation be saved and made available?

As your educator

I will inform you when I would like you to use the chat function and will save a copy of this and share with the class. If you would like to have your own copy of the chat transcript, you are able to save your own copy.

As a student

I will access the chat transcript once it has been made available and also know how to save my own copy of this should I wish to do so.

19. How will working in break-out groups without staff present work?

As your educator

I expect you to respect other students present and focus on the task set just as you would as it if the learning event was happening in person.

As a student

I will treat my peers as I would wish to be treated myself and will remain task-focused.

20. What do I do if other students in the break-out groups won't join the discussion or help with the group task?

As your educator

I will assign a group leader and expect other students in the group to work with them to complete tasks. I will 'drop-in' to the breakout rooms randomly to ensure progress and answer questions.

As a student

I will engage with the tasks set and respect the leader of the group I am assigned. Notwithstanding the matter of an SSP as mentioned in Q.17, please remember that if you feel able then the more active and vocal you are during a learning event the more you learn and develop the skills of leadership, team-work and critical thinking within your discipline which will be of great benefit in your working life.

21. There are discussion boards, blogs and wikis set up on Canvas for the module. What are the expectations for participation?

As your educator

I do expect you to participate by posting answers, as well as reading the posts of others as this contributes to your learning. I will also participate in these interactions, so please expect to see me posting in a timely manner as well.

As a student

You should check the deadlines for the work and complete your posting by this time. It is a good idea to complete the work first, then see what others have written as it will help you develop your knowledge. All your posts are expected to be polite and in the same tone that you would want to be addressed yourself.