Hybrid meeting guidance

Department of Physics & Astronomy

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As we slowly move towards a 'new normal' way of working after the upheavals of the COVID-19 pandemic, we face the challenge of facilitating interaction and meetings with many of us working remotely and on campus in a wide variety of patterns. Hybrid meetings are an opportunity to retain the best of in-person interaction and video conference calls, and thereby to achieve a more equal and inclusive working environment. However, it is far from obvious how to set up effective and inclusive hybrid meetings. The guidance below is intended to help us take steps in this direction.

Please bear in mind that this is guidance, not a rule book. First and foremost, organise your meetings with the needs and limitations of both your in-person and remote attendees in mind – whatever works best for *everyone* in the meeting is right.

Beyond that, we ask you to consider the following points:

- Communicate clearly, and in advance, how the meeting is going to operate.

- Have a dedicated 'AV facilitator', even for modestly sized meetings. This person helps setting up and monitoring the AV technology and gives the remote participants a voice at the table, especially when the technology is not working at its best. The AV facilitator can keep everyone informed of the themes on the chat, look for hands up questions from the virtual audience, invite them to speak and if necessary voice their question for them. This is a standalone role which in general should not be combined with other roles such as chairing or taking minutes for the meeting.

- Prioritise high-quality audio over high-quality video. By design, built-in microphones in devices will not be able to catch the voices of more than a couple of attendees, especially if socially distanced, nor that of a speaker more than a metre or so away from the device. In these and similar cases an external microphone is required. In general UCL room microphone speaker systems are not suitable for such tasks and a direct connection to the streaming computer is preferred.

- Consider what visual information is transmitted. The video feed for the remote participants should train on the action in the room, i.e. normally focus/be pinned on the speaker(s). It is often relatively easy to have an additional wide-angled stream from a device in the corner of the room so that online participants can see the majority of the physical participants. Conversely, if

technology allows, the remote participants' video or name tags/avatars should be displayed in the meeting room.

- Plan all meeting elements such that both in-person and remote participants can engage, and do so in a balanced way. For instance, a Q&A in a meeting with roughly the same number of in-person and remote attendees could have alternating questions from the room and via the remote connection.

- Be mindful of the minority if the number of in-person and remote attendees is imbalanced. In case there is a small number of on-campus participants, they could gather and join the meeting, which would be organised as a conference call, as a single user.

- Request feedback from both in-person and remote participants and take it into account for the next meeting.

Our guidance is based on this literature review:
https://liveuclac-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/ucapmfu_ucl_ac_uk/EbV02z3w6iJEjtH2ZXVyMEEBQzNiG4zkObytwtBpmHHq-A?e=AB3QrV

If you encounter additional relevant resources, or have gathered valuable personal experience with hybrid meetings, please get in touch with Mark Fuller and Benjamin Joachimi.