Preparing to Teach
a Telepresence Course

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Introduction

To promote a safe and healthy campus environment that incorporates social distancing precautions while allowing students to return to classrooms, many classes at Miami Dade College will be transitioning to a "Telepresence" format. This format mixes in-person classroom teaching with live videoconferencing, with groups of students rotating who attends in-person.

For instance, a Monday/Wednesday/Friday class with an enrollment of 30 students may have one group of 10 students attend in-person every Monday, another group every Wednesday, and another group on Fridays; the students not present in the room join the class remotely via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. Having fewer students in a classroom that would normally accommodate all 30 students allows for social distancing measures.

However, this teaching format introduces a number of new complexities, challenges, and opportunities. This guide is intended to provide some teaching guidance regarding how to make the best of this new (and possibly challenging) teaching method and help you ensure a smooth teaching and learning experience this semester. Some of the logistical choices you'll need to make will have direct impact on the learning experiences of students, and you may want to ask students for their own input as to what would work best for them.

Additionally, the appendix to this guide includes technical guidance and links that compliment this document's teaching guidance, and the last page contains a helpful checklist for recommended steps to take before, during, and after class.

What should I do before my first class?

There are a number of steps you can take to ensure a smooth start to class. The more comfortable you are with the technology, the more time and energy you can dedicate to your teaching rather than technical troubleshooting.

- First, be sure that you completed the [BBL3007 Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Basics training](#) and reviewed the [FAQ page in the CIOL ORG.](#)
- Inform the students ahead of time about their in-person attendance schedule and your attendance policy. Post the list to Bb homepage as an announcement as well as sending it via e-mail.
- Starting week 2 and if possible, ask the students to bring their own laptops to class. Students can connect to the session virtual room via Wifi. Students may also join your session from their smart phones. During week 1, ask and encourage all your students to speak up- more details later in this document.
- Ask students to log on to Bb from their smart phones and join a virtual session to test the process before joining you on campus.
- You may want to survey your students to be informed about the available equipment and their willingness to bring and use in class.
- Be well prepared for your first session. Have a clear plan/outline/agenda for your first meeting and activities. It would be helpful if you share it and discuss with students

ahead of time.

- Arrive early to your **campus** and your **first class** to make sure all of the technology is working properly and ready to go. Many MDC classrooms have been outfitted with necessary equipment for faculty to teach Telepresence courses, including freestanding webcams that connect with the room's computer. Read info. below if you would like to bring in your own laptop. You may need to bring with you some other peripherals.

| Campus	Can faculty bring their own tablets to use in the classroom?
Padron	Yes
Kendall	Yes
Hialeah	Yes, they need to provide their own video cable to connect to system (HDMI or VGA)
Medical	Yes
Wolfson	For personal use if needed, but we recommend using provided computers for official conducting of classes as they are already setup to interact with the rest of the Telepresence equipment.
West	Yes, they can bring their own devices and teach using their devices.
Homestead	TBD- Please contact your CNS dept.
North	Yes

- Develop a videoconferencing **etiquette summary** for your students so they know to keep their microphone off when not speaking. You may also want to co-create these guidelines with students during your first week so that they feel actively connected to the process – what mutual expectations are important to them as participants?
- **Encourage students to interrupt you and turn on their microphones to speak up at any time during the session to ask questions and participate in the class discussion. Especially during week 1 so they can get used to the new format.**
- Have a backup plan in case there are connectivity or technical issues. Set clear expectations in case of any technical issues: i.e. send an e-mail to students, post an announcement on the Bb course homepage, to have students work "asynchronously" (offline).
- You may want to adjust and share your revised syllabus with students before your first session, which should include your logistics and expectations for a Telepresence classroom.
- Make sure you have technical support contacts on hand in case of any issues during your class session; these are located at the end of this document.

How do I share materials with students, such as handouts, presentation slides, and videos?

- Convert your PPTs to PDF files and upload to the virtual room. This will allow you to monitor the Chat area while presenting.

- You can use Collaborate Ultra to share your screen as you present your PowerPoint, but also consider making any slides available to all students before the session in Bb or posting a link to an online document through the chat feature. If you do so, **ask one student to monitor the Chat area and inform you of any posted questions to address.**

- Share videos the same way you have been when teaching remotely. Share your desktop, be sure to select the "share audio box", and play the video in a new tab.
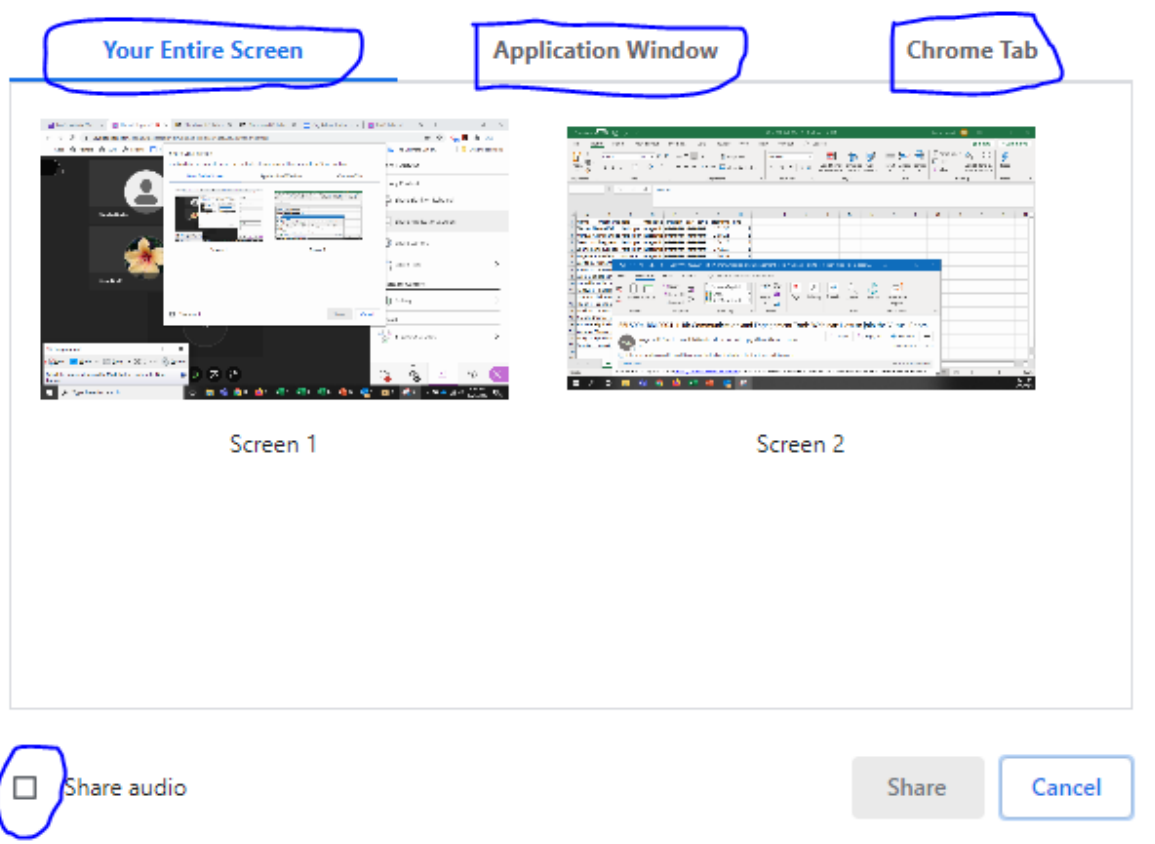
- Any paper-based handouts, like worksheets, should also be made available online via Blackboard before the session. Not only is this good for your remote students, it's also good for the environment!
- It's also a good idea to remind students where to find the Collaborate Ultra area on the course menu. That way, students attending remotely know exactly how to join a class session every time.

What is the best way to set up the classroom?

Miami Dade College classrooms that have already been outfitted with a freestanding webcam have already been arranged in the optimal default setup, but some adjustments may be necessary to create the best experience for your remote students.

- The camera and microphone are in a fixed position in each classroom. You may be able to adjust the camera by using the "Zoom" function.
- Depending on the layout of your classroom and the time and day of your class, you may want to adjust the window shades to optimize light. If at all possible, make sure light sources are facing you and not behind you since webcams don't handle sharp contrast well.

How do I ensure all students feel involved and engaged in the classroom?

Even though some students are with you in-person and some are joining remotely, those attending remotely need not be passive observers in the Telepresence class. Remote students can feel isolated and less involved, so it's important to acknowledge them and involve them in the classroom experience.

- You may want to consider pre-recording your lectures and make them available to students to watch before your class (flipped classroom teaching strategy). This way, you can use the class time for facilitating meaningful discussions and interactive activities.
    - Need help with pre-recording your lectures? Please contact CIOL at ciol@mdc.edu.
- **Once again, encourage students to interrupt you and turn on their microphones to speak up at any time during the session to ask questions and participate in the class discussion.**
    - **Note to faculty: remember to repeat the questions.**
- If possible, invite the in-person students to join the virtual room via their laptops or smart phone. This way, they can participate in any activity you do. They can participate in the Chat area, join breakout groups, or join their permanent group room if you made one available to them.
- At the start of each class, consider being deliberate in acknowledging the remote group's presence and extending them a special welcome.
- Remind your remote students that their involvement is invited and expected, including asking and answering questions.
- Consider assigning (on a rotating basis) one of your in-person students to monitor the chat or "raised hands" in Collaborate Ultra if needed. You can check in with this student periodically to see if there are any questions from the remote group.
- When soliciting input from the class, consider alternating between in-person students and remote students.
- With social distancing measures, it may be difficult to hear questions or contributions

from students in the back of large auditorium-style classrooms. One solution is to invite these contributions over text chat in Collaborate Ultra in the same manner as your remote students.
- At the end of class, acknowledge the remote students and confirm when they can exit the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra session. Before ending the remote session, check to see if any students want to stay after class to ask any questions.
- Discover what works best for you as you work with this modality and trying to engage students.
    - Is it best to bring the virtual class to the in-person class or vice versa? How would you know what works best?

How do I encourage collaboration and teams among all the students in class?

Collaborative learning opportunities, or assignments where students work in groups toward a common goal, can lead to greater academic achievement and more positive attitudes toward learning (Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Parente, & Bjorklund, 2001; Springer, Stanne, & Donovan, 1999), and Telepresence teaching creates unique challenges and opportunities for assigning group work.
- When creating assignment groups, consider the logistics of either grouping together students who are in the same in-class session or deliberately mixing students from different sessions.
- Students who are not in the same in-person sessions *can* work together, and this is a good way to promote a learning community among all the students in your class (and break down the barriers between the session groups). Leijon and Lundgren (2019) suggested that a liminal learning space can exist between in-person groups and remote groups; students can use Blackboard, Google Docs, or Office365 to work asynchronously (not at the same time), or their own Collaborate Ultra rooms to hold live meetings outside of (or even during) class time.
    - In Collaborate Ultra, you can create permanent groups in the Collaborate Ultra area by creating a session for each group or using the Groups tool in Bb. Attend the TECH106 Webinar to learn how to create Permanent Groups and/or using the Groups tool.
- Alternatively, using your existing session groups (Monday group, Wednesday group, etc.) might make logistical sense for creating student groups, especially if you want to use in-class time to work with the groups. For example, one in-person session group of 10 students could be split into two project groups of 5 students each. This makes group presentations easier (see How do I manage student presentations? below), but social distancing measures may make in-class group work problematic.
- There are many student technology engagement tools that you can use such as Jamboard, Quizlet, Office365, Nearpod, Flipgird, Kahoot, PlayPosot, VoiceThread, Packback, Breakout Groups and Annotation tools in Collaborate Ultra, etc. **Register for CIOL Webinars to learn about these great tools.** Visit the CIOL ORG homepage to enroll in available sessions.

How can I share board work or handwriting?

If you rely heavily on writing out work on the board while teaching (math or science problems, sentence diagramming, etc.), there are a few ways you can do this in a Telepresence class.

- If your classroom is equipped with a document camera, you may be able to use that as the "webcam" instead of your normal camera. Your in-person students would see your handwriting on the projector screen, and your remote students would see your handwriting via screen-sharing in Collaborate Ultra. This solution will likely be more effective for your remote students, with a higher quality image, but it is more difficult to set up. It's a good idea to test this setup before a class session that needs it.
- If your classroom is equipped with a Tablet, it would be a great option to share your screen and show what you write on the Tablet. Be sure that you are familiar with using the Tablet by watching your campus equipment video training.
- The use of Office365 is another option. This tool allows you to create a document (Word, PPT, Excel, etc.), share your desktop with students so both in class and remote students can see it, start typing in the document. All students will be able to see what you are typing.
- Another option is to use the whiteboard or annotation tools in Collaborate Ultra (while projecting to your in-person students).
- A fourth option is to use the Jamboard tool to present your content or as a collaboration tool. Attend TECH106 Webinar to learn how to use this very useful tool. Visit the [CIOL ORG. Homepage](#) to enroll.

How do I handle exams?

Managing tests and exams is more complex when some students are in-person and the others remote, but there are a few adjustments you can make to effectively assess your students' learning.

- Whenever possible, consider other ways of assessing students' learning. Authentic projects for written assignments such as research papers or position papers may be more effective at soliciting higher order thinking.
- More frequent, lower-stakes assessment may give you a better indication of how your students are doing than fewer, high-stakes exams. This allows you to review concepts that students have struggled with before moving on.
- Open-book exams are also a good option, especially when students are asked to apply knowledge and synthesize concepts rather than recall facts.
- If you plan to give high-stakes closed-book exams in your Telepresence class, the simplest solution is to use a Blackboard to deliver them online outside of class time. To mitigate issues relating to academic dishonesty, you can incorporate virtual proctoring with Respondus LockDown and Respondus Monitor or use randomized questions from large question pools. Register for BBL2010 CIOL Webinar.
- Online exams also mitigate the use of paper and may help prevent the transmission of disease, since having multiple people handling paper exams may spread pathogens.
- If you prefer to give the exams in-person, consider what activities your remote groups will do offline (e.g., discussion boards) as you give the exam to each session. You'll

likely to consider different forms on the exams with similar questions, since your earlier session groups may discuss their experience with students taking it after them.
- Unless there is no other choice, it's not recommended to give exams to the remote and in-person groups at the same time; the in-person students may feel as though they are taking the exam at a disadvantage.

How do I manage student presentations?

Having individual students or groups present or peer-teach to the class can be an effective and meaningful way to have them engage with the course materials and learn from each other (Joughin, 2007), and Telepresence classes can make use of these as well.
- If you want to include peer presentations, consider assigning presentation dates based on when the students can present in-person, that is, align presentation time slots with the in-class rotation.
- As with your own presentations, have students share their slide decks before their presenting. In-person and remote students watching the presentation should also be encouraged to ask questions and share thoughts.

Should I record my class sessions?

Note: Recording class activities via Blackboard Collaborate or other approved video conferencing applications are regulated by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and/ and subject to state privacy law (§ 1002.225, 1006.52, Fla. Stat.,). Class activities include, but are not limited to, lectures, discussion groups, advising sessions, labs, etc. For more information, refer to the [Guidelines for Recording Class Activities](#) recently established by MDC and posted in the Student Rights and Responsibilities guide.

- In general, recording your class sessions in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra is recommended. Recordings are helpful for students who want to review past sessions, for students who are unable to attend class because of medical reasons, or students who are unable to attend because of travel-related issues.
- Session recordings can easily be shared with students in Blackboard (see [Recording a Session](#) in the Appendix).
- If you are teaching a class that deals with sensitive topics, and the possibility exists that students will be uncomfortable sharing their perspectives because of the session recording, disable recording. While recording is helpful for students, don't sacrifice the learning experience for the sake of the recording.

How can I manage my office hours?

Telepresence teaching changes the out-of-class experience for students as well. The idea of a student sticking around after class to ask clarifying questions is suddenly a little more complex.

- At the close of your class session, check in with the remote group to see if anyone wants to stay longer to ask questions or discuss topics with you. If so, remember to stop recording the session before chatting with the student.
- Another possible solution is to host "virtual" office hours where any student can meet with you remotely outside of class time. Create one "Guest Link" in one of your classes and post it under the Course Menu in all your classes. Please be very careful to only use the guest link for this purpose with students. Students need to enter your course to join the Virtual Room you created for the class.
- Some faculty members may want to keep a set schedule for virtual office hours. An open meeting allows all students to join, which could lead to productive discussions about similar issues. Or, using the breakout room feature will allow you to manage who you meet with at a given time.
- Other faculty members might prefer to schedule individual appointments with their students. Scheduling tools like Calendly, which integrates with Microsoft Outlook, is a good option for giving students opportunities to schedule meetings with you.

How do I accommodate students with disabilities?

Some students may require accommodations to tests or other aspects of their remote learning experience because of a documented disability, such as extended time on tests and quizzes.

- If you have any students who require accommodations in your Telepresence, you are encouraged to work with the ACCESS department to ensure that they are engaging in equitable learning opportunities.

How do I (and my students) find additional support?

Need help with the classroom equipment?

Hialeah	305-237-8704	hialeahhelpdesk@mdc.edu
Homestead	305-237-5106	hcts@mdc.edu
Kendall	305-237-0400	khelpdesk@mdc.edu
Medical	305-237-4491	mhelpdesk@mdc.edu
North	305-237-8282	nhelpdesk@mdc.edu
Padron	305-237-6032	ihelp@mdc.edu
West	305-237-8929	westhelpdesk@mdc.edu
Wolfson	305-237-3232	whelpdesk@mdc.edu

Need help with Blackboard?

1. Visit the CIOL ORG.: Log on to Bb> Organizations> CIOL ORG.> Blackboard

2. **Need help with Blackboard and/or Collaborate Ultra?**
   Call (305) 237-3700 **(24/7)**
   Live Chat: http://tinyurl.com/MDCBbLiveChat **(24/7)**
   E-mail: onlinefaculty@mdc.edu

   Having issues with Collaborate Ultra?
   Visit this link to watch a 2m video on how to submit a ticket to Blackboard:
   http://tinyurl.com/CUTicket

3. Need help with Bb training & registration? Send an e-mail to ciol@mdc.edu

References and Additional Resources

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Appendix: Technical Guides

This appendix includes some helpful technical guides to accompany the teaching advice provided in the previous sections. Miami Dade College faculty members have access to Collaborate Ultra videoconferencing platform that can be used in Telepresence classes: The platform provides features for screen sharing, chat, breakout rooms, annotate, file sharing, and more.

Creating a Remote Class Session

You can create a class session for your remote students following the steps in this video.

Schedule Sessions Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

Recording a Session

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra allows you to record all sessions to share with your students. This feature can also be used to pre-record lectures for students to watch at their own pace. Keep in mind that recordings may take up to 24 hours to process.

● Blackboard Collaborate Ultra recording

Note: Recording class activities via Blackboard Collaborate or other approved video conferencing applications are regulated by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and/ and subject to state privacy law (§ 1002.225, 1006.52, Fla. Stat.,). Class activities include, but are not limited to, lectures, discussion groups, advising sessions, labs, etc. For more information, refer to the Guidelines for Recording Class Activities recently established by MDC and posted in the Student Rights and Responsibilities guide.

Screen/File Share

During a class session, you can use Collaborate Ultra to share content to your remote students, such as:

● Specific window/tab
● Entire desktop screen
● Specific application (e.g. PowerPoint slides)
● Whiteboard
● Uploaded document files

Keep in mind that your other tabs, bookmarks, or applications not related to your presentation might serve as a distraction–or expose personal materials to students that you'd rather them not see.

● Blackboard Collaborate Ultra share content

Chat

You can use the chat function in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to allow students to ask questions in real time during class. You can also download the chat and review unanswered questions at a later time or send to students as notes/review.

● Blackboard Collaborate Ultra chat

Polling

You can use the polling features to ask questions, start classroom discussion, or assess student knowledge. You can also set up polls prior to class start time and also download them to see remote student's responses.

- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra polls](#)

Breakout Groups

Breakout groups can be used to foster student-student interaction through discussion, group projects, or review sessions. You can drop in at any point to monitor progress or provide guidance to each group.

- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra breakout groups](#)

Annotation/Whiteboard

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra has basic annotation tools (text box, free form draw, shapes, and highlighter) that you can use to guide students or explain a concept. Access these tools by selecting the Annotate option when you're sharing your screen. You can also use the Whiteboard feature to have faculty and students annotate on a blank page. This feature allows you to incorporate "boardwork" that so in-person and remote students can see.

- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra annotation tools](#)
- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Whiteboard](#)

Helpful Telepresence Class Checklists

Before Class

- ❑ Share materials (slides, handouts, etc.) on Blackboard so that remote students have access to them.
- ❑ Arrive to the classroom early to make sure the hardware and software is ready to go.
- ❑ Connect the camera and microphone you'll be using.
- ❑ Start the Collaborate session at least 5 minutes before class. After the first few students connect, make sure they can see and hear you.

Starting Class

- ❑ Assign a student to monitor the Collaborate Ultra window for "raised hands" or contributions/questions via chat.
- ❑ If you are recording the class session, remind all students that the session will be recording before starting to record.
- ❑ Acknowledge and welcome your students attending remotely.

During Class

- ❑ As needed, use the tools the way you are doing now: Polling, Whiteboard, Breakout Groups, etc.). Adjust the settings as covered in the Equipment Training videos offered by your campus.
- ❑ Periodically check in with the student assigned to monitor the Collaborate Ultra to address any questions or contributions (or technical issues).
- ❑ Alternate between in-person students and remote students when soliciting input from the class.

Ending Class

- ❑ Remind the class of which assigned group will be in attendance in the next session.
- ❑ Refer students to any materials hosted in Blackboard in preparation for the next session.
- ❑ Acknowledge the remote students in closing the class and confirm when they can exit the Collaborate Ultra session.
- ❑ Before ending the Collaborate Ultra session, check to see if any students want to stay after class to ask any questions. If so, disable recording.

Note:
This document is based on Allan Gyorke's 2006 [Faculty Guide to Teaching Through Videoconferencing](#), and it is our hope that it holds up as a suitable spiritual successor for Today's difficult times. Tremendous thanks are owed to our colleagues from University of Miami who shared their guide and gave us permission to adapt it to MDC.
A special thanks goes to Dr. Mathew Acevedo from UM, Mr. Garamis Campusano and the College of Business team at FIU, Amy Crowley-Gonsoulin from MDC online, Margaret Shippey from the Faculty Dev & Classroom Engagement Office, Professors Patricia Nation, Sam Heastie, Jurist Willis-Taylor, Preston Allen, Paulette Isaac, and the CIOL team.