

# Use of Blackboard Collaborate

*Ralf Becker, Economics, School of Social Sciences, The University of Manchester*

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra (Collaborate) is a tool build into Blackboard which allows you to run online classrooms. You can run the class from your office or home and students can join in remotely. A session can be recorded and hence can be accessible afterwards for students, hence replicating the functionality of lecture recordings.

If you want to see a glossy corporate introduction video you can do so [here](#).

This document aims to show all the steps required to run a fairly basic online class, be it lecture or tutorial. This is a sophisticated tool with much more functionality than the one listed here. Use the [Blackboard Help pages](#) for more detailed feature help.

## Why you may want to use this

You can use this tools to run

- An online lecture allowing some forms of interaction with students
- A tutorial or exercise class
- Virtual office hours

## What you need

In order to run any online session you need

- Computer with internet connection
- Your slides (eg. Power Points or PDFs) or software (e.g. Excel, R, etc.) you want to use
- A microphone (build in or external)
- [optional] A tablet computer or tablet input device in case you want to use whiteboard style classes

## Blackboard setup

Collaborate Ultra is a tool available within Blackboard (BB) which allows you to run online sessions. You can find that tool if you to “Course Tools” in your Course Management Section.

But note that your students cannot see this section. Therefore you need to make this available to your students. Click on the + symbol at the top left of your left hand side menu.

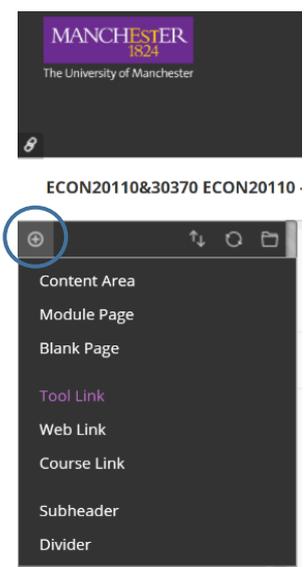
Choose Tool Link and you should see the following pop-up box:

**Add Tool Link**

\* Name:

Type:

Available to Users



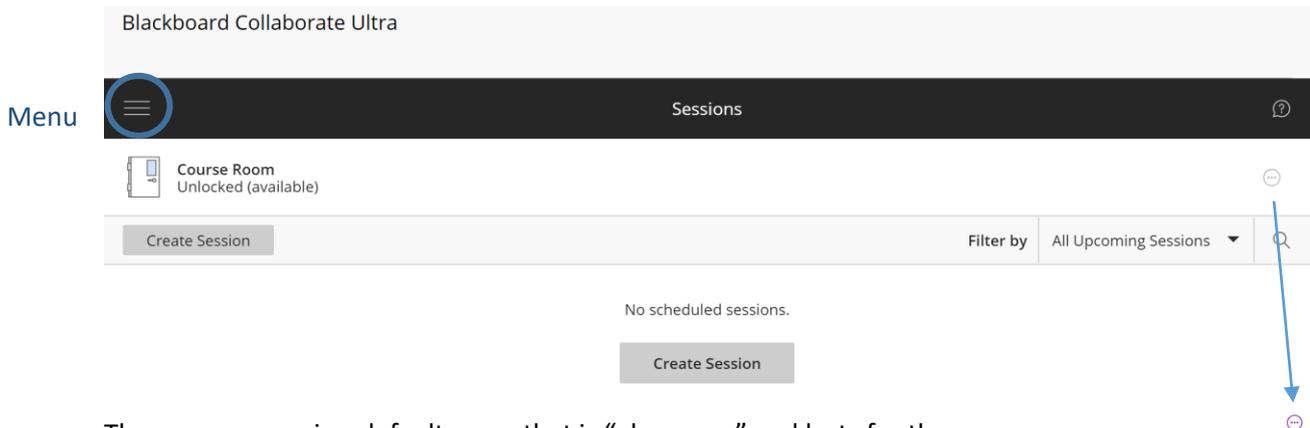
In the *Type* drop-down box chose Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, tick the *Available to Users* box, provide a sensible name and click *Submit*.

A link to Collaborate will now appear in your left hand side menu of your course. You can move it up and down to a sensible place, e.g. next to the link to *Lecture Recordings and Videos* which leads students to normal lecture recordings.

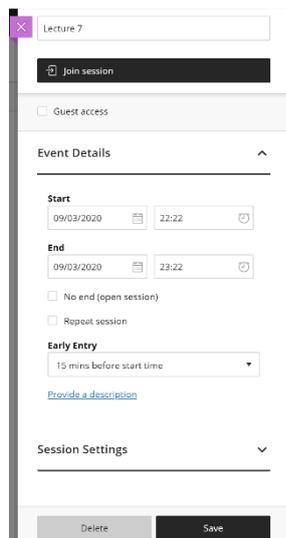
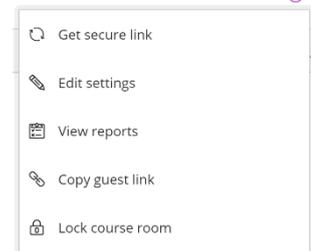
This will allow students to access the Collaborate home screen for your course unit.

## Session setup

If you now click on the *Collaborate* link you just created you will see the following Collaborate home screen



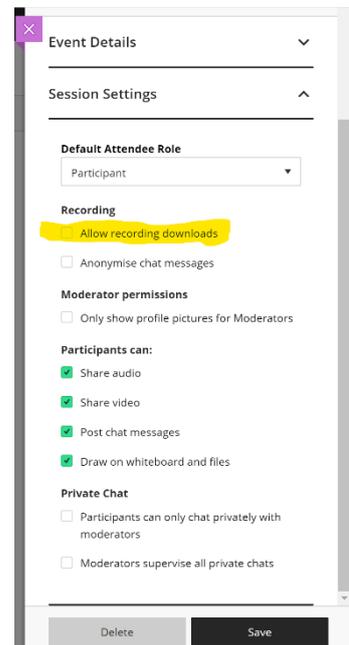
The course room is a default room that is “always on” and lasts for the duration of the course. It can be used for a number of different purposes. A virtual common room to allow your students to have synchronous communication and online collaboration.



If you click on the circle on the right hand side you can see some control settings for this *Course Room*, amongst others the option to *Lock course room*.

If you want to run a specific session, e.g. a lecture, tutorial or office hour you can create that by clicking on the *Create Session* button. You will see a window like the one on the left pop-up. Enter a sensible session name, chose whether you want to allow guest access, specify a start and indicate when participants can start entering the session.

Under *Session Settings* you can make a number of choices. In particular you may want to consider ticking the box to *Allow recording downloads*.



You can control the ability of participants to chat also once a session has started.

Finally press *Save* to actually create your session which will then appear in the Collaborate home screen under *All Upcoming Sessions*.

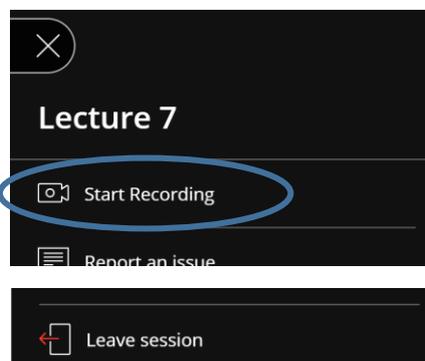
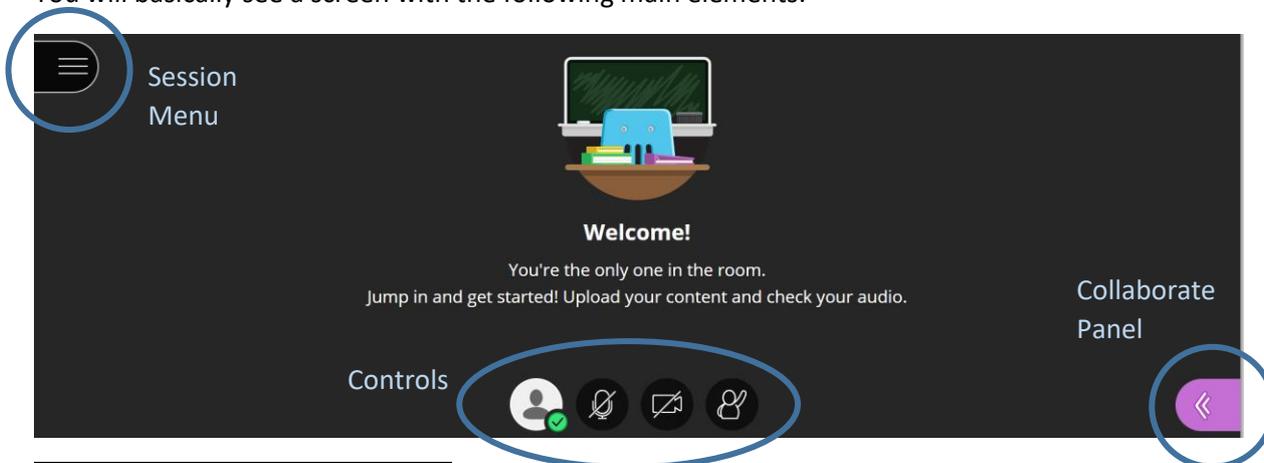
## Running of a session

In order to join a session you click on the Session name and click on *Join Session* (not shown here)



At this stage you may want to watch this short [YouTube video](#) (2:14mins) by BB which runs through some of the basic functionality.

You will basically see a screen with the following main elements:



From the *Session Menu* you can start a recording of your session. This is important if you want to ensure that students you can review the session after it closes. It offers functionality to students similar to lecture recordings.

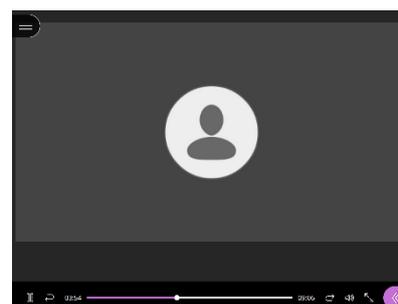
Below we will show where recordings can be accessed.

At the bottom of this menu you also see the option to leave the session.

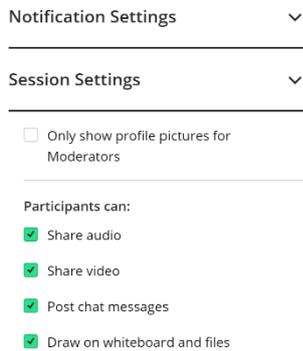
The *Controls* at the bottom of the screen allow you to switch your computer camera as well as the microphone on and off. This is important in case you want to mute yourself during the session. **At the beginning of the session your mic and your video will be switched off.**

At this stage all participants will merely see a default icon (see on the right) and may hear you talk in case you switched your microphone on.

Most of the important functionality, in particular how you control what visual you are sharing is controlled from the *Collaborate Panel*.



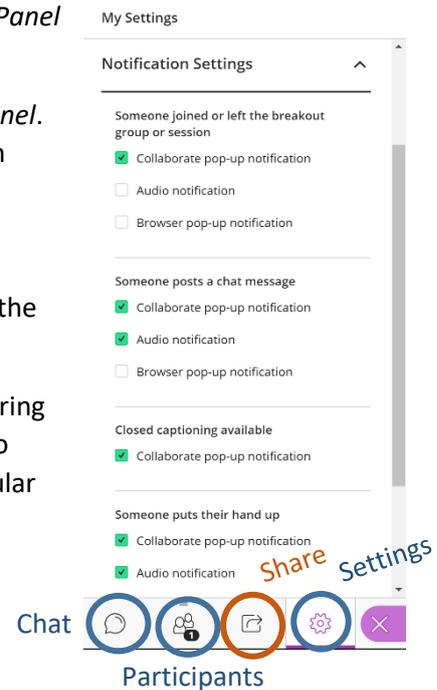
At the beginning of the session you should go into the *Collaborate Panel* and make some choices.



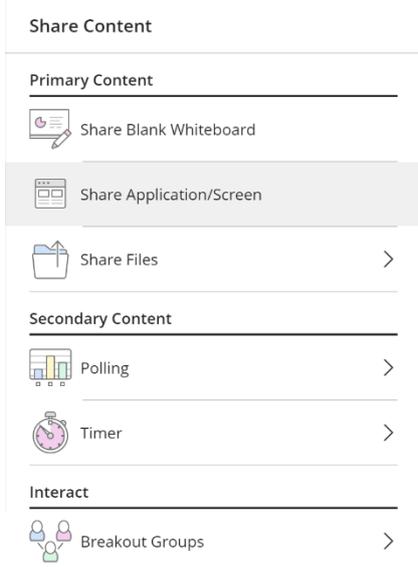
The *Settings* tab of the *Collaborate Panel*. In the *Session Settings* section you can control what student interactions are allowed. In the *Notification Settings* section you can control how student interactions appear to participants in the session.

You can also change these settings during the session, for instance if you want to have dedicate Q&A sessions at particular

points during your session.



The *Chat* and *Participant* tabs of the Collaborate Panel give access to the Participant list and the chat respectively. These allow the participants to interact with you and amongst themselves during your session.



Perhaps the most important functionality, i.e. what session participants can see, is controlled via the *Share* tab.

In this document we will not elaborate on the functionality under *Secondary Content* (like polling) or the creation of *Breakout Groups*.

The *Share Blank Whiteboard* option allows you to share a white screen on which you can write and/or draw. This is straightforward if you have a tablet computer or a tablet input device like these from [Wacom](http://Wacom.com).

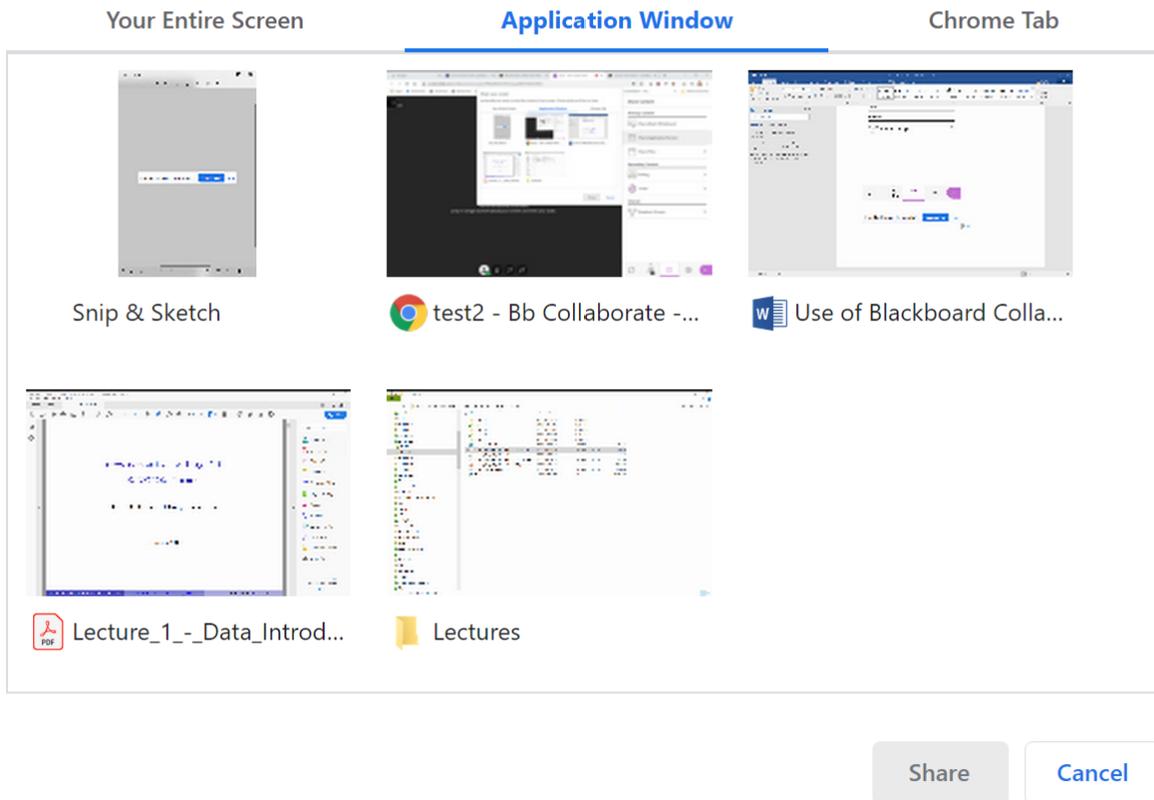
The *Share Files* option allows you to upload files which in turn can be downloaded and/or viewed by your session participants.

The *Share Application/Screen* option allows you to choose which file content you want participants to see. Clicking on the

*Share Application/Screen* option will open up the following choice:

## Share your screen

eu.bbcollab.com wants to share the contents of your screen. Choose what you'd like to share.



Here you can choose to either share your entire screen or merely a particular application. Once you share either it will appear on the feed to your participants.

**HINT 1:** Once you have set-up the visual sharing screen and switched on your microphone (see above) it may be a good idea to let participants confirm that they can see and hear what you want them to see and hear. You can ask them to respond in the affirmative using the chat function.

**HINT 2:** If you want to use a whiteboard type functionality you can either use the whiteboard build into Collaborate (see previous page) or you can choose another application, like OneNote, and share this application to the screen.

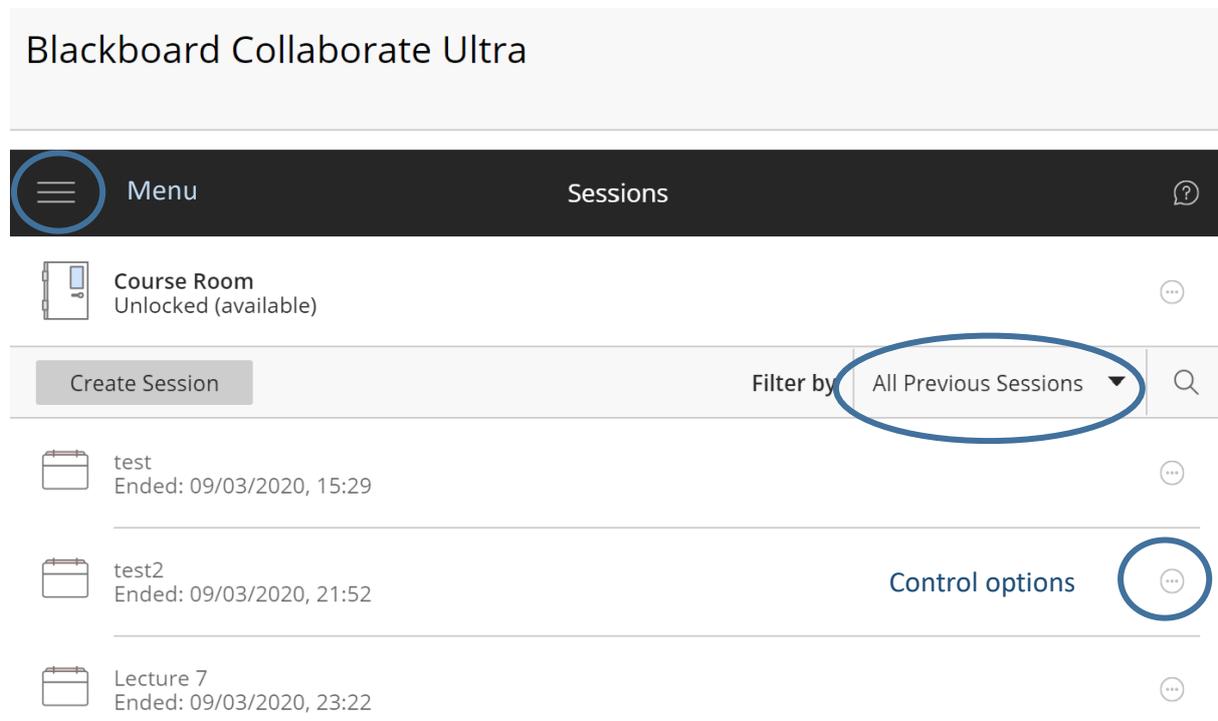
At the bottom of your screen you will see a button which eventually allows you to stop sharing whatever it is you are sharing.



**RECALL:** Once your session is finished you can leave the session via the Session Menu.

## Access recordings

If you chose to record your session you and your students can access these recordings from the main Collaborate menu (to which you get by clicking the *Collaborate* menu item which you created at the very beginning).



If you filter by *All Previous Sessions* you can find all your previous sessions. Sessions can be deleted using the Control options on the right hand side.

Recordings can be found by choosing the *Recordings* option from the top left *Menu*.

## Student Instructions

You should clearly communicate to students when you are running a live sessions. In addition to this students should have access to basic instructions. What follows are a proposes one page instruction sheet.

## How to access Collaborate Sessions

Collaborate is a Blackboard (BB) tool with which your lecturer can hold live online teaching sessions into which you can join. The lecturer can also choose to make recordings of these sessions available.

Click on the “Collaborate” link which your lecturer placed in the left hand side menu of your BB course. You should then see a screen which looks like this



Say you want to join Lecture 7 and it is live then you should click on this session. You will then be asked to join the session.

As your browser sets up the session it may ask you to connect your computer’s microphone and webcam. You can block the microphone and camera if you wish to. Click away the messages with the “x” in the top right hand corner.

Once you joined a session you should see material presented by the presenter and hear her/him speak.

If your lecturer allows you to communicate with her/him via the chat you can use the chat function to raise questions. For details you can also refer to the [chat help pages](#).

[Good practice](#) when participating in sessions.

If your lecturer recorded the session you will be able to review the session afterwards via the After a session you can access these via the “Recordings” option on the Collaborate Menu.

For more help please refer to the dedicated help pages of [Blackboard](#).