Background

The Governance Committee of the UWSA Board has realized that we will need to continue operating during this pandemic. We therefore propose that we hold our Board and committee meetings using the conferencing features of Microsoft Teams. We will outline how to book meetings, joining the meetings, how the meetings will be conducted, voting within meetings, recording meetings and taking minutes. This is a proposal document and subject to updating based on our experience once we start using Teams in practice.

Booking Meetings

While you can create a meeting within Teams, we have found it easiest to continue booking meetings in Outlook as we have been used to. The only difference is that you do not book a room. Instead, you click on the ribbon bar (near the top) where it says “Teams Meeting”. That does two things: 1) It updates your calendar entry description with a link that says “Join Microsoft Teams Meeting” plus other information about Teams. There is a link to Meeting Options where you can set who can be a presenter. We will leave those as is for now. 2) It updates the Location to read “Microsoft Teams Meeting”. When done adding people and any notes, press Send. All attendees will receive the Outlook calendar entry,
including the link to the meeting. Note that you can invite external email addresses to a Teams meeting if you wish.

Joining the Teams Meeting

At the appointed time, most users should get a pop-up on their screen announcing that the meeting will be in 15/10/5 minutes. You can either click “Join Meeting” or click snooze until closer to the meeting. When you’re ready to join, click “Join Meeting”. If you do not see the reminder, just go into your calendar and click on the appropriate meeting, and then click “Join Microsoft Teams Meeting”.

Teams will then launch and you will be in a “waiting room” by yourself. There you can check your camera if you’re using one and select whether your camera is enabled or not, and your microphone is muted. This is also a good time to check which device you are using for the camera, speakers and microphone (more on that later). When you’re ready, click “Join Meeting”.

Some notes on technology

Download the App – this will give you the best experience. If you do not have the app installed, Teams will launch in your browser. Chrome and Edge work, Internet Explorer and Firefox do not. If Teams is running in your browser, there will be a Download option in the bottom left-hand part of the screen. Click on it to download and then install the app if you can. If not, continue in the browser.

If you do have Teams installed, it will suggest you switch to the Teams App. Please do so.

Microphone/Camera/Speakers - strictly speaking, a camera is not necessary, but it does enhance the sense of everyone “being there”. If you are going to have your camera enabled, you will want to think about your surroundings and being dressed 😊. If at all possible, a headset with microphone is preferred. The headset/earbuds you use for making calls on your cell phone can work. When you use a laptop microphone and speakers there is a greater chance of echo from the speakers interacting with the microphone. However, many users will not have a headset available. It may help to turn down the volume on your speakers to reduce the echo effect.

To select which device you are using, you can click on the three dots “…” in the Teams Control Task Bar and select “Manage Devices”. There are drop down options for your Speakers, Microphone and Camera. Make sure they are set to the devices you want to use. Underneath the Microphone selection, you will see an audio test graph so that you can see if your microphone is working. Also on the Teams Control Task Bar, you will see icons for the camera and microphone – you can toggle those off and on as you wish. In general, it is best to have your microphone on Mute when you’re not speaking, to eliminate background noise and reduce the chance of echo, especially if you are not using a headset. If your computer has the capability, you may also wish to “Blur your background” so that the room behind you is not a distraction. You will find this on the “…” menu. If you do not see it, then your computer does not have the necessary hardware.

Hosting the meeting

We recommend that the Chair of the meeting join the meeting at least 10 minutes ahead of the start time. This will allow others to come in and test their equipment *before* the meeting starts. It also reassures attendees that they’re “in the right place”. It can be a little confusing with Teams to ensure you’ve got into the right meeting.
If you are having trouble with background noise once the meeting starts, you may need to use the “Mute All Participants” option. In the Teams Control Task Bar, click on the Show Participants icon, and then select the option to Mute All Participants. When someone wishes to speak, they will need to unmute themselves. While the host can mute everyone, they cannot unmute anyone but them self.

Inviting missing participants – we have found that some people may have trouble “finding” the meeting, especially as everyone is still getting used to Teams. It can help to invite them into the meeting directly from the Show Participants screen. There you will see everyone who has been invited to the meeting. Those who are already in the meeting will be shown at the top. Those who have not joined will be shown below. You can click on the right and select Invite and they will get a specific invitation via Teams.

Once you are ready to start the meeting, you will likely need to display the Chat window, which you can select from the Control Task Bar. Note: the Control Task Bar will automatically hide while the meeting is running. Just move your mouse to make it reappear.

Participating in the meeting

As mentioned above, participants should have their microphone muted unless they are speaking. To unmute, make the Control Task Bar appear and then click on the Microphone icon. Pro Tip: you can use your keyboard to toggle your microphone – just press Ctrl-Shift-M (or Cmd-Shift-M on the Mac). Similarly, you can use Ctrl-Shift-O (Cmd-Shift-O) to turn your camera off or on.

Camera – each meeting will need to decide if they want to have cameras enabled or not. If you are finding that the performance or sound is poor, you may wish to disable cameras. You may also wish to use the “Blur my background” option described above.

Chat window – keep the chat window open. It will display on the right. The chat window will be used to record when the meeting starts and ends, when people leave, and when people want to ask a question or speak. Unfortunately, Teams does not appear to have a “raise hand” feature, so we’ve agreed that participants will put a quick note in the chat window when they wish to speak. That may be in the form of typing a question/comment or by simply putting the letter “Q” (for question) while someone else is speaking. We suggest the Chair acknowledge that person’s desire to speak by giving a “Thumbs Up” to the “Q”. This nicely gives an order of speaking. The person can then unmute when it is their turn. This bit of formality may not be required if participants are good at waiting their turn and just speaking, but this can help in more formal discussions where proper etiquette is required.

Motions and Voting

We discussed how we will approach formal motions and voting. What we suggest is that when we are ready to make a motion that has been seconded, the motion will be typed into the Chat window by the Secretary (or their designate). Discussion can then ensue- the Chair writes “Discussion” in the Chat window. Once the Chair determines that it is time to vote, they will call for the vote, again in the Chat window. The Chair types three lines (press return after each) for Yay, Nay, and Abstain. Each participant gives a Thumbs Up on their choice. Once all participants have responded, the Chair can announce the outcome. Originally, we had thought to have people respond Yay, Nay or Abstain, but then the Chair has to tally them – this is much easier.
Documents

While Teams has a rich set of features for collaborative documents, we have decided that we will continue having our official agendas, minutes and related documents be in our original SharePoint site. That means that the agenda and all other documents will be created and be available as we have done in the past – nothing changes when using Teams for meetings. Moving our documentation to Teams would be a massive project and we have not decided to do that at this time. Teams documents can be used for temporary working files, but all official documents should be housed in our Board SharePoint site.

Sharing Documents during a meeting

Teams has a very handy feature for sharing documents during a meeting. In the Control Task Bar, there is an icon to the right of the microphone for Sharing. You can share a window, a Powerpoint presentation or your whole desktop. This is very handy for displaying the agenda, previous minutes, etc. The presenter (doesn’t necessarily need to be the Chair or host) can share their document for everyone to see. If someone else needs/wants to share a document, the first person can stop Sharing and let the next person share their document. If you share a browser window, you can switch between tabs and the other participants can see what you’re doing. If you want to switch between programs, you will need to share your desktop.

Taking minutes

We’ve agreed that we will continue taking minutes as we always have. Someone will take notes in whatever fashion they prefer – on paper, on their own laptop, etc. The Chat window will be handy for keeping track of when the meeting started, ended and when people left the meeting. We recommend that the Chair specifically enter into the Chat window when the meeting Starts, Ends, goes into Confidential portion, etc. This will help the Secretary later. Note: the Chat window will be persistent and can be reviewed by all participants even after the meeting has ended.

Recording meetings

If it is agreed by all, the meeting can be recorded. This can be helpful for the Secretary/minute taker to review what was said. In most cases, we would want to delete the recording as soon as they are done with that purpose. This is a topic that likely needs to be reviewed.

Being There

Teams meetings should be considered the same as a formal meeting. Participants are expected to come prepared for the meeting, participate fully in the meeting, and avoid distractions during the meeting. This can be particularly challenging when working in a home environment and with a computer in front of you that may be popping up notifications. Try to avoid responding to them, if you can. If you really must attend to something outside the meeting, consider turning off your camera so that you are not distracting to other participants. Remember to keep your microphone muted when not speaking.