

Guidance for Online Meetings for Students on Placement - College of Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences; Department of Social Work, Social Care and Community Studies

During your placement you can expect to participate in online meetings with colleagues, practice educators, supervisors and service users using different platforms including Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Always check and adhere to your placement provider's policy and guidelines on organising, holding and participating in online meetings.

This guidance is designed to help you think about some of the principles of best practice when participating in meetings using Zoom (and other platforms).

Virtual meetings can seem more informal however you need to ensure your presentation is professional, in line with expectations of PCF domain 1 Professionalism.

Preparing for the meeting

- Set up your equipment – test sound and video
- Position your camera properly - if you use a webcam ensure it is stable
- Close unnecessary tabs in your browser to improve functionality and turn off notifications such as email and messaging as these can be distracting.
- Consider using a headset with an external microphone for optimal speaking and hearing capabilities. This also helps to reduce the opportunities for other people in your work/home environment to overhear the discussion taking place in your meeting.
- Where possible lighting should come in front of you or from the side. If there is a window behind you, draw the curtains to prevent being silhouetted against this. Consider using a desk/table lamp even during daylight hours if the only natural light in the room comes from a window behind you.
- If you are unfamiliar with the use of online platforms, ask your supervisors for a 'trial run' beforehand and try practicing with other students, asking for feedback about how you behave professionally in your "trial meeting".
- Consider any security arrangements for the meeting such as whether a waiting room is needed. Your placement provider may recommend using a separate password for online meetings.

Presentation

- Log in from a distraction free environment - keep your background clear of distractions (bedrooms, cars, people).
- You need to think about what is visible in your background and whether this is creating the right impression – is anything visible that might bring the profession, the university or your placement provider into disrepute? Are there any personal details such as photos of your children visible? Is your washing drying in the background?
- Make sure that you are somewhere that is confidential so that others you share a house with cannot hear your discussions or see your screen when you are working. Talk to your

house mates beforehand about the importance of not interrupting you during online meetings if necessary.

- If your only private space is your bedroom, and your only place to sit is your bed, that is acceptable. It is not acceptable to be lying on the bed. Make sure the bed is made and personal items such as nightwear are out of sight.
- Consider using a virtual background – you could choose to use a SHU virtual background.
- Be ready and look professional, this includes wearing appropriate clothing.
- Be on time.
- It is not possible to have eye contact with other participants online, so it is good practice to look at the camera during online meetings. Be mindful that sometimes people have a second screen that they may be looking at.
- Be mindful when having online meetings with service users that you will not necessarily know who else is in the house. It is possible you may also be being recorded without your knowledge.
- Turn off the camera if you need to attend to something during the meeting and turn back on when you return to the meeting
- Avoid multi-tasking – refrain from replying to emails or text messages during the meeting
- If you need to briefly leave a meeting (e.g. for a comfort break, or someone knocks on your door), explain this to the participants, mute yourself and stop your video until you return. If you are in a larger meeting, you may need to use the chat function to excuse yourself.
- It is acceptable for you to consume a (non-alcoholic) drink during an online meeting, but most professionals refrain from eating during meetings.

Participate productively

- Keep audio on mute if you are observing rather than participating in a meeting OR until you wish to speak – this helps reduce background noise.
- If you are asked to take minutes of the meeting you must not ‘record’ the meeting in any other way than by making your own notes. You need to think about data protection and how you are going to communicate the minutes of the meeting to others while ensuring the service users’ confidentiality.
- Be aware of any information you may have open on your device if you are screen sharing.

PCF Domain 1

1. PROFESSIONALISM - Identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development

Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession. Our title is protected in UK law. We demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for our conduct, practice, self-care and development. We seek and use supervision and other professional support. We promote excellent practice and challenge circumstances that compromise this. As representatives of the profession, we safeguard its reputation. We are accountable to people using services, the public, employers and the regulator. We take ethical decisions in the context of multiple accountabilities.

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