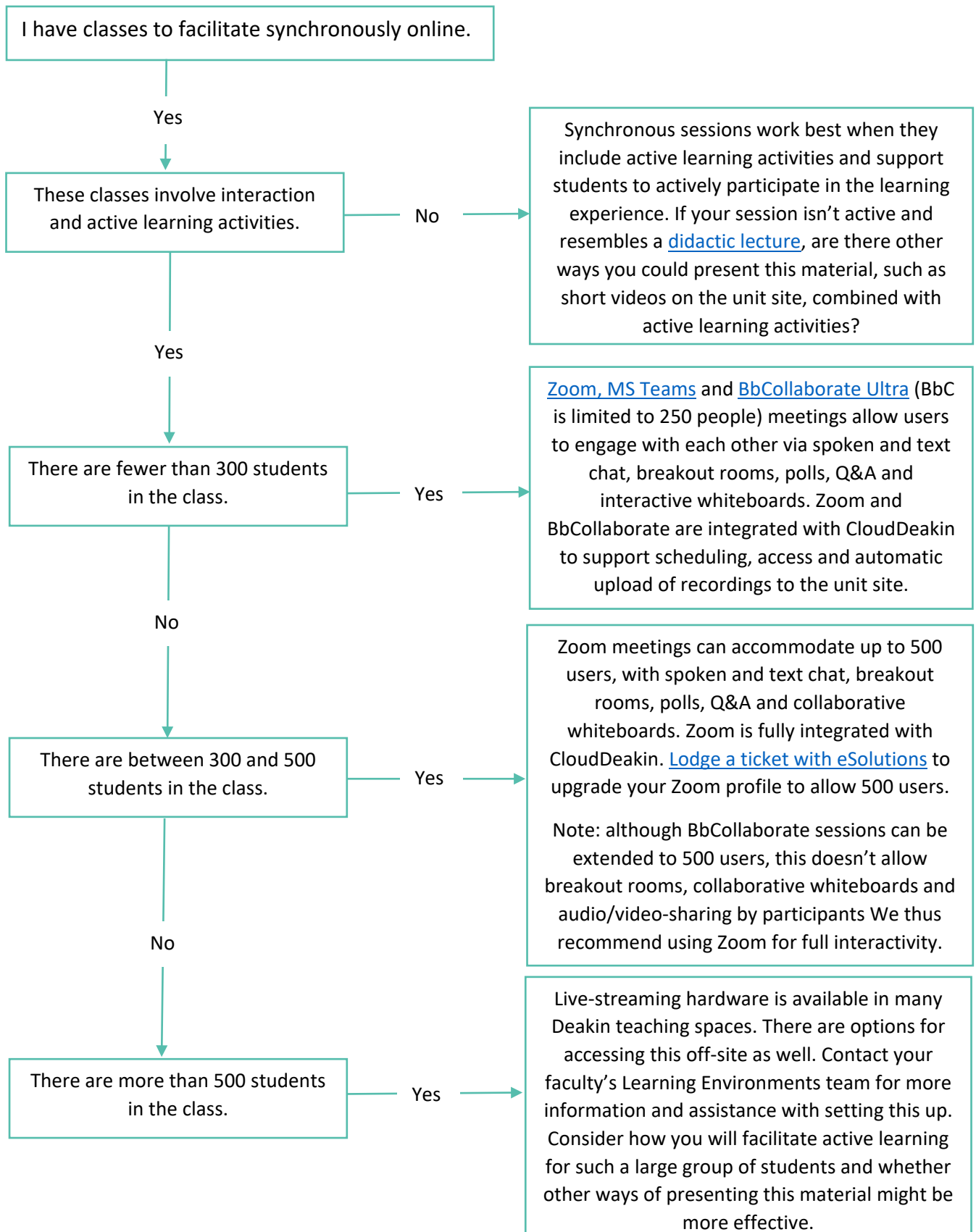


Teaching large classes online

Some teaching is moving back to campus but many classes are staying online for now. In this guide, we explore the platforms available for online classes (including Zoom, MS Teams, BbCollaborate Ultra and on-campus teaching spaces), and how you can make those learning experiences as interactive and engaging as possible.



Making large classes active

Including interactive activities in your classes helps to engage students in active learning, and can create a more effective, engaging learning experience. Here are some strategies for creating interaction in your online classes.

Identifying key ideas

When introducing a new concept or idea, help students remember important information by asking them to identify key points. For example, 'What are the three key elements of a defamation action?' or 'What are three methods astronomers might use to identify new planets?' You can use [Mentimeter](#) or [Padlet](#) (or the **interactive whiteboard** in [Zoom](#), [MS Teams](#) and [BbCollaborate Ultra](#) sessions) for students to add their responses.

Checking prior knowledge

At the start of your class, ask students to use the whiteboard in Zoom, MS Teams or BbCollaborate, or Mentimeter to list the things they already know about that day's topic. This can help establish a foundation for the new information and help students make connections with what they already know. It can also help you surface and correct misconceptions.

Discussing concepts, sharing ideas and solving problems

Think-pair-share activities and small-group discussions are great ways to get students thinking and talking about the concepts you are teaching. Splitting students into pairs or small groups (3 – 5) ensures that all students can contribute to the discussion and creates a less intimidating environment for students to voice their ideas. In [Zoom](#), [MS Teams](#) and [BbCollaborate Ultra](#), you can use **breakout rooms** to create small groups or use the whiteboard for students to collaborate. In live-streamed sessions, use tools like Mentimeter or Padlet for students to anonymously share ideas – in Padlet, students can also engage in discussion by commenting on each other's posts.

Checking student understanding

Including questions and 'pulse-check' moments throughout the class can help you check student understanding of key concepts and identify areas that might need further clarification. Asking questions about unfamiliar concepts, and asking students to make a prediction about content they are about to learn, has been shown to promote engagement and learning, even if students don't get the right answer straightaway¹.

Fielding student questions

In large groups, students can be reluctant to turn on their mic to ask a question – and it can be easy to lose track of questions in the chat panel. Using Mentimeter's Q&A function or Padlet allows students to submit their questions (anonymously if you prefer) and 'up-vote' other students' questions, so you can easily keep track of the most common questions. In Padlet, students can then add the answer to the question, creating a useful reference document.

¹ Lang, J.M. (2016) *Small Teaching*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco

This guide draws upon '[Active learning strategies for large classes and seminars](#)' available on the Health Innovative Learning and Teaching Network (HILTIN) site.

For assistance, contact your faculty Teaching and Learning team.

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