

## **Guidance for higher education institutions: Online review meetings**

1 This document is intended to provide an outline of how you can join the online meetings that will be conducted as part of the QAA review of your institution, to answer frequently asked questions and to share our top tips. This document should be shared with any staff, students or other stakeholders at the institution that have been invited to attend an online meeting with the QAA review team.

2 All online meetings held during a review will be hosted by QAA and conducted through a QAA-approved and supported platform (normally Microsoft Teams or Zoom). Any request from the institution to use an alternative platform will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. It is appreciated if institutions take appropriate steps to ensure that their participants are conversant with the software ahead of the review. Institutions are encouraged to arrange a briefing session for staff and students to help with this.

3 When using Teams or Zoom it is advised that all participants access the meeting separately through an individual laptop/PC to ensure adequate sound quality for all involved. 'Hybrid' meetings (whereby multiple people in a room contribute to an online meeting through a single laptop/PC/multimedia device) will only be accommodated if the provider has specific teleconferencing hardware and/or software to guarantee that all participants can both hear the proceedings, and be heard by others. Where hybrid meetings are unavoidable, the QAA Officer will wish to test the reliability and quality of this approach with you in advance of the scheduled meeting.

### **Meetings during a review**

4 Meetings that the review team hold with staff, students and/or other stakeholders are a formal part of the review of a higher education institution. These provide an opportunity for the review team to engage in discussion and, therefore, it is important that everyone in the meeting has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

5 The programme for the review will have been discussed and agreed between the review team and the institution under review. QAA will have sent your institutional contact/facilitator details of the names and/or roles of people that they wish to meet during the review. The institutional contact is responsible for ensuring that the team's requirements are met, forwarding on the meeting invitation details and providing a list of names to the QAA Officer in advance of the visit.

6 Details of QAA reviews and the roles of reviewers within teams are provided in Annex 2 below.

### **How to join the meeting**

7 You will normally receive an email from the institutional facilitator inviting you to 'join' an online meeting in the form of a calendar invitation. We ask that you do not share the event calendar invitation with anyone else.

8 At the time of your meeting, click on the 'Join the online meeting' link to access the meeting. The link can be found in the email inviting you to the meeting or by clicking on the meeting shown in your Outlook calendar. Please join the meeting using your full name to ensure that you are easily identifiable to all meeting participants.

## **Meeting conduct**

9 Participants will be invited to arrive five minutes before the official start of the meeting; this will give you time to check your access and connection. Check your settings to ensure that your video is turned on and your microphone is muted before you press on the 'Join now' button. Please ensure that you join the meeting on time. When you click to join the meeting, you will be placed in a virtual 'lobby area' and will be admitted for the start of the meeting. Please ensure that other electronic devices (such as your phone) are kept away from your microphone as these may result in interference.

10 When you join the meeting, please ensure that your video is enabled. There could be up to 20 people joining the meeting and it would be useful from the review team's perspective to be able to see everyone onscreen if possible. If you are experiencing bandwidth issues, the review team may ask that you turn your video off. If, for whatever reason, you unexpectedly leave the meeting, you can re-enter using the 'join the online meeting' link in the email invitation. If this happens, please ensure that your video is still turned on and your microphone is still muted.

11 A member of the review team will chair each meeting and members of the team will take it in turn to ask questions of the group. In general, the review team will direct questions to specific individuals to answer but we ask that you use the 'Raise your hand' function to indicate if you wish to answer the question. This will notify the Chair, who will invite you to speak if required. When answering, please remember to unmute your microphone and mute it again when you have finished speaking.

12 Meetings will not be recorded using the 'record' function available through the online platform. As with all QAA review meetings, a member of the panel will take notes during the meeting. Everything discussed in the meetings will be anonymised and will not be attributed to an individual in subsequent reporting.

13 The 'chat' function should only be used for issues relating to meeting management (for example, notifying the team of poor internet connection, audio issues or an intention to speak) rather than for posting answers to the questions raised. All answers to the questions posed by the team should be made verbally so these can be captured in the formal note of the meeting.

14 It is best to wait for a natural pause in the conversation before speaking to avoid cutting across anyone already talking. The Chair will monitor this and, where necessary, may have to request that people take turns to speak.

15 For reviews in Wales, the Welsh Language Commissioner has confirmed that the Welsh Language Standards still apply in the online and virtual environment. Zoom is currently the most effective platform for simultaneous translation. If simultaneous translation is required, please contact your QAA Officer as soon as possible in order that we can arrange a translator and book the Zoom license. For guidance on holding a bilingual online meeting, please see the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidance on [Holding bilingual video meetings](#).

16 Further information on using Teams and Zoom is provided in Annex 1 below.

## Annex 1: Top tips

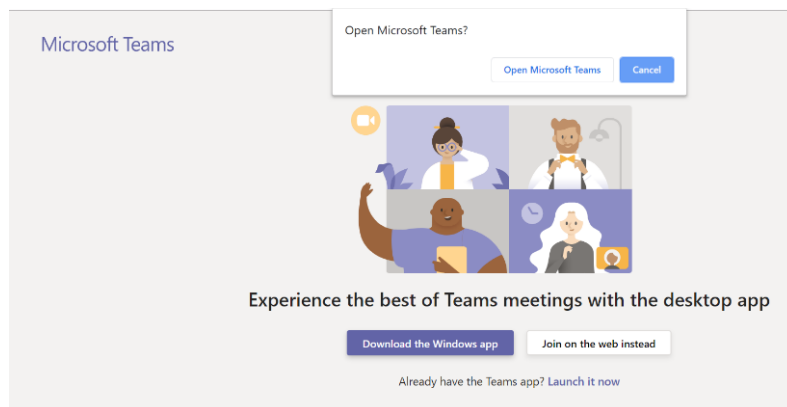
If possible, we recommend that you use a headset as this will often provide you with clearer audio than the built-in speakers of your laptop or PC.

A basic broadband connection should be sufficient to engage with Teams and Zoom. If your wi-fi connection is not always stable, you may wish to use an ethernet cable to plug your computer directly into the router.

See below for guidance on using Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

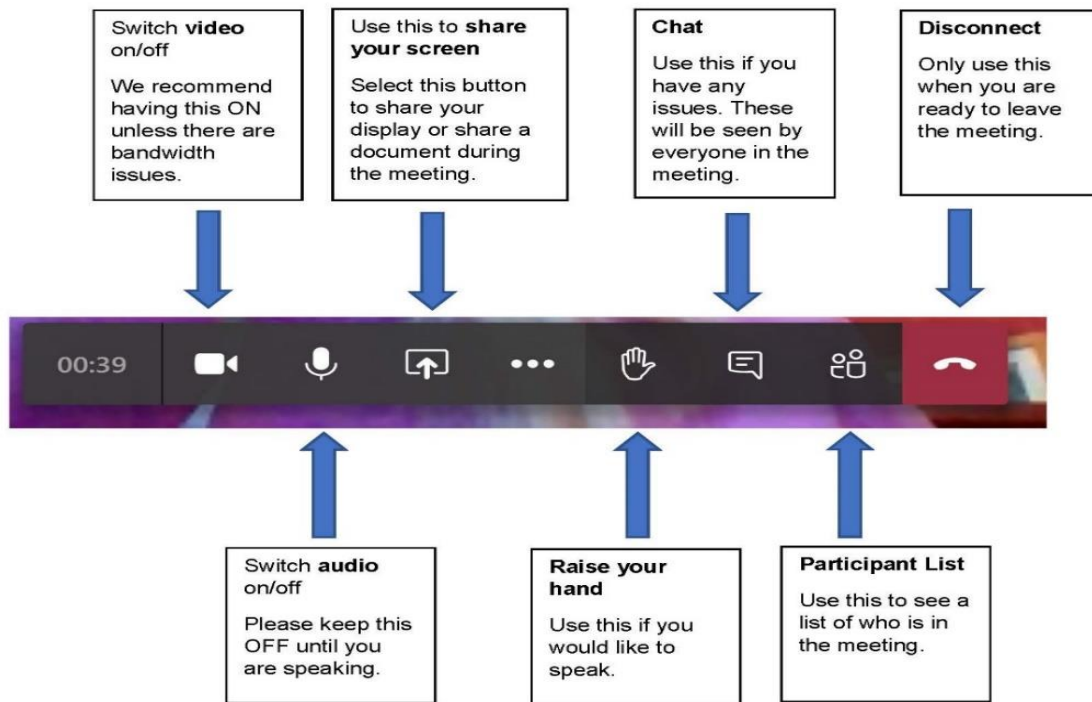
### Microsoft Teams

If possible, use the downloaded desktop app version of Teams rather than the web app version in your browser: we have found that this is a more stable platform. If you do not have the Microsoft Teams app installed on your desktop, phone or tablet, you can join the meeting through the online version of Microsoft Teams by clicking on the link that will appear after you have accepted the meeting invitation. We would recommend using the Microsoft Edge browser to access Teams, as other browsers are not fully supported. This will take you to the Teams page (see below) where you will be asked whether you want to open Teams.



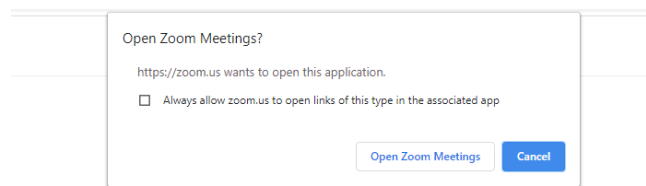
- If you would like to know more about using MS Teams, there are helpful videos at: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/microsoft-teams-video-training-4f108e54-240b-4351-8084-b1089f0d21d7>
- Specifically, about joining meetings: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/join-a-teams-meeting-078e9868-f1aa-4414-8bb9-ee88e9236ee4>

Here is a diagram of the settings available to you during Teams meetings:



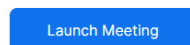
## Zoom

If possible, use the downloaded desktop app version of Zoom rather than the web app version in your browser - we have found that this is a more stable platform. If you do not have the Zoom app installed on your desktop, phone or tablet, you can join the meeting through the online version of Zoom by clicking on the link that will appear after you have accepted the meeting invitation. Zoom should work well on any modern web browser such as Chrome, Safari or Microsoft Edge. This will take you to the Zoom page (see below) where you will be asked whether you want to open Zoom.



Click **Open Zoom Meetings** on the dialog shown by your browser

If you don't see a dialog, click **Launch Meeting** below.



Don't have Zoom Client installed? [Download Now](#)

- If you would like to know more about using Zoom, there are helpful short tutorials and videos at: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>

- Specifically, about joining meetings:  
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-meeting>
- Specifically, about information for getting started with various different devices including laptops, pads and phones and the setting available to you during meetings:  
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697-Getting-Started>

## Annex 2: About the review team

The precise composition of the team undertaking the review is flexible to address the nature of the institution and the scope of the review. Reviewers are senior members of staff or experienced students who have experience of quality matters at an institutional level.

All reviewers have responsibility for:

- reading and analysing the documentation the provider has submitted
- participating in the review visits
- reaching conclusions on the basis of the information gathered during the review
- contributing to and commenting on the review reports.

Some reviews include a **student reviewer** who brings a learner perspective to the review. Their responsibilities during the review are likely to focus on lines of enquiry relating to the institution's management of the student learning experience, including the learner journey, and student engagement.

Some reviews (for example, QESR in Scotland) have a **coordinating reviewer** as part of the team who has responsibility for maintaining an overview of the review progress and its outcomes. They have particular responsibility for proactively managing the review and the review team. The coordinating reviewer maintains an ongoing record of the team's emerging conclusions and supporting evidence. At the end of the review visit, the coordinating reviewer uses the ongoing record to support the team and the QAA Officer in preparing an outline draft of the report.

Some reviews include an **international reviewer** who can bring an added external perspective to the team's consideration of the institution's approach to quality assurance and the enhancement of the student learning experience. International reviewers are expected to have a range of knowledge and experience that will benefit the institution, the review process, and the wider higher education sector, including comparative international knowledge and experience. International reviewers are senior peers, selected from appropriate higher education institutions or related agencies. Their selection to a review team for the review of any particular institution is informed by their expertise and experience, with the aim of achieving a suitable match to the strategic approach and enhancement priorities of the institution.

Each review is managed by a senior **QAA officer**, who provides advice to the institution on its preparations for the review and supports the review team in its initial analysis of documentation. The QAA officer accompanies the team during part, or all, of the team's visits to the institution, providing advice as appropriate. The QAA officer is responsible for testing that the review team's findings are based on adequate and identifiable evidence, and for editing the reports.

### Further resources

More information on the methods undertaken by review teams are available on the [QAA website](#).

Reviewer Management Group, April 2022

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