

GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE USE OF VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

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INDEX

1. Introduction
2. Virtual communication platforms
3. Our personal experience
4. Good practices
5. Lessons learnt
6. Questions
7. Practical task

1. Introduction

Virtual communication platforms are employed as a way to attend or organise meetings when they cannot be held in person. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic problem, it became a necessity to use them to communicate with co-workers or to share information or knowledge.

In this presentation, we will mention some of the platforms available and, among those, we will compare the ones that we have used at the Institutional Project Management Office (OGPI). We will also share our experience with those platforms and give advice on how to avoid technical issues.

2. Virtual communication platforms

There are many virtual communication platforms available on the Internet. Some of them can only be used to communicate with people; others are used for online meetings and/or webinars, and there are even some of them integrated in a workspace that serves a bigger purpose. In this presentation we will focus on these six platforms used for online meetings and/or webinars.

01

Adobe Connect

02

Google Meet

03

Zoom

04

Livestorm

05

MS Teams

06

Cisco Webex

2. Virtual communication platforms

In the following two tables we will see a list of features that we considered important and whether or not they are present in each of the 5 platforms.

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Browser based zero install	NO	Desktop only	NO	YES	Desktop only	YES
Register participants	Additional subscription	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
720p	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
On-demand webinar recording auto published	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
Draw on screen	YES	NO	YES	Whiteboard only	NO	YES
Recording Feature	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES

Table 1: virtual platforms' features (1)

2. Virtual communication platforms

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Raise Hand	YES	Additional browser extension	YES	NO	YES	YES
Reporting	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Q&A and Polling	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Store unlimited number of past meeting/webinars	NO	NO	Enterprise license only	YES	NO	NO
Integration with 3rd party apps	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Breakout Rooms	NO	NO	YES	Can be emulated with Livestorm Meet	NO	YES

Table 2: virtual platforms' features (2)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.1 Browser based zero install

Web-based software is the one you use on the internet via web browser. It means that you don't need to install anything, download any software, or worry about upgrades.

Join your meeting

When you receive an email invitation to a meeting, event or training session, it looks something like the image on the right.

When joining from Windows or Mac, a new browser window opens, prompting you to launch the desktop app or the web app. If you're using Linux or Chrome OS, the web app opens directly after you click on "Join meeting".

If you have any problem with the app, you can always join from your browser.

Catherine Sinu invites you to join this Webex meeting.

Monday, November 30, 2020
10:30 am | (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada) | 30 mins

[Join meeting](#)

More ways to join:

Join from the meeting link
<https://example.webex.com/example/eg.php?MTID=m475eadb9eb9ebc48f669>

Join by meeting number
Meeting number (access code): 555 345 231
Meeting password: aQ34ijkC (55512345 from phones and video systems)

Tap to join from a mobile device (attendees only)
+1-555-123-12342,,*01*632819374##*01* (US Toll)
+1-555-123-1342,,*01*632819374##*01* (US Toll Free)
Some mobile devices may ask attendees to enter a numeric meeting password.

Join by phone
+1-555-668-0000 (US Toll)
+1-555-655-4488 (US Toll Free)
[Global call-in numbers](#) | [Toll free calling restrictions](#)

Join by video system, application or Skype for business
Dial 555043049@example.webex.com
You can also dial 173.243.2.69 and enter the meeting number.

Need help? Go to <https://help.webex.com>

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.1 Browser based zero install

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Browser based zero install	NO	Desktop only	NO	YES	Desktop only	YES
Register participants	Additional subscription	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
720p	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
On-demand webinar recording auto published	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
Draw on screen	YES	NO	YES	Whiteboard only	NO	YES
Recording Feature	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES

Table 1: virtual platforms' features (1)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.2 Register participants

Scheduling a meeting that requires registration will require participants to register with their e-mail, name, and other optional questions, allowing you to capture more information about your attendees. If you don't need to collect this much information, you can schedule a meeting without a registration form.

Accepting registration requests

You can automatically accept all registration requests or approve them as a participant before they can gain access to the meeting.

Manage registration

Once your meeting is scheduled, you can manage your registrants, resend confirmation emails, and generate meeting registration reports.

Registration: ☐ None

☒ Require attendee registration ⓘ

Obtain detailed attendee information:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> First Name	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Last Name
<input type="checkbox"/> Job Title	<input type="checkbox"/> Company Name	<input type="checkbox"/> Address 1
<input type="checkbox"/> Address 2	<input type="checkbox"/> City	<input type="checkbox"/> State
<input type="checkbox"/> ZIP/Postal Code	<input type="checkbox"/> Country/region	<input type="checkbox"/> Office Phone
<input type="checkbox"/> Fax		
<input type="checkbox"/> Automatically accept all registration requests		

Note: Meeting attendance is not limited only to registered attendees. Attendees may forward meeting invitations to others, or may join using a name or email address that does not match their registration information.

[Save as template](#)

[Schedule Meeting](#) [Back](#) [Next](#) [Cancel](#)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.2 Register participants

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Browser based	NO	Desktop only	NO	YES	Desktop only	Desktop only
Register participants	Additional subscription	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
720p	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
On-demand webinar recording auto published	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
Draw on screen	YES	NO	YES	Whiteboard only	NO	YES
Recording Feature	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES

Table 1: virtual platforms' features (1)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.3 Video resolution. 720p

When you make a call or enter a meeting room, video resolution adjusts as the network bandwidth changes. The environment affects the resolution, but you get the best quality possible from the current network conditions.

Supported video definition

The video resolution varies depending on the type of device that you use. Normally, desktop apps support 720p high definition video calls on Mac, Windows, Android, and some iPhone and iPad devices.

In web apps and other OS devices, 360p is the standard definition for video calls.



2. Virtual communication platforms

2.3 Video resolution. 720p

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Browser based zero install	NO	Desktop only	NO	YES	Desktop only	Desktop only
Register participants	Additional subscription	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
720p	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
webinar recording auto published	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
Draw on screen	YES	NO	YES	Whiteboard only	NO	YES
Recording Feature	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES

Table 1: virtual platforms' features (1)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.4 On-demand webinar recording auto published

On-demand webinars allow you to schedule a webinar and to record the session automatically and store it in the cloud.

After the webinar is ended, registration will stay open and anyone who registers will receive a link to the cloud recording. The host will receive registration information, for both live attendees and others who register, to watch it later.

The webinar has ended
Register to watch this recording on-demand


[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [e](#)

Topic	New User Training
Recording Duration	00:07:00
Webinar Start Time	Mar 30, 2018 6:45 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

First Name*	Last Name*
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Email Address*	Confirm Email Address*
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

* Required information

☐ I'm not a robot


reCAPTCHA
Privacy - Terms

Register

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.4 On-demand webinar recording auto published

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Browser based zero install	NO	Desktop only	NO	YES	Desktop only	Desktop only
Register participants	Additional subscription	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
720p	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
On-demand webinar recording auto published	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
Draw on screen	YES	NO	YES	Whiteboard only	NO	YES
Recording Feature	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES

Table 1: virtual platforms' features (1)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.5 Draw on screen

You can share annotated content from your device to keep everyone in a meeting informed and engaged during a meeting.

- Share applications and the whole screen.
- Limit who can share content.
- Annotate your shared screen.
- Share a whiteboard.

When you annotate a shared screen or whiteboard, the following annotation tools are available:

- Draw annotations in different brush thicknesses and colors.
- Insert text in different colors.
- Erase any annotations.
- Draw attention to part of the screen by placing an arrow on it or drawing borders around it.
- Other features.



2. Virtual communication platforms

2.5 Draw on screen

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Browser based zero install	NO	Desktop only	NO	YES	Desktop only	Desktop only
Register participants	Additional subscription	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
720p	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
On-demand webinar recording auto published	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
Draw on screen	YES	NO	YES	Whiteboard only	NO	YES
Recording Feature	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES

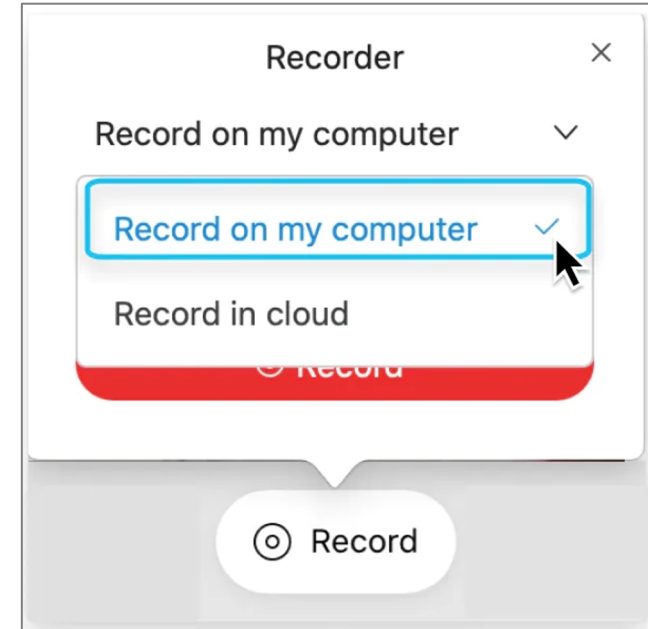
Table 1: virtual platforms' features (1)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.6 Recording feature

With this feature you can record meetings for people who can't attend or for those who want to refer back to what was discussed. Your recordings can either be saved to the cloud or your computer as a local recording.

By default, your recordings include the participant audio, video, and anything that's shared during the meeting. You can select the screen layout for your recordings so they fit the format and content of your meeting or event.



2. Virtual communication platforms

2.6 Recording feature

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Browser based zero install	NO	Desktop only	NO	YES	Desktop only	Desktop only
Register participants	Additional subscription	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
720p	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
On-demand webinar recording auto published	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	NO	YES
Draw on screen	YES	NO	YES	Whiteboard only	NO	YES
Recording Feature	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES

Table 1: Virtual platforms' features (1)

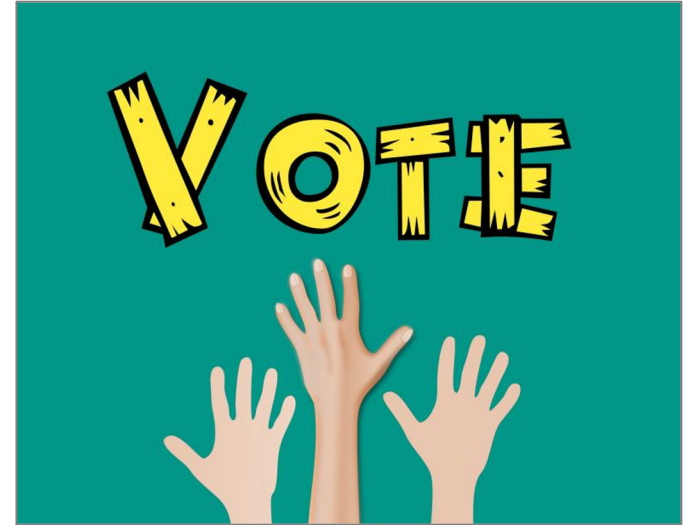
2. Virtual communication platforms

2.7 Raise hand

Sometimes the host of the meeting will ask participants to “Raise their hand” to take the floor, indicate their preferences or feedback on a question.

As a host, it may be helpful to inform your participants how you would like to use this feature at the start of the webinar.

For example, many webinar hosts use this feature to know if an attendee has a question and would like to be unmuted to speak.



2. Virtual communication platforms

2.7 Raise hand

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Raise Hand	YES	Additional browser extension	YES	NO	YES	YES
Reporting	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Q&A and Polling	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Store unlimited number of past meeting/webinars	NO	NO	Enterprise license only	YES	NO	NO
Integration with 3rd party apps	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Breakout Rooms	NO	NO	YES	Can be emulated with Livestorm Meet	NO	YES

Table 2: virtual platforms' features (2)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.8 Reporting

Hosts can easily view usage across all the meetings they schedule and run, such as attendance, duration and more including:

- **Registration:** Displays a list of registrants and their registration details.
- **Attendee:** Displays details about each attendee, such as when they joined, when they left and their total time in session. If registration is enabled, attendee's report will indicate if registrants attended or not.
- **Performance:** Displays engagement statistics on registration, attendance and feedback.
- **Q&A:** Displays questions and answers inside the webinar.
- **Polling:** Displays each attendee's poll results.
- **Survey:** Displays responses given to the post-webinar survey.



These reports can be exported for further analysis.

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.8 Reporting

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Raise Hand	YES	Additional browser plugin	YES	NO	YES	YES
Reporting	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Q&A and Polling	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Store unlimited number of past meeting/webinars	NO	NO	Enterprise license only	YES	NO	NO
Integration with 3rd party apps	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Breakout Rooms	NO	NO	YES	Can be emulated with Livestorm Meet	NO	YES

Table 2: virtual platforms' features (2)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.8 Q&A and Polling

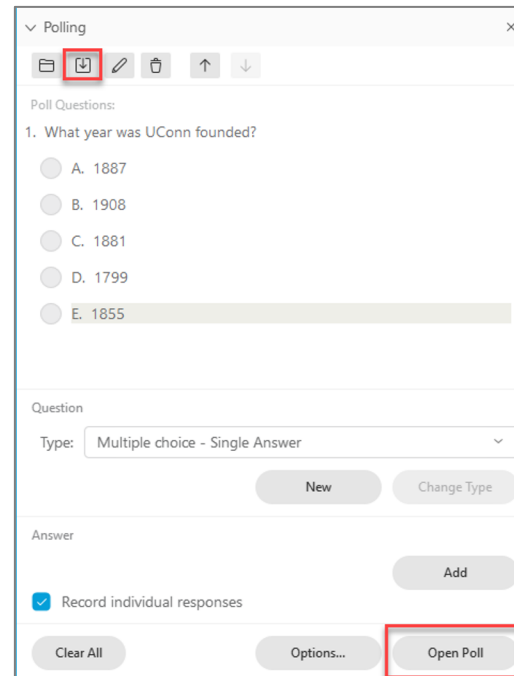
Questions and Answers

The question & answer (Q&A) feature for webinars allows attendees to ask questions during the webinar session and presenters, co-hosts, and host to answer their questions.

- **Ask questions:** As a meeting attendee, you can ask questions to the host, co-hosts, and presenters. Questions and Answers are automatically sorted.
- **Moderate questions:** As a host, co-host, or presenter, you can moderate questions by assigning, prioritizing, deferring, or dismissing them.

Polling

As a presenter, you can use a poll to create and share questionnaires. Polls can be useful for gathering feedback, taking votes, or testing knowledge.



The screenshot displays a 'Polling' window with a toolbar at the top containing icons for folder, poll, edit, delete, up, and down. The main section is titled 'Poll Questions:' and contains a single question: '1. What year was UConn founded?'. Below the question are five radio button options: A. 1887, B. 1908, C. 1881, D. 1799, and E. 1855. Option E is currently selected. Below the options is a 'Question' section with a dropdown menu set to 'Multiple choice - Single Answer', and buttons for 'New' and 'Change Type'. Underneath is an 'Answer' section with an 'Add' button. At the bottom, there is a checkbox for 'Record individual responses' which is checked, and three buttons: 'Clear All', 'Options...', and 'Open Poll'.

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.8 Q&A and Polling

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Raise Hand	YES	Additional browser extension	YES	NO	YES	YES
Reporting	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Q&A and Polling	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Store unlimited number of past meeting/webinars	NO	NO	Enterprise license only	YES	NO	NO
Integration with 3rd party apps	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Breakout Rooms	NO	NO	YES	Can be emulated with Livestorm Meet	NO	YES

Table 2: virtual platforms' features (2)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.9 Store unlimited number of past meeting/webinars

The main dashboard for some online conference platforms allows you to view current live meetings or webinars, as well as past meetings or webinars being held.

Past meetings and webinars can be exported.



2. Virtual communication platforms

2.9 Store unlimited number of past meeting/webinars

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Raise Hand	YES	Additional browser extension	YES	NO	YES	YES
Reporting	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Q&A and Polling	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Store unlimited number of past meeting/webinars	NO	NO	Enterprise license only	YES	NO	NO
Integration with 3rd party apps	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Breakout Rooms	NO	NO	YES	Can be emulated with Livestorm Meet	NO	YES

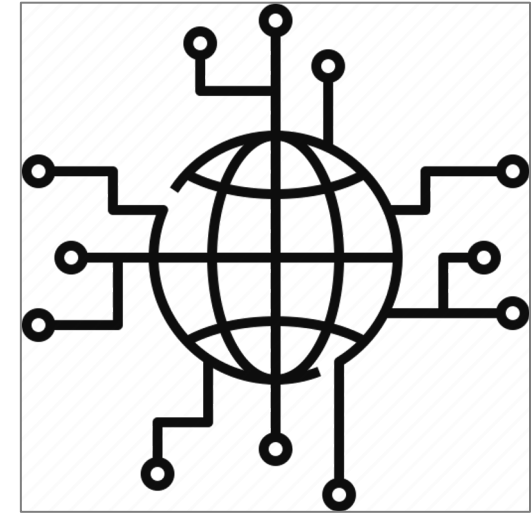
Table 2: virtual platforms' features (2)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.10 Integration with 3rd party apps

A third-party app is an application created by a developer that isn't the manufacturer of the device the app runs on or the owner of the website that offers it.

Third-party apps let you connect your platform to thousands of other web services and enrich platform's value proposal by providing smart connections with relevant software in the industry.



2. Virtual communication platforms

2.10 Integration with 3rd party apps

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Raise Hand	YES	Additional browser extension	YES	NO	YES	YES
Reporting	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Q&A and Polling	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Store unlimited number of past meeting/webinars	NO	NO	Enterprise license only	YES	NO	NO
Integration with 3rd party apps	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Breakout Rooms	NO	NO	YES	Can be emulated with Livestorm Meet	NO	YES

Table 2: virtual platforms' features (2)

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.11 Breakout Rooms

Breakout rooms are sessions that are split off from the main meeting. They allow the participants to meet in smaller groups, and they are completely isolated in terms of audio and video from the main session.

Breakout rooms can be used for collaboration and discussion of the meeting.

As a host	As a participant
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Pre-assign participants to breakout sessions● Allow anyone to join breakout sessions● Move or exchange attendees in breakout sessions● Remove a participant from a breakout session● Ask all participants to return to the main meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Join or leave a breakout session● Share content during a breakout session● Ask for help during a breakout session● Raise your hand during a breakout session

2. Virtual communication platforms

2.11 Breakout Rooms

	Adobe Connect	Google Meet	Zoom	Livestorm	MS Teams	Cisco Webex
Raise Hand	YES	Additional browser extension	YES	NO	YES	YES
Reporting	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Q&A and Polling	YES	NO	Additional paid plugin	YES	YES	YES
Store unlimited number of past meeting/webinars	NO	NO	Enterprise license only	YES	NO	NO
Integration with	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Breakout Rooms	NO	NO	YES	Can be emulated with Livestorm Meet	NO	YES

Table 2. Virtual platforms features (2)

3. Our personal experience

In our job, we have used all of the aforementioned platforms at least once, although we have more experience with three of them: Livestorm, Google Meet and Webex. In the past, we also used Adobe Connect, but we decided to switch to other platforms with more features.

Until some months ago, we were using Livestorm (with Google Meet support) when we wanted to do online meetings or webinars but, in the end, we were forced to switch to another platform because our necessities changed. We had yet to decide to which one, so we compared the features of some of them and concluded that the one that better suited our needs was Webex for the following reasons:

3. Our personal experience

- Cisco Webex is an advanced webinar creation and management tool.
- It has 3 different types of webinars: Webex Meetings, Webex Events and Webex Trainings
- It is possible to create a registration form to control participants' access to the webinar. This is a very good way to control attendance.
- It possess advanced statistics tools that are very useful when making project reports.
- It allows the recording and replay of sessions.
- It is a secure platform.
- It has a good and fast customer support service.

3. Our personal experience

Nowadays, we are also evaluating Zoom. It is quite similar to Webex in many things like the possibility to manage attendees' registration or advanced statistics. However, there are also some differences:

- Zoom is the most popular virtual communication platform. Therefore, Most of our partners are more familiar with this platform than with any other.
- It works perfectly in some countries that don't have good internet connections.
- Added plugins give more versatility to created webinars, although it increases the monthly fee.

4. Good practices

- Always check if your microphone and speakers (or headphones) are plugged-in and switched on.
- Schedule a connectivity test some hours or days before starting a meeting to check that everything is working properly. Most virtual communication platforms have their own connectivity testing tools, so you can use those.
- If possible, always use the same room and devices as the ones employed on the connectivity test to avoid problems.
- Don't forget to read all platform's documentation to know everything that it has to offer.
- All communication platforms have their advantages and disadvantages, so be open and stay positive when testing one for the first time before deciding if you like it or not.
- If you have any problem, read the troubleshooting guide if available.

5. Lessons learnt

- There is no perfect platform.
- You should choose the platform (and license) that better suits your needs.
- If your necessities change, don't hesitate to switch to another platform if you need so.
- It takes some time to get used to a new platform, so it's important to be patient.
- Customer support centres are very useful, don't forget to use them if you need help.

6. Questions



7. Practical task

Session 2: Practical training (09/12/2021)

- Have you noticed an increase in the use of virtual communication platforms since the arrival of COVID-19 at your institution?
- What virtual communication platforms have you used and why?
- What changes have you experienced in your daily work?

Note: 3-5 slides max.

Thank you!

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