

Small-Group Work in Teams

How can Teams support small group work?

You can use Teams to facilitate students working in small groups. Following these instructions will enable you to alternate between whole-class delivery and multiple small group activities, and move between groups to further facilitate learning.

Before the session

Prior to the session, undertake the following steps to prepare:

1. **Students must use their NTU login to access Teams:** if students use personal or employer accounts, they will not be able to access the session invitation.
 - a) It is advisable to display this guidance in a prominent position in the module learning room, along with step-by-step instructions on how you want them to use Teams and engage with small group work.
2. **Create the Team:** if you do not have one set up already, [create the Team for the class](#).
3. **Create the channels:** by default, there will be a single General channel. In addition to this, set up several channels for group work. The number of channels you create should match the number of groups you wish students to split in to. For example, if you have a class of 12, and you want to split them into four groups, create four channels. Give a clear, distinguishable name for each (e.g. Group A, Group B). Ensure that when you create these channels, none are set to private. This means that you can make last-minute adjustments to grouping decisions and students can quickly move if necessary.
4. **Set up the meeting for the whole class:** in the General channel, [set up a Teams meeting using Outlook](#) or [directly in Teams](#) for the duration of the class session.
5. **Decide on your approach to the grouping:** it may be wise to decide on groups before the session. You can display the group list in the session when you have the attention of the whole group. Students will then know which

channel to go to when you direct them to. When you display the list, in each group, clearly nominate a leader. This will be important later. The alternative is to decide on groups in a session; with very small groups this might be possible, but could also lead to confusion.

During the session

1. **Start your Teams session:** students will join as a group. Run your lecture and activities as a group, until you are ready to break out into smaller groups.
2. **When you are ready to split into small groups:** you must prepare students with the following before splitting the group:
 - a) **Group organisation and leadership:** show the list of groups and point out that the leader needs to take note of their additional responsibility. They are responsible for starting the meeting in their channel. If you notice that a leader is absent, nominate someone else from the group. This is why it is better to plan in advance, rather than arrange on the spot; however, if you have a small group, you may be able to decide in the moment.
 - b) **Make it clear when and how to return to the whole group** before students split into groups: give a timing (e.g. 10 minutes) or agree a time (e.g. 9:30 am). Repeat this several times, and post it so that it is clear for all. When returning, students navigate to their Teams calendars and click **Join** on the meeting arranged by the teacher.
 - c) **Provide students with guidance on how to start a meeting:** students can either use the [Meet Now](#) function or [create a calendar invitation](#) for their group to meet. **If students get this bit wrong, they could struggle to start a meeting, and you may not be aware of it for some time**, so each group's leader must understand this. You may decide to share this before the session instead.
3. **Facilitate the activity:** when you are confident students are fully prepared, ask them to leave the group call and move to small groups. It may be wise to wait 5 minutes before working with any of the groups so that you are free for students who get stuck to call you. After this, you can then visit each group to facilitate learning further.

4. **Continue to alternate for the remainder of the session:** you can continue the session alternating between the whole group and smaller groups. If there is more than one teacher, someone could stay in the main chat to answer questions and provide support while others circulate the small groups to facilitate learning.

Important considerations

Students may struggle with this initially and require time for support. Try to account for this in your planning for the first few sessions. Once they grow used to the structure, they will need little input from you to make this work.

Try to **record** the whole group delivery where possible, so that students who are not able to engage synchronously can catch up after. Remember to warn students you'll be recording the session and add a link to the recording in your learning room – see our guidance on Adding recorded Teams sessions to NOW.