# ITL Live Session Planning Guide and Template

2021 ITL Live Session Presenters,

We look forward to your presentation at this year's conference! For general information about the conference schedule, registration, submitting supplementary materials, or specific details by session type, please visit the ITL [For Presenters](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/annual-conference-itl/presenter-information/) page.

In this document you will find:

* The general session format for all live sessions
* A session planning worksheet
* Additional tips and resources for using Zoom
* Useful links to other resources

# General Session Format

Participants will access the Zoom session by clicking on a passcode embedded link in Sched, the Conference App, that they must log into to access. Presenters will receive an email invitation to the Zoom session with a passcode embedded link, but can also join via the participant link. For security and connection quality, live sessions will have these default Zoom settings:

* Waitroom enabled
* Mics/video muted upon entry
* Chatbox viewable to all attendees, with 1:1 private messaging disabled
* Participants not able to share screens

In order to create a unified feel to the conference, live sessions will have the same general format:

Set up time (20-30 minutes before session start time):

1. A Stearns Center tech host starts the session 20-30 minutes prior to allow presenters to test technology. Tech host is available to help with any Zoom questions. Session host arrives 15 minutes prior and shares ITL conference welcome slides. ITS is available to help with any connection issues.
2. Participants arrive in waiting room. Tech host lets them into the session 5 minutes before start, ensures mics muted, monitors chatbox for tech Q’s, etc.

Session time:

1. (allow 5 minutes) Session host welcomes participants, gives a few conference-related announcements, explains the format of the session, and introduces presenters.
2. (full 40 or 90 minute time) Presenters run session
   1. Session host monitors chat box for content-related questions, assists with breakout groups, and gives presenters time checks if desired
   2. Tech host monitors chat box for tech Q’s and lets in late attendees
3. (allow 2-3 minutes) Session host shares ITL conference session conclusion slides, thanks presenters, posts evaluation and Twitter links, announces what’s next in conference schedule, and how to contact presenters after the session.

E**ach session will have at least one person representing the Stearns Center to** provide support, conference coherence, and ensure that the technical logistics of the session are managed so that you and your team can focus on your session content and interacting with your participants:

1. Session Host-This person serves as the session facilitator and is comfortable talking about teaching and learning topics. They will introduce you and your session—situating your session content in the broader conversations in teaching/learning research, teaching at Mason, and in higher education generally. They are there to create a cohesive feel across conference sessions and provide some general conference session support for presenters (e.g., monitoring time, fielding/directing chatbox questions to presenters).
2. Tech Host (possibly the same person as your Session Host)-This person serves as tech support for the session and is familiar with the many features and tools of Zoom. They are there to manage all the participant logistics (moving participants from the waitroom to the session, ensuring mics are muted, assisting participants who are having technical issues, removing disruptive participants, etc.), so you can focus on your session content and engaging with participants.

# Session Planning Worksheet

**Part 1: Conference Goals**

A teaching conference like ITL might be different from your typical disciplinary conference. When planning your session, please consider these wider conference goals:

* Engage participants in:
  + Fostering & building Mason’s teaching community
  + Innovating and experimenting with new teaching ideas/tools
  + Applying presenter’s ideas to cross-disciplinary contexts
* Give attendees concrete ideas and tips to take into their classroom next week
* Share all the cool things our instructors are doing in the classroom

Key Questions:

* How can you structure your session in order to engage participants and build community?
* How can you help attendees apply your ideas to their own unique, cross-disciplinary contexts?
* How can you make your presentation useful and relevant to a diverse audience of instructors?

**Part 2: Session goals**

Key questions:

* What is the purpose of your session?
* What is it that you want participants to know or be able to do when they leave your session (understand content, practice skills, apply ideas to new contexts, etc.)?

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| By the end of this session, participants will be able to:  *Example: List three ways students can provide peer review and explain how one way could be used in their course.* |
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**Part 3: Session Plan**

Key questions:

* How will you get attendees to meet both the conference and your session goals?
* What kinds of activities/content are best suited to help you engage your audience with your goals (to learn the content, practice the skills, or apply the content to their own contexts, etc.)?
* Will you be sharing/presenting information, asking participants to reflect/work individually, responding to participant questions/comments, or asking participants to interact with each other?
* What do you need for each activity to work in an online environment?
* How long do these types of activities really take?
* What do you want the participant output to be (if any)?

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| Time | Activity | Who is leading this part? | Resources needed | Technology Tools |
| 5 mins. | Welcome and presenter introductions | Stearns Center Session Host | * ITL Conference and Session-specific welcome slides * Twitter info in chatbox | * Share screen * Chatbox |
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# Additional Zoom Tips and Resources

[See our synchronous session tips handout]

**Tips for using the chatbox**:

* Leverage your session host’s presence—ask them to monitor the chatbox and answer or direct questions to you during session so you can focus on what you are saying.
* Ask participants at the start of session to put questions in the chatbox—this allows you to keep the flow of the session, while periodically addressing questions or comments when relevant.

**Tips for using breakout rooms**:

* Have a plan for the number of participants in your breakout groups ahead of time; 2-4 is ideal to make sure everyone gets a chance to share (and consider if you have a small or large group attend).
* Pre-decide if you want groups to be randomly assigned, assigned by you during the session, or picked by participants—there are different logistics to make each option work smoothly.
* Give directions before putting participants in breakout rooms.
* Provide a link to a shared document before putting participants in breakout rooms.
* Include breakout group activity directions at the top of the shared document (so participants can get started right away).
* Include a space for “recorder” and “presenter” at the top of the breakout group if activity involves either, so group can decide this upfront, rather than negotiate in front of the whole group later.
* Consider having a shared folder that contains shared documents so participants can easily go between items rather than clicking on many links.
* For longer breakout activities, plan to pop into groups to see if they need help. Session hosts can assist latecomers in the main room.
* Schedule/send 2-minute notice messages to breakout rooms (see Zoom tool FAQs on website) and decide in advance who in your presenter team will do this.
* Note: When you send participants into breakout groups, the silence and not being able to see what groups are doing can feel weird.
* **TECHNICAL NOTE:** Only the Zoom host can see who is in which breakout group, move individuals between groups, and send a message to the groups. Zoom cohosts will be randomly assigned if you choose the random assignment option—meaning that the Zoom host will need to manually move them if they are leading a specific breakout group or move other participants into a new group if they are paired with cohosts who are not participating in the breakout group activities.

**Tips for using polling**:

* Consider having a test question up at the start to get to know participants and to work out bugs before the heart of your content.
* Consider using an external polling tool like Poll Everywhere that allows for real time open-ended responses—give participants a short time (2-3 minutes) to respond and narrate the responses with your expert commentary as they come in.
* Conserve your session time and ask yourself if a poll question is necessary or adds significantly to the experience. Could using the ‘raise your hand’ tool or asking for a visual nod or headshake suffice?
* Be sure to share the results and connect them explicitly to the session content.
* **TECHNICAL NOTE:** Both Zoom host and Zoom co-hosts can launch the poll, but only the host can create one.

**Tips for keeping things on schedule**:

* Plan your session to the minute and practice—ask a friend to try the activity and see how long it really takes them or see how long it takes you and double it.
* Leverage your session host’s support—ask them to give you specific time cues.
* Use a timer for individual or breakout group activities and provide 2-minute warnings.
* Have groups or individuals record work in a shared document so all responses are visible, but you can be selective on any reporting out.
* Allowing participants to use their mic or share their screen can create a greater sense of community during the session, but can take additional time to transition and navigate tool use—add 5-10 minutes to each activity you plan to do this in.
* Have a shared folder or documents, including copies of any materials you plan to show by sharing your screen; that way people can easily follow along (especially if participants are calling in due to tech issues).

**Tips for an unexpectedly large group of participants**:

* Anticipate and have a backup plan for a large group.
* Don’t be intimidated! They’re there because they want to hear what you have to share on the subject, and you were selected for the program because you have something to share for the benefit of all.
* Zoom is pretty stable, but you may want to ask the tech host to turn off participant video feed.
* You can still do breakout groups—consider doing quick think-pair-share activities or use partners instead of larger breakout groups for more involved activities.
* Consider changing to poll-based activities instead of open-ended ones.
* Consider changing to individual reflection activities instead of larger working groups.

**Tips for an unexpectedly small group of participants**:

* Anticipate it and have a backup plan for a small group. Consider having a couple “extension” activities prepared in case your session runs a little too efficiently with a smaller group.

# Useful Liks

* Information for [All Presenters](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/annual-conference-itl/presenter-information/)
* Information for [Collaborative Partner Event Sessions](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/annual-conference-itl/collaborative-partner-event-sessions/)
* Information for [Stearns Center Showcase Sessions](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/annual-conference-itl/stearns-center-showcase-sessions/)
* Information for [Live Q & A Sessions](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/annual-conference-itl/on-demand-roundtable-sessions/)
* Information for [Teaching Squares Session](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/annual-conference-itl/teaching-squares-and-social-lunch-sessions/)
* Information for [Workshops, Panels, & Roundtable Sessions](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/annual-conference-itl/workshops-panels-and-roundtables/)
* ITL Conference Proceedings (link coming soon)
* ITL [Conference Schedule](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/annual-conference-itl/conference-schedule-and-proceedings/)
* ITL [Conference Registration](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/annual-conference-itl/registration/)
* ITL [FAQs Page](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/annual-conference-itl/faq/)
* Stearns Center [Zoom Resources](https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/zoom-resources/)