

A quick guide to MS Teams for students

30 September 2020 14:01

Hi Everyone,

I've been asked to put together a few notes on how we use MS Teams. This is by no means a thorough description of Teams, but will hopefully get you off to a good start. Please let me know any errors, and let me know what else you'd like to see - or send me it to include!

Before we look at Teams proper though some 'house keeping'

1) Check your audio kit

One of the biggest issues you will face with taking part in remote discussions is being heard/hearing other people. Many inbuilt microphones are bad, and some speakers - even in expensive laptops/tablets - can make even the most eloquent person sound like a Dalek.

So before you start doing lots of Team meetings check that your microphone and speakers are good enough. Most software has a test option - or ask friends to hold a quick meeting with you. Watch out for feedback and echos - i.e. if you are talking to a friend and there's a loud noise, does it keep amplifying? or do you hear your own voice coming back which is very off putting.

A cheap headset can work wonders. At the other end of the scale the Jabra speakerphones are quite amazing for an unobtrusive system, and can be used for several people in the same room.

2) Webcams

A similar argument goes for webcams. Although improving, many of those found in cheap laptops and tablets simply do not gather enough light. So test again, in daylight and with your room lighting. Try to get the light source behind the camera (not behind your head!) If what's in your laptop or tablet is not good enough (you look permanently in the shadows!), there are plenty of good cheap options out there which are well worth it.

We will be asking you to use your webcams in all small group teaching events - unless your internet really cannot support it. So spend some time setting up your room with good lighting, and if you are embarrassed that things are untidy you can always use an artificial background.

3) Something to write with.

Although not absolutely necessary some way to have pen input will help, especially when using digital/interactive whiteboards. Many tablets have pen inputs - a cheap way to add this to a laptop is a Graphics Tablet.

4) Tidy your desktop before you start

There will be times when you are expected to share your screen. For the sake of privacy, please close down any personal information/unwanted web tabs etc before you start a Teams session - I don't want to know your banking details, or what you like to watch on youtube :)

And now some etiquette:

1) In large meetings

Generally in large events - for instance in the Research frontiers lectures, or in seminars when in groups of 70, switch off your camera and mute your microphone.

If you need to ask a question then raise your hand (by the button in Teams) and then unmute etc.

2) In small meetings

Generally for anything with say 5-6 colleagues and a tutor please keep webcams on and microphones live. We want to see and hear and interact with you - and a lot of this is not just audio; facial expressions are important :) Also, none of the teaching staff will really have met you before - this way as soon as the Covid crisis is over and you are doing seminars, academic tutorials face-to-face we will already know each other :)

3) Recordings

There is a record button in teams but please don't record any meeting unless you are specifically told you can. Generally you should not record academic tutorials, seminars etc - these are meant to be enjoyed live and without the thought of being recorded.

If in doubt, ask the person running the meeting what to do :) Everyone is here to help

So to sum up

- Check you audio, and video before you start
- Small meetings, use your webcams and audio
- Big meetings, turn off your webcam, mute your microphone until you want to ask a question
- Don't record

So on with the show...

MS Teams!

MS Teams is a collaboration software which combines video/audio conferencing with written collaboration/texting/channels, file sharing etc. It is relatively easy to use - but far from perfect :) It does though integrate well with OneNote, OneDrive and a lot of the Microsoft office suite most of you will be familiar with.

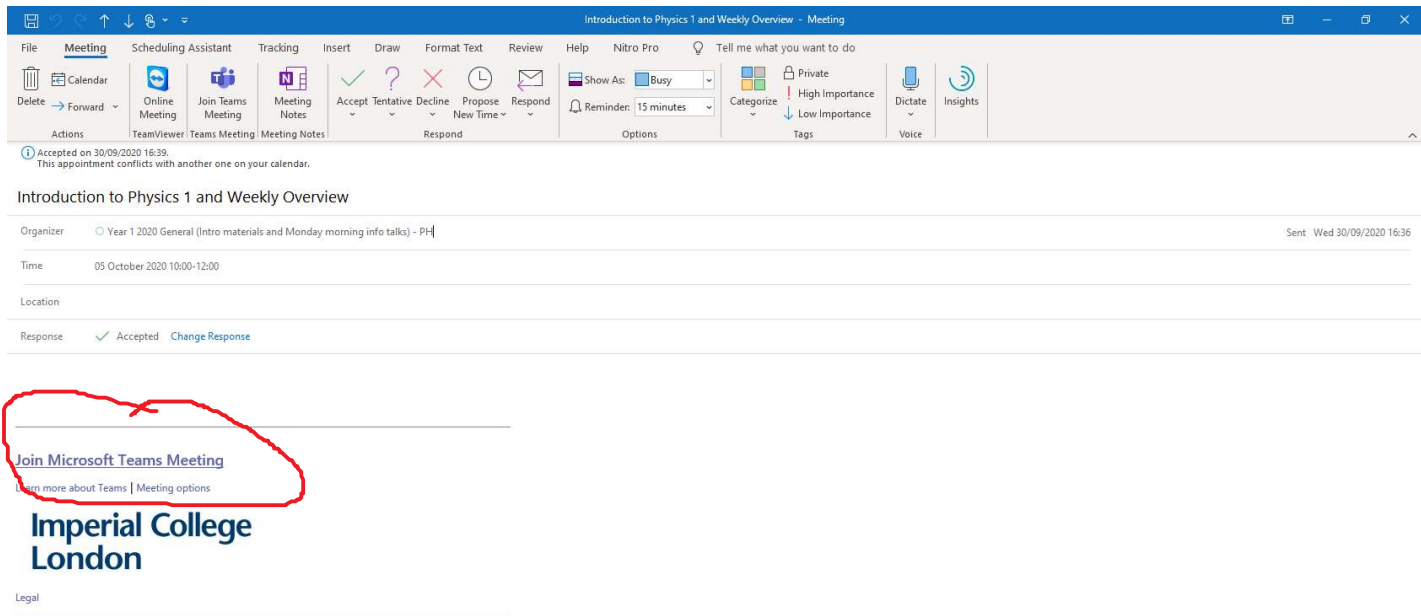
The below is written from the perspective of a laptop user, with a typical college install. By device will vary, the principles are the same - but the positioning of channels in menus etc may be different.

MS Teams will usually start with windows - if not click on its icon or type 'Teams' in the search bar to launch it.

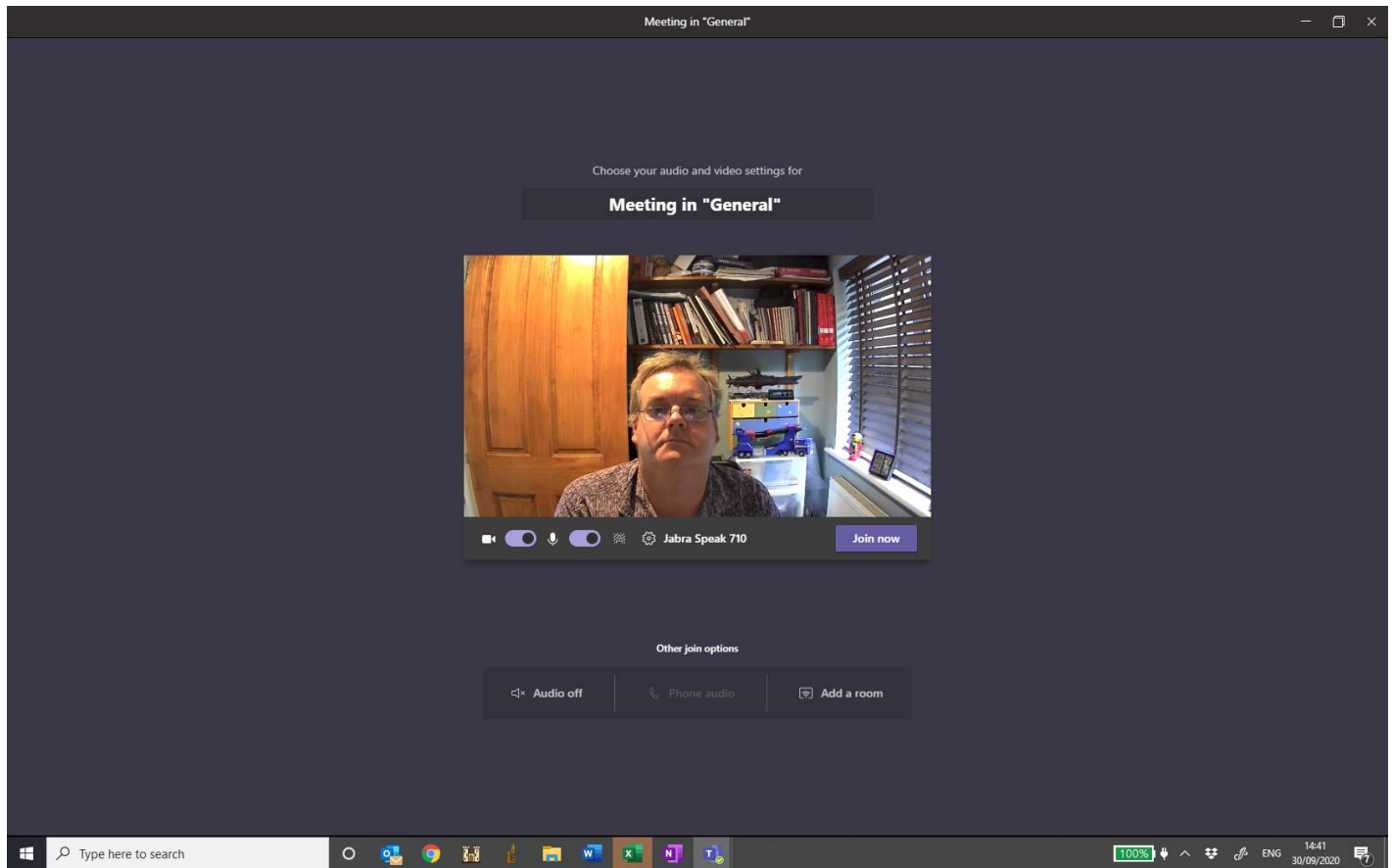
Use your college Login to access teams - if you have used Teams elsewhere, log out and login using your college details. If not you may not be able to access many of the channels, or you could find yourself stuck outside a meeting.

1) Joining a meeting/tutorial/seminar etc

For most meetings this term you will have been sent a Calendar invite/already have a timetable event in your calendar with a link to access the meeting. The link is where it says "Join Microsoft Teams meeting"



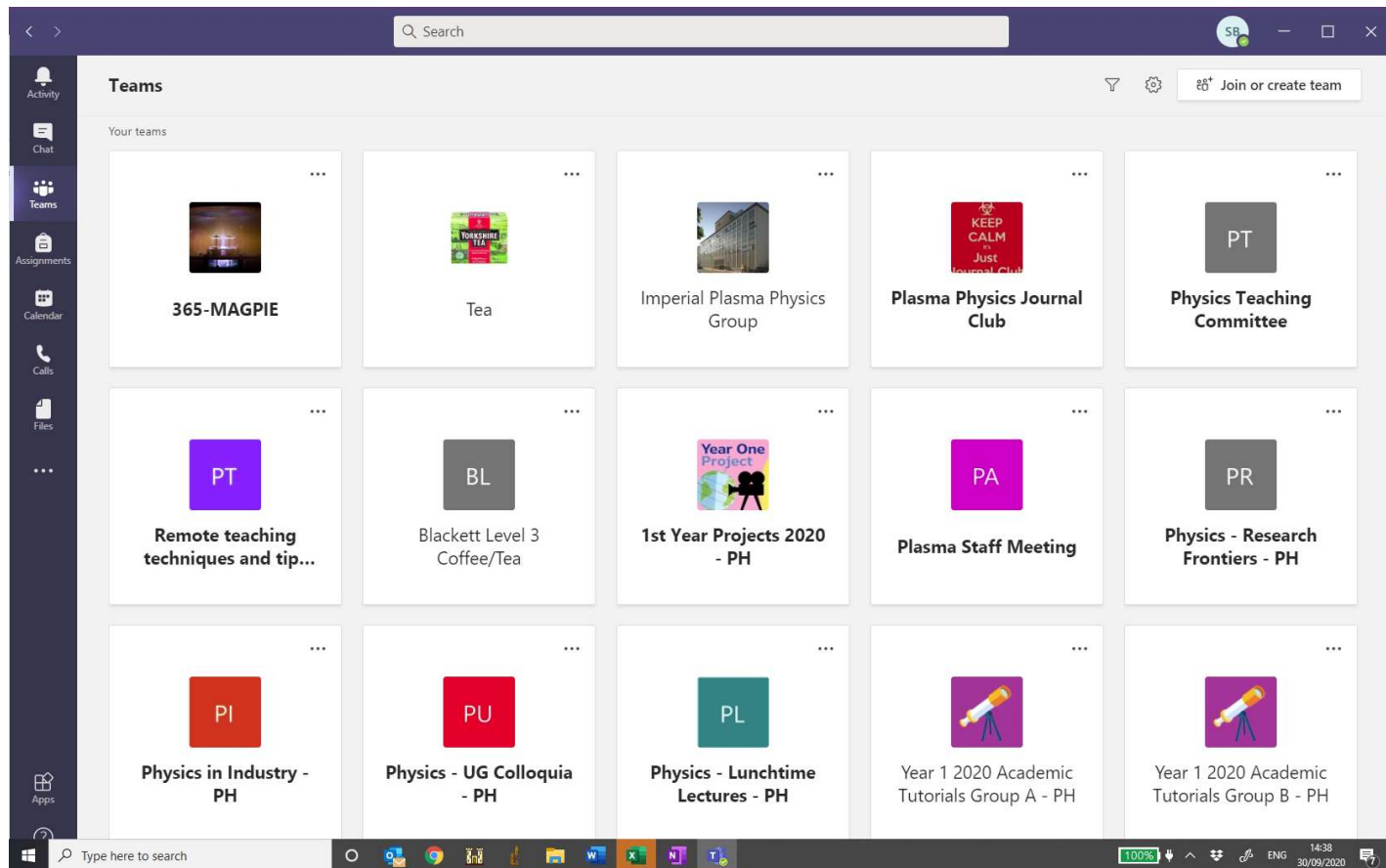
Clicking this this will take you to your meeting. You will get a window that looks like:



Here you can turn your webcam on/off, and mute/unmute your microphone prior to joining the meeting. When you are ready, just click 'Join now'.

The long way round...

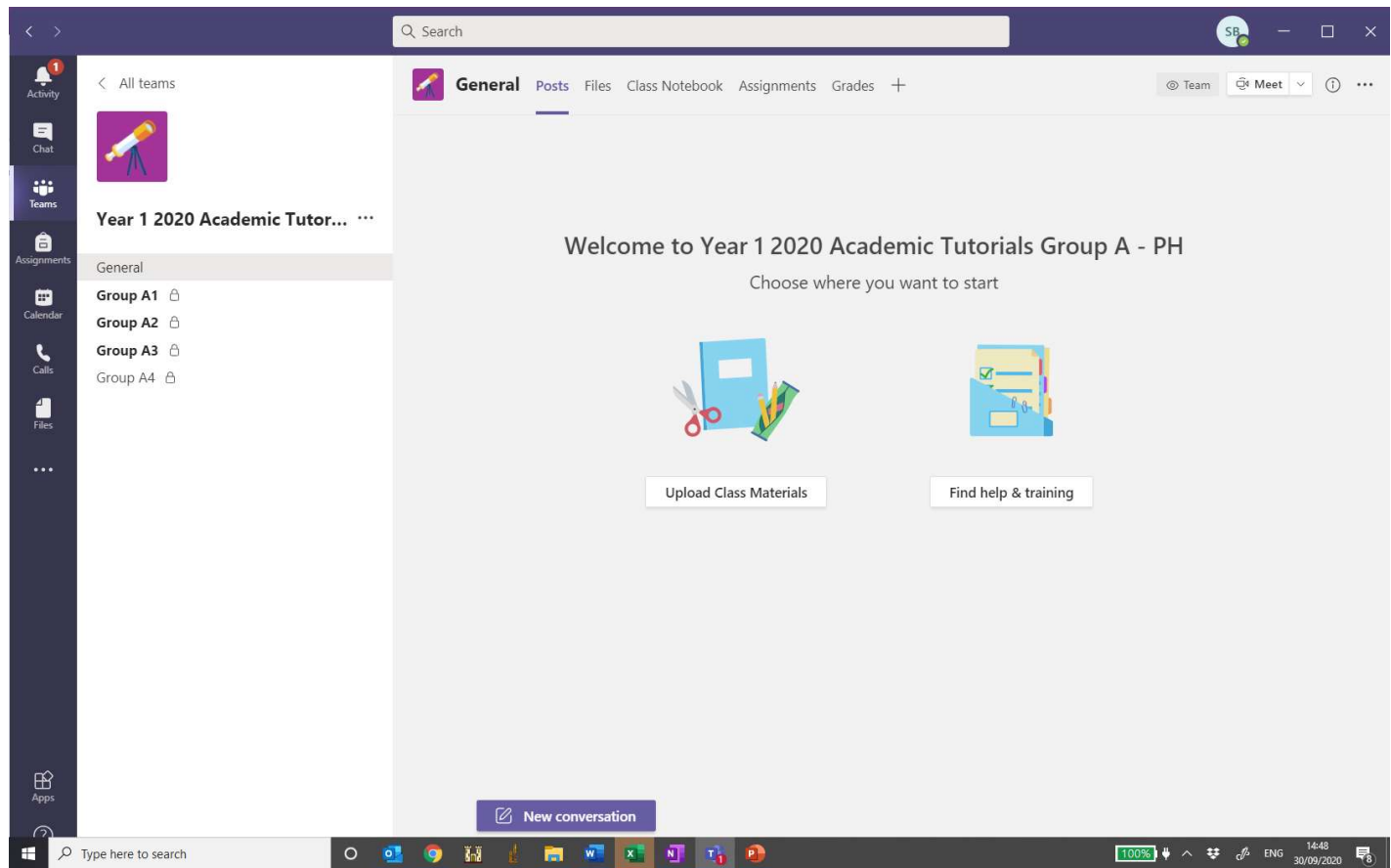
If you haven't been sent a link, or for some reason it is not working, we can navigate there instead. Bring up a list of all of the Teams you have been made a member of by clicking the Teams icon (you may need to click it twice):



(hopefully your view will have far fewer!)

Next find the Team that's associated with the meeting - for instance it might be "Year 1 Academic tutorials Group A". Click on this.

You should then see the General window for the Team. It looks like:



On the left are channels General, Group A1, Group A2, Group A3 etc

On the right is the area where you can post comments, share files etc. You can also find all files which have been posted to the channel in the Files tab next to the General channel label.

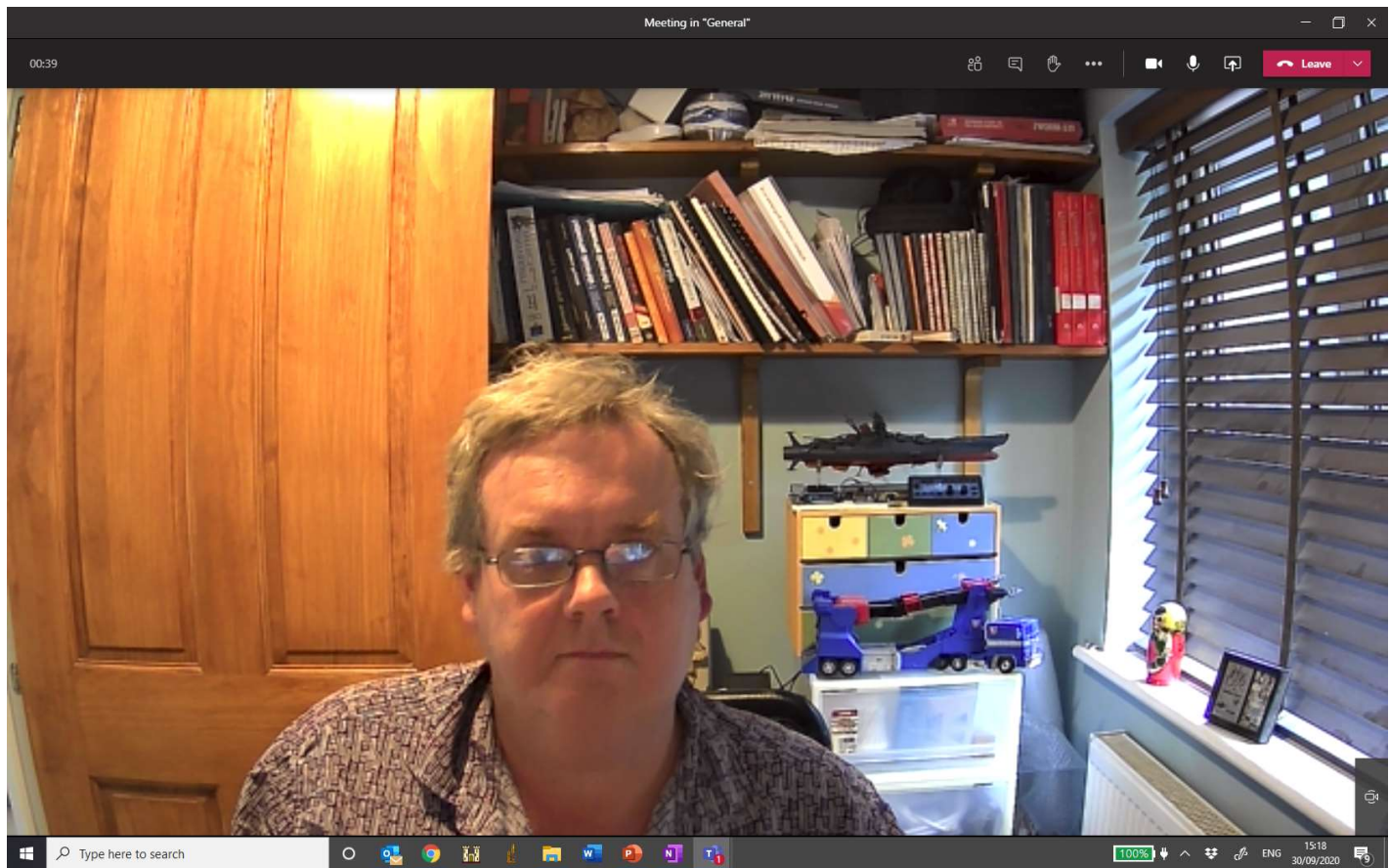
If your meeting is in the General channel you can just hit meet. Note, academic tutorials are usually in the individual Group channels - so if you are in Group A1, click that then meet.

"I still cannot find where I need to be!"

Don't panic. Instead go to chat (left-hand menu), enter the name of the person who called the meeting and send them a message. That will get to them immediately and they can invite you in.

2) The meeting window

Once you have joined a meeting a new window opens that looks something like this:



Running across the top is a menu bar:

Display Participants shows who is in the meeting

Show Conversation opens up a text box to type to either everyone or, by using @, a particular person

Raise Hand indicates you want to ask a question - usually not used for small meetings, but in a big meeting it's vital. (Remember to put your hand back down when you've asked your question!)

More Actions has options to change background, camera etc and gives meeting details

The camera and microphone on/off buttons are self-explanatory

Share screen enables you to either select one window/app to share, or your entire screen

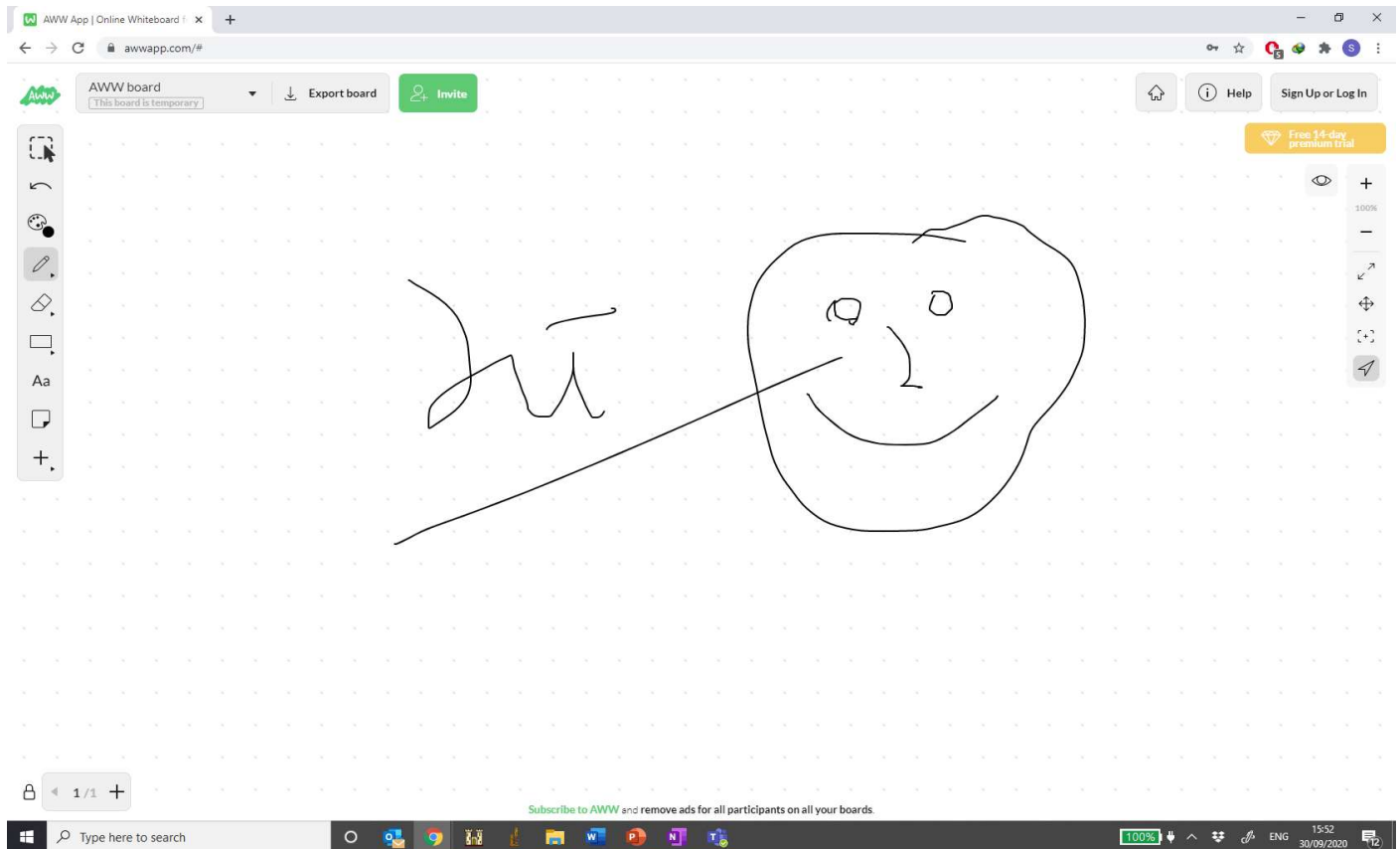
Finally there is the leave key :)

3) Whiteboards

In your tutorials etc you may well be asked to use an interactive/digital whiteboard to share information - just like the whiteboard in an office.

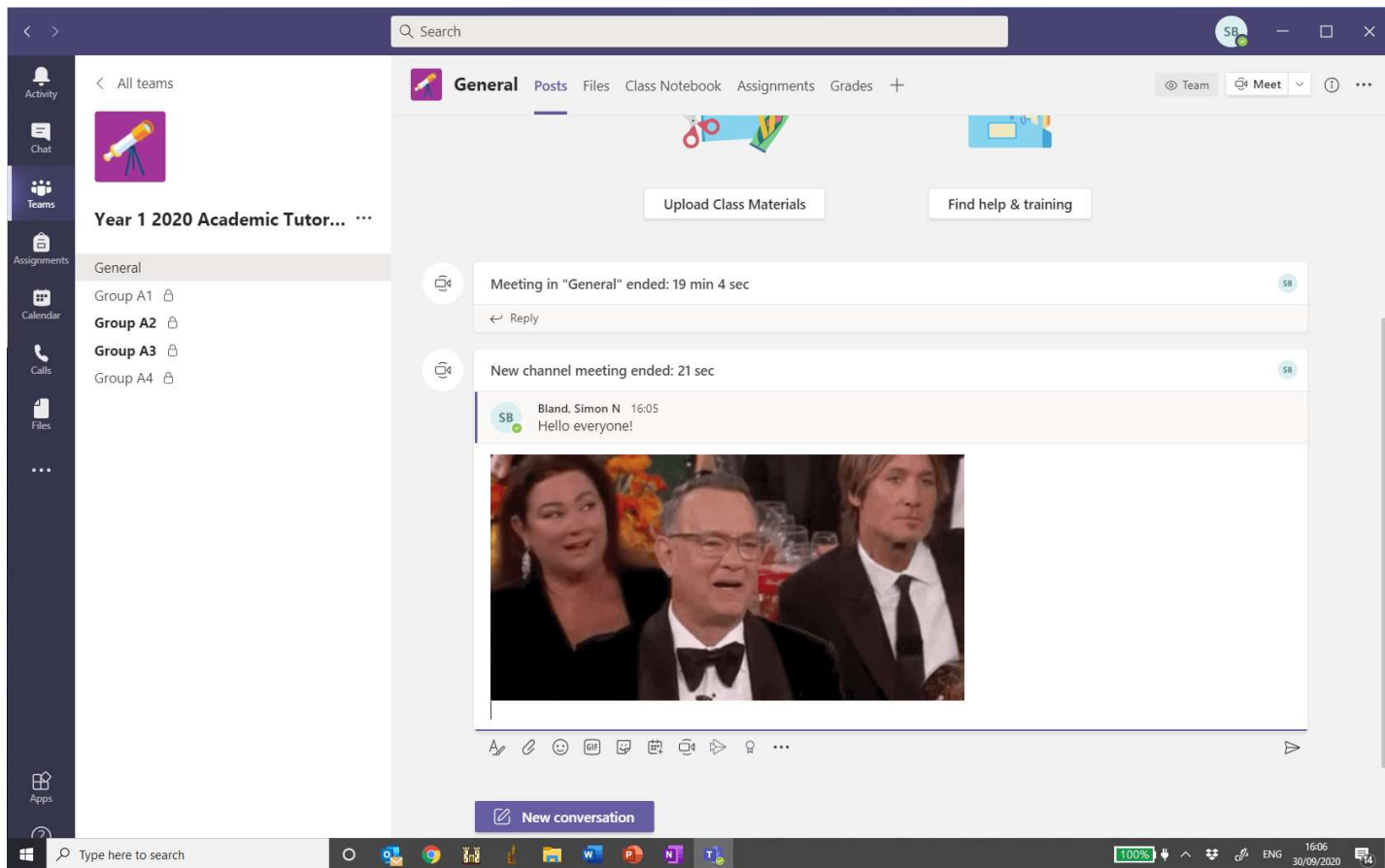
The MS Whiteboard attached to Teams though is pretty poor and somewhat unreliable. Instead we have a license for "A Web Whiteboard" (AWWapp.com). When it's time to use these the tutor will share a link with you or a QR code. Simply follow the link to your web browser and when prompted put your (first) name in - this allows us to see who is drawing.

An example AWW window is shown below. It is very intuitive to use. Pro tip - select a different pen colour to black and make sure the pen is thick enough to see! You can upload PDFs and images to the whiteboard easily and annotate them too.



4) The General window and channel / channel hopping

The main Teams window will keep going even if you are in a meeting. Here you can use the chat functions to talk to people, add text/pictures etc:



When replying to a message, please be sure to reply to it by typing in the box immediately below the message (rather than starting a "new conversation") - or if your message is actually a new topic, please make sure you start a new conversation rather than adding it to an existing thread. You can @mention people (start typing @[their-name]) if you want to draw their attention to your comment – they will get a notification.

There are some times when you will be asked to have meetings in your small group channels. This is a useful way of dividing up a class of 24 into say four lots of 6 people helping foster conversations. If you are asked to do this, then go into your channel (Group A1 etc) by the link in main window and click Meet Now. You do not need to turn off/leave the meeting in the general channel - it will pause automatically when you open up a new meeting. If a member of your group has already started a meeting in the channel join this.

Your tutor will usually go around these smaller groups dropping in on the meetings to see how things are going, see if anyone needs help etc. You can always call for help using the @tutor/TA name or by raising a hand.

When you are called back to the meeting in the general channel, simple go into the general channel and click to (re)join this.

5) Breakout groups

These are a much better way to divide up a large meeting into consistent groups – it's done by the meeting organiser effectively pushing you (electronically) into your groups, and then pulling you back when it's time to have large discussions again.

They are somewhat experimental - it's a new feature in Teams. You will first find them in Seminars this term, and we will switch to using them more regularly as their features improve.

6) How do I talk to my friends like with Skype?

Simply go to Chat, on the left hand side. Click the pen-and-paper icon for a new chat and then type their name/email - and a link should come up enabling you to message them or start a meeting with them. You can have several people in the same chat.

7) Can I schedule a meeting?

Yes, you can schedule meetings in either Outlook to by the Teams calendar that links to this.