

## **SHARED PRACTICE GUIDE 008 – ONLINE MEETINGS**

**Rev 04.2**

### **1. Introduction**

Shared practice guides (SPG) are a vehicle to share knowledge between the U3As in the London area. They are created by collating knowledge and experiences from those U3As. They are only a guide – what worked for one U3A might not work for your U3A. If in your experience something is wrong or you disagree with something, please write in to allow an update to be created and published. It's hoped these Guides will grow over time with more shared experiences.

### **2. Scope**

This particular SPG addresses the aspect of how to hold a meeting 'virtually' – online through the internet. There are many software packages that allow this. This guide cannot cover all of them but it will try to provide information on the most popular. Also with technology advancing daily there may be other packages that come onto the market after this guide is published.

This SPG is titled 'Online Meetings' and will cover software packages that cover teleconferencing (audio only) and video conferencing.

As Zoom is already a very popular package there is more information about it in this SPG and an explanation of the differences between the Zoom Basic (free) account and the Zoom Pro subscription account (Appendix 2).

### **3. Background**

Working 'virtually' can provide advantages at times (for example when a Group member can't physically attend a meeting) but also in times of emergency (eg during the COVID-19 pandemic) it can allow some U3A activities to continue.

### **4. Learnings - Online Meetings Software Packages**

This section is a summary of the various software packages available and some summary comments on each. No overall recommendation of one system versus the rest is made as some U3As might already have experience of one system hence are comfortable with that.

There is a vast selection of online material available to support the use of teleconferencing and/ or videoconferencing software packages on each package. The following are only a few:

**WhyPay?** = <https://whypay.net/> (Third Age Trust & Phil Broomsgrove).

DRAFT We have tried out a Voice Conferencing tool called WhyPay? (a UK-based company) and it went very well. There were 4 of us involved, using both mobile and landline phones, and we had a 50 minute conference call. We're going to try on Monday morning to have a 'virtual' Committee meeting using the same tool.

The software is free to use for a single Conference room/convenor with up to 50 participants, and it uses 03... numbers which are included in calling plans for most mobile

phone contracts. If you're on Pay-As-You-Go or a landline, you would pay the same cost as for a call to an 01... or 02... number.

They also have an offer at present (during the Coronavirus outbreak) for their other services to be free for the next 3 months. These are called PLUS (4 Conference rooms/convenors with 50 participants in each, normally £4 per month) and PRO (8 Conference rooms/convenors with 50 participants in each, normally £8 per month).

We are thinking this might be a good tool to allow some of our Interest Groups to have 'virtual' meetings at present.

Beckenham are using WhyPay? for their Committee meetings where there are 8 members - one books the meeting and emails the others with the phone number, room number and pin number. They have done this twice so far and it worked well. As often with these online systems good practise to identify oneself when starting to speak and try not to speak over others. Two members did have a problem getting on to WhyPay? at first as their phone package barred them from the 0333 phone number, but they used an alternative instead. One member needed to disconnect and phone again after an hour as their phone package would charge 40 p a minute over the hour.

### **Pow Wow Now** (Roger Mead)

This is a purely audio conference system so it has the advantage that anyone with any telephone, either landline or mobile, can take part. There is no need for a computer or smart phone. They used to work on a system where each participant paid for their own call into the system but now there is an additional service charge. So Pow Wow Now can cost up to 15p a minute. There are alternative telephone conference facilities offered by some telephone companies and it is worth exploring these. In some cases the calls could be within your bundle so have little cost implications.

Audio conferencing could be seen as adequate for many U3A group activities.

### **Cisco** (Roger Mead)

Another 'new kid on the block' trying to catch up with Zoom and get ahead of them is Cisco. Their pricing structure is very similar to Zoom with a basic free package probably covering most needs. Their big advantage over Zoom's free package is that Cisco have no time limit on meetings (still a max of 100 participants. More details can be viewed here:

<https://www.webex.com/pricing/index.html>

One can set up and publish a meeting agenda within the App., share screens, etc. However you really need to download the App and if you are using an Apple device it needs to have the latest software else it can't install. So this might be a disadvantage compared to Zoom. If you are a Participant on Zoom you just click on the invite link set, no need for any downloads - which makes it very easy to join in.

### **Google Meet** (Roger Mead / Mike O'Reilly)

Another new entrant, or with an enhanced offering, Google has made its 'Meet' service free. The big players are now determined to unseat Zoom as the leading video conferencing system. Google Meet is going to be integrated with Gmail which will make it very convenient for all sorts of conference calls. So Zoom may not be the answer in the longer term.

### **Google Hangouts**

Not clear if this is similar / same as Google Meet. No details available. Used by Crouch End & District U3A.

### **Zoom** (Derek Harwood)

Each Zoom meeting must be set up in advance by a "host" person. The host must already have:

- 1) set up a Zoom account (easy to do from <https://zoom.us/download>)
- 2) the host must have chosen between a Zoom Basic account (free) or a Zoom Pro account (at £11.99/month). See Appendix 2
- 3) the Host can then define a meeting with a meeting date and start time and description and issue an invitation to all Participants.
- 4) the attendees do NOT need to have a Zoom account nor to have downloaded any software. They can just click on the link provided in the meeting invitation.
- 5) the Basic account only allows 40-minute max meetings, but you can easily log back in again. It allows up to 100 members per meeting.

A further summary can be found [here](#).

LRU3A have now developed two specific SPGs for Zoom:

[SPG 009, Zoom Guide for Hosts](#)

[SPG 010, Zoom Guide for Participants](#)

One U3A reports: "We have had a few problems with sharing photographs as it would appear that some people's computers can't cope with the load of being in a Zoom meeting and then opening and sharing photographs on their screens. We have worked around it a bit by making sure that members open their photo programme and photographs before they enter the Zoom meeting. If necessary we can get pictures uploaded to our Flickr site in advance and then someone else can put them on a shared screen. Apart from that it seems to work well.

We found this website which has some useful advice:

<https://wwwf.imperial.ac.uk/blog/photography/2020/04/01/looking-better-on-video-calls/>.

Our photographers found it quite helpful as most of them would be careful about lighting etc when taking photographs but had not thought to apply the same advice to making video calls. We might do a quick tongue in cheek competition for the best set up Zoom selfie which might raise the standard."

There were some concerns in the Press regarding Zoom's security but they have now released Version 5 which seems to rectify the concerns.

### **Free Conference** (Roger Hunt)

<https://www.freeconference.com/feature/video-conferencing/>

### **Microsoft 'Teams'**

Can't find anyone using Teams to give me feedback on it's pros & cons. It is used by many big companies – but hence might be tailored for that sort of market. This is used by National Office. I think it does more than video conferencing e.g. I think it has a SharePoint element allowing for file management. However, everyone I know who has experience with it says it's "clunky". John Bent can provide more information.

### **Skype** (Appendix 3)

Free to use. Can take up to 50 members per meeting. Has a 40 minute max limit per meeting.

<https://www.skype.com/en/about/>

### **WhatsApp** (Liz Tarrant & Debbie Chapman)

Although it can be loaded on the computer, most people have it on their phone.

To have a video conference/meeting:

1. Create a group - click on the 3 dots at the top right of the mobile phone screen
2. Press New group
3. On your list of contacts, click on those you wish to have in your meeting
4. [setting up the meeting was on what I sent you]

I am looking at WhatsApp type applications for the more craft orientated things – as our meetings are often more about showing what we have been up to and telling each other how to do it... which we could easily do as we go along rather than having to all sign in to a meeting at the same time (which some may find more difficult). While WhatsApp is most commonly used and known for texting, but it can be used for audio or video as well.

### **Facebook Live Video** (Malcolm Bentote)

Has been used by Bushy for large live meetings. No other details available at this point in time.

## **5. Reference Material**

Each of the above software systems or packages has online supporting material. If you want any further guidance please search on the internet.

There are further SPG's for details on Zoom:

[SPG009-Zoom Guide for Hosts](#)

[SPG010 Zoom Guide for Hosts](#)

## **6. Contact Point**

In the short term until a volunteer is found, any queries or further explanation of the material in this Guide, or any aspects needing to be updated, please contact:

[webmaster.londonregionu3a@gmail.com](mailto:webmaster.londonregionu3a@gmail.com)

## **APPENDIX 1 – HELPFUL TIPS**

There're new tricks for us to learn when you use online methods for meetings:

- Circulate an agenda in advance. Help people to prioritise and compile it in advance, not at the tail end of the call. Allot time to each item and keep to schedule.
- Allow time for people to fumble the log-in - send clear instructions in advance and test them. Be patient.
- If there are slides or documents, circulate them in advance. Don't rely on being able to display them 'live'. Often bandwidth is insufficient.
- Be punctual. Tele-meetings are real meetings.
- If people are working from home, and it's not possible to lock children and the dog in the airing cupboard (!), supply decent headsets with microphones.
- The meeting chair should ask people to introduce themselves, and it's polite to re-introduce yourself before you speak.
- An icebreaker is a good idea. Ask people what they had for breakfast, or send a picture of where they are...
- Don't be an agenda-benda. Stick to the script and don't let the meeting drag-on. Keep people engaged by asking for opinions.
- If you can hear the sound of a keyboard, it's a sure sign people are disengaged and doing their Ocado order.
- Prevent people talking over each other, make specific time for questions.
- Make sure people understand which bit of the meeting they are to contribute to and how. Help them to get their documents lined up.
- Keep minutes and action items, circulate them and follow through. Don't assume people know what they are doing next. Demonstrate tele-meetings count.
- Video conferencing needs rock-solid wifi. Have a standby, if it drops out. You'll want good lighting and if you are using a lap-top, put it up on some books so we are not treated to a view, up your nostrils.
- Make sure there's nothing embarrassing in the background. A copy of the Karmasutra on the book shelf or a picture of you, legless, in a Bar in Corfu!
- Sit still, it uses less bandwidth.

## APPENDIX 2 – ZOOM BASIC VS ZOOM PRO

### Summary:

Zoom Basic: free to use, has a 40 minute limit per meeting (for meetings with 3 or more in them), needs meeting Hosts to have some basic IT skills.

Zoom Pro: £11.99/month per account; has no time limit per meeting; needs less IT capability (by the Group Coordinators/ Meeting hosts); but needs someone with more IT capability to be the central Zoom Pro administrator.

You can get a 50% discount for a Pro or Business account, if you take a year's subscription & if you go through a third party company (CDE)

### Details:

The Zoom Basic plan is free and is relatively easy to use. Any one that has reasonable confidence with computers can download and set up a Zoom Basic account. Only 'Hosts' eg Group Coordinators/ Leaders need to have an account. Group members of meetings, 'Participants', do not need an account. In fact they need no software to just join a meeting. There are slight differences for users on Smartphones or Tablets – then they probably will want to download the 'App' (which is not the same as having an Account). So it is fairly easy to start holding online meetings.

However there is a key restriction with the free Basic account. Each meeting can only last 40 minutes. However it is fairly easy to just click back into the meeting (ie re-start the meeting). It is seen as disruptive by some. If this is the case for a U3A generally, or some particularly Group or type of meeting (eh Monthly Meetings) then the solution is to trade up to a Zoom Pro account. The Pro account has no time limit (effectively). This is currently £11.99 per month **per Host**. Only one meeting at a time can be held. It is not meant to be shared between various users. U3As might decide due to this restriction, to take out several Pro accounts but then costs will rise.

There is a way however of sharing the one account within a U3A. It does involve some more administration and more IT capability (ie a volunteer to run the Pro account). On the other hand, the other advantage of having a Pro account (shared by many) is that, rather than many within a U3A needing to set up a Zoom Basic account & become familiar with setting up meetings, this is done centrally by the IT expert. Hence it might assist getting more Interest Groups online using Zoom.

Islington U3As has followed this route and the following is their method and learnings.

The first stage (after procuring the Pro account) was to establish the following roles:

- i) Zoom Administrator (ZA) (a technically sophisticated member with some spare time capacity and inclination to volunteer)
- ii) Zoom Helpers (ZH). These might be Group Coordinators/ Leaders, but if they are not IT comfortable, this can be another member in their Group
- iii) Participants (all Groups and their Members who would like to participate in online Zoom Meetings, including Group Coordinators and their Zoom Helpers)

Method or processes:

A) Meetings are centrally scheduled by the ZA after receiving a request from Group Coordinators or the ZH for Groups. Preferable if the ZA has an alias email address rather than using a personal email address. The ZA might do this scheduling manually or there can be a common calendar set up through the alias based email account (eg Google Schedule). A public version of the calendar can be made live which only shows which slots are taken and which slots are still available for booking requests.

B) Recurring weekly and monthly meetings are encouraged as they do not require fresh invitations to be generated and communicated per meeting. The same link applies to all subsequent recurring meetings.

C) Fortnightly recurring meetings are discouraged because they start clashing with multiple monthly meetings after a month with 5 relevant weekdays in it, thus reducing the efficient utilisation of the Zoom Pro account in a significant way.

D) All Zoom Meeting invitations are setup to allow the following by default:

- i) access from landline and mobile phones
- ii) access from any browser, which removes the need to download the Zoom App. This is done because downloading the Zoom App has caused problems with a small minority of members.
- iii) Members able to join the meeting before host and interact with the other members present even if the ZA, who is the only 'Host' for all meetings scheduled, never joins the meeting
- iv) sharing of screens without the ZA being present.
- v) Groups without a regular schedule are asked to book the next meeting after the currently booked one off meeting has taken place

E) Coordinators / Zoom Helpers are sent the meeting invitation by ZA. These should be forwarded to the Group's Members in the same way as always done before the current lockdown (eg through Beacon).

F) The Group Coordinators are encouraged to remind the Members of their Group of the Zoom Meeting Invite prior to each meeting.

G) All members of the Group, including the Zoom Helper, can join meetings in the way that suits them best via the link across the Internet on a computer/tablet/smartphone or across the Telephony Network from their landline or mobile phone.

H) It is recommended that before the first meeting, Group Coordinator or their Zoom Helper should ensure that their members are comfortable with Zoom. If necessary, a "test" meeting should be arranged with the help of the ZA.

I) Since one Zoom Pro can only have one Zoom Meeting active at any time, the person requesting the meeting to be scheduled by Zoom Admin is also told by when the meeting needs to be finished at the latest and encouraged to apply the First In, Last Out (FILO) principle to their meetings. This means that it is the responsibility of the person that requested the meeting to be scheduled to also be the last person to leave the meeting, thus making sure that the meeting has ended at the latest by the time that was requested when booking the meeting, without the ZA having to be present. This process has been adopted to make sure that a member of the Group does not go away from their device of choice without manually leaving the meeting, thus stopping the next meeting from starting.

## APPENDIX 3 – SKYPE

### What is Skype?

Skype is for connecting with the people that matter most in your life and work. It's built for both one-on-one and group conversations and works wherever you are – via mobile, PC, Xbox and Alexa. Skype messaging and HD voice and video calling will help you share experiences and get things done with others.

With Skype, you can have meetings and create great things with your workgroup, share a story or celebrate a birthday with friends and family, and learn a new skill or hobby with a teacher. **It's free to use Skype – to send messages and have audio and video calls with groups of up to 50 people!**

If you pay a little, you can do more things, in more ways, with more people – like call phones or SMS messages. You can pay as you go or buy a subscription, whatever works for you.

Try Skype out today and start adding your friends, family and colleagues. They won't be hard to find; hundreds of millions of people are already using Skype to do all sorts of things together.

Skype is a bit of a pig to use IMHO - especially with a mobile phone or tablet rather than a PC.

For both meetings and general "socialising at a distance" think about setting up a Skype help facility for members. Once we have enough people signed up to help so we don't get swamped.

Some thoughts about how to do this -

- Try a quick meeting of as many of the computer helpers s possible to see how well it works (I have only used it for up to 6 people)
- Contact known non-technophobes and set up a register of Skype helpers who can be contacted by email or phone to guide people through the setup process
- Once we think we have enough initial helpers, email iu3a members to ask if they would like help to setup Skype or can be helpers themselves

Skype group calls are free with "just one link". (You can pay for extra features.) It allows for a group of up to 50 people. The limit is 4 hours for each video call. Calls can be on computers or mobile phones. Skype needs to be loaded (it is owned by Microsoft so may be preloaded). You can host a conference call with just one link.

1. Website: [Skype.com/en/free-conference-call](https://www.skype.com/en/free-conference-call)

2. First screen: Host a video meeting (if Skype is not installed, it will open it on the web so no need to download or sign up)

3. Fill in Meeting name (if you need it)

4. Meet now (change if a future meeting)

5. Create a free meeting - click on this

6. Second screen: "Host a conference call with just one line"

7. Your link is shown as: "Link for meeting name" - [join.skype.com/](https://join.skype.com/) plus a series of letters and figures

8: Share invite - click on down arrow for menu. Click: Copy link \*\*\*

(other menu items: Send with WhatsApp, Tweet, Outlook Mail, Gmail)

9. Video symbol: Start call

\*\*\*It looks easy but I couldn't see how to create a group to send the link to.