

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra – A Practical Guide for Audio and Video

This guide is for University of Westminster staff who use Blackboard Collaborate Ultra with their students or fellow staff members.

The recommended web browsers for Blackboard Collaborate Ultra are Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox, so please make sure that you are using the latest version of either of these browsers. Unfortunately, some users have experienced audio and video problems when using other browsers. Please DO NOT use Microsoft Internet Explorer or Microsoft Edge (non-Chromium base).

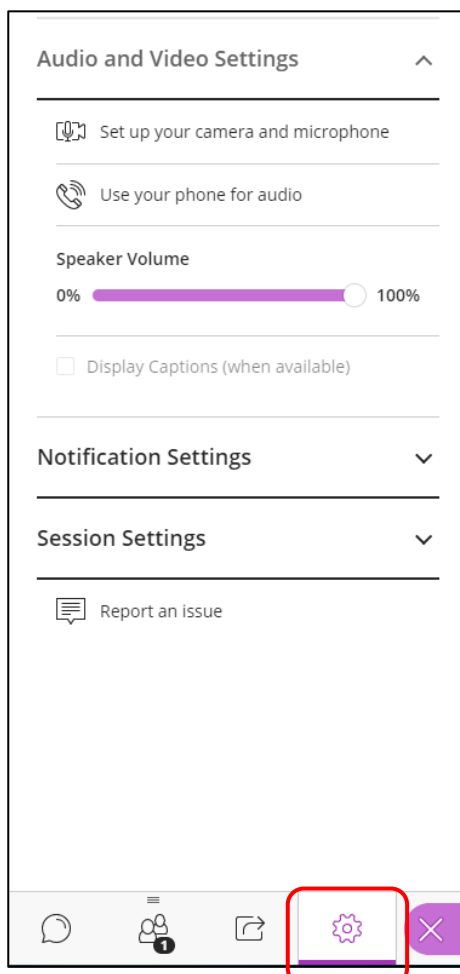
Audio and Video Setup (check your audio)

When you join a session, you will be prompted by your web browser to allow Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to use your device's microphone and camera. This is necessary so that you can be seen and heard. If this is the case, please click allow and note that the request prompt may look different dependent upon the browser you are using. You will either be asked to do this when you first join a session or when you first choose to share your audio or video.

Once your browser has received this confirmation, you should be prompted by Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to select an audio and video device. Select both your audio device and video device (optional) from the dropdown list.

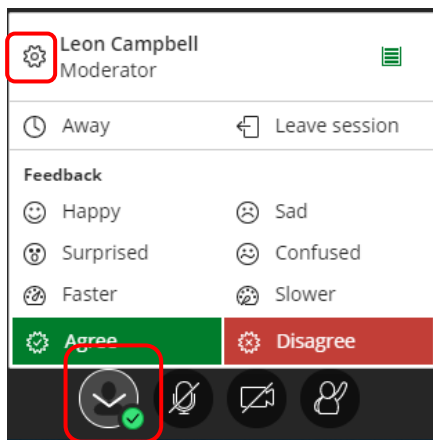
To manually select an audio and video device, please do either of the following:

1. Click on the cog icon at the bottom right of the Collaborate Panel

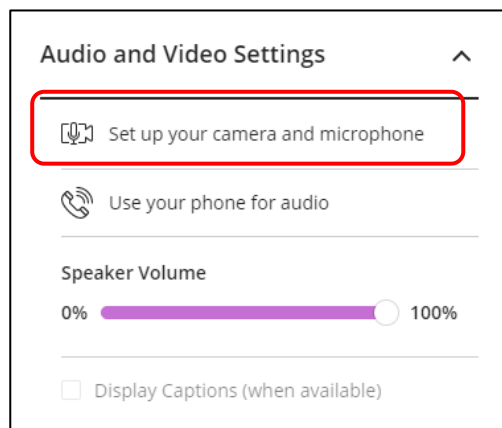


Or

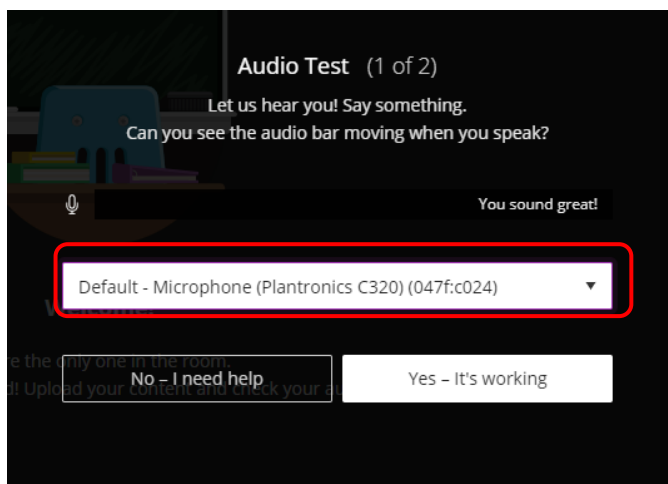
2. Click on your Avatar icon ('My Status and Settings')
3. Click on My Settings (cog, name and role area)



4. Click on 'Set up your camera and microphone'



5. Select the relevant audio device from the drop-down menu in the Audio Test (default device is usually recommended)



6. Click 'Yes - It's working' if you can see a recording level when talking. If not, please see the trouble shooting section below
7. Select the relevant video device from the drop-down menu in the Video Test (default device is usually recommended; for most laptops this will be the Integrated Webcam)

8. Click 'Yes – It's working' if you can see a video image. If not, please see the trouble shooting section at the end of this document.

When you complete the audio and video setup, you will get a notification that your microphone and camera are ready to go.

By default, you are hidden and muted after you complete the setup. Click the microphone and camera icons that you will see at the bottom centre of the Collaborate Ultra environment after joining the session to begin full meeting participation. Alternatively, using your keyboard, press **Alt + M** to turn your microphone on and off. Press **Alt + C** to turn your camera on and off. Once Blackboard Collaborate Ultra loads, you can click the microphone icon at the bottom of the screen to share your audio and the camera icon to share your webcam video.

Best practices for a better experience

For all attendees, we recommend the following actions before and/or during a session:

- ✓ Consider rebooting (restarting) your computer before a Blackboard Collaborate Ultra session and then, after re-opening the browser, clear the cache in the browser:
 - [Chrome](#)
 - [Firefox](#)
- ✓ Connect to the internet via wired connection, if available. If using Wi-Fi, try to be as close to the router as possible.
- ✓ Close all background programs that are not being used for the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra session (email client, Microsoft Teams, Skype, extra web browsers, and any other desktop applications; especially any communication software). In addition, close streaming services such as YouTube, Netflix or Spotify before accessing the session.
- ✓ Use either Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox, which are the best supported browsers on the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra platform.
- ✓ Use a headset/microphone for best audio quality; however, users without headsets should ensure that they are in a quiet area to prevent background noise.
- ✓ Use video during the session only when necessary.

Troubleshooting

Audio and Video issues

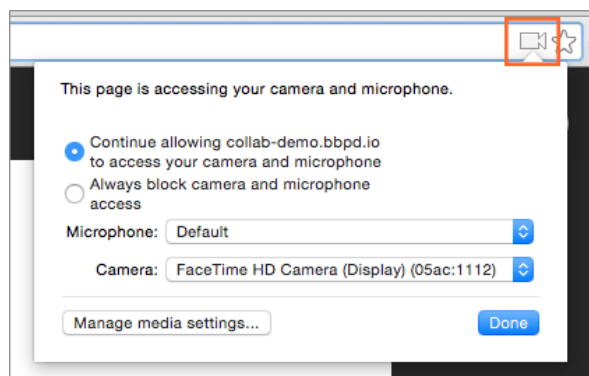
For the best experience you should use the latest version of Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox. If you are not using one of the browsers already, please re-join the session from the original join link using either of these browsers.

If you are having issues with your audio or video, see section above for details of how to check the session settings. For browser settings see below.

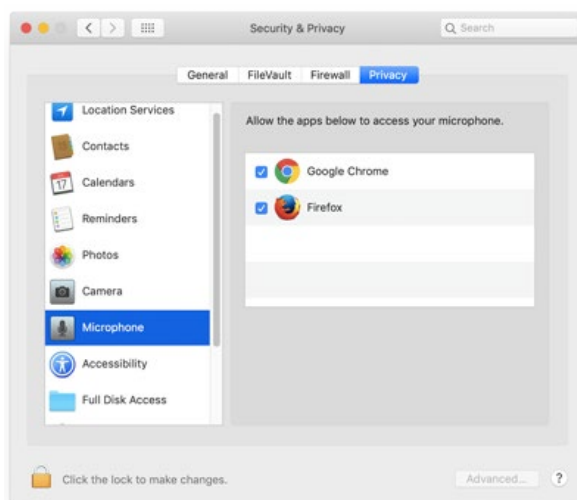
- ✓ Are the audio or video controls on? A line through the icons means that a device is not enabled.
- ✓ Are you using the latest version of Chrome or Firefox? If not, update your browser.
- ✓ Does the browser have permission to access your camera and microphone?

- **Chrome**

Select the audio/video icon in the URL bar to check the default audio and video settings. From the pop-up window, you can change devices or step through your device setup again to set the default devices. You may need to refresh the page for the change to take effect.

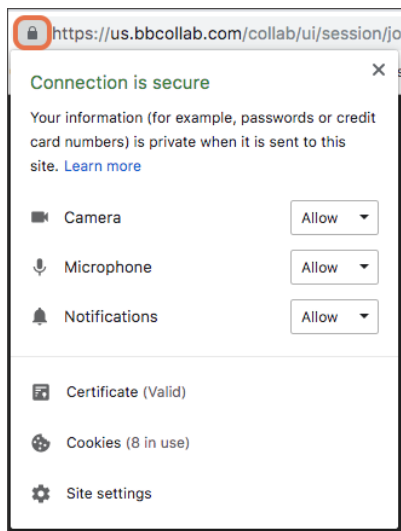


If you are using macOS 10.14 (Mojave) or higher, open *System Preferences* and select *Security & Privacy*. Select *Privacy*. Make sure your browser is a selected app for both the *Camera* and *Microphone*.



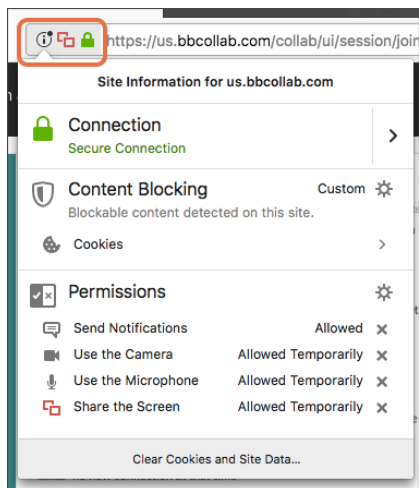
Open *Chrome Preferences* and select *Advanced* and *Site Settings*. Select *Camera* or *Microphone*. Make sure the session is in the *Allow* list.

Select the *View site* information icon to the left of the URL to view site information and see if anything is blocked.

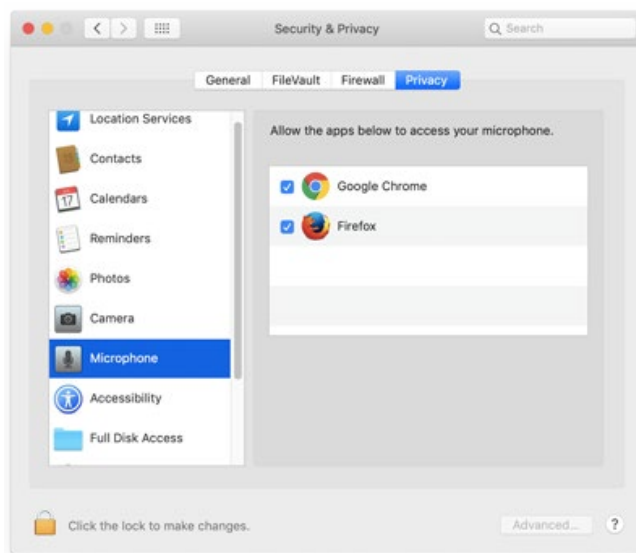


○ Firefox

Open the browser's *Show site information menu*, to see if your device microphone and camera are allowed. You may need to refresh the page to see the change. If you decide to turn on your audio or video again, you are asked to select new devices.

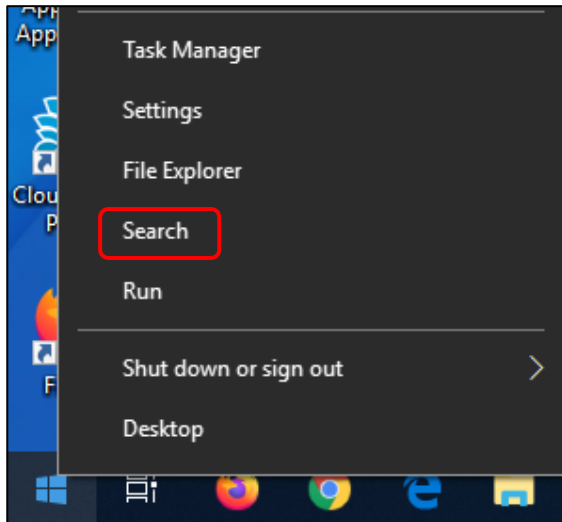


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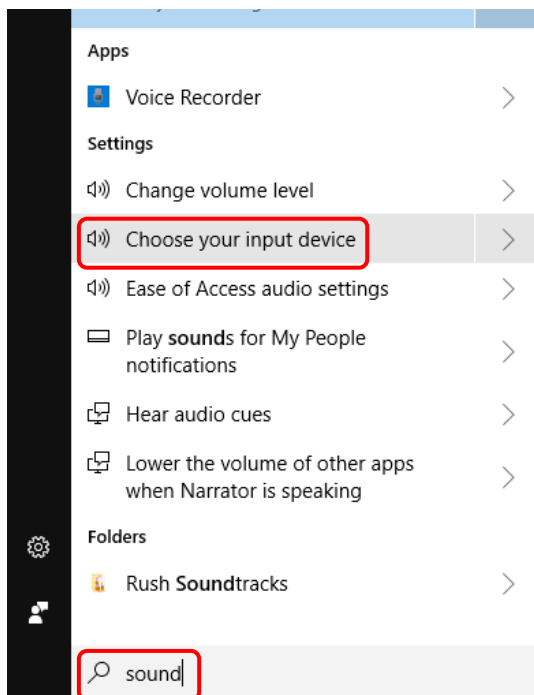


In many cases even if you have a headset plugged in, it will not be the default sound device. As the default sound device is likely to be the onboard sound card of your computer, it may be necessary to change this setting. Please follow the steps below (for Windows 10).

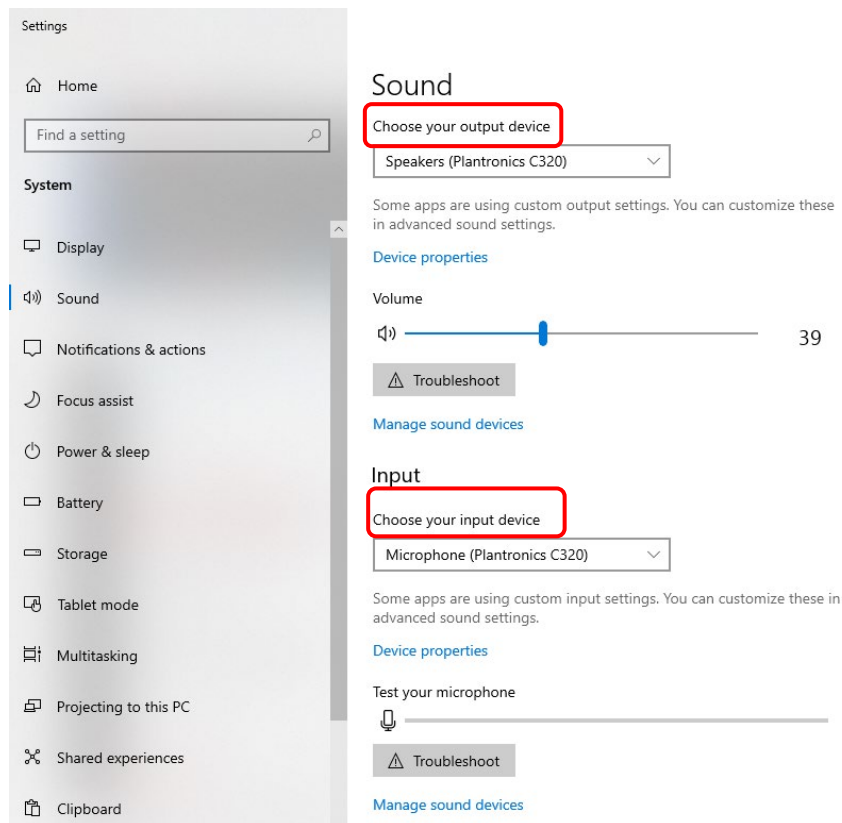
1. Plug in your headset/microphone
2. Right-Click the Start button in Windows 10 and select *Search*.



3. Type Sound into the search box and from the results that appear above, select *Choose your input device* from the Control Panel.



4. This will open the Sound panel (as below)



5. To change both the output device and input device, click on the drop-down menu and select the necessary device. In this case the Plantronics C320 (wired headset).

Please note that Chrome sometimes uses the computer's default speakers. Check that the correct speakers are selected for your operating system.

- ✓ macOS go to Apple > System Preferences > Sound.
- ✓ Windows go to Control Panel > Sound or search for Sound and select Sound from the Control Panel in the search menu.

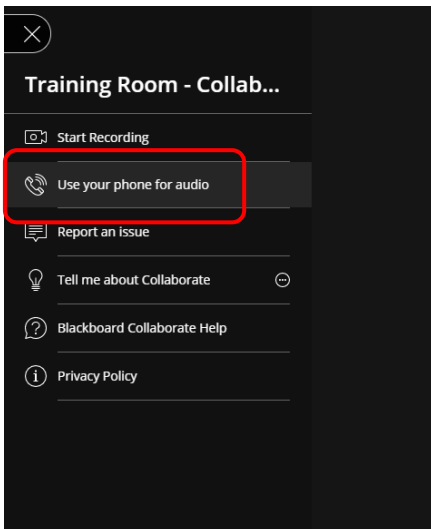
Clear Browser Cache

Try clearing browser cache and restarting a session. [Click here for instructions to clear browser cache.](#)

High CPU usage (aka your computer's processors are working hard) can cause audio issues as well. Be sure only necessary programs are running on the computer before starting the session.

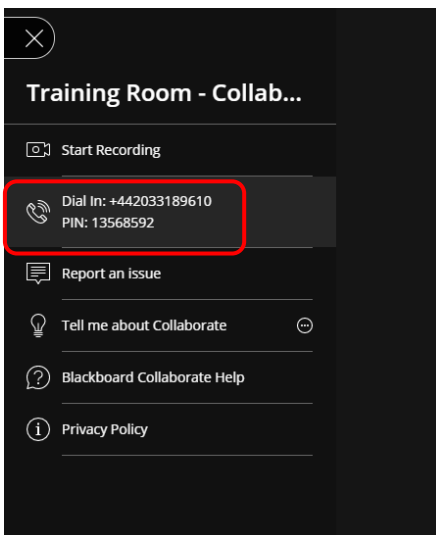
Use your phone for audio in a session

If you still cannot get audio to work on your computer, you can use your phone (landline or mobile) as an audio device in a session.



To do this you will need to call the number provided (as in screenshot below). Please note that you are still required to join a session via a browser to use your phone, as this is how you access the temporary personal identification number (PIN). With this personal PIN, you appear as yourself in the session.

The number provided is a UK national number and call charges will apply.



Network Connection issues

- ✓ Try and connect to the session using a wired rather than a wireless connection. If this is not possible, try to be as close to the router as possible.
- ✓ Check wireless settings; if using a Wi-Fi connection.
- ✓ Note that there is not much that can be done to address local connectivity issues.
- ✓ Try connecting using a Smartphone, if you have one using 4G

Re-join session in Chrome or Firefox

If none of the above works and all else fails, please restart your computer and try to re-join the session again via Chrome or Firefox.