How to… Use Breakout Rooms (MS Teams)

Below is just an example of how I personally will be delivering my material online. Thought it might provide some use to my fellow colleagues, but it's by no way an instruction, feel free to ignore it!

With the move towards Blended Learning, it's a good idea to promote adopt both **Asynchronous** (i.e. material that student can do in their own time / at their own pace) as well as **Synchronous** (i.e. live) learning opportunities.

In my Live Sessions, I'm hoping to follow something like the structure presented below (using MS Teams):

- A live series of individually-answered questions (via MS Forms) to assess the proportion of students who have completed the Asynchronous Pre-Sessional Material
- Problem-based question(s) which students will attempt in **small-groups** relating to the material (achieved via Breakout rooms)
- Session where I address Questions submitted by students anonymously prior to the Live Session. This is achieved by posting the link to an *Open Text* quiz on Mentimeter (free online software)
- Live Q&A session for students to address any particular questions that arise in-session

NOTE: It's important **NOT** to just go over the pre-sessional material quickly in the lecture, otherwise students will QUICKLY learn they never have to bother doing the work, if you just cover it anyway

ALSO NOTE: Most students don't like asking questions live in a session as they can't do so anonymously. That's why I use an anonymous Open Text Mentimeter quiz prior to the live session

In order to deliver these small-group tutorial-like elements of my Live Sessions, I have to employ Breakout rooms. **MS Teams** isn't the only software which can do this, and in fact it much more straight-forward in **Canvas Conferencing** (i.e. *BigBlueButton*), but the issue is that the BBB only facilitates ≤8 groups at any one time. As I have potentially >200 students at any one time, that's not going to cut it (MS Teams can hold ≤300 Private Channels in one Meeting apparently).

Another reason I'm using MS Teams, is because **I can record** my general chat with the students (not the breakout rooms), and make this recording available for as long as I want (BBB is only 14 days).

There's **two ways** in which you can make Breakout Rooms in MS Teams:

1. Making lots of Channels (more limited functionality, but easier to manage)
2. Making lots of Meetings (more customisable, but potentially more difficult)

1) CHANNELS

This video is a really nice demonstration of how you can set-up Breakout Rooms using Channels and QUB has found some good resources too. So you could create a new MS Team for you Module section, and create a number of **PRIVATE** Channels in advance, where you can allocate particular

students to each Channel. Then, for every Meeting you have within that Team (e.g. every Lecture or Practical session), you can tell the students to break off into their predesignated Channels for a small-group activity. You can also add documents to each of the Channels independently if you'd like to give the students an Exercise or Task to do. You can also relatively easily 'drop-in' on each of these Channels once created, but apparently this only works when using ≤4 Channels at once!

NOTE: You cannot add Quizzes using MS Forms to individual Channels, but can to the overall 'General' Channel. So if you want to assess your students, get them to come back to the General Channel, and answer as a group there.

ALSO NOTE: You cannot record in individual Channels. If you want your students to record a small-group Brainstorming event for example, you'll have to use Meetings

2) <u>MEETINGS</u>

Instead of creating individual Channels, you can create individual Meetings within an MS Team. The idea is that you can create a General Meeting for everyone, and then overlap this with as many individual Breakout Meetings as you need. The benefits to this format are:

- that students will be invited to the particular Breakout Meeting when you set it up
- you can add quizzes to these Breakout Groups
- you can get the students to record themselves if you need this assessed / monitored
- you can set up these Meetings to repeat every day, week, etc. so if these are regular for some time, that might be an advantage

The main issue (at least for me) seems the logistics of this, as instead of trying to get students to transfer to their own Channels <u>WITHIN</u> a single meeting, you're getting small-groups of students to start their <u>OWN</u> meetings, and so I think it's trickier if you're navigating between (or regulating) multiple Meetings rather than multiple Channels, particularly if you have many of them.

As you can see there's a couple of possibilities for you here. Personally, I think I'm going to go with using Channels to create my Breakout Groups, as I won't need anything from the students' video-recorded, and I can have the groups set up for the duration of my section of the Module.

I hope this quick guide is in some way useful.

If you have any updates or additional insights which could be useful, please feel free to add, or send them onto me @ c.mcclure@qub.ac.uk