Top Tips

Light
Make sure the room is light enough and check whether participants will be sitting in front of a window which can result in that person being too dark to be easily seen.

Camera
Check that the camera is at a good level in relation to the participants. Remember how the newsreader on telly appears on the screen—the picture includes head and shoulders but there will be a little bit of space all around the sides and top.

Sound
Use the Vol+ and Vol– buttons on the console or remote to increase the incoming volume and check whether your microphone is on or off — there will be an icon on the right of the large screen. It is best to keep the microphone off until you wish to speak in case it picks up extraneous noise in the room (machinery hum, for example).

Etiquette
A list of participants’ names could be made available to everyone prior to the conference.
It is usually wise to mute your microphone if no-one at your site is speaking. This means that coughs, etc do not disturb people at other sites. Beware of making comments at the end of a video conference before ensuring that the call is completely disconnected.
Bear in mind that you can still be seen, if not heard, so mobile phones and laptops should only be used if they are necessary to the business of the videoconference.
If you are invited to take part in the class, do so—your contribution is valuable. Your tutor will always appreciate feedback. Listen to your fellow students as well as they may have different perspectives you can learn from.

The University of the Highlands and Islands is committed to enhancing your student experience. If you would like to give us any feedback on any aspect of your time with us, simply press the red button. You will find the link by clicking on ‘Current Students’ on the UHI Home Page http://www.uhi.ac.uk.

Getting Help
Your course tutor is a great source of help and assistance.
If you are studying in one of the UHI Colleges or Learning Centres then the College Librarian or Learning Centre Manager will be happy to assist you. If you are studying from home then you can call your tutor, the UHI Subject Librarian or your student adviser.

UHI Helpdesk
UHI provides a Helpdesk Service for all students. You should think of Helpdesk as your first port of call for any technical queries you may have. Our friendly and highly skilled staff are there if you need help. Helpdesk is open from 0900 - 1700 Monday to Friday. You can email 150@uhi.ac.uk, call 150 from an internal phone or call 01463 279150 from an outside line. Please remember to provide your student ID and a summary of your enquiry and a contact number if necessary.

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What is Videoconferencing?

Definition: Videoconferencing is a real-time, two-way exchange of information between two or more geographically dispersed locations using audio, video and sometimes data.

Huh? UHI has its own internal two-way telly.

The University of the Highlands and Islands uses videoconferencing as part of its teaching and learning programme. This allows students to go into their local Academic Partner or Learning Centre to join classes being taught from another location.

How is Videoconferencing (VC) used within UHI?

As a teaching tool, videoconferencing is versatile, incorporating many features to improve the learning experience. For example, a laptop connected to VC equipment will share documents which are displayed on screen for all participants to see. Media players allow the showing of Blu-ray DVDs across the link. As well as using these features for teaching, they can be used by students for presentations, student union meetings, etc. UHI Student Association meetings are held via videoconference, giving students in each of the Academic Partners the opportunity to attend.

VC lectures can be recorded and played back at a later date so, if you are ill, there is no need to miss a lecture. Your lecturer can arrange the recording with the videoconferencing service and assist you with access to recordings.

Desktop videoconferencing is available for those students who have difficulty attending an Academic Partner or Learning Centre in person. This allows students to login to a conference from any location. Ask your lecturer or VC service for details.

What does the Videoconferencing equipment look like?

Sixty new videoconferencing studios were installed in 2010 and there are approximately 150 VC studios throughout the Academic Partners and Learning Centres altogether. The equipment in the studios is similar and its operation follows the same principles. There are large screens to view the video, video cameras on the same wall, overhead microphones, a computer and either remote controls or consoles to control it all.

Some of the rooms have different devices such as a whiteboard, a connection for a laptop and the lecture theatres have a projector.

Videoconferencing support

The Videoconferencing Service (VCS) is part of the Learning and Information Services Department and is run by staff who manage the day-to-day scheduling of all multi-site conferences. They also provide technical support to users. Each academic partner also offers local first line support and basic training. VCS Support is open Monday – Friday 0830 – 1700 and support is available at evenings and weekends if videoconferences are scheduled.

For support relating to videoconferencing, call 155 from an internal phone or 01463 279155 from an external line. If you are attending a videoconference out of normal working hours, you can still use this number for support.

How do I learn to use the equipment?

Training materials for each of these devices are available in the Learning and Information Service’s section of the UHI website http://www.uhi.ac.uk/. Click on the ‘Students’ link at the top right of the page and then on the ‘IT Help’ button.

FAQs

I’m in the VC room and all the screens are black

Just touch the console or press a button on the remote and everything should come out of ‘sleep mode’. Look for a small green light in front of the PC—if you can’t see one, press the ‘ON’ switch.

How do I make a call?

In most cases, your tutor will have arranged a videoconference with the videoconferencing service and the connection will be made for you.

How do I end a call?

Press the ‘Disconnect’ button when your videoconference is finished. You will be asked to press ‘Disconnect’ again to confirm. On the remote, the ‘Disconnect’ button has a red handset icon.

I don’t feel comfortable in front of a camera

Most people don’t, initially, but you will soon find that you forget about the camera being there. If the camera is zoomed in so that everyone can be seen clearly (leave a little bit of space), it feels as if you are all in the same virtual room.

Do I have to speak into a microphone?

No—the microphone is overhead and is sensitive enough to pick up most people’s voices without having to shout.

Can I use PowerPoints?

If you have a Powerpoint presentation on your laptop, you can connect it to the laptop socket and press the ‘Laptop’ button under ‘Source Select’ on the console or the ‘Laptop’ or ‘Presentation’ button on the remote. You also have the option to bring the presentation on your pen-drive and connect it to the PC. Press the ‘PC’ button on the console. Remember to switch back to Main Camera when you’re finished.

Can I share videos or music?

You can share files of most file format. Just open the file in the usual way and use the ‘Laptop’ or ‘PC’ buttons on the remote or console, as described above.

How do I prepare for a videoconference?

As with all classes, turn up on time. This is important in a videoconference as you may have to check if the camera is correctly positioned.

When the videoconference starts, make sure you can see and hear that others can see and hear you. If things are not right, let your tutor know.