



Nuffield Future Researchers

Guidance for: Working in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Overview

Increasingly during this pandemic, teaching and learning are taking place online. This approach has been relatively common in higher and further education for many years but rarely has it featured in school-based education or been applied consistently. While we must handle the immediate situation, it is likely that the way in which young people engage with learning may change for good. In line with this, the new Nuffield Future Researchers programme provides a valuable opportunity for all stakeholders to partake in a virtual research experience and, together, learn how best to interact in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Introduction

Google Classroom

After scoping possible options, and following a review and impact assessment by an internal team at the Nuffield Foundation, we have decided to use *Google Classroom* as the VLE for the Nuffield Future Researchers programme. We believe this application is a suitable choice for the needs of the programme; it is easily accessible for all and has the necessary functionality not only to provide relevant activities for students but also to provide for any communication needs between students, Project Supervisors and Coordinators. *Google Classroom* will be accessible for all relevant students and Project Supervisors until the end of September 2020, at which point the 2019/20 Nuffield Future Researchers cycle will be closed, and all associated materials and logins will be deactivated.

Applications available in the Nuffield Future Researchers *Google Classroom* are as follows:

- **Google Meet** (formerly *Google Hangout*): A video communication service that will allow users to communicate via audio/video conference.
- **Google Chat**: An instant messaging service in which users can keep in touch with one person or a group.
- **Google Drive**: A file and folder storage service in which users can save and share project-specific documents.
- **Gmail**: An email service whereby users can email other @nuffieldresearcher.org email addresses.
- **Google Calendar**: A time-management and scheduling calendar service through which users can arrange and keep track of project-related activities/events.
- **Jamboard**: A collaborative digital whiteboard in which users can create and share ideas in real-time.
- **Keep**: A note-taking service by which users can jot down meeting notes and make lists etc.
- **Tasks**: A to-do list creation service through which users can keep track of tasks that need to be completed.

We hope that this will enable you to virtually connect and collaborate as seamlessly as possible and using whichever format works best for the situation. Project Supervisors may wish, for example, to have online drop-in sessions in which they are available for instant messaging on the *Google Chat* function to field questions from students, schedule a *Google Meet* in conjunction with the *Jamboard* service to clarify a concept and generate ideas in more detail or save and share relevant documents using their *Google Drive*. Students, for example, may wish to email their supervisor using their @nuffieldresearchers.org *Gmail* account with a list of questions that can be answered in bulk, use *Google Keep* to take notes during a *Google Meet* or outline their to-do-list via *Google Tasks*. We

believe that the above will help cover all communication and project needs, while also ensuring a communication trail should a safeguarding issue arise (please see the *Safeguarding measures* section for more information).

Gaining access to Google Classroom

When informed by your Regional Coordinator, please go to <https://classroom.google.com/> and log in using the email address and password with which you have been provided. *Google Classroom can only be accessed using your assigned email address* (which ends in '@nuffieldresearchers.org'). You cannot, therefore, use your own personal *Gmail* or another email account to access *Google Classroom*. When you log in for the first time, you will be forced to update your password to one of your choosing; please make sure your new password is of adequate strength to ensure the security of your account.

You can access *Google Classroom* from any internet browser. You can also use [the Google Classroom app](#) on an Apple or Android mobile devices – but do note that you will also have to download separate apps for *Google Docs*, *Sheets* and *Slides*.

Students can also sign up for *Office 365 Education* for free, which will include access to applications such as *Word*, *Excel* and *PowerPoint* etc. – find more information on that [here](#).

Please note that the setup and allocation of students to Project Supervisor classrooms will be handled by the Nuffield Foundation. This includes necessary security and administration settings, some of which cannot be changed. We will also provide Project Supervisors and students with guidance materials so that everyone is comfortable navigating *Google Classroom*. However, if you would like to undertake some information-gathering in your own time to find out more about how to use *Google Classrooms* effectively, you can find some helpful video guides [here](#) alongside searching for free tutorials on YouTube.

Safeguarding measures

Given the online nature of the projects this summer, students, parents/guardians and Project Supervisors may be concerned about the possibility for misuse (for more information on this, please read our Online Safeguarding guidance). We have, therefore, included some directions throughout this document for both students and Project Supervisors when collaborating within *Google Classroom*.

The first of these is that we ask for all communication to occur within *Google Classroom* and its associated applications.

Google Classroom has been deemed a suitable application for the purposes of this programme because projects can be entirely self-contained within it, making it appropriate for both projects in which there are multiple students working with a Project Supervisor and those in which the project is supervised on a 1:1 basis.

The only exceptions to the above requirement are circumstances in which it would be relevant and appropriate for a student to join a staff meeting or call outside of *Google Classroom*, such as for an online seminar, virtual experiments or an online meeting of a research group that the supervisor is a member of etc. This is permitted providing there is at least one other staff member present in the meeting (although please note that another Nuffield Future Researchers student is not considered to be another staff member). However, should there be a 1:1 call between a student and a supervisor **or** the Project Supervisor is going to be talking to multiple Nuffield Future Researcher students only, this must be done via *Google Classroom's Google Meet* application.

We're keen for students not to miss out on opportunities like the examples above where they would usually be available to students undertaking on-site placements. We hope that the above is a good balance between safeguarding and benefit.

Google Meet

As previously mentioned, *Google Meet* is a virtual space in which students and Project Supervisors can call each other using their laptop, desktop or mobile phone. There is no option to join a *Google Meet* via telephone; instead, you must access the call via the link provided by the Project

Supervisor. Project Supervisors will have control over who is admitted to the *Google Meet* to ensure that it remains a safe and secure online space. *Google Meet* features the option to have your camera switched on, so that meeting attendees can see each other (this is encouraged for relationship-building). Alternatively, this can be turned off so that just the audio is used – with no camera – if preferred.

In line with safeguarding considerations, we ask that video conferencing between Project Supervisors and students is recorded.

This means that any *Google Meet* must be initiated/scheduled by the Project Supervisor, as they have the administrative access necessary to turn on meeting recording. This recording of meetings is in lieu of an 'open door' policy and ensures a communication trail that will protect both the student and the Project Supervisor.

An important feature of the meeting recording(s) is that they will *only* be available to the attendees of the video conference. Recordings can be found in attendees' *Google Drive* after the meeting. Your Regional Coordinator will *not* have access to the recordings and nor will they be monitoring them; however, should the recordings need to be reviewed for any reason, Nuffield Foundation staff do have administrative access. To protect your privacy, this access will only be used if absolutely necessary. The exception to the recording meetings rule is if students would like to communicate with each other via *Google Meet*. For this, no recording is necessary and nor can it be enabled. We encourage responsible peer-to-peer networking and information-sharing between students.

Our Google Classroom Code of Conduct

How you use *Google Classroom* and its associated applications is flexible and can be decided between student(s) and Project Supervisors, depending on activity need. We do ask, however, that all parties working in *Google Classroom* follow the below recommendations on appropriate conduct:

1. As in face-to-face meetings between young people and adults, it may be appropriate for another adult to be present in the room – or, at the very least, to be aware that the *Google Meet* is happening.
 - a. For students communicating with their Project Supervisor, this could mean that, if possible, you arrange for an adult in your house to be close when the *Google Meet* is happening or at least make an appropriate adult aware that the call is taking place.
 - b. For Project Supervisors undertaking *Google Meets* with students, you can either ensure a colleague joins the call or make a colleague aware of it if a 1:1 *Google Meet* is unavoidable.
2. Find spaces to communicate from that do not reveal your personal information or display things that you may not wish others to see.
 - a. Bedrooms are less than ideal but, if this is your only option, do be aware of what is on display, e.g. photographs of family members or personal laundry items etc.
 - b. When accessed from the Google Chrome browser, *Google Classroom* allows for an add-on whereby you can have a customised or blurred background. There is more information on this [here](#).
3. Dress appropriately for a professional setting and ensure you use professional and appropriate language.
4. If sharing your screen at any time, do ensure there is nothing inappropriate that can be seen by other call participants.
5. It may help all project members if you make a communication calendar using *Google Calendar* and agree what dates and at what times to contact one another and by which channel. It may also be useful to set out when you will *not* be available.
6. It is worth making a note of conversations immediately after the call has finished and to act on any issues, both positive (for example, if you need to expand on your notes to ensure you've got everything down or start a to-do list of action points) or where you feel unhappy with something that happened on the call or immediately afterwards (for example, being sent unsolicited material).

7. If you need to terminate a *Google Meet* early because you do not feel safe or because you feel ill or see or hear something upsetting, please ensure you contact your Regional Coordinator for support and guidance as soon as possible.

Activities within the VLE

Students will be able to access the activities for the *Developing Research Skills* and *Developing Data Analysis and Numerical Skills* modules after completion of the virtual student induction with their Regional Coordinator. The Coordinator will be able to monitor the completion of these activities on *Google Classroom* and follow up on any outstanding tasks.

Project Supervisors will be able to set activities in *Google Classroom* for students to access. In effect, they will take on the user role of 'Teacher'. The below points are an extract from a blog¹ that outlines the ways in which *Google Classroom* can be used:

- Streamline how classes are managed:
 - The platform integrates with Google's other tools, such as *Docs*, *Drive* and *Calendar*, so there are lots of built-in shortcuts for classroom-management tasks. For example, if you post an assignment with a due date, it's automatically added to the class calendar for your students to see.
- Digitally organise, distribute and collect assignments, course materials and student work:
 - Teachers can also post an assignment to multiple classes or modify and reuse assignments from year to year. If your students have regular access to devices, *Google Classroom* can help you avoid some trips to the photocopier and cut down on some of the paper-shuffling that comes with teaching and learning.
- Communicate with students about their classwork:
 - You can use the platform to post announcements and reminders about assignments and it's easy to see who has or hasn't completed their work. You can also check in with individual students privately, answer their questions and offer support.
- Give students timely feedback on their assignments and assessments:
 - In *Google Classroom*, it's possible to use *Google Forms* to create and share quizzes that are automatically graded as students turn them in. You'll not only spend less time grading, but your students will get instant feedback on their work.

Please note that if Project Supervisors deem it appropriate, they can initiate 'Confidential mode' in their @nuffieldresearcher.org *Gmail* account in order to send sensitive or confidential information to their student(s). More information can be found [here](#).

You are permitted to sync your *Google Drive* with your laptop to enable offline working if you would like. At the end of the programme, Project Supervisors will need to confirm with their students whether any files need to be deleted from the student's local drive if files were downloaded or synced.

Things to remember:

1. Access to *Google Classroom* must be via your given @nuffieldresearchers.org email address and not your personal/work/school/college email address.
2. Always communicate via *Google Classroom* unless an external meeting with colleagues of the Project Supervisor present is deemed appropriate and beneficial to the student(s).
3. Project Supervisors must initiate/schedule a *Google Meet* with students and ensure the meetings are recorded.
4. Recordings of meetings will only be available to meeting attendees unless it is deemed appropriate for internal Nuffield Foundation administrative staff to have access.
5. Project Supervisors should only admit those attendees who are appropriate and relevant to the *Google Meet*.

¹ <https://www.common sense.org/education/articles/teachers-essential-guide-to-google-classroom#How%20do%20teachers%20use%20Google%20Classroom?>

6. During a *Google Meet*, another adult should be present in the room or in the meeting – or, at the very least, be aware that the *Google Meet* is happening.
7. Appropriate clothing should always be worn and professional language always used.
8. Users should ensure nothing inappropriate can be seen, either in their background during a *Google Meet* or during a screen share.
9. Students can sign up for *Office 365 Education* for free, which will include access to applications such as *Word*, *Excel* and *PowerPoint* etc. – please see more information [here](#).
10. If users feel unsafe or upset at any point during their interactions in *Google Classroom* and its associated applications, they should contact their Regional Coordinator immediately.

Google Classroom support

If you have any queries or questions regarding *Google Classroom*, please contact our dedicated support team at support@nuffieldresearchers.org.