The Oxford HIVE – Hub for International Virtual Education

Guide for Prospective Users

The HIVE: A brief overview

The Oxford Hub for International Virtual Education is the next step in creating engagement between the presenter and attendees of virtual events and deepening their impact.

When presenting through the HIVE the presenter can see a live video of faces of up to 84 participants at once, gauge their reactions based on facial expressions and other cues that have traditionally only been possible in a physical meeting space.

The presenter can also display presentations, run polls, share documents and break participants into small groups. Attendees can ask questions by voice or by typing, raise hands, and work together in small groups on shared documents.

For smaller groups it is possible to configure the HIVE for groups of up to 21 or 42 attendees with one or two attendees per screen, making it ideal for interactions with boards and small working groups.
What can you use the Oxford HIVE for?

The Oxford HIVE is an ideal platform to deliver training to a global audience while maintaining close contact with the speakers, and facilitators and their attendees. Instead of having a large number of participants travel a great distance, only the speaker has to make the journey to Oxford to connect with them as if they were in the same room.

This leads to cost savings as well as reducing the environmental impact of organising events.

The HIVE is also great at presenting pitches or case studies to boards and panels giving more flexibility to all involved.

The facility can also be used to stream presentations given in an intimate setting to a large global audience. This makes it great for things like project or book launches. It makes it possible for the presenters to be truly engaged by a small audience and share their enthusiasm with the public.

How does the Oxford HIVE work?

The **HIVE Room in Oxford** is a physical room with 27 large HD screens on which videos of all the virtual session attendees appear. The only person physically present is the presenter who gets the same sort of visual feedback from attendees as they would in a classroom or a lecture hall.

The **HIVE Virtual Room** is where the attendees join the session. This is where they watch the presenter facilitate their session and see the presentation or digital whiteboard. They can interact by raising hands, voting on polls and sending questions in via chat. They can even be split into small breakout groups and have a more intensive face-to-face interaction with each other.

The presenter does not have to learn anything about the virtual technology; they just interact with the participants as they would in a real classroom / conference.
room, only with a few digital enhancements.

For instance, they can run polls or see the order in which people raised their hands. They don’t even have to stay in one spot; the camera follows them as they move in the room, making for engaging presentation.

The participants also have an extremely low barrier to entry with just a few basic control elements to interact remotely with the lecturer by speaking, raising hands, writing questions, or participating in polls.

**What is the presenter experience?**

The presenter's experience is very much **like that in a traditional classroom**. They can walk around the room with the room camera automatically following them and use the clicker to advance the presentation slides. That is all they need to learn if they just want to deliver an engaging lecture.

The presenter sees if the participants raised their hand or if they are looking puzzled.

They can **call on participants** to ask questions or contribute to a discussion or answer questions that have arrived via chat appearing on the wall.

They don’t need to use any other technological interface than that for controlling their presentation.

But there are many **more features** the presenter can access. The easiest way to add additional interactivity is to run polls to spur discussion. It is even possible to colour-code the participants’ names based on the option they chose.

For even **more intensive collaboration**, the presenter can split participants into smaller breakout groups or even pairs. For additional group collaboration, the presenter can open a shared Google Doc in the room into which the participants can add their contribution.
To increase variety, it is possible to play a video directly within the participant’s view without any loss in quality in sound or video.

What is the attendee experience?

Before the session
The attendee receives an invitation to create an account. They can then join the meeting room at any time and wait for the presenter.

During the session
The virtual attendee interface has been streamlined to minimize confusion.

All attendees have a view of the presentation and a video of the presenters. They also see a view of the whole room. If they have a question, the attendees can raise their hand by using the hand raise button and when called on by the presenter, they hold down the microphone button to speak. They can also use the chat function to ask a question or make a comment without disrupting the flow of the session.

When the room is open for collaboration, participants can work on documents with others in the room or in a break out session.

After the session
The session room with all uploaded resources and recordings of live sessions is available to the attendees on the server after the session’s end.
How to book the HIVE

The HIVE is now available for booking via the Said Business School Conference Office at conference@sbs.ox.ac.uk. Tel: 01865 288846

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<th>Charge:</th>
<th>£500 / hr + VAT</th>
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The cost includes set up time.

The technical details

The HIVE uses the WebRTC protocol to facilitate the communication which means that only the browser and no other software is necessary. Compatible browsers are Google Chrome, Firefox, Opera on Mac and PC and Safari on Mac. Chrome on Android tablets and phones are also supported. Safari on iPad and iPhone will be supported by February 2018.

Note: Only the last 3 versions of each browser are supported. With Safari, only versions on MacOS High Sierra (10.13) and iOS 11.2 and later are supported. Internet Explorer and Edge do not support the WebRTC protocol.

The software runs on the Google Compute Engine to ensure high level of reliability and video responsiveness.

Inside physical the HIVE room, there are 27 4K monitors and a high capacity server with advanced graphics cards.

The speaker is recorded by an HD camera with an autotracking facility.

HIVE FAQs

**Q: Can I use the HIVE for one on one calls or small group meetings?**

**A: The HIVE is primarily a one-to-many communication platform with great visual feedback for the presenter. It is not designed for presentation to groups smaller than about 10. It is easy to forget that the attendees are not in the same visually rich environment that the lecturer is in.**

The HIVE has many collaboration features to be used as part of a conference or event but it is not
primarily intended for small group collaboration. The HIVE’s strength is that it can give a presenter visual cues from attendees that are impossible in traditional webinar settings. But only the presenter gets the full benefit of this.

The main benefit for the attendees is that they get a highly engaged and dynamic presentation and they can interact with the presenter as if they were in a real classroom.

Q: Can I stream large public events from the HIVE?
A: This is not the primary function of the HIVE but it is possible to stream the HIVE session using YouTube or Facebook streaming. Additional costs may apply.

We are also exploring a virtual overflow function for streaming to larger groups.

Q: Do attendees need any special equipment to join the HIVE session?
A: The only requirement for remote attendees of HIVE sessions is to have a browser that supports WebRTC installed on their Mac or PC. Supported browsers are: Google Chrome, Firefox, Opera and Safari. Note: Safari requires the latest version of MacOS High Sierra.

Participants will also need a webcam and a microphone which are part of all modern laptops. Headsets are recommended for best experience, but a microphone is sufficient.

Other than the browser, no special software or plugin needs to be installed for the participants to join the session.

HIVE sessions can also be joined using Chrome on Android tablets and phones. iPad and iPhone support is currently in beta.

Can I connect from any network?
The virtual attendee’s network should be fast enough to stream a YouTube video. Attendees have successfully connected over mobile connections. We recommend a connectivity tests for attendees from corporate networks prior to sessions.