

Using Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) for research involving human participants

The COVID-19 pandemic presented many new challenges for researchers, particularly in conducting qualitative research interviews and focus group sessions. Conducting these remotely can be done with online tools such as Microsoft Teams (MS Teams). MS Teams is an Office365 cloud-based communication and collaboration tool that combines video conferencing, file storage and integration with other Office365 applications. It is considered a secure storage facility available through Yukon University's (YukonU) institutional license. Teams data is encrypted in transit and at rest in Microsoft datacentres.

Licenses are available to all faculty, staff and students. It can be used to meet with staff and students if they are logged into Office365 through their University account. The platform can be accessed by visiting <https://teams.microsoft.com> and logging in with a YukonU ID. There are also desktop and mobile apps available for download.

Training materials: <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/enduser-training>

Key Functionality

Microsoft Teams can be used for 1:1 interviews and focus groups with people external from the university, as well as meetings with staff and students. [Join a meeting without a Teams account](#). As with many collaboration platforms, MS Teams offers HD Video and Audio, easy sharing of content, accessibility functions and the ability to record meetings. Meetings can include up to 250 participants and can last up to 8 hours. It allows you to host and record a session.

Key advantages of using the MS Teams platform are the integration with MS Office products, the platform's use of a Canadian cloud-based infrastructure, the comprehensive use of encryption for data both in transit and at rest, and a highly limited ability for people external to YukonU to join meetings easily, which offers greater security for studies in which participants are all within YukonU. It provides the tools to interview anyone, anywhere. The browser version of Teams is free, so interviewees don't have to download any extra apps or create accounts to join the call. You can schedule an interview, share a screen, record the interview and search an interview transcript.

Interview Options Available

- Audio only
- Video with no audio
- Audio and video

- Audio, video and an automated Live Caption rendering of speech to text on the screen in real time.
- Recording of all the above. The recordings are stored within the Team and is available to the owner and meeting participants. The output is available to the owner in Microsoft Stream under their My Content tab. This is part of the YukonU Office 365 offering. The recordings may be watched online or downloaded.
- All meetings that are recorded are automatically 'transcribed' subsequently on Microsoft Stream. The accuracy of the recording will vary but is typically >85%.

How do start using Microsoft Teams

A YukonU researcher has permission to create new Teams and can add team members to these.

It is recommended that each Team has at least 2 YukonU members who are 'owners' of the Team for logistical/support purposes. This is to provide backup in the event of a researcher being absent or having left the University. If this is not acceptable from a research ethics point of view it is technically possible for a Team to have one owner.

Research Supervisors and Research team members

- It is recommended that all researchers install the MS Teams app on University-issued laptops or desktops that will be used to record or manage interviews.
- You must start the interview on a laptop or desktop, using the Teams app or within a browser, as you cannot start a meeting from a mobile device.
- You can create a specific team for each interviewee/focus group and enrol interviewees as 'guests'.

Interview Participants

- You can invite a person from outside of YukonU to a Teams meeting with another email address. You can have people who do not have a @yukonu.ca email address as a "guest" on any Team you create. Once they are a guest in a Team, you can invite them to a meeting, collaborate, chat and share files in a channel.
- You can find more information about inviting someone outside of YukonU to a Teams meeting by viewing the videos in the links below:
 1. [Invite Anyone from Outside of Your Organization to your Meeting](#)
 2. [How to Join a Team meeting you were invited to if you are a Guest](#)Details from Microsoft support on how to [Add Guests to a team in Teams](#)
It is recommended that you do a test call with an outside individual to confirm this is working correctly.

- All interview participants should use private browsing functions on a desktop or laptop web this includes:
 - Google Chrome browser in incognito Windows mode
 - Microsoft Edge InPrivate window (**Ctrl-Shift-N**)
 - Mozilla Firefox Private Browsing (**Ctrl-Shift-P**)
- Browsers: see details about Teams support of internet browsers at <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/limits-specifications-teams>
- If an interview participant is using a mobile device, then the researcher carrying out the interview should request that they install the Microsoft Teams app on their device before the interview commences.
- When the above have been completed, the researcher can initiate online audio and video calls with the participant in order to carry out the interview.

Recordings of Interview

Recordings are saved to OneDrive and Sharepoint.

Teams shows a notification to all participants on the Teams desktop, web and mobiles apps as well as to people who joined via phone when a meeting recording starts.

Requirements for recording – Informed Consent

- You must have participant's permission before you can record them. For research requirements this permission must be documented, either in writing (signed consent) or by recording consent.
- It should be made clear to participants whether the recording is audio only, audio and video or video only.
- The participant should understand that they can stop the recording at any time. They must understand they need to indicate to the researcher that they would like the recording stopped.
- Participants must understand where the recording is stored and how long the recorded data will be retained.

If the participant has agreed that the interview can be recorded, the interviewer must remember to start and stop the recording. After the time limit has elapsed, a new recording must be started.

If you have started the meeting recording you should stop the recording when the meeting is complete or if a participant asks that the recording be stopped. The meeting organizer or a person from YukonU can start and stop a recording. A person from another organization, guest or anonymous participant is not able to start and stop a recording.

Researchers should be aware that with enough technical awareness, any participant in a video conferencing meeting (using any platform) has the ability to record the meeting without the researchers (hosts) knowledge. Consenting processes should make this clear to all participants. Online interviews should not be done for research that involves collection of sensitive information. Online methods are best for projects considered to be minimal risk.

Privacy

In order to minimize any privacy issues which may arise, the following guidance is provided

- Researchers should create separate teams for each research team member.
- If more than one research member is collecting data, then each member will be able to see recordings carried out by other members unless they have separate teams. This would contravene ethical/privacy requirements. Each research member can carry out multiple interviews in the team assigned to them.
- Researchers may create up to 250 teams.
- MS teams includes a feature called 'channels'. The recommended model of one Teams channel for each interview is given below. Note: the maximum number of channels within a team is 200. This includes deleted channels. When more than 200 interviews are to be conducted as part of the research, the researcher will need to create additional teams to conduct these interviews.

Data Storage and Retention

- When a recording of an interview is made, you need to determine where the data is being stored. If it is saved to Microsoft Stream Cloud storage you will need to manually download and delete from the cloud.
- Associated with the recording is an automated speech-to-text transcript. Because this is automated, it is not a completely accurate transcription record. It is currently available only for English language recordings. A final transcription of the interview will need to be verified by the researcher. Some research project protocols will also have the requirement to share and verify the transcript with the participant and this tool helps in doing this work.
- Participants invited using a URL link cannot see recordings of the interviews in Teams. The recording will need to be sent to them by a separate, secure means.
- The recordings and associated automated transcript, can be downloaded from Stream to a secure local storage.
- The Research Ethics Office (REO) recommends a retention period of a maximum of one week for recordings if these are on Microsoft Stream cloud storage. During this

period the recording should be downloaded to secure local storage. It is best to store directly on your own computer and ensure these files are password protected.

- The REO recommends a retention period of one month for recordings in a secure local storage site unless the requirements of the research indicate a longer retention time and have been specified in your Research Ethics application.

Using MS Teams – training videos available <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/microsoft-teams-video-training-4f108e54-240b-4351-8084-b1089f0d21d7>

Some of the training modules available include:

- Quick start
- Intro to Microsoft Teams
- Set up and customize your team
- Collaborate in teams and channels
- Upload and find files
- Manage meetings

If you have questions about the use of Microsoft Teams for your research please contact the Research Ethics Coordinator at vwalker@yukonu.ca. If you require technical support with the YukonU Microsoft Teams you should submit a help ticket to the YukonU help desk at <https://help.yukonu.ca/>

These guidelines have been adapted from resource materials posted online by McMaster University and Trinity College, Dublin University.