

Concern about Privacy and Security issues of using Zoom for classes

Wednesday, 29 April 2020 6:46 PM

To: All UG and PG Students; All Faculty
cc: All Staff

Dear Students and Faculty,

Recent news revealed many privacy and security issues with the Zoom platform and we understand many students and faculty may have concerns when using Zoom in our real-time classes. Some also suggested that we should switch to other platforms. We share the same concerns because we treat privacy and security issues seriously at HKUST. By this email, I would like to update members of the actions and measures HKUST have taken to address these issues.

1. Currently, HKUST has a site license for Microsoft Teams, an alternative to Zoom, and everyone can use it now. However, the current version of Teams lacks many features used by faculty in classes for Teaching and Learning purpose, but we expect Teams to add these features in future releases to enhance its competitiveness. Until then, we believe that only a limited number of classes can use Teams to replace Zoom.
2. We are also exploring Webex from Cisco and will provide support for that platform if it deems suitable.
3. As a paid customer of Zoom, HKUST closely monitors how Zoom addresses these issues as they arise and constantly communicate with Zoom to get solutions or workaround. In particular, we note that recent releases by Zoom had pulled out many security features to create a new button on the menu bar for the host to quickly disable users' ability to share screen, rename themselves or post on chat, and to lock the meeting or create waiting room. Version 5.0.0 just released yesterday finally uses AES 256-bit GCM encryption to match with their original claim of using 256-bit encryption.
4. As an institution, we adopt **Single-Sign-On (SSO) using ITSC account with 2FA** (Two Factor Authentication) so that Zoom will only have our email addresses and names, but not any other private information of our members.
5. The global and default setting in Zoom for all HKUST members is that **only ITSC authenticated users can join meetings** started by our members. This setting and the SSO are the measures HKUST use to prevent outsiders from joining (Zoom-booming) our meetings or classes. To our knowledge, many problems reported stem from the lack of this. This implementation can avoid many unfortunate incidents reported in the media, including those in our sister universities.
6. The global and default setting in Zoom for all HKUST members is that **recordings will not display participants' names** to protect the privacy of students or participants. Like meetings, recordings can only be accessed by HKUST members through ITSC login with 2FA login process. The setting for NOT displaying names in recording provides an added assurance on privacy for participants.
7. New versions of Zoom allow users to opt out from certain data center regions. However, for our classes with students from around the world, we cannot set this restriction while maintaining reasonable quality of class experience. We have to allow real-time video and audio data in Zoom Classes to route through servers closest to the students. However, even if hackers steal the data on the fly, they may be able to eavesdrop in our classes, but are unlikely to be able to intrude in the class.
8. To provide the most up-to-date facts and measures we have taken, an FAQ page (<https://itsc.ust.hk/zoom-online-teaching/faq-privacy-security-issue-zoom>) will be set up by the end of this week to provide ways to address the privacy and security issues when using Zoom in classes. An online form for members to raise their

concerns and questions not covered by the FAQ is set up on that page so that we can amend and update the FAQ based on your input.

Important Note to Faculty members:

We ask all faculty members to double-check the settings of their Zoom classes from within Canvas and their Recording settings in <https://hkust.zoom.us> to ensure that they are using the default global settings in points 5 and 6 above, respectively. (See enclosed screenshots)

Based on the current privacy and security concerns known to the public, the fixes Zoom has included in their new versions, the default global settings we set for members at HKUST, the nature of our Zoom classes and the required confidentiality, we believe that, at this point, with the proper settings, the major privacy and security concerns of using Zoom for classes have been addressed. While we will continue to scrutinise and pay close attention to Zoom's actions or inactions and be alert on any new discoveries by the international community on Zoom's privacy and security concerns. We are also working to get other platforms ready as soon as possible so that, if needed, we have alternatives.

Thank you for your understandings and please do visit the FAQ page in a few days when it is ready.

Thanks,
Roger Cheng
Associate Provost (Teaching & Learning)

Canvas

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Syllabus

Outcomes

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Conferences

Collaborations

Library Toolbox

More Tools

Studio

After 7 occurrences

Registration ☐ Required

Video

Host ☒ on ☐ off

Participant ☐ on ☒ off

Audio

☐ Telephone ☐ Computer Audio ☒ Both

Meeting Options

☐ Require meeting password

☐ Enable join before host

☒ Mute participants upon entry

☐ Enable waiting room

☒ Only authenticated users can join

HKUST

connect.ust.hk,ust.hk Edit

☒ Record the meeting automatically in the cloud

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Recording

Local recording



Allow hosts and participants to record the meeting to a local file

Cloud recording



Allow hosts to record and save the meeting / webinar in the cloud

- ☒ Record active speaker with shared screen
- ☐ Record gallery view with shared screen ⓘ
- ☐ Record active speaker, gallery view and shared screen separately
- ☒ Record an audio only file
- ☒ Save chat messages from the meeting / webinar

Advanced cloud recording settings

- ☐ Add a timestamp to the recording ⓘ
- ☐ Display participants' names in the recording
- ☒ Record thumbnails when sharing ⓘ
- ☐ Optimize the recording for 3rd party video editor ⓘ
- ☐ Save panelist chat to the recording ⓘ