**ITBL**

INQUIRY THROUGH BLENDED LEARNING

## Engaging Students in Real Time with Elluminate Live!

*Changing student demographics and new technologies provide motivation for the university as a whole and for individual instructors to design greater flexibility into course structures and learning environments. Elluminate Live! allows instructors to "meet" with students and colleagues in real-time even though they may not be physically in the same room.*

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## What Is Elluminate?

Elluminate Live! is a web-based audio-graphic conferencing software package that allows for real-time virtual lectures, discussions and meetings. This technology enables instructors to hold online lectures or meetings with students, communicate with distance learners in virtual space, and collaborate with other faculty and researchers around the world via online meetings. The audio discussion and presentations can be recorded for later review. Elluminate is embedded in Blackboard so that students can access it seamlessly through course sites.

PowerPoint slides can be imported to support instructor or student presentations and there is a whiteboard with tools for typing text or drawing graphic elements that everyone in the session can view. Online breakout rooms provide for small group discussions, text messaging functions can facilitate private conversations and survey and assessment tools make it easy to get timely feedback. Elluminate also allows participants to share desktop applications (e.g. Adobe Photoshop) and Web sites.

Required hardware and software are easy to acquire and use. You and your students will simply download the Java-based client software to your computer and then test to make sure that your microphone, speaker and/or headset are compatible with the Elluminate system. Schedule an Elluminate session for a specific day and time. Everyone in the class connects from wherever they are.

## Why Use Ellumniate?

Elluminate has obvious utility in distant and online courses, but it can also be useful in blended learning. Today, many of our students live off campus and commute to school and many have part-time or full-time jobs. Elluminate sessions can reduce the number of times that students have to travel to campus, thereby saving time and often reducing or eliminating the woes and cost of parking, finding child care, or leaving the workplace. Instructors, too, can conduct classes from remote locations when they are traveling for conferences or research field work.

Guest experts from anywhere in the province, the nation or the world can make presentations or join a discussion right from their home or office. Students can attend from their own desktops or they can assemble in class and the Elluminate session can be projected for all to see.

Student schedules often make it difficult for small groups to meet to discuss and work on projects. Elluminate makes it possible for some or all of those meetings to take place online and sessions can be recorded in case a group member cannot make the meeting.

Elluminate can be used for small online group tutorials or study sessions – with or without the instructor in attendance.

## Give Me an Example

For a class where you have an extended team project, set up Elluminate sessions in your Blackboard course where each of the small groups may schedule their own meeting times to work on their projects, in addition to, or in place of face-to-face meetings they may want to conduct. Set specific times during the semester when you will meet with each team to discuss progress and direction of their project. Depending on the group's preference and yours, some of these meetings may be conducted via Elluminate. If done through Elluminate, you may want to record the session for use in assessment. This may consist of students assessing their individual contributions to the group as well as their assessment of the over-all group process.

## More Ideas

- In especially large classes, you may want to schedule at least one tutorial session each week to be conducted through Elluminate. You or a teaching assistant can conduct it and schedule it for a convenient time. Students may attend "live" to ask questions and discuss topics and issues. Record the session and make it available to students unable to attend a tutorial session that week and to all students as a review they can view anytime during the semester.

- When inquiry groups identify a human resource such as the author of a particularly interesting article they read or a practitioner who has authentic experience in an area related to their inquiry, they can contact that resource and ask to talk with them through Elluminate. Students will likely need your help to make Elluminate available to the resource person, but such a session has the advantage of being able to access human resources anywhere in the world as well as being able to record the session so that students outside that group may listen to the discussion at a later date. Imagine being able to discuss the AIDs crisis with an African expert, or discuss Middle East issues with a student in the region.

- Deliver an entire course online using Elluminate in conjunction with Blackboard and Breeze.

- Once a week or once every two weeks offer "virtual" office hours via Elluminate.

## Other Considerations

- While the tool is easy to use, it is important that each person download and test the application on their own computer well in advance of a session. This will allow time to contact IT for help if someone encounters a problem.

- Moderating/facilitating your first session can be a bit stressful if do not have previous experience. Consider participating in a couple of practice sessions with colleagues and/or inviting an experienced Elluminate moderator to sit in as an assistant for your first session.

- Be sure that you make the best use of the tool. You will not want to take up much time within an Elluminate session to deliver content. Ask students to view a Breeze presentation or to complete readings prior to the session, then use Elluminate to engage in discussions, sharing of perspectives or coming to consensus.

- Headsets can be purchased for less than twenty dollars and tend to deliver better results than just speakers and a microphone. Students may want to stick with what they already have or an economic microphone, but moderators will likely prefer a headset.

## Where Can I Go for More Information?

1. **Ellumnate Instructors Help Page**
   http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/elluminate/instructors.html

   **Elluminate Quick Reference Guide**
   http://www.elluminate.com/support/docs/ELive_Moderator_Quick_Reference_Guide_6.0.pdf

   **Getting Started with Elluminate**
   http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/documents/Getting_Started_with_ElluminateLive!.pdf

   **Live Manager**
   http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/documents/Elluminate LiveManager.pdf

   **Elluminate Live!TM User Guide for moderators**
   http://www.elluminate.com/support/docs/ELive_Moderators_Guide_6.0.pdf

2. **Elluminate Live! Workshops**
   Check the Teaching and Learning Centre's workshop page

   http://commons.ucalgary.ca/cgi-bin/WebObjects/Workshops.woa

3. **Examples of Elluminate Sessions**
   Elluminate.com provides a series of links to archived sessions.

   http://sas.elluminate.com/site/external/event/playback

4. **Synchronous E-Learning: Analyzing Teaching Strategies**
   A study by the University of South Florida (2005) to investigate how synchronous e-learning tools such as Elluminate Live! can be used to support specific teaching strategies within online courses.

   http://www.coedu.usf.edu/cream/papers/STARS_SITE_2005_paper__Final.pdf

5. **7 Things You Should Know About Virtual Meetings: A Brief from the Educause Learning Initiative**

   http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7011.pdf