

# Using Microsoft Teams for Office Hours

*Created by Luciana Marques for English faculty ([Luciana.Marques@colostate.edu](mailto:Luciana.Marques@colostate.edu))*

Instructor office hours may be one of the most under-utilized resources students have to succeed in our classes. Mostly, students do not attend office hours because either the time does not work for them, or they do not feel comfortable talking to the instructor individually, or even they do not realize they can just “drop in”. This issue becomes more pressing in online classes, as the lack of face-to-face interaction makes it harder for students to even remember that the instructor even exists behind Canvas, let alone attend a virtual meeting. However, attending office hours helps students succeed, especially in a composition class, where the discussion of essay ideas and drafts allows students to write essays more closely related to what the instructor intended.

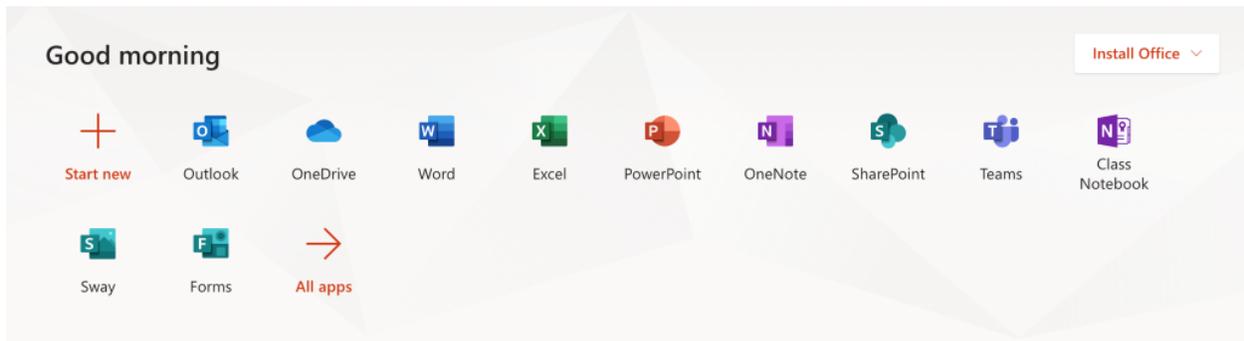
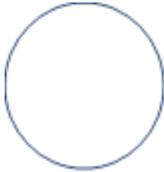
In face-to-face classes, instructors are required to hold about 3 hours of office hours a week, some at a fixed schedule, called open office hours, some by appointment. While in face-to-face office hours students sit with instructors, in an online environment, students can meet with the instructor via online platforms. Meeting online may require more effort from both the instructor and the student, since it is not just stopping by an open office, but really sitting in front of a computer, downloading and accessing different types of software, logging on, etc. Most times, students and instructors need to make appointments for those meetings. So, to try and make things easier, we suggest you hold your office hours using Microsoft Office Teams, and we suggest you hold your office hours via appointments and in “help desk style”.

## What is Microsoft Teams?

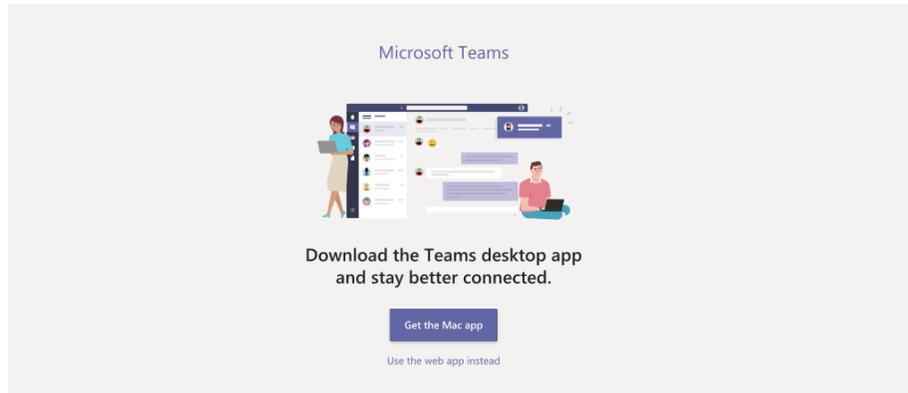
Microsoft Teams is a communication platform that can be used in several ways. Most instructors use it to meet with students in office hours and record lectures using the meeting function. The great advantage to using Microsoft Teams is that all students and faculty are connected to it already via their Microsoft Office account (the one with the format [firstname.lastname@colostate.edu](mailto:firstname.lastname@colostate.edu) or [ename@colostate.edu](mailto:ename@colostate.edu)). Also, it is free to use, and fully supported by ACNS. Using Microsoft Teams instead of a third-party software reduces the number of software students need to have in order to take classes, and uniformizes the software use across campus, as other departments also use Microsoft Teams. This was a common complaint students had in the Spring. [This link](#) has more information on how to use Microsoft Teams.

Students and instructors can use Microsoft Team via a web browser, by signing in to office.com with their Microsoft Office account (with the format [eID@colostate.edu](mailto:eID@colostate.edu)). However, we suggest both students and instructors to download Microsoft Teams to their computers. The greatest

advantage is that it is very easy to be notified if someone is trying to reach out with the desktop app than it is with the web browser version. To download Microsoft Teams, go to office.com, log in with your [eID@colostate.edu](mailto:eID@colostate.edu) email and password and click on the Microsoft Teams icon. You can also get it by clicking Install Office à Office 365 apps (but you will get all apps, including Word, Excel, etc).



Then, on the next screen, click the “Get the [Operating System] app” button.

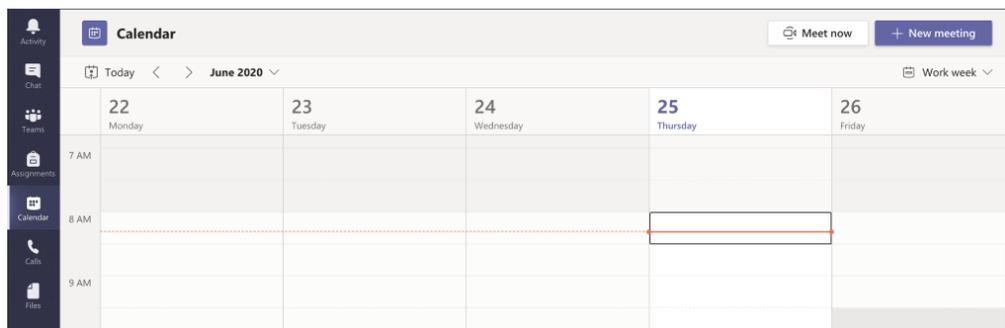


## How to use Microsoft Teams

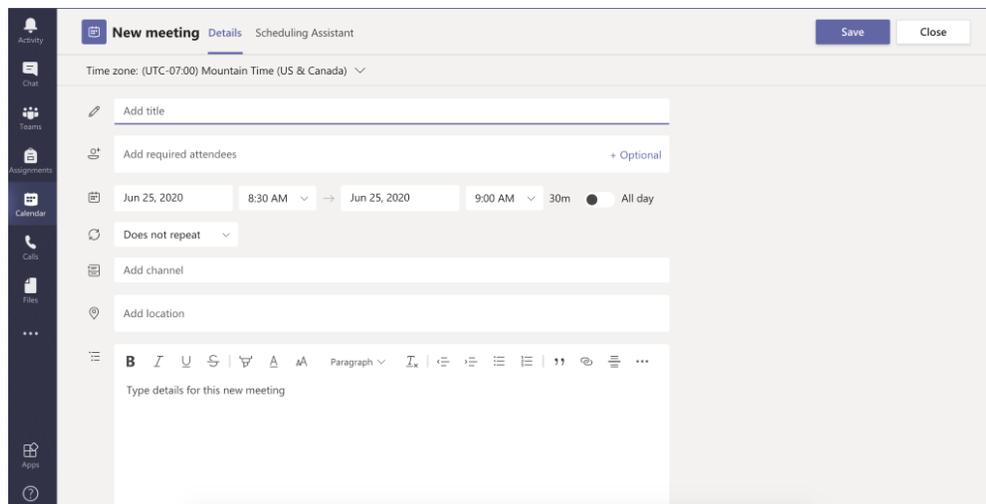
### Using the meeting function – scheduling a meeting



Instructors can use Microsoft Teams for video conference office hours via a meeting. To schedule a meeting, click on the “Calendar” icon to the left, and then click on the “New meeting” button on the top right.



A new meeting will appear.



Fill out the meeting details. You must invite students to the meeting by typing their enames/eIDs or Microsoft email addresses on the “Add required attendees” field. Once you are done, click on “Save” at the top right of the screen.

The meetings function can be used for office hours appointments or for open office hours. For open office hours, you can set the meeting as recurrent by clicking on the menu that says,

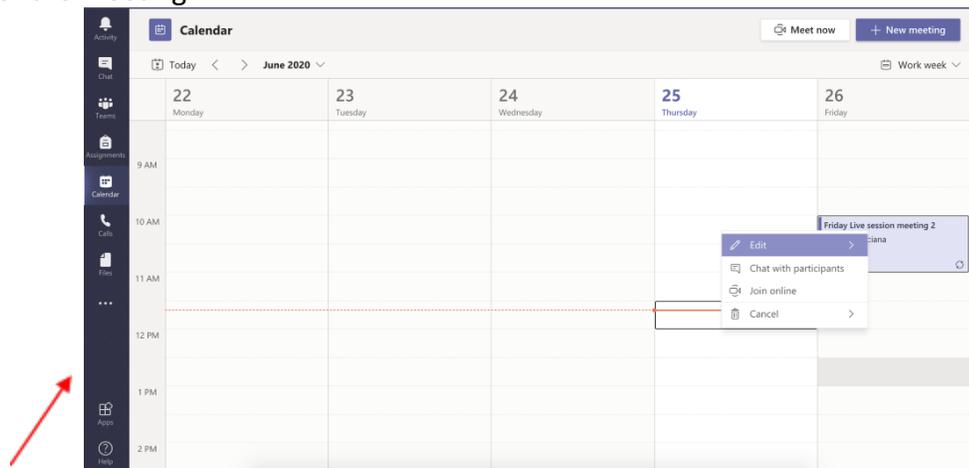
“Does not repeat” and change it to the frequency you want. Make sure to invite all the students in your class(es), and you can have different office hours times for each class if you like.

*Attention! Inviting people can be tedious, and it can be easy to mistype someone’s eID.*

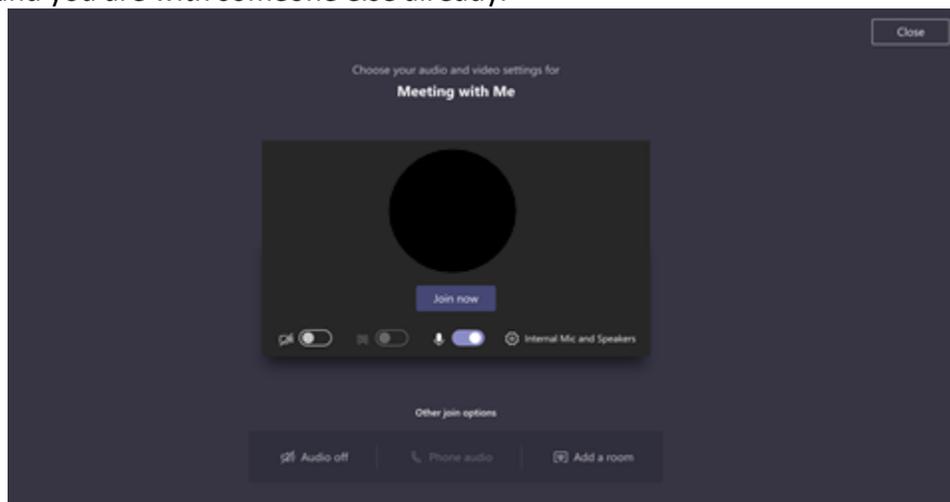
*Make sure the eIDs you type indeed correspond to your students’ eIDs. It is a good idea to copy*

*and paste the eIDs from the course roster you can get at AriesWeb.*

When the meeting day and time comes, log on to Microsoft Teams, go to the Calendar, right-click on the scheduled meeting and click “Join online”, or simply click on the “Join” button on the top right of the meeting



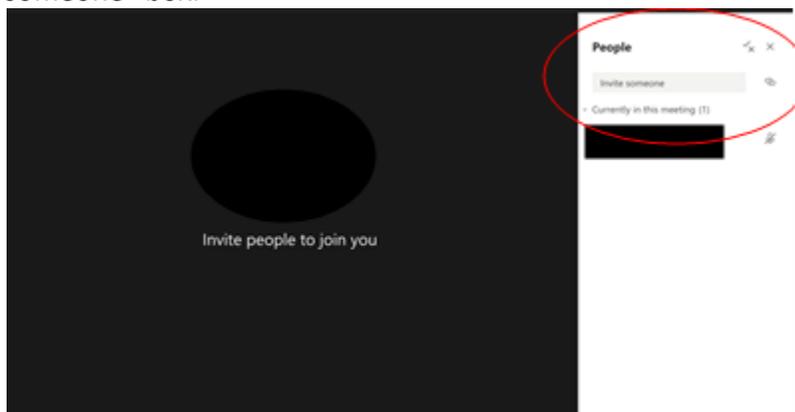
Once you join the meeting, you will first adjust your video and audio options. In the student version of these instructions, we ask them to join the meeting without video and audio first, so as not to interrupt potential ongoing conversations, especially if they are joining open office hours and you are with someone else already.



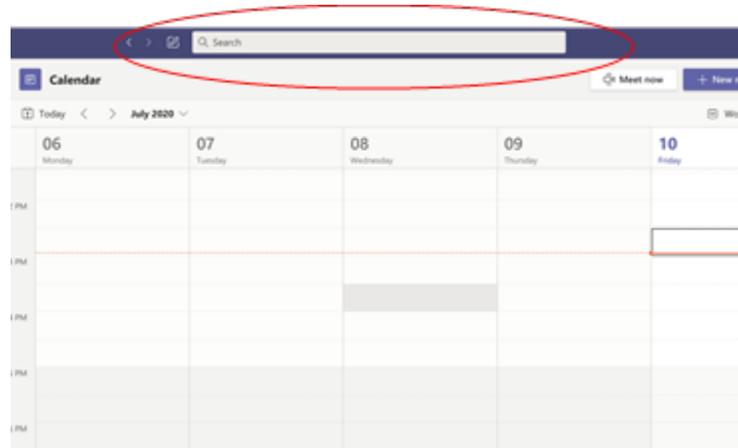
*Attention! It is important to realize that scheduled meetings can be accessed by all invited students at any time, not only on the day of the meeting. So, make it clear to your students in the syllabus and on Canvas when you will be in open office hours so they do not think you are there 24/7.*

### Using the meeting function – meeting now

Alternatively, instructors can click the “Meet now” button on the Calendar to create a new meeting and invite participants via a meeting link. This possibility is useful when students email you and you want to meet with them right there and now, without scheduling an appointment or using the open office hours meeting. Clicking the “Meet now” button will take you to a join meeting screen similar to the one above, where you can set up the audio and video function. Once you join the meeting, you can invite your student by copying the link to the meeting by clicking the chain-like icon on the top left of the screen or by typing their ename/eID in the “Invite someone” box.



The other way you can meet students without having to schedule a meeting is by simply searching them using their ename/eID in the search box at the top of the window.



### Using the chat function for open office hours – Help Desk style

So far, the meeting functionality in MS Teams is essentially the same as that of other video conferencing tools like Zoom. The next function may be the differential of MS Teams, however. You can use the chat function in MS Teams to hold what we call “Help Desk style” chat office hours.

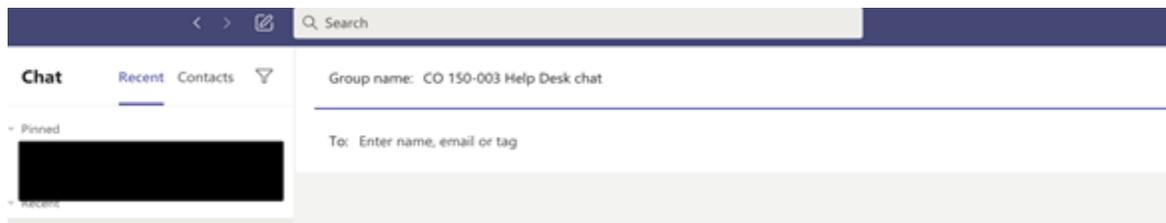
Help Desk style chat office hours work just like a Help Desk – as long as it is open, students can connect at any time and ask a question or seek help. It is a very good way to provide answers relatively quickly, especially in comparison to email messages, as you are available to your students right at the moment. Depending on the issue your student has, you may give your student a call on MS Teams, or start a private chat if necessary. In the student version of this document, we ask students not to initiate a call with you, but they may initiate a private chat themselves.

Additionally, you can hold Help Desk office hours by inviting your students to a group chat. A group chat is a good idea if you want all your students to see the answers to the questions from each other, to save you some time from having to answer the same question multiple times, or to expose students to issues they may not have even thought about.

To create a group chat, click on the “new chat” icon next to the search bar at the top left of your screen. In the “To” bar that appears right below the search bar, type the ename/eID of all your students to invite them to the group chat. Again, make sure to invite the right student to the chat, by getting their ename/eID from the course roster in AriesWeb.



You can name your group chat if you want by clicking on the arrow at the right end of the “To” bar and typing the same of your group next to “Group name”. You can name it whatever you like, but it is a good idea to make it informative, g like “CO150 office hours chat.”



While you can have one big chat for all your students, we suggest you keep separate chats for at least the different classes you teach. A good idea is to have one chat group per class you have on Canvas. If you merged all your CO150 sections in one Canvas class, for example, you can have one group chat for that class.

All chats will show up in the chat section on the top left of your screen, which you can access by clicking the Chat button on the top left of the screen. We suggest you pin all your group chats by right-clicking on each chat and selecting “pin”. That way you will not lose them easily.

If you decide to do a group chat, remind your students that everybody in the class can see what, they post. That way, there is no risk of them sharing sensitive information with the whole class.

### Things to consider when doing Help Desk office hours

You need to consider some things when having office hours in an online environment, especially with adopting a Help Desk style office hours like the one suggested. As we said in the beginning of this document, instructors are required to hold about 3 hours of office hours per week. In a face-to-face class, you would be in your office for that whole period and call it a day when your office hours are done. In an online environment, however, office hours might be trickier.

**First**, it is a good idea to be available in MS Teams for more than 3 hours a week. Online classes lack that face-to-face instructor-to-student engagement, so being more available to help students may make up for some of that and will give students more opportunities to reach out. We suggest you be available on MS Teams almost every day for a number of hours. You could be available, for example, from Monday to Friday 2:00 – 6:00 MST. Using the chat function to hold office hours means you do not have to have your video on or anything like that, so you do not have to look good or to be glued to your screen all the time, and you do not have to create any meetings. Making yourself available for longer hours only means you need to log on to MS Teams, keep doing your work and, if a student reaches out, answer him/her. Students appreciate the availability, especially if it is close to a major assignment due date.

**Second**, it is a good idea to have clearly established times for office hours and abide by it. Make sure your office hours are posted clearly on Canvas and explained in the syllabus. When your office hours start, you should make an announcement on Canvas or post a comment in the group chat. If students have their Canvas and MS Teams notifications set right, they will receive an email with your announcement, so they will be reminded of it. When your office hours are finished, make sure to log out from MS Teams or change your status to “Appear away” (you can do that by clicking on your profile picture at the top left of the screen). In an online

environment, students tend to work at odd hours. If they see you are available, they may reach out to you.

**Third**, explain in detail on Canvas and in the syllabus how your office hours will work. Tell students the kind of technology they need to attend office hours (make sure they know they do not need anything fancy, for example, and that they are registered in MS Teams already). Suggest they turn on the notification system on Canvas and Microsoft to receive notifications of when your office hours start. Explain your policy for posting and answering question in the chat, what happens if they ask a question when you are not available, etc. Suggest they plan to do their work when you are available, so they can ask questions and get answers quickly.

**Finally**, invite them all the time to attend office hours. As we said in the beginning, students may not feel comfortable attending office hours, or may even forget the instructor exists. Inviting them to office hours often reminds them of this resource. You can even give students incentives for attending them, like extra credit points on assignments. We want our students to succeed, and they need our guidance more often that we – and they – think.