

Technology Integration Practical Solutions

Engaging Document Collaborations

Introduction

In this guide, we will look at tools and ideas for using collaborative documents in instruction. We will look at both how to use them to support both asynchronous and synchronous student work.

Presently, there are two major document collaboration platforms students are most likely familiar with and have access to (Microsoft Office 365 and Google Apps).

Microsoft Office 365

All students, faculty, and staff have access to utilize an institutional license of Microsoft Office 365. Unlike previous versions of Microsoft Office, the newest release can be run as either the traditional desktop applications for Windows or Mac or a fully-functional web-based version to support other platforms such as Chromebooks or for use on machines where Microsoft Office cannot be installed.

The common collaboration document types in Microsoft Office 365 are:

- Microsoft Word (Word Processing)
- Microsoft Excel (Spreadsheet)
- Microsoft PowerPoint (Multi-Media Presentation)
- Microsoft OneDrive (Cloud Storage Platform)
- Microsoft Stream (Video Sharing Platform)

Resource Materials:

- [Quick Start Guide – Microsoft Office 365 Desktop Application Access](#)
- [Quick Start Guide – Microsoft Office 365 Web Application Access](#)

Google Apps

Many of our students are likely familiar with collaboration in Google Apps and they are commonly used in the K-12 educational setting. Google Apps are completely web-based, so they will run on nearly any platform that supports a web browser. No desktop application is needed to utilize these applications.

It should be noted, not all of our students have personal Google accounts, so they may not have access to these tools.

The common collaboration document types in Google Apps are:

- Google Docs (Word Processing)
- Google Sheets (Spreadsheet)
- Google Slides (Multi-Media Presentation)
- Google Drive (Cloud Storage Platform)
- YouTube (Video Sharing Platform)

Please note that Google Apps are not supported by any element of the UNT System and any support needed by students, faculty, or staff must be between the user and Google.

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Suggestions

When sharing files, norms of acceptable behavior need to be established up-front. Opening a class of even 10 students to collaborate on a single shared file without establishing these norms can lead to a frustrating experience and the likely failure of the collaboration.

Norms should include the following:

- Use Track Changes features to ensure existing work is not lost.
- Encourage students to not type “over” each other.
- Do not use “Select All” – EVER.
- Use comments/notes appropriately.
- Establish how conflicts will be resolved.

Use Cases

Following are use cases for asynchronous and synchronous use of collaborative spreadsheets, word processing documents, and multi-media presentations.

Examples of Collaboration - Asynchronous

Following are some examples of use for collaborative documents in an asynchronous setting – when students work on assignments as they can:

Use Case: Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets

A group of 3 students is assigned the task to take soil moisture readings at a pre-selected location at their home and record it 5 days. Each of the students lives in a different location and none of the students are able to meet at the same location at the same time to work on entering their data.

The group elects to create a shared spreadsheet that all 3 of them can access and enter their information into without having to meet together or relay to a single “data-entry” person.

Individuals can safely be in the file at separate times or at the same time making edits.

Use Case: Microsoft Word or Google Docs

The group of 3 students in the example above is required to write a research and reflection paper on the experimental process and the findings of their research and answer a series of guided questions from the instructor. All 3 students are required to participate equally in the development of the paper.

The group elects to create a shared word processing document that all 3 of them can access and edit as they need to. The group members break the paper into 3 distinct segments with each segment assigned to a different individual.

The group members can safely be in the file at separate times or at the same time making edits.

Use Case: Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Slides

Continuing with the group of 3 students in the example, they are to work with another group in their class to evaluate their research findings. Each group must either confirm or negate the work of their co-

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presenting group. The second group must agree or rebut. All members of both groups are required to equally contribute to the development of the presentation and to present their findings to the class.

The groups elect to create a shared presentation document that all members of both groups can access and edit as they need. Each group is responsible for their portions of the presentation.

Individuals can safely be in the file at separate times or at the same time making edits.

Examples of Collaboration - Synchronous

Following are some examples of use for collaborative documents in a synchronous setting – when students work on assignments at a pre-set time (e.g. during a class lesson):

Use Case: Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets

An Accounting instructor is teaching a class over basic balance sheets and is using a spreadsheet that has been shared with all class members to show how the balance sheet is laid out. The instructor has the sheet on the screen during their presentation and has assigned different class members different items to enter into the spreadsheet.

The students are all able to access and edit the spreadsheet simultaneously and enter their assigned information. The instructor is then able to show how all of the financial figures interact with each other for a basic balance sheet.

Use Case: Microsoft Word or Google Docs

An English instructor is conducting an in-class workshop over writing mechanics using a sample essay that has been shared with all the class members. The instructor analyzes each sentence in the sample essay asking a selected student to rewrite the sentence.

The students are all able to access and edit the word processing document simultaneously. However, in this example, students would only be editing elements they are directed to by the instructor.

Use Case: Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Slides

A Business instructor is conducting an in-class workshop over professional presentation techniques and is using a sample presentation that has been shared with all the class members. Each student has been assigned a slide in the presentation to write presenter's notes for. The instructor will then attempt to present using the notes that have been entered by the students during class.

The students are all able to access and edit the presentation document simultaneously. Since each student has an assigned area to work in with an assigned task, all students will be working simultaneously in the shared file.

Support Information

Microsoft Office 365 is fully supported by the [UNT Dallas Office of Information Technology](#) and it's collaborative and instructional functionality is supported by the [UNT Dallas Office of Distance Learning & Instructional Technology](#).

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Google Apps are not supported by any department at UNT Dallas or UNT System. Support for Google Apps will be the sole responsibility of the instructor, student, or user in collaboration with Google Apps Support.

- [Google Docs](#)
- [Google Sheets](#)
- [Google Slides](#)
- [Google Drive](#)
- [YouTube](#)

The UNT Dallas Office of Distance Learning & Instructional Technology has produced the following printable resource guides regarding document collaborations.

- [Office 365 Collaborations in Canvas \(Blank Documents\)](#)
- [Collaborations on Existing Office 365 Documents](#)

Additional information about Microsoft Office 365 support from the UNT Dallas Office of Distance Learning & Instructional Technology can be found on the [Supported Technologies: Microsoft Office 365](#) information page.