



Virtual Hearings Guidance - Observers

Introduction

This document explains how to join a Fitness to Teach virtual hearing in order to observe proceedings.

Technical requirements

Microsoft Teams is the platform GTC Scotland uses for virtual hearings. For instructions on downloading and using Microsoft Teams, please see the section below titled 'Accessing the hearing'.

To observe a virtual hearing, you will need a computer, laptop or other device which has a reliable internet connection, suitable memory and processing speed. Most modern computers and devices will have no issue running Microsoft Teams.

[Hardware requirements for Teams.](#)

You can download the free Microsoft Teams application [from the Microsoft website](#), or from the [Apple Store on Apple devices](#), or the [Google Play Store on Android devices](#).

Before the Hearing

Booking a place

A notice of hearing will be published on our website 7 days prior to the hearing taking place. Members of the public (including press) must inform GTC Scotland if they wish to attend.

If you wish to observe a virtual hearing, please email regulation@gtcs.org.uk to book a place. Booking will close 48 working hours before the hearing is due to start.

You will need to provide the following information when booking:

- Your full name
- Details of the hearing that you wish to observe
- Email address to which we can send the Microsoft Teams link
- Contact number we can reach you on if there are technical issues during the hearing
- Reason for wishing to observe (for example, press).

Testing

We strongly suggest you test Microsoft Teams before the hearing starts and get familiar with the software to limit possible problems when you try and join on the day.

Adjustments for disabilities

If you have a disability and you think adjustments may need to be made to assist you to observe the hearing, please contact us as soon as possible to discuss this if you have not done so already.

During the Hearing

Rules

Although the hearing is being held virtually, it remains a formal hearing and we expect observers to behave as you would if you were in a physical hearing.

You must not speak unless the Panel asks you a direct question, interrupt or ask questions during the hearing.

Whilst the hearing is ongoing, you must ensure that your microphone is on mute and camera is turned off. Please ensure you are familiar with these functions on Microsoft Teams.

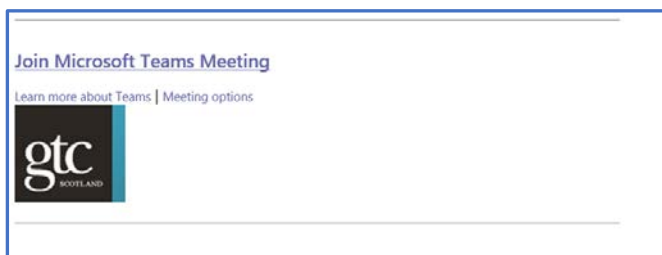
We record our hearings. **It is strictly prohibited for any other person to audio or video record, screen shot, photograph, copy or share our hearing proceedings.**

Any observer who causes disruption will be warned by the Convener to desist. If the disruption continues, they may be removed from the hearing upon direction by the Panel.

Accessing the hearing on the day

You should ensure that your device is fully charged and that all other devices are switched to silent mode for the duration of the hearing. You should also ensure that you have a private area where you are alone and are unlikely to be disturbed or interrupted.

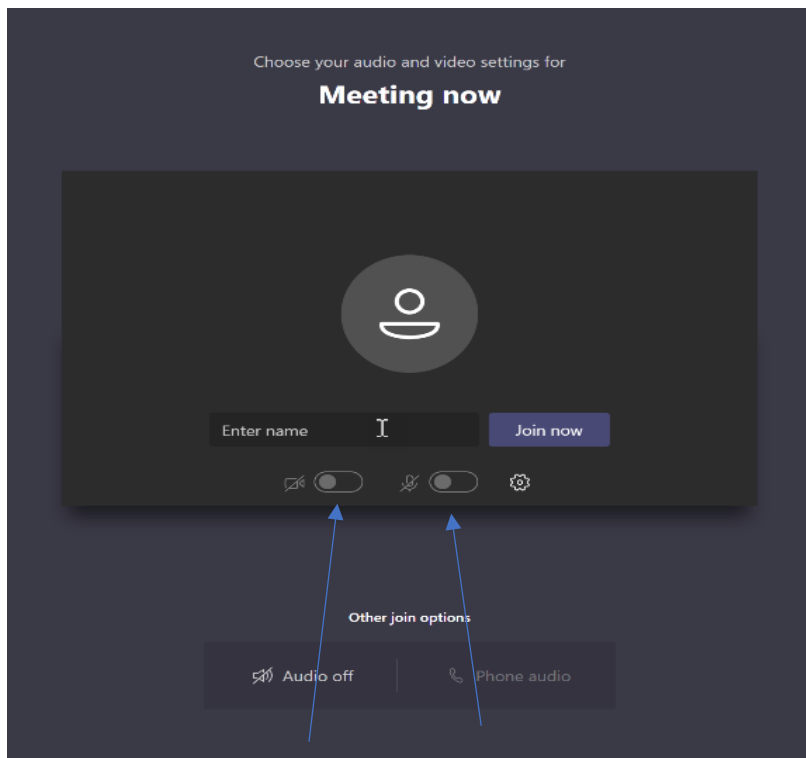
When you have booked a place at a virtual Fitness to Teach hearing, you will be sent an email, which will contain a link that looks like this:



Please do not share this link with anyone else.

If you have the Microsoft Teams application (app), when you click on the link, the hearing will open automatically within the app. You do not need to have the desktop app to join a call. If you do not have the app, you will be given the option to download it or join on the web. If you do intend to download the app, you should do so in advance of the hearing in order to avoid delay on the day.

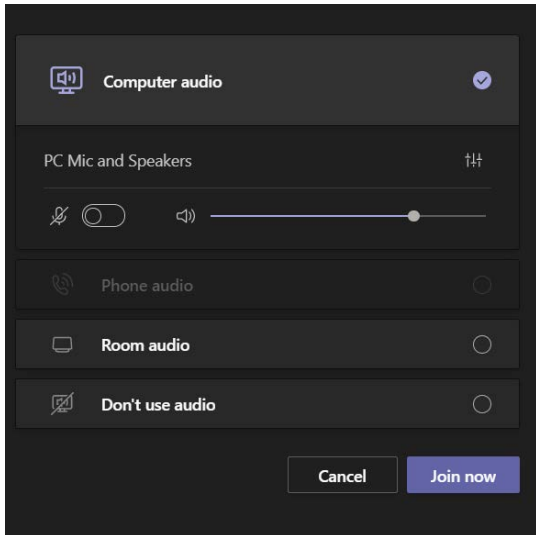
When you click the meeting link, you will see a screen similar to that below:



You should ensure that both your camera and microphone are switched **off** (as they appear in the image above) before you join the hearing. When you are ready to join the hearing, click 'join now'.

You will then be held in a lobby until the Servicing Officer admits you into the hearing.

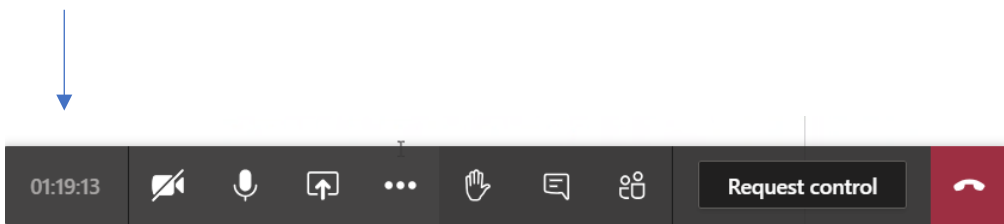
Depending on the version of Teams you are using, you may see the below menu alongside the above before you enter a hearing. You should either select 'Computer audio' and ensure your microphone is muted, or 'Don't use audio' before selecting 'Join now'.



The Teams taskbar

During the hearing, you will see this task bar on your screen. It may differ very slightly in appearance depending on the version of Teams you are using (i.e. how up to date the app is). The most relevant functions are detailed below:

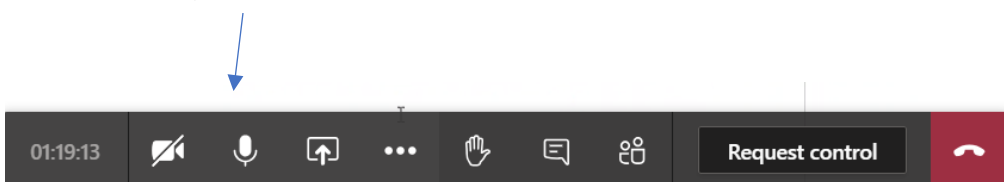
This indicates the length of time that the hearing has been running.



This is the camera icon. If there is a line through it, this means your camera is turned off.



This is the microphone icon. If there is a line through it, this means your microphone is muted. To mute your microphone, click on the microphone icon and a line should appear through it.



Technical Difficulties

If you experience technical difficulties during the hearing or you disconnect from the hearing, please try to re-join as soon as possible. The Servicing Officer will readmit you

Due to their role within proceedings, the Servicing Officer will not be able to assist you with technical issues. The hearing will not be delayed if you are unable to join. Please check your equipment and settings in the first instance. If you continue to experience technical difficulties, please email regulation@gtcs.org.uk marking your email as urgent and with the subject header 'Cannot connect to ongoing hearing – assistance required' and we will do our best to assist you.

If you are repeatedly disconnected, you may not be readmitted if your attempts to rejoin cause disruption to proceedings. All the participants in the hearing receive an audio and visual notification when someone has joined the lobby, and this can be distracting if the hearing has already started. If you receive a message that you have been denied from the lobby, it will likely be due to such disruption being caused. In this instance, please avoid repeated attempts to rejoin and contact us.

If you are not admitted, this may be because the name you are joining with is different to the name we have for you, for example, if you are using a laptop/device belonging to someone else. The Servicing Officer will not admit any individual whose identity is unknown. Please ensure your name is correct before you enter the lobby. Alternatively, let us know if we should expect you to join with a different name.

Private sessions

At various points during the hearing, the Panel may need to retire into private session. At these times, the relevant participants (the Panel Members, Servicing Officer and Legal Assessor) will enter a separate call, and all other participants and observers will leave the hearing.

Breaks during the hearing

There will be regular breaks during the hearing to allow all participants the opportunity to move away from the screen. You will be advised of a time to return to the hearing. You should simply disconnect from the call and then reconnect through the email link at the time specified by the Convener.

Please note: Observers should adhere to the timings given by the Convener as to when to join/rejoin the call. If you are not waiting in the lobby when the session resumes, you will not be admitted whilst the hearing is in progress. We will not respond to any email or telephone requests seeking access in these circumstances.

Leaving the hearing

When the hearing has concluded, you should disconnect from the call by clicking the red 'Leave' button.