



# Interactive videoconferencing

Help sheet

## 1: Introduction to videoconferencing

Videoconferencing is the term given to real time communication between two (point-to-point) or more (multi-point) sites.

### How videoconferencing works

Communication is established via a dedicated, usually digital, network using camera(s) and microphones to allow the sharing and exchange of combined video, audio and data signals between participants. Signals are compressed for transmission by a Codec (coder/decoder) and the network will operate via dedicated digital telephone lines (ISDN) or broadband internet connection (IP). There are principally three classifications of videoconferencing environments:

- Desk top (involves use of PC or laptop, microphone and mini-camera);
- Roll about systems (equipment entirely housed in a relocatable cabinet – requires only the relevant connection sockets to telephone and Local Area Networks, to ensure portability between rooms);
- Room system (permanently located in a dedicated room).

Videoconferencing can be used for interactive learning and teaching sessions (discussion groups, role plays, tutorials, lectures etc), meetings, professional development sessions and networking.

### Notes adapted from

'What the research says about video conferencing in teaching and learning', available at [http://www.becta.org.uk/research/reports/docs/wtrs\\_vidconf.pdf](http://www.becta.org.uk/research/reports/docs/wtrs_vidconf.pdf).

Cooperating School Districts' (CSD) New Links to New Learning - web pages.  
<http://www2.csd.org/newlinks/newlinks.htm>

Macintosh, J. (2001) Learner Concerns and Teaching Strategies for Videoconferencing. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*; Nov/Dec 2001, 32, 260 -265.

### What videoconferencing does

- Allows simultaneous provision of interactive learning activities to students at, and remote from, the teaching site
- Allows collaboration by teachers and learners with their respective peers internal and external to the university
- Reduces the amount of time spent traveling between sites
- Affords interactive access to experts – state-wide, nationally & internationally
- Enriches the experience of distance learning by reducing feelings of isolation and encouraging interaction

Videoconferencing is best utilized with trained facilitators who plan their encounter (educationally, environmentally and administratively) and use suitable strategies to ensure a personalised, engaging and equitable experience for participants at near and far locations.

### Resources

West Midlands Regional Broadband Consortium, videoconferencing guides:  
<http://www.wmnet.org.uk/vc/>