



Tips for teachers using heiCONF (Big Blue Button)

Status: 1.3.21, V1.5

heiCONF is an open source web conference system for teaching online and holding meetings as audio and video conferences. heiCONF is hosted at and operated by Heidelberg University. There are two variants: heiCONF (max. 50 persons, likely interactive formats) and heiCONF-Audimax (max. 200 persons, likely frontal lessons, video only for moderator role).

Please note: There is a "heiCONF Short Guide for Students" which describes the manifold interaction options in heiCONF.

Welcome to 

heiCONF is an open source web conferencing system designed for web conferencing and online teaching

Please use a headset to ensure a good audio quality for all participants

- CHAT**
Send public and private messages.
- WEBCAMS**
Hold visual meetings.
- AUDIO**
Communicate using high quality audio.
- EMOJIS**
Express yourself.
- BREAKOUT ROOMS**
Group users into breakout rooms for team collaboration.
- POLLING**
Poll your users anytime.
- SCREEN SHARING**
Share your screen.
- MULTI-USER WHITEBOARD**
Draw together.

For more information visit <https://www.urz.uni-heidelberg.de/de/heiconf>

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1. Technical requirements

heiCONF is a web application, which you can use via a modern web browser – we recommend Chrome or Firefox (Windows, MacOS) for full support. There may be device-related functional limitations with mobile devices.

heiConf requires a good Internet connection for you and your participants.

Only if "dial-in via phone" was activated when the room was created is it possible to participate by telephone as an alternative, although this is then associated with a number of restrictions on participation.

We recommend the use of a webcam and the use of a headset to produce better sound quality and avoid echoes.

Access for participants is directly in the web browser via the specific URL provided by the host (teacher). Depending on the created meeting room, participants might have to enter a specific room access code and wait for moderator (teacher) approval before joining.

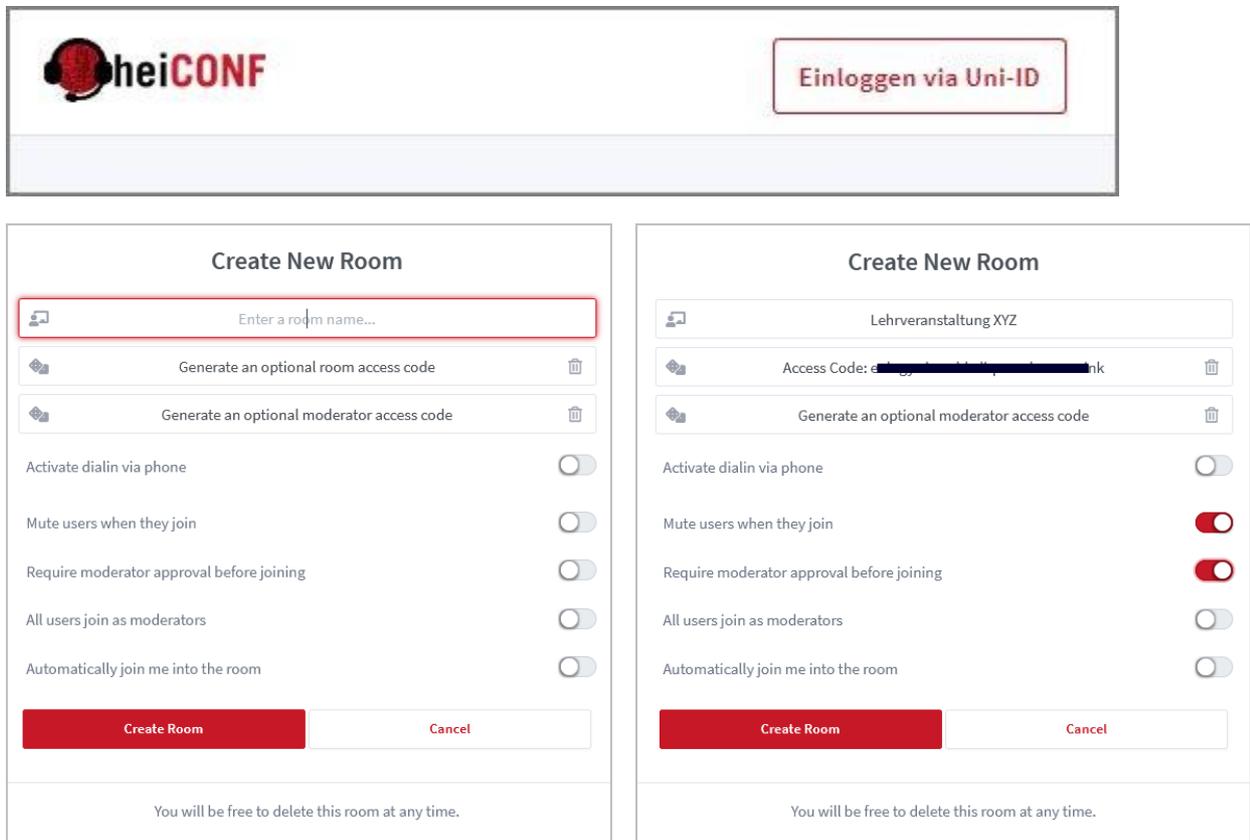
If you have any questions regarding the technology, please contact directly the URZ:

<https://it-service.uni-heidelberg.de/>

2. Creating a new meeting room

After login at <https://heiconf.uni-heidelberg.de/> via Uni-ID you see your personal heiCONF home page including a ready-for-use personal meeting room with fixed URL. However, for lectures and other online formats you should create additional rooms (and maybe immediately assign another employee with extended rights). Each meeting room has a cryptic URL, which you can see in your heiCONF home page by clicking on a room name.

Good to know: There is a second heiCONF service named heiCONF-Audimax via <https://audimax.heiconf.uni-heidelberg.de> which has been especially optimized for lectures and larger audiences currently up to 200 participants (web cams only allowed for heiCONF moderator role).



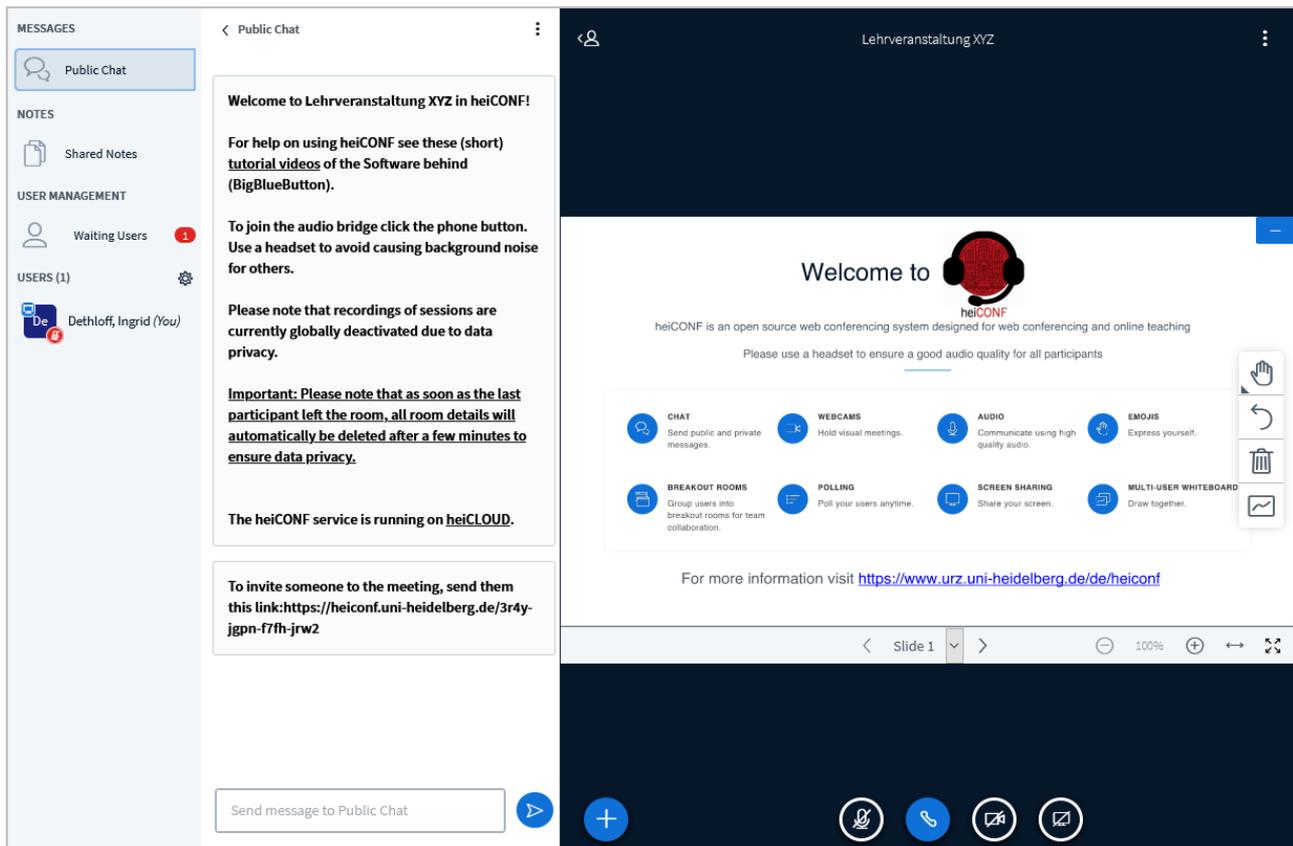
For security reasons, the ELC recommends three changes which apply to a single room and can be changed again later on via click on "Room settings" on your heiCONF home page:

- Generating a room access code by clicking on the dice symbol
- Activating the option "Mute users when they join"
- Activating the option "Require moderator approval before joining"

Further options: In case of experienced users and small groups which often meet, it might be a good idea to set "All users join as moderators".

When you create a room, a cryptic URL is generated, which you transmit to the desired participants together with the appointment.

Below you can see the default layout. In the left column you will find the list of users (your host symbol is square whereas guest symbols are round) and the user management, the option "Shared Notes" and also the option "Public Chat" which is already opened as a second column. In the right part of the screen you will find the area reserved for shares and whiteboard - below, there are control icons you can operate and above, there are transmissions of user web cams. You can collapse the second column to enlarge the sharing area.



Meeting room from meeting host's point of view directly after start; one participant is waiting for approval before joining the room

3. Planning of an online web seminar

Good pre-planning is very important. Think about your goals and how to achieve them didactically and with the features of heiCONF. If necessary, assign a co-moderator. Clarify in advance, what, who, how, when and in which order. Prepare your files/presentations and check that they work in heiCONF. Communicate to your participants beforehand the specific URL, the date/time and technical requirements - if necessary, a test in advance is appropriate.

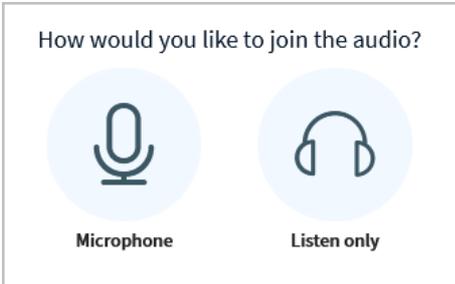
Design the interactions according to your didactic goals: Besides audio, there could be text chat, status options (Requests to speak by show of hands etc.), polls, presentations, writing in shared notes or whiteboard and breakout rooms. Use web cams sparingly - they need bandwidth, often distract and are kind of "invasive" when shown during the whole meeting. However, they can be useful for the lecturer or mere discussion scenarios.

4. During a meeting

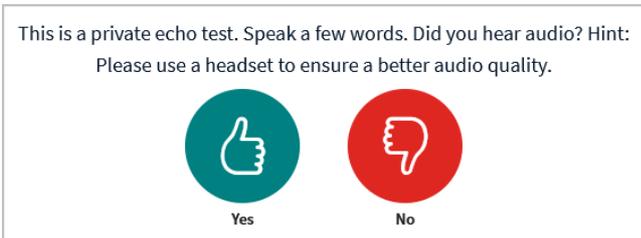
4.1 Shortly before the start



You log in about 10 minutes before the agreed upon time via <https://heiconf.uni-heidelberg.de/> with your Uni-ID, click on the specific meeting room (if you have more than on room) and the red button "Start".

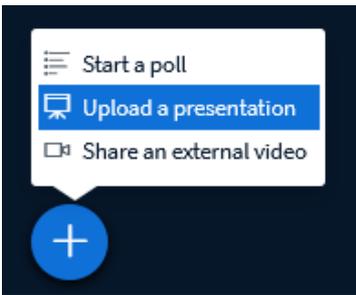


As host, be sure to join with "Microphone" (instead of "Listen only") and give the requested device web browser permissions - in case of more than one microphone, choose the "correct" microphone in the drop-down list!



Complete the audio test ("private echo test") and confirm with "Yes". You are now in the meeting room and transmit audio, if you didn't activate "mute users when they join" with room creation or a URZ wide setting "mute users when joining" takes effect.

Upload a presentation



Turn to slide 2 for a blank whiteboard page or upload your presentation via blue "+" symbol. Possible file formats include: PowerPoint, Word, pdf, images et al. Drag and drop the desired file into the target area and confirm by clicking the blue "Upload" button – if necessary, activate the download option for participants. When, later on, you browse through the uploaded document, this will be synchronously displayed to the participants. A whiteboard overlay is available for annotations in the document. Your mouse movement will be shown as a red dot in the document and you can make use of this to draw attention to details. Tip: If there should be problems with the presentation, use alternatively the screen sharing (see below).

Start audio and mute audio



Use this icon to enable/disable your own audio – if you see the blue icon, your audio is currently active. Click on the blue microphone icon to mute your audio at any time.

Share webcam



Start your own webcam by clicking the "Share webcam" icon and granting permission to access your webcam in the browser (multiple times). A preview image shows which section is being transmitted. If you see the blue icon, your web cam is currently active. You can deactivate your webcam at any time by clicking on the blue camera icon.

Shared notes and text chat (public chat)

As part of the web seminar preparation, you could pre-structure the “Shared Notes” area with the agenda or tasks. It can be motivating for your participants, if you write a little greeting in the text chat.

Share your screen



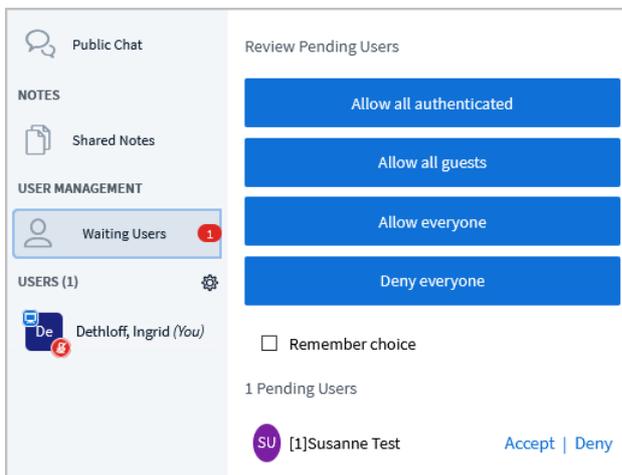
If you want to share your screen during the meeting, click the icon “Share your screen” and select the desired application in the drop down menu or, if you have got 2 monitors, select the desired screen. A small preview image makes it easy to share the “correct” application. Everything you do in this application or on the screen afterwards is transmitted to the room. Mouse pointer tracking and whiteboard overlay are not available here.

You can deactivate your screen sharing at any time by clicking on the blue screen sharing icon.

4.2 Coordinate the arrival of the participants

The access for your participants takes place directly in the web browser via the specific heiConf room URL. They enter their name and join directly or you have to approve them before they may join the meeting.

Approving participants (You)



If - as recommended - you have set a room access code, your participants have to enter their name (which can't be modified during a meeting) and the specific room code and have to wait for your approval. Confirm the participant name via “Accept”.

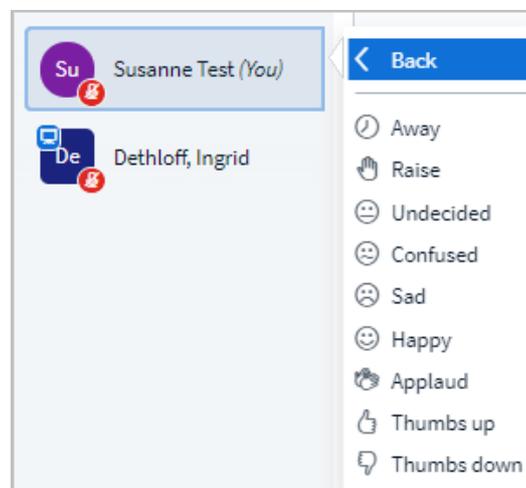
If possible, address all arriving participants personally, because silence in the meeting room can be very irritating for participants of a web seminar.

Default rights of participants

Important: You can restrict attendee rights (“Lock viewers”) in the meeting if necessary (see FAQ)!

Participants may:

- Participants can use the status options (“Raise” etc.)
- Participants (who joined “with microphone”) may speak / transfer their audio
- Participants can start their web cam
- Participants see the slides + whiteboard and shares (but cannot change anything)
- Participants can use the text chat (public + private)
- Participants can switch to “Shared notes” and read or write there.



Status options from participant point of view

4.3 Beginning of the web seminar

Favorable is the immediate arrangement of a back channel, which also works without audio & webcam: Standard is the text chat. Keep an eye on the text chat during the meeting, maybe assign a co-moderator.

In small groups, a short welcome round (going through the list of participants) is suitable to increase motivation and to clarify any questions right at the beginning. Afterwards, present your agenda, point out the different interaction possibilities and ask for active participation. Web seminars can be stressful and normally shouldn't be longer than an hour. Depending on the didactic scenario, you should plan a break for longer web seminars.

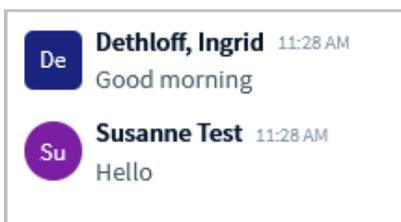
4.4 Interactions during a web seminar

In addition to interactions via audio or webcam, the following options are available.

Status options

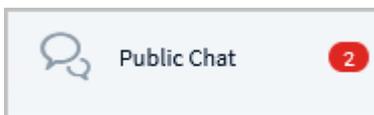
You can quickly get a result by asking a question and asking the participants to choose "Thumbs up" or "Thumbs down" by clicking on their respective name and "Set status". The result is displayed in the resp. participant name symbols and visible for all. Participants with active requests to speak move up the list. If all participants set a status, the order is not changed. There is no sorting by participants with "Thumbs up" or "Thumbs down". If you do not want the participants to see each other's choices or if the group of participants is larger than about 10 people, you should rather use the technical option "poll" (see below) for a yes/no question.

Text chat



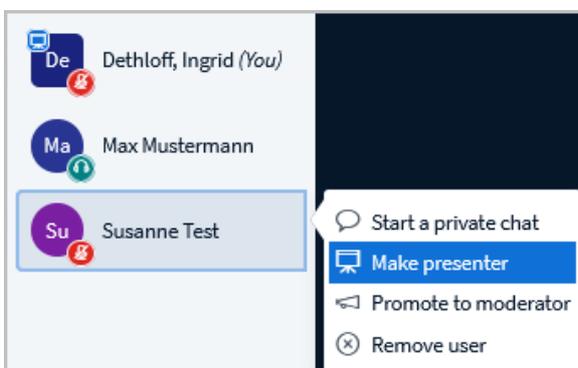
In the public chat the individual contributions are listed by name and in chronological order. Guests are represented by a round icon. Web links in the text chat only work if they start with "https://" or "http://"

Good to know: Each person in the meeting may save the text chat locally as text file!



Participants who have closed the chat window in favor of the "Shared Notes" will receive a notice under "MESSAGES" in the upper left corner with the number of missed messages.

Make someone presenter



The host wants to make "Susanne Test" presenter

As host, you can make any participant temporarily "presenter" – one at a time. In the user list, a sharing icon shows who owns presentation permissions at the moment and thereby may upload files, share an application or screen and initiate a poll.

As "presenter" it is also possible to undo the uploading/showing of a document by calling it up again via the + symbol and "Upload a presentation" - with click on the trash can besides the file name.

The whiteboard can then be seen again via "Upload a presentation" and clicking on "default.pdf", because the whiteboard is only available when a document with ideally empty pages is displayed.

Good to know: There can only be one presenter at a time. As host, you can get back the rights at any time, either by clicking on your name in the users list or the blue +-symbol and selection of "Take presenter".

Shared notes



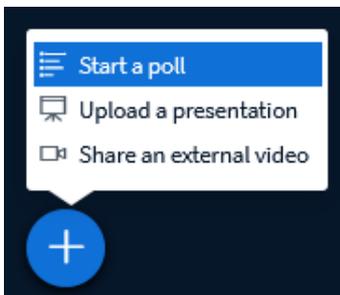
In the "NOTES" section, anyone can switch to "Shared Notes" to see this section and write in it. Therefore, you should make arrangements who is to write there at any given time. Anyone can export "Shared notes" content as HTML or text files during the meeting (icon on the far right).

Whiteboard



The whiteboard is useful for annotations in the document or as empty board. The URZ default-document contains empty pages 2-6 in landscape format and may be used for writing/painting. As meeting host, you can not only actively use the whiteboard with your integrated "presenter" rights, but you can also assign whiteboard permissions for everyone in the room. To do this, simply click on the curve icon at the bottom right with the meaning "Turn multi-user whiteboard on". You can enter text by choosing the "T" symbol and drawing a square on the whiteboard as placeholder for text – afterwards you can enter text in the square via your keyboard.

Poll



Select an option below to start your poll.

Yes / No	True / False
A / B	A / B / C
A / B / C / D	A / B / C / D / E

To create a custom poll, select the button below and input your options.

Custom poll

A	0	0%
B	0	0%
C	2	100%
D	0	0%

As meeting host, you or someone you have temporarily given presenter rights to, can start a poll. Only the answers are available, i.e. you have to ask the question via audio, write it on a slide or in the text chat! heiConf offers predefined answers like "Yes/No", "True/False", "A/B/C/D" or "Custom Polls" with max. 5 custom fields. Participants can vote once, then the answers disappear. The poll is not anonymous, because as host, you see the user names with each option. However, if you click on "Publish polling results", all participants see absolute numbers and percentages but no user names. Creation of a poll requires an uploaded and shared document as basis. Everyone except the person who started the poll can vote.

Breakout Rooms

For group work and to reinforce social cohesion, breakout rooms can be set up for a specific duration within a session with just a few mouse clicks. You can either assign participants to rooms manually or use the system's random function. A countdown timer shows the remaining time after which all breakout rooms are automatically closed again and the participants are thereby returned to the main room. As host you can alternately join group rooms. The text chat of the main room is still available during breakout room time. The breakout room functionality requires some practice for all and mainly preplanning what should be achieved during the breakout room phase - the factor "time available & securing results" also plays a major role here.

4.5 At the end of the web seminar

A summary of the meeting, backup of results (text file export of "shared notes" or text chat, screenshot of whiteboard transcripts etc.) and clarification of next steps (When will we meet again? Assignments?) is an appropriate way to close a meeting in web seminar rooms. In smaller groups, it might also be a good idea to have a small feedback session via audio, similar to the welcome round at the beginning.

As host, you can centrally end the conference via the "3 point menu" in the upper right corner by clicking on "End meeting". Participants can independently leave the room at any time by selecting the "Logout" option in their "3-point menu" and then closing their web browser.

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What happens with my content after leaving the meeting room?

Due to the URZ heiCONF configuration, all room details (chat, notes, whiteboard etc.) will automatically be deleted a few minutes after the last participant left the meeting room in order to ensure data privacy.

How can I mute someone?

As host, you can click on the participant's name in the user list and choose "Mute user" in the context menu. However, the resp. participant could activate his/her microphone again. Therefore you should introduce rules like "Use status icon 'Raise your hand' and wait until you are called before activating your microphone and speaking". You can mute permanently only via "Lock viewers" (see below).

How can I tell that someone is speaking or who is transmitting audio?

The button with the name in the top center changes and shows a micro symbol - in parallel, you can see in the participant list that the respective icon besides the name vibrates slightly.

Person is silent



Person speaks / Audio is transmitted



Person has muted the microphone



How do I set up dial-in via phone?

Please have a look at the URZ documentation <https://www.urz.uni-heidelberg.de/de/heiconf-grundlagen>

Which roles (permissions) are there in the meeting room?

There are 2 user roles in heiCONF: viewer/participant (round icon) and moderator/host (square icon). A moderator has all the rights in the room and could assign "presenter" permissions to anyone. If necessary, there can be many moderators in a meeting, but only one person at a time with "presenter" permissions.



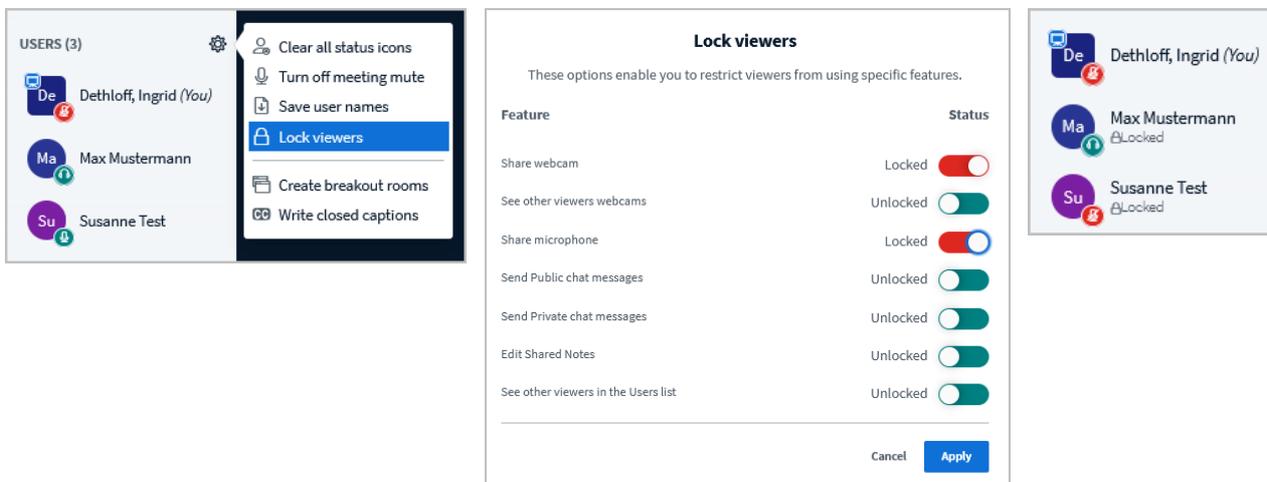
Lecturers have the role "moderator" automatically when they create a room and their name button is square with small presenter icon on the left, because initially they also got the "presenter" permissions.

Students, who normally join the room via communicated room URL, usually hold the role "participant" indicated by a round icon.

- As host, you can turn on "multi-user whiteboard permissions" with one single click (curve icon at the bottom right in the sharing area).
- By clicking on the name in the participant list, you as host can assign or revoke individual rights.
- Many permissions are already set when creating the room: audio + web cam permissions, moderator role, rights to enter the room directly at any time.

- Important note: You can remove individual rights (audio, web cam, chat, notes, user list) from all participants simultaneously via "Lock viewers" (see below).

What exactly means "Lock viewers"?



You can reduce the default rights during a meeting via the "Manage users" icon at the top right of the user list and "Lock viewers", e.g. simultaneously lock all microphones and web cams (see above). Only you can undo this or the blocking would also be removed if you send your participants to breakout rooms. After locking all participants, you can then briefly grant audio rights to a person via the user list as "Unlock XY" before you then revoke the rights again via "Lock XY".

How can I use the role "moderator"?

If, when creating a meeting room, you activate not only "Generate an optional room access code" but also activate "Generate an optional moderator access code", you can tell the latter (only) to a person who should assist you as co-moderator during the meeting. You can recognize a "moderator" by his/her square symbol in the user list. The "Moderator" role enables the following functions in heiCONF:

- Starting and ending a meeting
- Display of the blue plus icon to give yourself more rights: "Take presenter" with the resulting possibilities to start a poll, upload a presentation or give everyone whiteboard permissions "Turn multi-user whiteboard on".
- Via click on a participant name: make others "presenter" (one at a time) or "Remove user"

The moderator role is not useful if someone is only to show a document or control a presentation - for this, temporary presenter rights are sufficient. Please think carefully, to whom you give the moderator room access code, because this person couldn't just take presenter privilege from you but also demote you to "viewer" for the meeting duration (which cannot be undone by yourself)!

How do I create breakout rooms for group work?

You get information on creating breakout rooms in the URZ documentation via <https://www.urz.uni-heidelberg.de/de/heiconf-grundlagen>

Which web browsers are suitable?

Mobile devices may not be suitable due to the small screen size. Current versions of Firefox, Chrome and Microsoft Edge are recommended, see also the following URZ notes via https://heibox.uni-heidelberg.de/published/heiconf-faq/de_DE/faq.md

What are the current technical limits regarding presentation size, file types, etc.?

The limit for uploaded presentations is currently 30 MB per file. Please also have a look at the URZ FAQ via https://heibox.uni-heidelberg.de/published/heiconf-faq/de_DE/faq.md

Where can you leave notes for the participants or take notes of the discussion process?

Everyone in the room can read and write in the "Shared notes" column by default - pre-structuring by the organizer or moderator is useful here! It might also be helpful to mark the contributions by prefixing them with one's own initials or name, as otherwise it is not possible to recognize who has written which content there.

How do I delete something on the whiteboard?



Regardless of who is writing: The trash symbol deletes all annotations made by a person, while the curve symbol with the meaning "Undo annotation" always undoes the last own action. The host cannot delete content of other participants. It is not possible to undo individual content longer than one step back without undoing all actions up to that point.

What is the meaning of "Hide presentation"?



Anyone in the room can click on the blue corner at the top right of a presentation to hide the presentation for himself/herself personally. If you as host really want to make a presentation invisible for everyone, you have to click on the blue plus icon and "Upload a presentation" to choose another presentation or delete the current presentation by clicking on the trash can.



After the personal minimization, a round blue icon with the meaning "Restore presentation" appears in the bottom right corner.

How can individual participants save bandwidth?

If necessary, everyone can use the "3 point menu" in the upper right corner and "Settings / Data savings" to at least reject the display of external webcams by setting the switch to "Off". The same applies to a screen share.

How can I delete published poll results?

heiCONF understands poll results as part of the whiteboard functionality and thus you can delete published poll results either by clicking on the trash icon or "Undo Annotation".