DigiGuide: Making Polling Tools a Safe Environment

Although there are many polling and interaction tools for teaching, the University of Liverpool has an institutional license for the fully-featured student response system, Poll Everywhere.

Poll Everywhere, like other tools such as Kahoot, Mentimeter and Socrative have a variety of settings and customisable options that can typically:

- Restrict participation
- Require identification
- Set moderation
- Add profanity filters

This guide will focus on the institutionally supported polling system, Poll Everywhere. Additional guidance is available through IT Services Knowledge Base resources, however appropriate materials will be signposted throughout this guide.
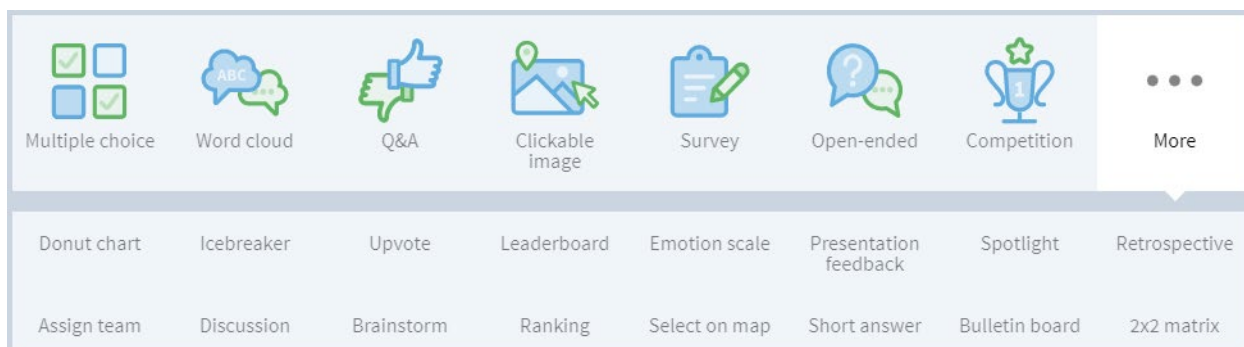
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1. What is Poll Everywhere?

Poll Everywhere is the institutionally supported fully featured student response system, ranging from simple MCQ to more complex forms of interaction and reporting. Poll Everywhere operates via a website, or a PowerPoint addon that gives seamlessly interactivity embedded within presentations. Use this solution if you intend to use a larger number of questions that you wish to prepare in advance, including mixed-media, use developed pedagogies, presentation reporting, or the reliability of an institutionally supported system. A helpful feature is the in-built QR generator through which students can use to respond via a secondary mobile device in parallel to a desktop computer during a synchronous online or in-person session.

To get started see the Poll Everywhere log-in instructions or a list of recommended links and guides.

2. Types of Activity

Depending on your pedagogical approach Poll Everywhere offers a wide range of activity formats which are fully customisable to your preferences.

1. To create an activity, select the *Activity* button on your Activities page.
2. Select the activity you would like to create for your students from the Activity Creator Tool. You can choose from the main 7 activities (Multiple choice, Word cloud, Q&A, etc.) or find more templates when you hit the *More* button on the right.
3. Enter your question, prompt or statement.

After completing the steps above, you will then proceed to input the answers and responses, be able to upload images and multimedia, amongst other options depending on the format of activity that you have chosen.

See creating a poll or activity for further guidance, or for a full list of activity formats within Poll Everywhere, please see the table below:

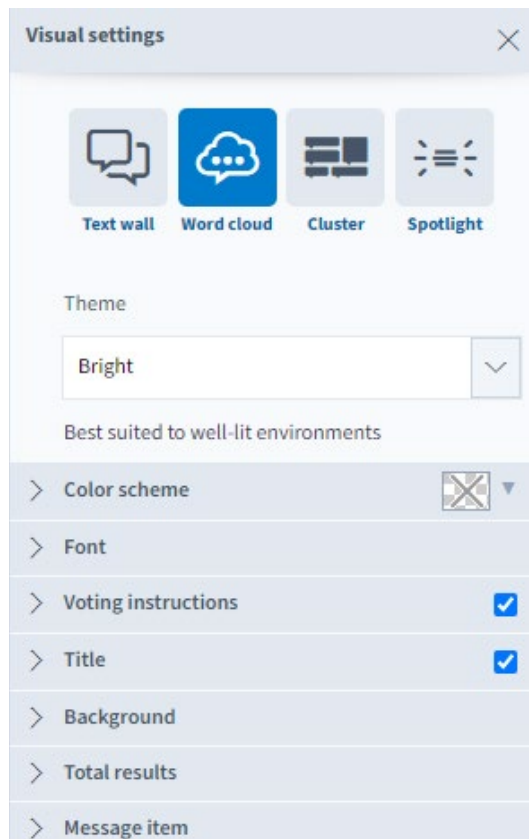| Multiple Choice	Open-Ended	Leaderboard	Assign Team	Short Answer
Word Cloud	Competition	Emotion Scale	Discussion	Bulletin Board
Q&A	Donut Chart	Presentation Feedback	Brainstorm	2x2 Matrix
Clickable Image	Icebreaker	Spotlight	Ranking	
Survey	Upvote	Retrospective	Select on Map	

3. Visual Settings

When editing an activity, you can find *Visual Settings* at the top of the page. Amongst the options in this menu, you can choose;

- Theme
- Colour Scheme
- Font style and colour
- Background colour or image

If you choose to edit these settings it is important to consider accessibility and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) when choosing a colour scheme. Tools such as Coolors will support you with recommendations for making your activities more accessible regarding colours and contrasts.

You will need to visit the *Visual Settings* menu to ensure that two settings are checked 'on'. When an activity is active, it is important that you display *Voting Instructions* and *Title*. This means that the students can clearly idenify the activity from the activity title, and they can clearly view the response instructions throughout the duration that the activity is active.

4. Sharing & Embedding Activities

In addition to being able to use Poll Everywhere for synchronous activities, it is also possible to leave activities open for up to 30 days, for asynchronous engagement. You can learn more about activation time on the Poll Everywhere Guidance articles.

You are encouraged to take advantage of the Test option in the activity menu. This will enable you to respond to the activity as a participant, allowing you to check for any errors or ways in which you can enhance the activity further before sharing the activity with students in a live setting. To do this first you need to Activate the activity before using the simulator provided to complete the activity. Note: the responses you make in test can be deleted.

You can find the tools to share and publish your activities in the Configure menu. Select the *Send* tab, then click *Share and embed* to expand that menu. In the *Share and embed* menu, you will find the following settings:

- **Response link:** A static response page for this specific activity. This link doesn't require activation.
- **PollEv.com/your_username:** Your response page where your active question will be displayed.
- **Live Results:** A link to your activity's visualisation.
- **Embed script:** This script will allow you to embed your activity in a web page.

Alternatively, Poll Everywhere is available as a plug-in, or add-in, to PowerPoint. This will appear as a new tab on the PowerPoint ribbon, and enables you to be able to present polls and activities directly from a PowerPoint Show. For further information, including how to install the Poll Everywhere add-in in PowerPoint, please refer to Using Poll Everywhere and PowerPoint. Similarly, it is possible to embed these activities into your Canvas course environment. For further guidance on this, see Embedding Poll Everywhere Activities into Canvas.

5. Student Participation & Moderation

Poll Everywhere enables you to configure each activity so that students can participate in a way in which you pre-determine. Within the configuration settings you can set:

- How people can respond
- Audience restriction & identity
- Response settings
- Moderation

All students have been registered to Poll Everywhere by ITS, therefore this allows you to either set audience restriction and identity to *Everyone* (no restrictions) or *restrict to registered participants only*, which means only those with a University of Liverpool user account can participate.

Should you opt to *restrict to registered participants only* you then have to decide how you want to identify your participants, if at all. This can be done with their *registered name and email*, or it can be *completely anonymous.*

Anonymous Feedback

Anonymous feedback can provide valuable insight and facilitate difficult or sensitive discussions. Anonymity allows participants to respond to your polls without ever revealing their identities to yourself or other participants, even if they are registered with your account.

There are two ways to allow your participants to respond while protecting their identities. The first is to not ask for participants to create screen names and to have the system auto-generate IDs. This method will protect the identities of those responding but still allow you to gather data for reporting purposes and correlate responses across multiple questions. The second method is to set up an activity to be completely anonymous. This also protects audience member's identities, but also limits reporting options.

View the ITS guidance on creating Anonymous Polls and the Poll Everywhere official Anonymous responses article.

Moderation

In addition to *Response Settings,* such as limiting the number of responses permitted and allowing students to change answers, you also have the option of moderation. Moderation enables you to approve every response before it appears on the activity. An *Automatic Profanity Filter* offers the following options:

- Disable filter. Anything goes!
- Censor profanity out of responses
- Block responses with profanity

If you opt to *censor profanity out of responses*, Poll Everywhere will 'try their best to replace profanity with asterisks.' Alternatively, choosing to *block responses with profanity* will enable Poll Everywhere to automatically use the moderation approval flag to allow through messages that looks OK. However, you will still see the rejected messages in the Moderator view and in reports.

Response History

Response history enables you to save the individual responses that your activities receive. You may choose to:

- Share responses (via email)
- Download spreadsheet (.CSV)
- Download screenshot

This enables you to keep a record of responses, anonymous or otherwise, or to share responses with participants via Canvas or as a basis for further activities with your students.

6. Strategies to Minimise Misuse

It is important to communicate the importance of online etiquette and digital professionalism to students.

Fostering Safe Places Online

Consider including a slide or Canvas page that outlines the expected behaviour of your students whilst using discussion boards or tools such as Poll Everywhere for active learning. It may be beneficial to include links to the institutional policies relating to appropriate use and student conduct, which are outlined later in this guide. Try to include information about:

- The importance of respect for staff and students
- How online etiquette and digital professionalism enhances employability
- How digital fluency and the ability to use digital platforms in a positive, pro-active manner is beneficial to the student learning experience

Try to use positive and encouraging language in your messages and avoid stressing on the consequences of misconduct. Focus on the positive aspects of good behaviour in online communication.

KnowHow Online Tutorials

Consider integrating the following [KnowHow](#) online tutorials into your Canvas course to educate students around the importance of appropriate and professional behaviour in online environments:

1. [Developing a Positive Online Presence](#)

Students will learn about ways to use their online presence to enhance their employability, and how to deal with potential risks in online spaces.

2. [Overcoming Anxiety around Online Learning](#)

Students will learn tips and techniques to overcome anxiety related to learning online.

Start with Closed Activities

Where both staff and students are new to a tool, such as polling tools, it is a good idea to consider using this tool for low stakes activities at first. This will enable students and staff facilitating to familiarise themselves with the tool and to develop their own confidence, which will grow the more they engage with the tool for active learning.

To do this, begin by using activity formats such as multiple-choice at first. Design the activities so that the multiple-choice question can trigger a discussion, or the group response can lead the lesson down different routes resulting in a more personalised learning experience. Once you feel confident that students are comfortable using the tool, begin to integrate more open questions, such as word-clouds, open-ended formats or presentation feedback.

Assess the Risk and Have a Plan

You will be familiar to how your students are as a group, and be able to judge the likelihood of misuse. Misuse may we more likely to occur early on in a course before a group cohesion and rapport is built up between the students and their teacher. Students may also be more inclined to test boundaries early on in a course as they enter a new environment with unfamiliar peers. For these reasons it is wise to identify areas where misuse may occur, particularly online, and in particular when using polling tools.

Use the profanity filter but be aware that 'creative' use of words is always possible, and the profanity filter may not always be up-to-date with the modern use of language. Always know how to *clear responses* when an activity is active in the event of misuse. Remember, the responses can be cleared but the activity will remain open – this provides an opportunity for you to address any misuse and then proceed with the activity as planned.

What to do when students misuse

As mentioned above, it is important to have a plan of how you will react in the event of misuse. This will reduce the impact on other students, and also send a message to those that misuse that you are prepared and will act when required.

If something inappropriate is submitted to a polling activity during a synchronous teaching session consider;

- Pausing the class
- Highlighting the importance of being professional whilst learning
- Give the student(s) opportunity to remove and/or amend their response (if settings allow)

You may also consider to raise the Student Charter, or feel it may be beneficial to link to this in your Canvas course environment. You may also wish to include links to the institutional policies relating to misuse which are listed in the following section.

Be aware that depending on the content and context of the misconduct, this could have triggering affects for students (or staff) that may have suffered traumatic events in the past or continue to experience difficulties. If appropriate, you may need to highlight that students can receive support and also report such misconduct through the institutional Report and Support reporting tool.

If you cannot resolve the misuse in person, or the misuse persists, it is important to raise this with a senior member of staff and/or your line manager. This will enable you to talk through your options and seek advice on your next steps.

7. Institutional Policies Relating to Misuse

The IT Acceptable Use Policy highlights that users, both staff and students, [2.1] shall:

Utilise the University IT facilities in a responsible and respectful manner in accordance with:

a) UK law, (or relevant overseas law when accessing University IT facilities from that country); and
b) University Policy; and
c) Regulations of any third parties whose facilities Users' access.

It is also worth noting the Breach of Policy [3.3] section of the IT Acceptable Use Policy.

The Policy on Student Conduct and Discipline states under Rules for Student Conduct [7] [pg. 6] that [7c] Violent, indecent, disorderly, threatening, intimidating or offensive behaviour or language (whether expressed orally, in writing or electronically, including blogs, social networking websites and other electronic means) is regarded as constituting misconduct.

Under the Dignity at Work and Study Policy, harassment [5.0] is defined as, amongst others, the:

Use of threatening, abusive, insulting words or behaviour or disorderly behaviour or the display of any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting, and which is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. [pg. 5]

Student and staff responsibilities [7.0] are also highlighted in this policy, with reference to the Student Charter and the requirement of students, including:

- Help to create and maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning and an environment which encourages equality of treatment, and.
- Comply with the terms of all University regulations and codes of practice.

Further Links & Resources

CIE Resources

- Polling and Interaction Tools for Teaching

Knowledge Base

- Knowledge Base
- Poll Everywhere log-in instructions
- Recommended links and guides
- Creating a poll or activity
- Present polls and activities directly from a PowerPoint Show
- Using Poll Everywhere and PowerPoint
- Embedding Poll Everywhere Activities into Canvas
- Anonymous Polls

Institutional Policies & Support

- Report and Support
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Policy on Student Conduct and Discipline
- Dignity at Work and Study Policy
- Student Charter

Poll Everywhere Articles

- Activity formats
- Activation time
- Testing
- Anonymous responses article

KnowHow Courses

- KnowHow
- Developing a Positive Online Presence
- Overcoming Anxiety around Online Learning

General Links

- Poll Everywhere
- Kahoot
- Mentimeter
- Socrative
- Coolors