COIL Tools and Links

We have compiled a list of essential functions of online tools that can be of use in COIL settings, as well as some respective examples. *Please be aware that compliance with data security regulations needs to be checked at each individual university*.

Video conferencing tools

Video conferencing tools enable synchronous online meetings. In addition to video and audio transmission, the range of functions usually includes chat, the option of sharing one's own screen and dividing the participants into breakout rooms. In Berlin alone, a wide variety of video conferencing tools are used:

- Microsoft Teams
- Zoom
- Webex
- BigBlueButton
- Jitsi

Joint chat

Many video conferencing tools have integrated chats that can also be used outside of video meetings. However, it is usually only possible to communicate with people whose institution uses the same video conferencing tool.

Examples of joint chats:

- One GDPR-compliant chat is Rocket.Chat. Via the server of the *Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliche Datenverarbeitung mbh Göttingen*, employees and students of many German institutions can log in with their institutional login and chat with each other free of charge. Even though the tool claims to be GDPR-compliant, as with all other tools listed here, the usage options are institution-specific and must be coordinated with the respective data protection and IT departments.
- https://matrix.org/ is an open chat standard according to which anyone can set up a server. It can be used internally or similar to e-mail for communication with other participants. [Universites using matrix](#)

Joint cloud

A cloud enables digital storage and often also joint editing of documents. Folder structures can also be created. External parties can be granted access to the documents. However, these usually have limited access rights.

In COILs, it can be helpful to be able to access and store seminar documents together. Of course, it must be clarified, how the different access rights are to be handled and whether external parties (especially from abroad) can be granted access at all.

Example of clouds:

- Nextcloud
- [CryptPad](#) (claims to be GDPR-compliant, data security compliance still needs to be evaluated)

Collaborative text editing

In collaborative work, synchronous work on the same documents is essential. Some cloud solutions enable employees of an institution and, in some cases, external parties to work on files online at the same time. However, the entire range of functions can rarely be used.

Examples of tools for collaborative text editing:

- CryptDrive (extensive collaboration options, Excel formulas not usable in free version)
- Etherpad (e.g. yopad.eu, text editing only)
- Nextcloud (partly only txt files)

Boards

Another helpful tool in collaborative work are so-called boards. These allow ideas to be collected together on a digital board. For example, students can get to know each other before a joint event by asynchronously entering information about themselves (such as a photo, hobbies or academic interests). Boards can also be used for synchronous group work, allowing different group work setups. Post-its can then be created and systematized there. Working with boards should be well planned didactically. In contrast to digital pinboards, boards offer more room for creative, free design.

Examples of boards:

- Collaboard
- Miroboard (most widely used internationally, Miro claims to be GDPR-compliant, but most likely a corporate license needs to be acquired to assure data security compliancy)
- Conceptboard claims to be compliant with the GDPR, as it was founded and has its headquarters in Germany

Virtual pinboards

Virtual pinboards offer the possibility to present information in a structured way. Unlike boards, they provide a clear structure in columns and rows. Thus, the setup is easier, but the tool allows for less creativity than boards. This can also be used for getting to know each other among students. Also, entire seminar programs or additional information can be made available without much preparation (as with boards).

Examples of digital bulletin boards:

- Taskcards (claims to be GDPR compliant)
- Padlet (might be critical in terms of data protection)

Other useful COIL-Links & toolkits

- The FRAME's project's Toolkit for integration of Virtual Exchange in Higher Education
- Digital Tapas-Bar (only available in German)
- COIL Ressources of the Berlin Centre for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (in German)
- Mentoring Handbook for Virtual Exchange Teachers
- COIL Ressources of the California State University Long Beach
- Methodenpool of the University of Cologne