

# Library Lounge: Virtual Study Session Toolkit

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## VSS background:

The University of Strathclyde Andersonian Library's '**Library Lounge: Virtual Study Sessions**' materialised after a Strathclyde Library staff member attended the Customer Service UK Group (CSUKG) online conference in November 2020. There was a presentation at this conference, by Librarians from the University of Sheffield who presented on their 'Virtual Library Commons' sessions – an online space where students can study together – called 'Come Together, Write Now'.

This inspired our staff member to take this idea back to the Strathclyde workplace, instigating discussions with senior Library staff on the feasibility of creating something similar. A meeting with one of the Sheffield Librarian presenters was arranged, post CSUKG conference, to discuss the initiative further. Having collected valuable information from this meeting, the staff member then worked with the IS supervisor in the RLS team to work on and submit a written proposal of hosting our own virtual study sessions under the existing 'Library Lounge' branding name (used for other classes).

Our proposal drew on our aim of building community and offering support to students who were unable to visit the library and wanted some Library "vibes". During the midst of the pandemic, students and departmental staff told us that they missed the library community and being able to have a dedicated study space. They cited feelings of isolation and loneliness; therefore, we had hoped to build a community where students could 'pop-in' and feel supported whilst they were studying. Our aim was to offer them an alternative environment, essentially a virtual, managed study space taking place once or twice a week. [Appendix 1: Virtual Study Session proposal.](#)

In April 2021 we initiated Virtual Study Sessions via Zoom, with the first one taking place on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021 2pm – 4pm. Initially, the Virtual Study Sessions were offered to support students during the exam diet, but it soon became clear, from attendee survey feedback, that there was a demand for more than one session a week. Therefore, we increased our sessions, as a result of increased Library Staff Facilitator capacity, to two sessions a week. We wanted to make the two sessions at different times – Tuesdays 2 – 4pm and Thursdays 10 – 12noon – to accommodate student's academic lives as well as those who may be joining internationally.

## Format of the sessions:

The first 5 minutes of each session is a general welcome and discussion, including a run-down on the format of the session and what each attendee hopes to achieve during the study session. Facilitators highlight the Zoom chat function that can be used to contact the Library Facilitators with any library questions during the two-hour session (e.g., assistance with Endnote, referencing, how to get published in a journal etc). Attendees then turn off their cameras and microphones and get on with their coursework, studying, or research. During this part of the session, a PowerPoint slide ([Appendix 2: in-session slides](#)) showing the inside of the library is displayed which explains that the session is in progress, as well as directing attendees to the in-session zoom chat in case they have any questions. The slides (we rotate between three PowerPoint slide photos of the library) gives attendees a sense of feeling that they are 'virtually' there in the library. Halfway through the session there is a break and chat for 10 minutes – finding out how attendees are progressing – before returning to independent coursework. The last 5 minutes are used to summarise how the session has gone by asking attendees how they have progressed.

For us to cover two 2-hour sessions every week, it was realised that we needed to encourage other staff to get involved. We made use of our periodical staff training sessions (taking place usually three times a year), where we presented presentations like this:

<https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/79164/> to our Library Colleagues at the May 2021 and the August 2021 training sessions, encouraging them to join as facilitators. This had the desired effect, and we increased our VSS Staff Facilitator numbers from 4 to 11. We also send round staff emails ([Appendix 3: email to main Library staff](#)) asking staff to consider being VSS Staff Facilitators via the main library staff mailing list.

We have a **script** ([Appendix 4: VSS Script](#)) that new VSS Staff Facilitators can follow to become familiar with the VSS format as well as to assist those who may be feeling apprehensive. We also offer staff who are joining the team, the opportunity to be 'observers' for a couple of sessions, allowing them to experience the sessions first before facilitating session(s).

## Feedback from Attendees

Feedback, both oral and in response to our feedback survey (which we send out in our [Appendix 5: post session e-mail to attendees](#)), has been detailed and overwhelmingly positive. Students reported that they feel more motivated if they commit to attending a Virtual Study Session; they cite

feelings of accountability and talk of “*being in it together*”. 100% of respondents reported finding the sessions useful while the comments from the survey really illustrate what these sessions have achieved. Please take a moment to read the comments from our Virtual Study Session attendees ([Appendix 6: selection of feedback from attendees](#)). We have been blown away by the quality, detail, and positivity of these responses from attendees.

We have also received verbal feedback from attendees during the sessions, with attendees stating that:

- It reduced feelings of isolation (from either living alone, living overseas, not being able to travel to the UK, or feeling like this was a safer alternative to studying in the physical library during the pandemic).
- Others mentioned being able to set aside specific coursework for themselves to primarily work on during the session, providing themselves with an achievable and measurable goal.

## Advertising internally

The sessions are advertised on our [training calendar](#) and are promoted in a way that conveys the informal, relaxed, and comfortable feeling of other ‘Library Lounge’ sessions.

The sessions are also advertised through the following mediums:

- The Library’s social media channels ([Twitter](#) and Instagram);
- The University’s virtual learning environment ‘MyPlace’;
- Via departmental and university support services contacts (encouraging other departments and groups to re-post);
- Student newsletters ([University of Strathclyde Doctoral School Newsletter](#), and the [International Student Newsletter](#));
- And via direct emails to previous attendees of both the Virtual Study Sessions and other Library classes.

We use the same ‘Library Lounge’ branding, calling these sessions: ‘Library Lounge: Virtual Study Sessions’ to promote a virtual study environment that is approachable and welcoming to attendees. We deliberated on the wording of the text that we used to promote this initiative within the course training calendar, and specifically used key words and phrases such as:

‘alternative’, ‘online managed study environment’, ‘dedicate specific time’, ‘focus on your coursework’, ‘studying alongside other students’.

This ensured that there was no misinterpretation by prospective attendees – in perhaps thinking that they were signing up to workshops – regarding the purpose of these sessions.

The thinking was to directly target those who had previously shown motivation and commitment to attend our classes, with the view that they would be more likely to show interest and book a place. This had the desired results, as we received most bookings from this line of advertising. The direct email we sent out also contained wording asking the students to cascade the information about these sessions onto their classmates, as we were aware that word of mouth, especially from those who have attended classes previously, is the best form of advertisement.

We have also had interest from members of staff. We had one staff member asking to arrange a meeting with us so that we could share our findings from our experience of running these sessions, and another staff member attended one of the sessions to find out about the format of the sessions. Both members of staff contacted us with a view to replicating something similar for their own cohorts, as well as targeting online degrees and reaching out to distance learners:

*“I joined the session to see how it worked, in order to understand whether we could implement something like this for online degrees as well, so to try and build a proper community feeling between students that may live in different locations. One struggle would be the presence of students in different time-zones, but perhaps something like this could be trialled.”*

We have found that following through with a reminder email on the day to attendees, helps ensure that bookings are upheld. We have also found that continually advertising to previous or current attendees, in the form of making them aware of future sessions at the end of the session that they are attending and providing future dates alongside the URL for booking in the follow-up feedback email, allows for regular attendees and good retention rates.

To keep the momentum going with attendance levels as well as building up the reputation of the sessions, we later decided to promote the sessions through the student representative in charge of the Doctoral Researchers Group and relied on additional contacts from our Faculty Librarians. One of which was the Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research for the Business School, who distributed the information to students, and this resulted in further bookings from new attendees:

*“Email, received through several channels. What really motivated me to come was when it was forwarded by the Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research.”*

*“Email from Doctoral Researchers Group.”* ([Appendix 7: Email sent out to Strathclyde Doctoral School Group](#)).

In May 2022, we wanted to mark our 100<sup>th</sup> Virtual Study Session (Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May), so we used some of the monies from the STEPS ([Appendix 8: STEPS Award](#)) (Strathclyde’s Teaching Excellence Program) Award that we won for the Administrative and Professional services category, to buy two £50 Amazon vouchers. This enabled us to create a prize draw throughout the month of May, the incentive being that the more sessions that attendees signed up to throughout May then the more chance they had to win one of the vouchers. We advertised the Virtual Study Sessions prize draw through an email stipulating what was happening ([Appendix 9: Virtual Study Session prize draw email](#)).

We have recently worked with our Communications Officer to create Virtual Study Session flyers ([Appendix 10: Virtual Study Session flyer](#)) that will be used at the beginning of the Semester 1 (2022) in the coming weeks to promote at open days, tours, market places, and talks, spreading the word.

## Advertising externally

We have also felt it to be important to share this initiative, as well as the best practice it entails, with other Library and Information Professionals with the view to others emulating our initiative (hence this toolkit). Therefore, we have presented externally at conferences and written reports and online blogs. We have also worked with our Communications Officer to create Virtual Study Session flyers, specifically for LIR professionals. These flyers came about from one colleague creating (along with the Communications Officer and a few other Library Facilitators) a poster ([Appendix 11: Virtual Study Session flyer for external LIR professionals](#)) which she presented (and subsequently won the poster competition at the conference) at the CONUL conference.

Please find the following documents available to you in our StrathPrints Open Access Repository of our external promotional work:

- **JISC Digifest 2022:** Library Lounge: Virtual Study Sessions – Encapsulating the student community through the creation of an online study environment: <https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/81461/>
- **CSUKG knowledge sharing event “Inspired Ideas from the Sharp End”:** Library Lounge – Virtual Study Sessions (VSS): Recreating Library vibes in a virtual environment: <https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/81468/>
- **CONUL conference 2022:** Library Lounge: Virtual Study Sessions – CONUL Poster for CONUL conference: <https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/81465/>
- **CILIP Scotland Conference:** Library Lounge – Virtual Study Sessions (VSS): Supporting the student community through the creation of an online study environment. – CILIP Scotland Conference. <https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/81472/>
- **Volunteer Attendee testimonials:** <https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/79203/>
- **Blog post for Virtual Study Session: Recreating library vibes in a virtual environment (For SALCTG blog):** <https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/82220/>
- **Interview for JISC membership: members stories webpage:** Creating Library vibes for students studying remotely (JISC interview with Lynsey Sampson and Kirsten Watson): <https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/81471/>
- **Submission for our Micro CPD case study (for the Organisational and Staff Development Unit at Strathclyde):** <https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/82230/>  
<https://sway.office.com/Dkcu6JrUhosL9OQg?ref=Link>

## Future plans

### *The following plans for the future of the University of Strathclyde Andersonian Library Virtual Study Sessions:*

- Continue to run the virtual study sessions twice weekly – Tuesdays 2 – 4pm and Thursdays 10 – 12noon;
- Look at further promotion both internal and external;
- Encourage more staff to join our team of Virtual Study Session Facilitators;
- Support the student led running of the ‘Writers’ Retreats’ – developed through the virtual study sessions;
- Look at attendee feedback for ideas for further development.

## *Appendix 1: Library Lounge: Virtual Study Session Proposal*

**Background:** Students and departmental staff have told us that they miss the library community and having a dedicated study space, many of them being unable to visit the physical Library so we hope to offer them an alternative - a virtual, managed study space once or twice a week.

Lynsey attended a presentation by Librarians from the University of Sheffield who have been offering this service over the last year and recently met with [REDACTED] to discuss these initiatives further.

**Benefits:** Students have told us that they're feeling isolated and lonely, and we hope to build a community where they can pop in and feel supported while they are studying. Feedback from similar events (both at Sheffield and NCETPO) indicates that students feel more motivated if they commit to attending a virtual study space; they cite feelings of accountability and talk of "being in it together". It will enable students to set aside and dedicate that time to do their coursework. It will also enable us to reach distance learners who would not otherwise use the physical library building, providing evidence of a continued virtual study space when the physical library building re-opens.

**When?** Taking into consideration the level of engagement at Sheffield, we would suggest offering one or two Virtual Study Sessions per week, either Tuesday and Thursday 2-4pm or Wednesday 2-5pm. We would propose starting from week commencing 5<sup>th</sup> April and continue until the demand is no longer there, possibly week commencing 26/4. We plan to review the uptake of this, with a view to continuing it throughout certain periods of the academic year to coincide with exams.

**Who?** Briony, Lorna and Lynsey are all willing to be involved as facilitators and colleagues from the Student Wellbeing Group have also offered to act as facilitators for some of the sessions. We also plan to ask for additional volunteers from the Library staff and see staff training as integral to the preparation and running of the sessions.

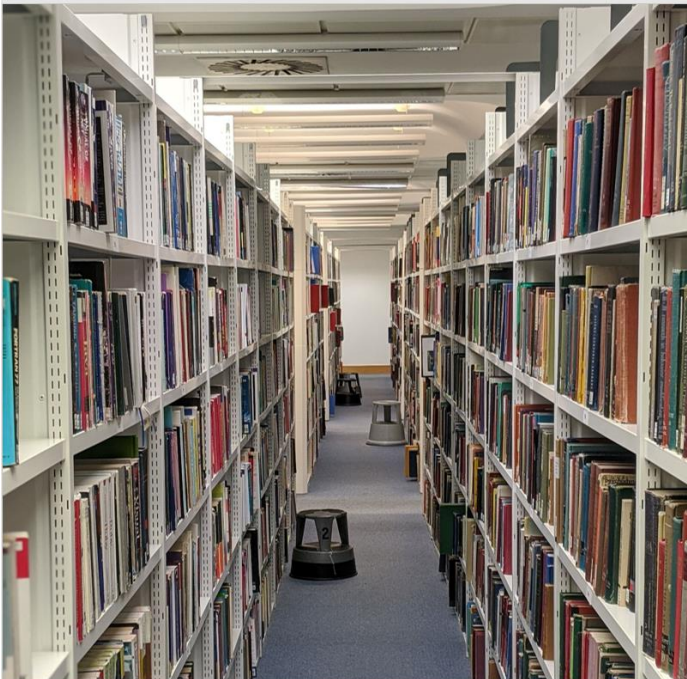
**How would it work?** Students would book a space on DAT and we would send them the Zoom link, along with a bit more information on what to expect. The first 5 minutes of each session would be a general discussion, including what we hope to achieve during the study session. Students would then turn off their cameras and mics and get on with studying. During this part of the session, we would display a slide which would explain that the session is in progress and giving a link to our help pages in case a student needs to contact someone during the session. Halfway through the session we would have a break and a chat for 15 minutes, before going back to studying. The last 5 minutes would be to summarise how it has gone and what we have achieved.

Meetings will be set up on Zoom to ensure that attendees must be signed in with their Strathclyde credentials and we will operate a waiting room where we admit students. Staff will monitor behaviour and will be able to eject any student who behaves inappropriately. We will send housekeeping/ acceptable behaviour rules before the session and reiterate these at the start.

We don't intend to market it at specific groups of students but would aim to publicise the sessions through our normal channels.



Appendix 2: In-session Virtual Study Session slides



## The Library Lounge: Virtual Study Session is in progress

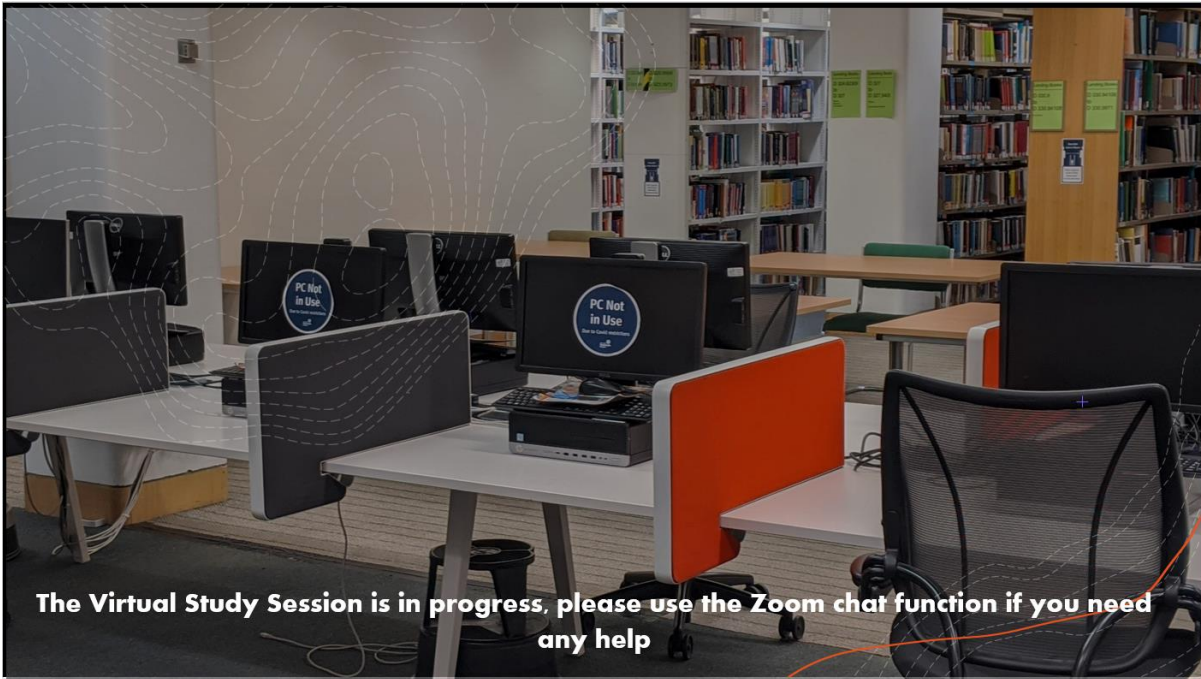
Please contact staff via the Zoom chat button

The Learner Development Services team have really useful guidance on revision at <https://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/strathclydeonlinelearning/studyskills/>



## The Virtual Study Session is in progress

Please use the Zoom chat function to contact staff or ask any questions.



The Virtual Study Session is in progress, please use the Zoom chat function if you need any help



'Library Lounge: Virtual Study Sessions' turned 100 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022!

Please contact staff via the Zoom chat button

The Learner Development Services Team have really useful guidance on revision at <https://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/strathclydeonlinelearning/studyskills/>

Library Lounge: Virtual Study Sessions turned 100 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022!

- Please contact staff via the Zoom chat button
- The Learner Development Services team have really useful guidance on revision at: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/strathlife/academicsupport/>

Celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> session in May with our prize draw...

**Prize draw rules:**

- 1) To be in with a chance of winning a £25 Amazon voucher you need to attend a VSS session in May.
- 2) You need to attend the full session.
- 3) Attendance at 1 session = 1 entry into the prize draw. The more times you attend, the more entries you will have into the prize draw!
- 4) Valid sessions are those scheduled to run in May 2022.
- 5) Draw will take place Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June. Winners will be notified by email.

### *Appendix 3: Email to main Library staff*

Hello,

We are looking for more staff to **get involved** in our **Library Lounge: Virtual Study Sessions** and **help us to facilitate the sessions**. We provide staff with a script to follow as a guide plus the option to be 'Observers' at a few of the sessions when they first get involved, to reduce any anticipated anxieties.

We hold the **Virtual Study Sessions twice a week (Tuesdays 2pm – 4pm and Thursdays 10am – 12noon)**, and these are online study sessions for all Strathclyde Students taking place over Zoom where the students are able to work independently on their university work whilst knowing that the others in the session are doing the same. The sessions motivate attendees through having a structured designated 2-hour time period, as well as reporting on what they plan to do and how they have got on during the introduction, break, and the end. Further information on these sessions is included from an excerpt from the Virtual Study Session toolkit which is currently being created (see below).

We currently have a rotational team of 10 Facilitators for the Virtual Study Sessions. All Facilitators are part of a Teams chat on Microsoft Teams called 'VSS Staffing Chat'. Here, there is a spreadsheet, where Staff are able to put their name against the dates that they are able to facilitate (either Tuesdays 2 – 4pm or Thursdays 10 – 12noon). Staff can sign up to facilitate whatever number of sessions they wish, fitting them around their responsibilities. **Involvement is minimal and simply requires half an hour of your time during a session to facilitate the chat at the beginning, middle, and the end. During the session the staff member can get on with their own work with the Virtual Study Session continuing in the background.**

We are really making a difference to students. Here is some of the **attendee feedback**:

*"I think the session is very helpful as it's not 100% formal and we are encouraged to ask any questions and get the support needed straight away."*

*"I found I lost a lot of motivation to work on my dissertation after classes/lectures ended. I think the virtual study group is a good way to help structure my studying again and boost motivation."*

*“Facilitators are always fantastic. They are supportive and always offer assistance.”*

Here is information from the toolkit on the format of the sessions:

***The first 5 minutes of each session is a general welcome and discussion, including a run-down on the format of the session and what each attendee hopes to achieve during the study session. Facilitators highlight the Zoom chat function that can be used to contact the Library Facilitators with any Library questions during the two-hour session (e.g. assistance with Endnote, referencing, how to get published in a journal etc). Attendees then turn off their cameras and microphones and get on with their coursework, studying, or research. During this part of the session, a PowerPoint slide ([Appendix 2: in-session slides](#)) showing the inside of the Library is displayed which explains that the session is in progress, as well as directing attendees to the in-session zoom chat in case they have any questions. The slides (we rotate between three PowerPoint slide photos of the Library) gives attendees a sense of feeling that they are ‘virtually’ there in the Library. Halfway through the session there is a break and chat for 10 minutes – finding out how attendees are progressing – before returning to independent coursework. The last 5 minutes are used to summarise how the session has gone by asking attendees how they have progressed during the two hours.***

**If you are interested, please reply to this email and I will add you to our Teams chat.**

Many thanks in anticipation,

I look forward to hearing from you,

Kind Regards,

# University of Strathclyde Andersonian Library's – Library Lounge: Virtual Study Session's script

The following script provides guidance on what to say during the introduction, break, and the end of the Virtual Study Sessions, if you are struggling and you need some prompts. You do not need to follow this script word for word, use it as guidance to cover the essential points whilst incorporating your own personality too.

It is a good idea to split the facilitating between two facilitators prior to the session (we usually have two facilitators covering each session). Strathclyde virtual study session staff facilitators usually use the Teams chat (the specific VSS chat) to reach out to one another and decide which facilitator will do the introduction and which facilitator will do the break and the ending.

## Opening

### ***Say Hello and Introduce yourself:***

*Hi, my name is NAME from LIBRARY DEPT YOU WORK IN and this is my colleague NAME from DEPT HE/SHE WORKS IN. Welcome along to this Virtual Study Session. We are here to facilitate this afternoon's virtual study session.*

### ***If you work in a direct customer service facing Library role:***

*I work in the Research and Learning Support Team within the library, working with the IS Enquiries Team to answer library enquiries. We have a close working relationship with other university support services, which means that we are best placed to signpost students to sources of support.*

### **Format of the session:**

*We will start the session (2pm or 10am – for our afternoon and morning sessions) by spending a few minutes introducing ourselves and asking what your aims are for this session. At this point we will have our cameras and microphones on (if you feel comfortable to do so).*

*At ten past (2.10pm or 10.10am), we will then turn our cameras and microphones off and work quietly until the break. At 3pm or 11am (depending on which session), break-time, we will take a break, turning our cameras and microphones back on, during which time you can ask any questions you might have and share your progress. After 10 minutes (3.10pm or 11.10am), we will turn our cameras and microphones off again and work until 3.55pm or 11.55am. During the last 5 minutes, we will then have a short time to catch up, with our cameras and microphones on again, to find out how we have got on during the second half of the session.*

*We are here to take any questions you might have and, if these occur to you during the study session, you can contact NAME or I by using the chat function within Zoom. We will be putting an in-session slide up of a photo of the Library so that you feel like you are ‘virtually’ in the Library! On this slide, there is information to encourage you to contact us on the Zoom chat if you have any Library questions. There is also information about the Learner Development Services Team, who are another source of support for your studies. Otherwise, you can wait until the next break to ask any questions.*

*The aim of the session is to create a dedicated study space and time for yourself in the same way as you would if you were studying within the actual library. While we will do our best to answer any questions you have or to find out the answers for you, we are not able to help you with the writing or revising of your work.*

### **Introductions:**

*To start with, please, if you feel comfortable, introduce yourself and let us know what you plan to work on during this (afternoons or morning’s – depending on the session) virtual study session. Although it is absolutely fine if you would prefer not to say anything.*

Start with the two Library staff facilitators introducing themselves:

*I'll start, my name is NAME and I'm going to be working on BRIEFLY MENTION WHAT YOU WILL BE WORKING ON. NAME (other facilitator), what will you be working on?*

*Who would like to go next?*

If no one volunteers to go next with introductions, choose one of the regulars (or someone who has their camera on):

*NAME, what do you plan to work on during this session?*

Finished introductions:

*I see it is coming up for 10 past, so let's put our cameras off and our microphones on mute and begin the first half of the session. Good luck everyone and see you back here at (3pm or 11am – again depending on the session you are facilitating).*

\*\*\*Some conversation prompts for facilitators\*\*\* (optional and time dependent):

- *Has anyone attended any sessions like this before?*
- *What course are you doing?*
- *What do you find helps with your studying/ revising/ coursework/ research?*
- *Does anyone have any tips that they would like to share?*
- *What are your studying weaknesses? Distractions like food/ phone?*

\*\*\*This will get them talking more and can be a good lead into advertising our online resources\*\*\*

E.g.:

**- I am going to work on my references:** “Don't forget about our **LibGuides**” and then put links to the LibGuides webpages in the Zoom chat box.



- ***I am going to be doing some more research on my topic:*** “Have a look at our online guide for your subject area as well as our guide on literature searching”, again put the LibGuide link in the Zoom chat box.

- ***“Do you have access to all the resources that you need for your revision?”***

- maybe check that they have already downloaded eBooks etc. Make suggestions as to how we can help.

[New people to the session:](#)

You can gauge whether you need to start with the whole introduction or shorten this according to whether the session consists of regulars, a mix of regulars and new attendees, or new attendees.

**Close with a reminder of how to get in touch via the Zoom chat box. Mention that they cannot chat to each other privately in Zoom, only to either everyone, or privately to one of the facilitators (ensure that you click on the chat settings and choose ‘chat to everyone’, as the default seems to be ‘chat to everyone and anyone directly’. This will enable attendees to contact the host and chat to everyone publicly, therefore minimising any misbehaviour within the chat).**

## [Break – 3pm or 11am](#)

***Introduction to break:***

*Hello, how has the first part of the session gone for everyone?*

If someone mentions having difficulties with something, use this time to either help them, if it is a quick solution, or say to them that you will contact them through the Zoom chat privately to support them with their enquiry. Add any relevant links to resources in the chat box which have arisen from enquiries.

Have a facilitator asking:

*“So, who would like to go first and share how they have got on during the first half of the session?”*

If no one volunteers to speak, again ask one of the regulars (or someone with their camera on):

*NAME, how did you get on with (if possible, try to remember what each attendee was working on) your literature review chapter/ finding references/ creating a table of statistics etc?*

Provide prompts and reflection such as:

*That sounds interesting. What is your dissertation/ PhD on? How do you feel about it? So, you have been finding it a slow process, but you feel you are getting there?*

Include facilitators charting their progress, with the facilitator leading the break saying how he/ she has got on, and then asking the other facilitator about his/ her progress.

Conversational prompts (time permitting):

- *Has anyone got any good study tips/ techniques that they would like to share?*
- *What are you hoping to achieve in the rest of the session?*
- **Remind them to take a break from the screen:** remind students to look after themselves – take their eyes away from the screen, stand up and stretch, grab a drink or food etc.
- *What activities do you do when you are taking regular study breaks? E.g., walk, phoning a friend, stretching etc.*
- Even topics which are neutral and not study related (to give them a break from talking about their work, time permitting) e.g.: *What is the weather like where you are? Has anyone seen any good films at the cinema?*
- - **Mention any recent developments in the Library:** As it is often hard to reach students to tell them about changes to resources or policies, this is a great time to spread the word (chat service, Wellbeing Wall being developed – any tips that they would like to share?)

**\*\*\* If a student mentions hitting a roadblock or other difficulties around their mental or emotional health, provide links to the Wellbeing pages and the Learner Development Service pages and contact email addresses. \*\*\***

### Closing of the break:

*I see it is coming up for 10 past, so let's put our cameras and microphones on mute again and continue with the second half of the session. Good luck for the second half and see you back here at (3.55pm or 11.55am – whichever session you are facilitating).*

Give them an opportunity to ask **any other questions** then, no later than 3.10pm or 11.10am, re-start the session and put up the in-session slide (good practice to vary this slide if you have a few pictures of your Library).

### Closing – 3.55pm or 11.55am

*Hello, welcome back everyone! How did you feel you all got on during the second half of the session?*

#### Have a facilitator asking:

*So, who would like to go first and share how they have got on during the first half of the session?*

#### If no one volunteers to speak, again ask one of the regulars (or someone with their camera on):

*NAME, how did you get on with (if possible, try to remember what each attendee was working on) your literature review chapter/ finding references/ creating a table of statistics etc during the second half of the session?*

If you have time, ask for any verbal feedback on what they thought of the session(s) and keep a note of the feedback.

Put the survey feedback link (we use a survey that we have created from MS Forms) into the chat and ask them to fill this in:

University of Strathclyde Virtual Study Session survey link example:

<https://forms.office.com/r/ZVFBEWcRcW>.

If they mention struggling with an aspect of their research, provide links to online help and resources in the chat box.

- **End with a farewell message and a 'hope to see them again':** *So, I'm just aware that we are coming up to (4pm or 12noon, depending on the session) signalling the end of the session. It was good to see you all! We really hope to see you again at a future session – our sessions run on Tuesdays 2pm – 4pm and Thursdays 10am – 12noon. Remind them of the ways to get in touch: email, telephone etc.*

If you have attendees who are reluctant to engage, use this time to promote our online resources and services which they may not be aware we offer. “Did you know....” or “This is something you may find useful...” and then share your screen to give them a tour of our webpages, resources etc. But only if you have time and this is suitable.

[Useful Links to Share when sending out the follow-up email after the session \(these are examples from the University of Strathclyde\):](#)

**Supporting online learning (including the Learner Development Services team):**

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/strathclydeonlinelearning/studyskills/>

**Referencing resources:** [https://guides.lib.strath.ac.uk/referencing\\_guide/home](https://guides.lib.strath.ac.uk/referencing_guide/home)

**Subject Guides:** <https://guides.lib.strath.ac.uk/?b=s>

**Skills Boost sessions:** <https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/is/help/skillsboost/>

**Wellbeing service:** <https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/disabilityandwellbeing/>

**Contact us:** [help@strath.ac.uk](mailto:help@strath.ac.uk) or <https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/is/contact/>

**Manchester Academic Phrase Bank:**

<https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

## Useful points:

### *Enquiries received through the Virtual Study Sessions:*

Enquiries from attendees are most often received through the Zoom chat. The attendee will post their question either to everyone in the session (facilitators and other attendees), or they will private message one of the facilitators.

When an enquiry is received, the facilitators assess the enquiry to see if they have the knowledge and information to answer it themselves. If they can, then one of them will answer it through the Zoom chat there and then. If they cannot, then they will make use of the Virtual Study Session Teams Chat, in Microsoft Teams, to ask one of the other facilitators from this group. The brilliance of this is that all the Library Facilitators are from different Library departments so have a plethora of knowledge and experience between them. This results in most enquiries being answered during the session.

### *New attendees:*

Sometimes new attendees will join a session but will have different expectations as to what they thought the session involved. In this case, we would always recommend explaining clearly what the session involves, asking if they have university work to work on, and if they do not then suggesting online Library modules (such as our online Academic Library Skills modules – provide the link(s) to attendees) that they can work on. We would convey this information either through a private Zoom message or create a break-out room within the Virtual Study Session with the attendee to talk with them in-person.

## Appendix 5: Post session e-mail to attendees

Hello,

Thank you for taking part in our **130<sup>th</sup>** 'Library Lounge: Virtual Study Session' this morning on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> August, I hope you all got a lot out of it.

Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey, it is much appreciated as it provides feedback for us on the success of the sessions as well as helping us to shape future sessions. **If you have still to take the survey, you can access it here:** <https://forms.office.com/r/ZVFBEWcRcW> . If you would have already filled in the survey, but would like to send additional comments then please send them to [lib.ref@strath.ac.uk](mailto:lib.ref@strath.ac.uk) .

We are running the sessions continuously, and you can sign up here: <https://bookings.strath.ac.uk/Home/Course/5713>.

**\*\*\*Remember, that you can sign up to as many of the other sessions as you wish. Please see this link for our future 'Library Lounge: Virtual Study Sessions' dates:** <https://bookings.strath.ac.uk/Home/Course/5713> . \*\*\*

\*\*\*Please also note that in order for us to anticipate attendance levels before each session, we would be very grateful if you are able to book through the bookings page for each session. If you encounter any problems with signing up for multiple sessions, then please email us at [lib.ref@strath.ac.uk](mailto:lib.ref@strath.ac.uk) and we can manually book you onto the other sessions. \*\*\*

Here are some useful links to help with your revision:

**LibGuides:** <https://guides.lib.strath.ac.uk/>

**General Study**

**Skills:** <https://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/strathclydeonlinelearning/studyskills/>

**Specific information for**

**revision:** <https://classes.myplace.strath.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=19550>

**Referencing resources:** [https://guides.lib.strath.ac.uk/referencing\\_guide/home](https://guides.lib.strath.ac.uk/referencing_guide/home)

**Subject Guides:** <https://guides.lib.strath.ac.uk/?b=s>

**Skills Boost**

**sessions:** <https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/is/help/skillsboost/>

**Wellbeing**

**service:** <https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/disabilityandwellbeing/>

**Contact**

**us:** [help@strath.ac.uk](mailto:help@strath.ac.uk) or <https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/is/contact/>

I also include the Manchester Academic Phrasebank, which is a good resource for your academic writing:

<https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

Please get in touch for any further assistance,

We really look forward to meeting you again at future sessions,

Best Wishes,

## *Appendix 6: selection of feedback from attendees*

“I find the sessions absolutely fantastic, and they just give me that bit of focus and support that I need. I think 2 hours are good for most sessions as it means I can commit to them more regularly, but now and again a 4 hour session might be good. Maybe once a month or twice a month, to focus on longer projects. I couldn't commit to 4 hours every week though which is why I picked 2 hours.”

“These are great, not only the sessions themselves but the librarians being on hand to help with queries that are related to use of library or electronic resource or support studies Endnote and such.”

“Works well having two members of library staff when open to all students, many of whom won't know each other”

“These sessions have been a really great idea - it helps me to set blocks of time to do particular subjects without distraction and actually progressing, instead of "dabbling" here and there without feeling productive. They have also enabled me to connect via LinkedIn with other students in different areas.”

“I quite like the sessions because it makes me feel accountable to not just myself but someone else. Also considering that we get to speak honestly about it, during the session, it almost feels therapeutical.”

“I really enjoyed the session. It helped motivate me to complete my tasks and I enjoyed meeting new people and hearing what they were planning to do in the zoom.”

“I like the format which allows us to share goals at the start of the session and report on them at the end. It really helps as I've been having issues holding myself accountable recently.”

“I got a lot out of this session. Lynsey kindly talked me through the study sessions on the library site. It has allowed me to hone my study skills and become familiar with the SUPrimo search system. This has been a great start to my time as a virtual student. Thank you 😊”



“Facilitators are always fantastic. They are supportive and always offer assistance.”

“It's such an amazing idea! I hope it continues to be a thing even for the next academic year because it's convenient for ppl who can't commute to the physical library! It was more social than I actually anticipated cos usually studying is quite an independent thing, but it was actually nice to meet ppl from diff backgrounds and meet ppl outside of my course.”

“It was really helpful to ask for advice via the chat.”

“I found I lost a lot of motivation to work on my dissertation after classes/lectures ended. I think the virtual study group is a good way to help structure my studying again and boost motivation.”

“It is an amazing experience. It is really nice to communicate with other students and share our feelings and difficulties. The most beneficial part was that I could ask the staff immediately during my work. This support really helped me today.”

“I think the session is very helpful as it's not 100% formal and we are encouraged to ask any questions and get the support needed straight away.”

“The session is pretty good. It recreates the library feeling at home and brings a sense of community.”

“The session itself is good as it allowed me to feel connected to other pgr students working on similar tasks. As discussed, something that is more permanent over summer would be great as many pgrs will be working during this time. I imagine everyone's requirements will be different but a session that is longer would be great. Pgrs that are in full-time writing stage would benefit most from a virtual office/writing room, where they can develop a familiarity with a few people and encourage each other to stay motivated.”

“Really good aspects were: - the chance to interact with other people, and to be encouraged to think about goals to aim for at the session.”

## **Library Lounge: Virtual Study Sessions: Throughout September Tuesdays 2pm – 4pm and Thursdays 10am – 12noon**

**<https://bookings.strath.ac.uk/Home/Course/5713>**

“These are independent study sessions facilitated by Library staff, where students are able to study alongside other students in an online environment via Zoom. These sessions are a great way for you to dedicate specific time to focus on your research whilst feeling connected to the University by working alongside other students. The feedback from PGR attendees has been overwhelmingly positive, with students being able to set aside specific research to work on during these sessions, enabling them to feel motivated in attaining their goals. Students also appreciate being able to ask Library staff questions through the Zoom chat as they receive an immediate response, and they also enjoy hearing from other students in a comfortable, relaxed setting, knowing that they too are working on their own research topic. The sessions take place every Tuesday 2pm – 4pm and Thursday 10am – 12noon.”

## Appendix 8: STEPS Award

### ADMIN & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES - AWARD

LORNA GILKISON, KIRSTEN WATSON, LYNSEY SAMPSON, ALAN MORRISON, ALASDAIR STEWART, BRIONY WILLIS, DARCY SPILLER, LIZ SCOTT, FIONA TINTO, JEAN KIDD, JENNIFER GRAY (STUDENT AMBASSADOR), JESSICA BIONDO, KAREN VEITCH, SARAH KEVILL, GILLIAN ANDERSON (LIBRARY) - SUBMITTED BY LORNA MCNALLY

In April 2021 the Library initiated Virtual Study Sessions (VSS) via Zoom. The main aim was to build community and offer support to students who couldn't physically visit the Library and wanted some Library "vibes". Students had told us that they were feeling isolated and lonely, and we hoped to build a community where they can pop in and feel supported while they are studying. Initially, the VSS were offered to support students during the exam diet, but soon developed into a regular offering, catering for all students, appealing in particular to PhD and Masters students. The sessions have attracted many students who are based overseas and therefore couldn't attend the Library for study even though it has been open since August 2020. Sessions have run throughout the summer 2021 and are planned to continue in the new academic year.

Two 2-hour sessions are offered each week. The first 5 minutes of each session is a general welcome and discussion, including an explanation of the format and brief comments from each attendee about what they hope to achieve. Students then turn off their cameras and microphones and get on with studying. During this part of the session, a slide is displayed explaining that the session is in progress and directs them to the in-session zoom chat function should they need to contact one of the moderators. Halfway through the session there is a break and informal chat for 10 minutes, before returning to study. The last 5 minutes are used to summarise how the session has gone and what attendees have achieved in the time.

Feedback, both oral and in response to a feedback survey, has been detailed and overwhelmingly positive. Students reported that they feel more motivated if they commit to attending a Virtual Study Session; they cite feelings of accountability and talk of "being in it together." This initiative enables us to reach distance learners who would not otherwise use the physical library building and encourages feelings of 'belonging' to the Strathclyde community. This initiative has been innovative, people-oriented and collaborative and has fostered a sense of belonging amongst participants.

40 Virtual Study Sessions have taken place between April to August 2021 with 295 bookings in total. On average there were 7 students in a session. The sessions are still running and can be booked here:

<https://bookings.strath.ac.uk/Home/Course/5713>

#### Participant Testimonials

Tagged: Belonging and learning communities

#### JUDGES' COMMENTS:

This is an example of a highly innovative response to the specific needs of students during the pandemic. The originality of the Virtual Study Sessions will have required a clear insight into, and understanding of, student needs. This was combined a degree of boldness to propose and implement such an original response. The feedback indicates that the outcome was highly successful in supporting students' needs during the pandemic.

**Library Lounge: Virtual Study Session - celebrate our 100th session in May with our \*\*\*prize draw\*\*\*!**

Hello,

***Our next Virtual Study Session on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May will be our 100<sup>th</sup> session, what a milestone!***

To mark this momentous occasion, we will be doing a **prize draw**, where VSS attendees (those who attend any of our sessions during the month of May only) could be in with a chance of winning **1 of 2 x £25 Amazon vouchers!**

The rules for the prize draw are as follows:

- 1) To be in with a chance of winning a £25 Amazon voucher you need to attend a VSS session in May.
- 2) You need to attend the full session.
- 3) Attendance at 1 session = 1 entry into the prize draw. Therefore, the more times you attend, the more entries you will have into the prize draw!
- 4) Valid sessions are those scheduled to run in May 2022.
- 5) The draw will take place on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022. The winners will be notified by email.

To book for one of our Virtual Study May Sessions, please click on this link and then book: <https://bookings.strath.ac.uk/Home/Course/5713>

**Virtual Study Sessions:** These are independent study sessions facilitated by library staff where you will be able to study on your own alongside other students virtually over Zoom. The Virtual Study Sessions are a virtual place to study independently on your own research or coursework.

The session takes the following format:

- Introduction (10 minutes) (meeting other students, and finding out what you plan to do with the first half of the session i.e. what research or coursework you have set yourself to work on)
- a break (10 minutes) (find out how your research or coursework is going)
- and an end (5 minutes) (find out how the second half has gone for you).

During the introduction, break, and the end you will be able to have your camera and mic on and talk. During the study part of the sessions (50 minutes first half and 45 minutes second half), you will have your camera and mic off and work independently on your own while there is a photo of the library up on the screen. You can, during the time when your camera and mic are off, ask library type questions in the Zoom chat to one of the library staff who will be there as moderators (library type questions such as help with referencing or Endnote, or how to find an E-book etc).

Good luck and looking forward to seeing you all at the May Library Lounge:  
Virtual Study Sessions!

Kindest Regards,



Too many distractions?  
We'll help you stay focused!



Sign up to a  
Virtual Study Session  
and dedicate 2 hours  
to your uni work.

Search online for 'Strath virtual study session' or scan the QR code:



 /unistrathlibit

# Library Lounge: Virtual Study Sessions

Library and Information Resources staff  
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

**1. Need**

- COVID lockdowns and the switch to online learning
- Risk of isolation
- Students missing 'Library vibes'
- Staff wished to build a community as wellbeing is at the heart of the Library

Online study sessions open to all students and facilitated by Library staff.

**2. Format**

- Two-hour online study sessions held twice each week.
- Delivered via Zoom, sign up in advance.
- Library staff facilitate sessions.
- Attendees share study plans at the start.
- Midpoint social chat.

Inspired by the University of Strathclyde's Open Up and Thrive programme.

**3. Impact**

- Won the University's *Celebrating Innovation and Resilience Award* in the Professional Services category.
- 100 sessions held between April 2021 and May 2022.
- 713 attendees.

**4. What's next?**

- We're designing a toolkit for other libraries to use.
- We're spreading the word at library events.
- To learn more, go to: [strathprints.strath.ac.uk/80001](http://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/80001)

**5. Participant feedback**

- "It is really nice to communicate with other students."
- "I like... to share goals at the start of the session and report on them at the end."
- "I feel motivated studying on Zoom with other people together."
- For more, scan the QR code or go to: [strathprints.strath.ac.uk/79203](http://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/79203)

[www.strath.ac.uk/library](http://www.strath.ac.uk/library)  
@ /unistrathlibit