# Using Google Docs and Breakout rooms for a directed task, collaborative work, and presentation.

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I teach a second-year chemistry module called "Chemistry and Society". This module gives students an understanding of industrial applications of their chemistry studies, in particular, toxicology, looking into the effects of chemicals in humans.

We usually have a debate during a session each year on the use of animals to test toxicity, whether students feel it is a good or a bad thing. I replaced this session with an online debate. I thought this might be of particular of interest to them this year, with all the talk of the development of vaccines and clinical trials in the media. Students were encouraged to look at examples and to find scientific data and papers to back up their thoughts.

I decided to use breakout rooms in Zoom and Google Slides for the session. I set up Google Slide decks (Google’s online version of PowerPoint) in advance, with the topic headings, and left them open to anyone with the link to edit. The topics were, 'I believe that animal testing is a good thing’, and the other was, 'I believe that animal testing should be banned'.

I recorded some background material for the students using Panopto and released that on the Monday prior to the live session on Friday. These videos gave the students an insight into what type of tests are done, what they are aiming to determine, and likely use of the data.

I briefed the students at the start of the session as to how the debate would work and put the Google Slide links into the chat asking them to open them before I put them into four random breakout rooms. I joined each group early in the session to ensure they knew what was expected, then gave them time to discuss the topic as a group. I then dropped into each group before closing the breakout rooms to check how they were progressing.

The students nominated a person from each room to present their thoughts to the whole group. I found that the students engaged very well with the session and I was able to watch the slide decks being edited in real time, giving me an indication of engagement, and also creating a resource that they could review at a later date.

Some of the slides were very good, both in terms of presentation and also scientific literature to back up their thoughts, showing that they had engaged with the pre-recorded material and has undertaken the research necessary for them to participate in this debate.

Students commented in the session, in the mid module review and in the course committee meeting that this was a good interactive session, allowing them to collaborate with their peers to develop their understanding of the subject, and opposing views that are held with in the scientific community.

Things to note:

* Ensure students know what is expected when they go into breakout rooms, both whilst in the room and afterwards. Ask them to open any documents linked to in the chat before they are put into the breakout rooms.
* Use Google Docs/Slides to allow them to collate their thoughts. This also allows you to see how they are progressing ‘in real time’ and to intervene if you think any of the groups are struggling.
* Students can call you in to the room if they need help or clarification.