

## Lessons from COVID-19: What Back to School Will Look like in 2021/2022

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Even though the COVID-19 variants still rage around the world, universities, colleges and other educational institutions are planning a full reopening for the 2021-2022 academic year. But what constitutes a full reopening is less a return to the past than it is a move toward support for a new normal – a hybrid environment that embraces live classroom sessions as well as streaming and on-demand video for students. While there is some evidence that a wholesale switch to online education led to poorer learning outcomes for elementary and high school students, higher education students came to appreciate video's strengths as a teaching medium during the height of the pandemic.

For students who have trouble fully understanding in-person lectures, recorded, on-demand video presents significant advantages for learning. The ability to pause, rewind, speed up and replay lectures make it much easier for learners to adapt the content to their learning needs and to take comprehensive notes and absorb complex material. In addition, more mundane challenges like bad weather, illness, or heavy commute traffic can be overcome if students have access to academic video.

Synchronous streaming video shines as a means of projecting content to far-flung audiences for one-off content such as guest lectures, or of communicating to specific groups of students for special projects. The medium also makes it more convenient for presenters as distance is no longer a factor when originating their content - they simply needn't travel to a specific site to present. For example, Dr. Anthony Fauci spoke to the Harvard Medical community about COVID via streaming video from a remote location.

On a more personal level, virtually all students are now familiar with the real-time benefits provided by conferencing platforms like Zoom or Teams, and these can make it easy to communicate for study groups, collaborative assignments or just to compare notes.

### Real-world Value

Video technology can create virtual experiences that are almost as personal and effective as in-person education. Here are some examples:

**The University of Michigan** deepened its commitment to providing virtual exchange experiences at scale by harnessing innovation to expand access to learners on campus and worldwide. For the past two years, it has used a streaming service, and now conducts 30,000 minutes of video meetings per hour on campus.

**Western University of Health Sciences:** This health professions university pivoted swiftly to virtual learning in the spring of 2020 with a mix of video lectures and collaborative video calls, and it plans to incorporate these media into its hybrid learning environment in 2021-2022.

**Katherine Delmar Burke School** stopped in-person learning when the pandemic hit, and relied on a streaming video solution to offer classes remotely. Ease of use for students and teachers was of paramount importance, so the school provided tablets that offered one-click connectivity to video classes as well as integrated scheduling.

These and scores of other institutions have adopted video as an integral part of their curricula, and we see this trend accelerating in 2022 and beyond.

## **Embracing Video**

As universities and colleges strive to create these hybrid learning environments, a few key points stand out:

- Strategies specific to video are critical. Establish consensus on what your strategy for academic video will be and clearly define the desired outcomes from the use of video in your institution. Such consensus will guide decision making and provide a path to measure effectiveness against the desired outcomes. Incorporating student feedback in the strategy development is important.
- Video is more than Zoom. Collaborative video tools are the go-to technology for most organizations and students these days, and they're great for real-time dialogue during one-on-one or small-group communications, but they're only one piece of the puzzle. Early student feedback during COVID was that using Zoom/Teams for delivering lectures was ineffective.
- Streaming video plays a big role. By capturing and managing the lecture content including transcribing, chaptering and streaming video, institutions can keep students connected regardless of distance or learning style. Asynchronous video creates an invaluable opportunity for students to view content at their own pace, as often as they'd like and at a time of their own choosing. Additionally, streaming video is an ideal format for meeting the needs of the disabled community.
- Managing content is a must. A video content management system (VCMS), most often integrated seamlessly with the LMS, is a requirement for effectively managing video content in a secure, searchable, and easily accessible place. Research whether a hosted or on-premises solution is best for each organization and consider whether such a VCMS can facilitate virtual or hybrid events to extend into campus-wide events, continuing education meetings and conferences.

Once considered a back-up for in-person instruction, streaming video – in all its forms – is now a critical part of the educational delivery system. Colleges, universities, and trade schools are finding that video improves flexibility, overcomes distance limitations, and reduces costs in higher education. The 2021-2022 academic year will be like no other pre-pandemic, but it will certainly be better in many ways thanks to video-based hybrid learning.