



BEST PRACTICES IN VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

January 2021

In this report, Hanover summarizes best practices for using virtual platforms and engaging students and parents. The analysis shares strategies for teaching, admissions events, graduation, and addressing the digital divide. The report also includes a brief overview of commonly used platforms among competitor institutions.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 / Executive Summary
- 4 / Best Practices for Virtual Engagement
- 12 / Reaching Disconnected Students and Decision Influencers
- 17 / Benchmarking Analysis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on a review of best practices for virtual engagement and a benchmarking analysis of virtual engagement platforms at competitor institutions, Hanover recommends that institutions:

Increase the visibility of virtual tours.

Student interest in virtual tours is growing. Institutions should embed or link virtual tours in highly visible locations on their websites, such as the landing or undergraduate study page, to boost accessibility. Institutions should also increase the ease with which prospects can submit their contact information at the end of the tour, as students who do so are twice as likely to apply as those who share contact information through other means.

Create engagement opportunities for online students.

To help online students feel less isolated and promote persistence in online courses, institutions should create opportunities that allow learners to engage with their course content, with other students, and with their instructors. Potential engagement opportunities include virtual student organizations, affinity groups, and one-on-one check-ins with instructors.

Consider establishing or expanding technology loaner programs to further bridge the digital divide.

Many institutions are ramping up technology services for students. Institutions should consider establishing or supplementing laptop loaner programs alongside additional supports such as loaning WiFi hotspots, offering drive-up internet access, or negotiating with vendors to lend or sell discounted equipment.

KEY FINDINGS

Instructor presence promotes online learning and is particularly important for at-risk students. Faculty can establish a virtual presence through frequent and consistent check-ins, constructive feedback, and targeted support. Online instructors should also use visual presentations, textbooks, and written assignments, as distance students find these materials most helpful for their learning.

Benchmarked institutions often rely on multiple online teaching platforms. While most institutions host live online classes through Zoom, many also offer an alternate web conferencing platform and a distinct tool for pre-recorded lessons. Half of benchmarked institutions use the same platform for online teaching and virtual admissions events.

Institutions should strive to build new experiences for virtual open days, rather than replicate in-person programs. Virtual events allow for more personalization and cross-campus participation. For instance, virtual breakout rooms help students navigate open days with ease, customize their experience, and engage with more areas of campus. Institutions should also shorten programs as they are converted to a virtual format to boost engagement.

Institutions are increasing engagement during virtual graduations by leveraging social media and offering personalization. Relevant strategies include personalized keepsake videos, graduation-related social media hashtags, and customisable video backgrounds. Performances by student groups also help to maintain tradition.

Academic and personal supports help online students navigate their experience, especially students of color and first-generation status. The most commonly used supports among online learners are study skills development, money management, and wellness services. Virtual course orientations and online learner assessments are useful for supporting at-risk students.

BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

Hanover summarizes considerations and strategies for increasing engagement in online teaching, virtual admissions events, and virtual commencements.

TEACHING: PRINCIPLES FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTORS

Plan for Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a schedule for meaningful and active involvement in online courses, basing time commitment off of teaching and planning requirements of in-person classes• Engage with students via weekly announcements, live discussions, office hours, and timely grading
Be Human	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical energy can get lost in the medium of video lectures – try to capture your personality and passion in ways that are different from what you do in person• Infuse writing with your unique voice and warmth, and practice immediacy
Envision the Student Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipate student feelings of isolation and plan for it in a course’s design• Have experienced online faculty or instructional designers evaluate courses
Build an Intuitive Course Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strive for clear, methodical, and intuitive organization, and consider if structures help or hinder student progress• Increase the usability of learning management systems by activating the student preview function, adding navigation instructions, and providing quick pointers
Add Visual Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use headers and spaces to break up long sections of text, and embed relevant images or thumbnail videos• For more ideas, consult institutional media designers or the layouts of favorite websites, books, or magazines
Communicate Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce thorough, yet digestible explanations of expectations, such as directions written in a conversational tone, informal two-minute videos that explain the details of an assignment, rubrics, and examples of exemplar work
Use Scaffold Learning Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Break down complex tasks to allow for timely progress, feedback, and students to modify their approach, if needed• Scrutinize assessments to ensure that students have had the opportunity to build – step by step, as with face-to-face learning – the knowledge and skills needed to do well
Use Multiple Examples and Explanations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Source existing videos that approach a particular topic from different angles, record a short guest-lecture video to let students hear from another expert, create opportunities for students to explain information to one another• Consider offering supplemental examples for students who want more help
Promote an Enjoyable Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help students feel comfortable by being engaged and positive, showing compassion for busy online learners, using engaging teaching activities and materials, and streamlining course organization and navigation to create flow
Ongoing Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop as an online teacher by participating in available workshops, joining discussion groups focused on effective online teaching strategies, subscribing to teaching-related newsletters, and exploring best practices

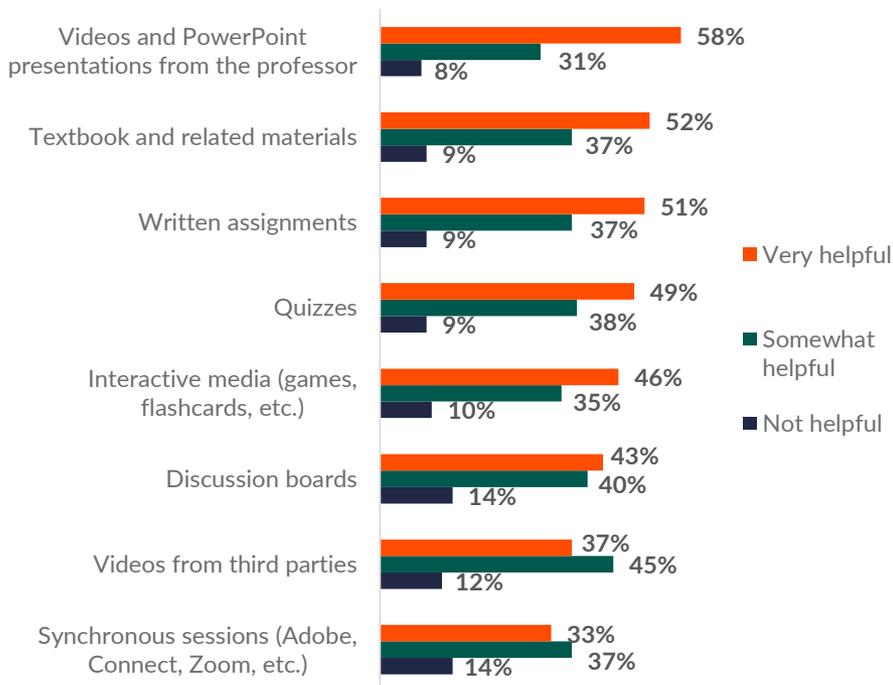
Source: [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) (sometimes verbatim).



TEACHING: FOSTERING STUDENT LEARNING

Instructor presentations are the most helpful teaching strategy for online learning. Based on a [survey](#) of 1,500 prospective, present, and past online college students, the most effective activities and materials for online learning tend to be “asynchronous items that students are able to consume and complete on their own time.” These include videos and PowerPoints from the professor, textbooks and related materials, and writing assignments. By contrast, only one-third of learners believe that synchronous sessions are “very helpful” for their learning and success.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF HELPFULNESS OF ONLINE CLASS ACTIVITIES AND MATERIALS



Source: [Learning House](#).

INNOVATIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE VIRTUAL LEARNING



The [University of Michigan](#) has experimented with the use of **telepresence robots** to fully integrate distance students in on-campus courses. For example, Kubi robots tilt, turn, and rotate a video calling tablet, which in turn, allows a remote user to look freely around the room. More complex Segway-like robots, such as Double and Beam, provide online learners with full mobility in physical classrooms. Initial responses from [students and professors](#) alike are very positive.



In its best practices for online pedagogy, [Harvard University](#) encourages instructors to utilize **virtual whiteboards** for “collaborative problem solving and brainstorming” in small-group discussions. Using Zoom, the creator of the whiteboard can [create and switch](#) between multiple pages and also allow other session participants to annotate on the same board. A tablet is best for handwriting annotations.



Think-Pair-Share is an [active learning strategy](#) in which an instructor poses a short scenario or question, pairs each student with a partner to discuss, and then brings back the class together to share takeaways. [Queen’s University](#) explains that, in online classes, instructors can divide students into breakout sessions or private chats. Afterward, groups can post summaries to a class-wide discussion board. The activity is most effective when students are challenged with a complex idea, rather than simple or recall questions.



An [instructor](#) at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst boosts collaboration in online courses by **crowd-sourcing content** from students. This strategy can be applied to group assignments or lessons, as well as [curriculum design](#).

TEACHING: INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE

Interactions with faculty support persistence and are particularly important for at-risk students. A [recent study](#) of pedagogical approaches in Massive Open Online Courses found that a professor's presence throughout a course and interactions with students are significant determinants of completion. In fact, the [lack of a strong instructor relationship](#) is the main difference between in-person and online learning experiences for students. In the absence of physical proximity, instructors must establish a [virtual presence](#) through check-ins, feedback, and targeted support. While more faculty interaction in asynchronous online courses is critical for supporting [students at risk of failure](#), "it is not as important as consistent interaction over time."

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE	INTENDED IMPACT
Post a Video Introduction	Initiate contact with students by uploading a video introduction	Connects instructor with students; orients students to expectations	Initiative social and cognitive presence in the classroom
Rediscover Student Introductions	Use upload text-, audio-, or video-based introductions	Strengthens community-building in initial forum	Increases social presence and interaction
Customize the Course Roster	Creates document listing student-provided background information	Creates and sustains a sense of community	Instructor is able to lead discussions that connect students to common themes
Set Up Web Alerts	Post relevant web articles	Reinforces instructor lectures and comments; enriches discussion	Learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through reflection
Produce a Podcast	Post audio files to the site to stimulate individual reflection on relevant issues	Creates audio/video mini-lectures	Reinforces learning outcomes
Use RSS Feeds and Aggregators	Create an RSS site that aggregates information on related topics	Reinforces lectures and comments, enriches discussion	Injecting new sources of information; useful for directing discussions
Post a Screencast	Develop instructional tools that support course content	Adds lecture notes onto the site; develop audio/video mini-lectures	Accurate understanding of the material; injecting new sources of information
Make a Word Cloud	Develop visual tools that emphasize key themes	Provides collaborative insights into course material	Deep learning by looking for patterns
Post Unit Summaries	Post a summary of the week/module	Provides personal insights into course material	Diagnose comments for accurate understanding; scaffolding learner knowledge
Create a Voicethread	Highlight relevant issues and stimulate thoughts for individual reflection	Asynchronously replicates interactions of traditional classrooms	Reinforces learning outcomes

Source: [Wiley Education Services](#) (nearly verbatim).



ADMISSIONS: VIRTUAL RECRUITMENT EVENTS

BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL EVENTS

All Events Determine what experience(s) students will have. Admissions teams must decide what programs will be offered virtually (e.g., all events or only the largest) and whether programs should be revamped to create unique virtual experiences.

Offer multiple methods of engagement, particularly during large virtual events, to allow students to personalize their experience. Allow students to engage with a variety of campus constituents and consider creative formats, such as interactive faculty presentations similar to TED Talks.

Engage students before and after each event. Use a blend of fun and informative videos or social media posts to put the institution in front of attendants in unique ways. Such exposure helps build excitement before large events and promotes engagement afterward.

Virtual Open Days

Build a new experience. Instead of replicating a typical open day, redesign the event bearing in mind that participants may be easily distracted. Consider a brief welcome from a campus leader followed by a variety of 30-minute sessions that students can choose from (e.g., tour, breakout rooms with academic units).

Create a seamless registration process that sets expectations. Offer descriptions and times for each session. Distributing itineraries to each registered attendee will help build excitement and ensure they have all the information they need (e.g., instructions on how to move through the virtual experience).

Ensure cross-campus participation to offer students exposure to as many areas of the institution as possible. Highlight different stakeholder groups through a variety of sessions, such as faculty-led course-specific information sessions, one-on-one meetings with current students, and alumni roundtables.

Source: [Visit Days \(Virtual Student Experiences\)](#) and [Visit Days \(Virtual Open Houses\)](#).

TRENDS IN VIRTUAL ADMISSIONS



40%

Of [enrollment leaders](#) are adding or promoting virtual tours on their website in response to COVID-19



65%

Of enrollment leaders are increasing live virtual events to engage students during social distancing



62%

Of enrollment leaders plan to increase personalized outreach to prospective students by staff and faculty

Additional Tips for Online Conversion Events

- Leverage [virtual events](#) as an opportunity to provide personalized experiences. Segment programs by topic or audience (e.g., a certain course, international students).
- Host online events on user-friendly channels. A [recent survey](#) shows that enrollment leaders most commonly use Zoom, social media, and WebEx. Social media is particularly useful for [informal or interactive events](#).
- Shorten programs as they are converted to a [virtual format](#). For experiences that typically last a whole day, consider a series of [smaller virtual events](#).
- Use breakout rooms, particularly for larger events, to help students find the information they want.

ADMISSIONS: VIRTUAL TOURS

Student interest in virtual tours is growing. In April 2020, [Google searches](#) for “virtual campus tours” doubled and the volume of high school seniors viewing virtual tours increase 228 percent over the previous year. [Fordham University](#) in New York reported an even larger spike: the dean of undergraduate admissions conservatively estimates that the university’s virtual tour received 2,200 views over March and April versus 730 one year prior.

STRATEGIES FOR DRIVING VIRTUAL TOUR ENGAGEMENT



Ensure that the virtual tour is widely accessible across the institution’s website to improve access. Embed or link the tour in highly visible locations, such as the landing page, navigation bar, and website header or footer. Institutions should also post the tour on relevant webpages, such as the Undergraduate Open Days page.



Promote the tour across all marketing channels, especially email and social media platforms. For instance, enrollment counselors can add a link to the virtual tour in their email signature. Promoting the tour via a Facebook post, Instagram story, or Twitter hashtag will further drive tour traffic.



Continue engagement after the tour. Embed an effective call to action within the experience, such as an inquiry form. Prospects that share their contact information during a virtual tour are [twice as likely to apply](#) as students who provide the same information through different methods (e.g., phone, form).

Source: [EAB](#) (unless otherwise noted).

SPOTLIGHT: CITY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

City, University of London (City) highlights its campus and facilities in its **360 Virtual Tour**. The [tour](#) is compatible with mobile devices and offers computer-users a virtual reality viewing option. A panel on the left of the screen allows students to select different areas of interest, while a panel on the right provides information on the location in view (see bottom figure). As an alternative, City also embeds a one-minute YouTube video with scenic shots of the campus on its tour webpage. While the institution does not specify what platform it uses to produce the tour, [common providers](#) include YouVisit and PlatformQ Education.



Source: [City, University of London](#).

GRADUATION: 2020 TRENDS

Institutions demonstrated [three general approaches](#) to commencement in 2020: 1) delaying the ceremony indefinitely, 2) cancelling the in-person ceremony in favor of an online celebration without contingency, or 3) holding an online ceremony while arranging an in-person commencement in the future. Due to nationwide stay-at-homes measures and bans against large gatherings, nearly every institution rethought its plans for spring graduation ceremonies. Some institutions, such as [Edinboro University](#), sought feedback from students to help in their decision calculus, while other administrations opted to take swift, unilateral action. Despite the varied response, nearly every institution highlighted the impact of the pandemic on graduates and emphasized the desire to honor graduating students again in the future.



Delayed In-Person Ceremony + No Virtual Graduation

Some institutions delayed in-person commencement ceremonies until the fall or an indefinite date in the future, as with the Class of 2020 at [New York University](#). In place of a virtual ceremony, the institution shared a 30-minute video in which campus leaders, alumni, and students salute the graduating class.



No In-Person Ceremony Plans + Virtual Commencement

Other institutions, such as [Johns Hopkins University](#) in Baltimore, Maryland cancelled in-person ceremonies in favor of online options. Many of these institutions did not commit to offering an in-person celebration in favor of waiting for guidance from public health officials.



Delayed In-Person Ceremony + Virtual Commencement

Several institutions sought to provide an online ceremony around the time of graduation while providing logistics about future in-person ceremonies, such as [Harvard University](#) in Boston, Massachusetts. Many of these institutions invited graduates to attend the May 2021 commencement or another future ceremony.

GRADUATION: FORMAT AND STRATEGIES

There are four main platforms for institutions to host virtual graduation ceremonies:

- Many institutions hosted their virtual ceremonies directly on their **institutional website**. Although the actual hosting platform is not publicly available, this method provides a singular access point. This can prevent confusion and increase traffic to the institutional website.
- Some institutions hosted [online ceremonies](#) on **social media**. Platforms such as Facebook allow graduates and supporters to easily share the commencement video, thus increasing the size of the event's audience. Since Facebook is designed to stream to large groups, there are likely few technical requirements from the institution. Additionally, with the audience's pre-existing knowledge of the platform, there could be higher chances of engagement with a decreased risk of technical challenges.
- **YouTube** was another common platform for streaming 2020 commencements. Similar to Facebook, using a widely available platform like YouTube could increase traffic and minimize potential disruptions. YouTube's platform also allows for [encoder streaming](#). This feature enables an institution to use more advanced technology to capture content, including their desktop, camera, microphone, and send it to YouTube Live to be streamed to participants.
- For a smaller ceremony, a **webinar platform** could significantly increase the sense of connection to the graduates. This format would allow for the traditional elements of a graduation ceremony via live speeches and the reading of names. The webinar platform could also enable sharing student pictures and information to highlight graduates in addition to name reading.

BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL CEREMONIES

Communicate Plans

- Announcements about virtual commencements are generally posted on institutional websites and social media accounts and then sent directly to students.
- Consider using announcements to [solicit student input](#) on a virtual ceremony.

Explore New Participation Opportunities

- Invite high-profile speakers that might have been unable to attend an in-person ceremony. For instance, [Davidson College's](#) online celebration featured numerous notable alumni, such as Golden State Warriors player Stephen Curry.

Prepare in Advance

- Ask students for information on the pronunciation of their names, which can be collected via an online survey.
- Deliver necessary materials (e.g., diploma, honor cord, mortar board) to students well ahead of the virtual ceremony.

Use Visuals

- Most institutions incorporated social media and included student videos and photos into [2020 ceremonies](#). San Diego State University (SDSU) encouraged students, families, and friends to use the hashtag #SDSUgrad when sharing photos and messages on social media. The institution displayed these posts in real time before broadcasting the pre-recorded ceremony using the software Tagboard.
- Encourage speakers to use visuals, allowing for a more engaging presentation.

Preserve Traditions

- To the extent possible, integrate important traditions into virtual ceremonies. For example, [Purdue University](#) played pre-recorded performances by Purdue Bands to make commencement "feel more real."

Offer Personalisation

- SDSU allowed students to upload photos, messages, and videos of themselves to create a personalized video keepsake that they could then share on social media.
- Purdue University students could select from an array of virtual campus backgrounds for keepsake photos.

REACHING DISCONNECTED STUDENTS AND DECISION INFLUENCERS

Hanover summarizes trends and strategies related to supporting at-risk students, addressing the digital divide, and engaging decision influencers in virtual environments.

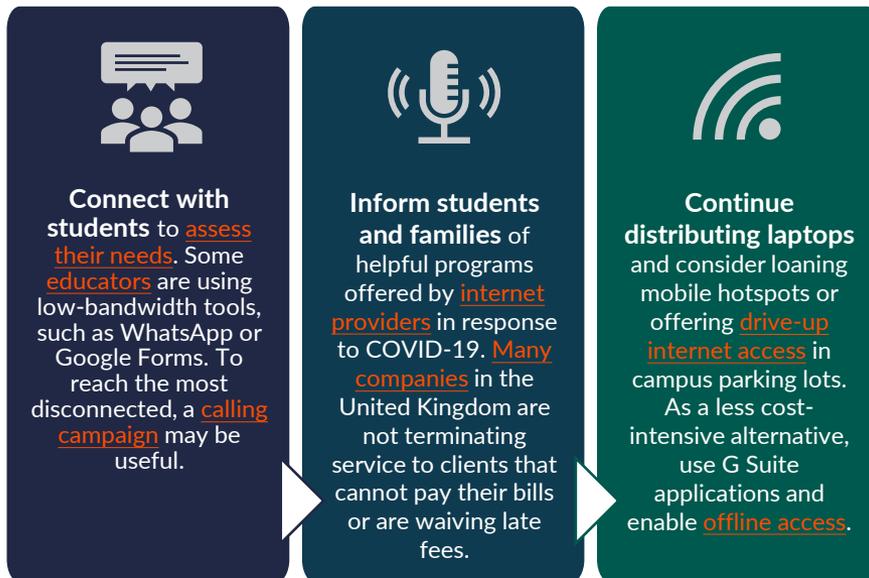
DIGITAL DIVIDE: ADDRESSING THE DIVIDE

In response to the transition to online learning, many institutions are helping students access technology. According to the London-based [Association of Colleges](#), as many as 100,000 college students did not have a suitable device for online learning or internet access as of November 2020. Many institutions are ramping up [equipment lending programs](#) in response. Nearly half of institutions are [loaning WiFi hotspots](#) and offering financial assistance for students who must purchase new equipment. Another quarter of institutions are negotiating directly with vendors to lend or sell heavily discounted equipment.

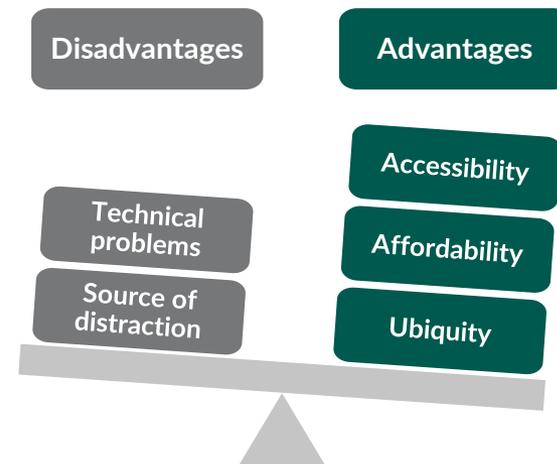
Mobile learning offers another method for bridging the digital divide. [Educause](#) defines mobile learning as the use of “portable computing devices (such as iPads, laptops, tablet PCs, PDAs, and smartphones) with wireless networks” to allow “teaching and learning to extend to spaces beyond the traditional classroom.” Mobile learning may be particularly beneficial for at-risk students. Approximately [56 percent](#) of underserved students in the United States with only one device at home rely on a smartphone to access the Internet. Although mobile learning has its [drawbacks](#), experts tend to [agree](#) that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Online learners use mobile devices to access virtual classrooms. A [2018 study](#) found that 67 percent of online learners used a smartphone or tablet to complete class-related activities, and an additional 12 percent would have like to use a mobile device. [Top activities](#) completed using a smartphone or tablet include reading required materials, communicating with professors, and accessing the learning management system.

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING ONLINE LEARNERS WITH LIMITED INTERNET ACCESS



PROS AND CONS OF MOBILE LEARNING



Source: [IEEE](#)

DIGITAL DIVIDE: STUDENT SUPPORTS

Institutions should ensure that all academic and personal support services that are typically offered on campus are also available online. Academic and personal supports help online learners [navigate virtual classes](#). These services are particularly important for first-generation students and students of color, who commonly face [more remote learning challenges](#) than their white peers. Indeed, [first-generation students](#) are significantly more likely than their counterparts to use all of the top academic and personal support services, except study skills development, suggesting that such services could help to bridge economic divides.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS



ONLINE LEARNER ASSESSMENTS

Many institutions, such as [Ohio State University](#), offer or require readiness questionnaires for students who plan to [enroll in distance courses](#). These surveys offer an introduction to the [challenges of online learning](#) and can be used to [assess the preparedness of at-risk learners](#) by appraising time management, communication style, and study habits, among other skills.



DIGITAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION

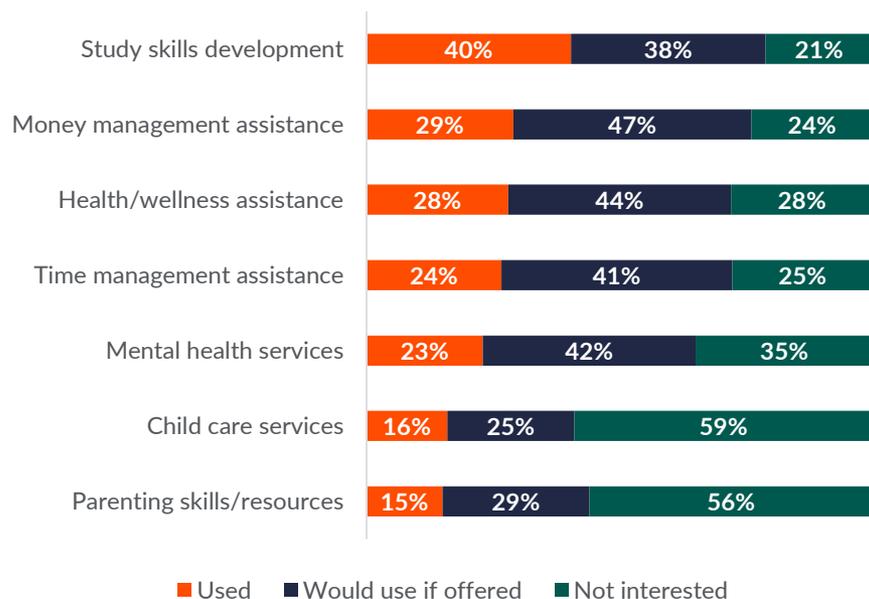
Digital skills instruction ensures that students are equipped with the [competencies necessary to navigate online classes](#). Scholars identify [five categories](#) of digital skills: technological literacy, informational literacy, media literacy, digital presence, and e-Awareness. Digital skills [instruction](#) is particularly vital for non-traditional learners, who may be unfamiliar with educational technology.



ONLINE COURSE ORIENTATIONS

[Online orientations](#) allow students to [determine if the online environment is suitable for their learning styles](#). Instructors can also use orientations to promote [student success](#) by [communicating requirements and distributing content early on](#). [Orientations](#) should be interactive, introduce institutional policies and resources, and promote the development of relevant skills.

MOST USED ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL SUPPORT SERVICES AMONG ONLINE STUDENTS



Source: [Wiley](#)

DIGITAL DIVIDE: MAINTAINING INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

George Washington University in Washington, DC offers strategies for maintaining equity and inclusion in virtual classrooms. The guidelines, set forth by the university's [Office for Diversity, Equity, and Community Management](#), focuses on four key themes: accessibility, relational connections, awareness and mindfulness of various and multiple identities, and flexibility and openness. The figure below summarizes considerations and strategies in each area and offers additional resources for further reading.

ACCESSIBILITY

There are three aspects of accessibility: accessibility for students with physical impairments that may create challenges for engaging with content, accessibility for students with psychological and/or learning differences that require certain accommodations, and accessibility for students with limited access to computers or stable internet service. Relevant strategies include:

- Provide alternative formats for content (e.g., transcript for audio, closed captioning on media)
- Offer approved accommodations for students who present accommodation letters
- Ensure that content is mobile-friendly
- Consider variation in students' access to computers and stable internet service
- Additional resource: [Accessible Teaching in the Time of COVID-19](#)

RELATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Supportive interpersonal relationships with students is a critical component of effective teaching and is particularly important for students from traditional underrepresented backgrounds. Relevant strategies include:

- Continue to have opportunities for live, synchronous engagement
- Talk to your students about what is happening
- Build/maintain community among students
- Provide students with support and resources
- Additional resource: [Teaching in Times of Crisis](#)

AWARENESS OF DIFFERENT IDENTITIES

Equity-minded teaching requires acknowledgement that students come to the classroom with vastly different experiences, which are often tied to their social identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation, first-generation status). Relevant strategies include:

- Address microaggressions and concerning language in discussion boards, chats, and other places where students interact
- Consider integrating culturally-relevant materials and know that ODECE is happy to be in consultation
- Be aware of variation in students' capacity to manage remote learning
- Be aware of how the current situation is impacting different communities
- Additional resource: [Microaggressions in the Classroom](#)

FLEXIBILITY & OPENNESS

A key aspect of equitable and inclusive teaching is recognizing and working with the diversity of students. Instructors of distance courses should be open-minded about trying new activities or formats. Relevant strategies include:

- Review syllabi and consider what changes might be needed to grading weights, late policies, and other course policies in order to accommodate the transition to online learning
- Maintain flexible policies throughout
- Consider alternative ways that students can engage with courses
- Consider alternative ways that students can demonstrate what they have learned (i.e., flexible assessments)
- Additional resource: [Assessments for Virtual Instruction](#)

DECISION INFLUENCERS

While young people's parents or decision makers play a pivotal role in informing attitudes to higher education, there are considerable differences in the extent to which families are involved in decision-making. According to the [British Journal of Sociology of Education](#), very few instances exist where a young person's perception of HE and their parent's view differ. However, when considering social status, "there were considerable differences in the extent to which families were involved in the decision-making process and in their knowledge about HE, generally, and the relative status of institutions and subjects, more specifically."

Similarly, a 2017 Department for Education [report](#) found parents in some regions have expressed concern that a university education is "no longer a guaranteed route to a well-paid or graduate level job given the huge increase in the number of graduates in recent years and lack of opportunities in some sectors or parts of the country." Parents in the study also expressed concern about the cost of higher education and, for some, were unsure if the benefits were worth the investment. Beyond immediate family, decision-makers also include friends, teachers, personal experiences, and even the media.

Universities steer parents to guides and existing information such as the [UCAS](#) website. Other universities have created their own materials such as UCL's [Parent's Guide to University Study](#). The guide aims to widen participation and ensure those with the academic ability can attend university.

INCREASE THE PERCEPTION OF BENEFITS AMONG DECISION-MAKERS



Source: [Department for Education](#)

BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS

VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS

All benchmarked institutions use Zoom for online teaching except for King’s College London. Most institutions use a combination of online teaching tools that often serve different purposes. For instance, the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) at University of Pennsylvania (Penn) offers instructors BlueJeans and Zoom for live online sessions (e.g., classes, office hours) and Panopto for recorded lectures. While the centre encourages students to collaborate with peers (e.g., group projects, study groups) using Canvas Conferences, which is embedded within the university’s virtual learning environment (VLE), it does not recommend the tool “for instructor-led sessions due to it’s inability to save recordings and poor performance with larger groups.”

Half of benchmarked institutions utilize one of their online teaching platforms for virtual admissions events: Penn (Zoom), King’s College London (Microsoft Teams), and New York University (Zoom). Other tools include WorkCast, PlatformQ, and Meet and Engage. While most institutions offer immersive virtual tours (e.g., 360° view, interactive), Penn and the University of British Columbia are the only competitors that identify their service provider ([YouVisit](#)). King’s College London and the University of Massachusetts – Boston only offer pre-recorded tours on YouTube.

VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS UTILIZED BY BENCHMARKED INSTITUTIONS BY FUNCTION

INSTITUTION	TEACHING	VLE	VIRTUAL TOUR	OPEN DAYS	ADMISSIONS EVENTS	GRADUATION
University of Pennsylvania	Zoom , BlueJeans , & Panopto	Canvas	YouVisit	Zoom	Zoom	YouTube
City, University of London	Zoom	Moodle	YouTube	Student CRM **	Meet and Engage	Zoom , YouTube , & Flipgrid
King’s College London	Microsoft Teams & Echo 360 *	Moodle	YouTube	--	Microsoft Teams	N/A
New York University	Zoom	Brightspace	YouTube	--	Zoom	YouTube
University of British Columbia	Zoom & Collaborate Ultra	Canvas	YouVisit	WorkCast	--	YouTube, Facebook, & Panopto
University of Massachusetts – Boston	Zoom , Collaborate Ultra , & Echo 360 *	Blackboard Learn	YouTube	PlatformQ	--	YouTube & Facebook

Note: Table is not comprehensive. Institutions may use other tools an platforms that are not publicly identified. *Used for recorded lectures. **Used to manage virtual open day. Institution does not specify video or streaming platform.



HANOVER
RESEARCH

Thank you.

