echo360

Delivering Exemplary Hybrid and Online Instruction

A COMPILATION OF BEST PRACTICES FROM ECHO360 USERS

Contents

Why You Should Read This Guide and Share It with Colleagues

UNESCO has estimated that nearly 1.6 billion students, representing 91 percent of the worldwide student population, have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The uncertainty of whether students will resume their studies on campus or be forced to leave prematurely dictates that universities develop the digital resiliency to deliver multi-modal teaching that engages and excites students, whether they attend on-campus, online, or both.

Without such resiliency, institutions will not be able to continue their mission to enroll and serve their students. The method of course delivery should not affect the quality of instruction or the level of learning and student success.

As a global education technology company serving more than 1,200 higher education institutions and over 2 million students worldwide, we have observed first-hand the impact on colleges and universities as the pandemic forced the closure of campuses worldwide.

Since the outbreak, Echo360 executives have met with scores of university leaders to offer support and guidance. We quickly instituted special programs to enable expanded usage and help instructors rapidly move their courses online using the Echo360 platform. We also adjusted our product development roadmap to accelerate the delivery of features that help users better manage their expanded online offerings.

During these meetings, university leaders always ask us the same question:

> "What are other institutions doing and what best practices are emerging that we can adopt?"

This guide is an attempt to answer that recurring question. It contains stories and examples of innovative professors who have used the Echo360 platform to rapidly transition from recording their lectures in on-campus classrooms to implementing effective online and hybrid learning strategies from their homes.
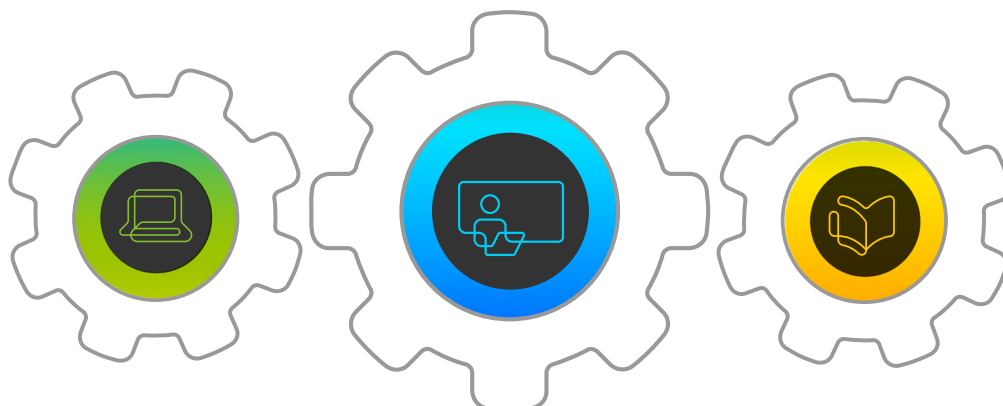
Their case studies provide compelling examples of how to deliver high-quality instruction in a traditional classroom, online, or through a blended learning model. These practices, when scaled across institutional faculty, will preserve academic continuity while minimizing financial, health, and safety risks. They will help you comply with privacy and accessibility standards and get the most out of your investments in video conferencing and your Learning Management System (LMS). Ultimately, these approaches will strengthen your academic brand by delivering exemplary hybrid/online learning that justifies the value of your tuition dollars to students and parents.

This guide also includes the voices of students, who are arguably the final arbiter of the effectiveness of instructional technology and classroom instruction. They share their views on how video, captions, and transcripts help them learn by making that learning more accessible.

We think you will find this guide valuable and we encourage you to share it widely among your colleagues.

If you received this guide from a colleague and would like to learn more about Echo360, please contact us online or call: US – **1-877-ECHO360 Ext, 1**   UK - +**44 (0) 20 8050 0360**   AU - +**1300 324 600**

Southern Illinois University – Walter Metz, Ph.D., Professor
Film Studies

Instructor Uses Echo360 to Provide Effective Online and Hybrid Learning

In his recent webinar, How to Use Echo360 to Teach Remotely During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Walter Metz, professor of film studies at Southern Illinois University described how, after the pandemic forced his campus to close, he was able to rapidly create and teach his classes online with Echo360. The classes he rapidly created did not sacrifice the quality of instruction. His online classes provided students the opportunity to participate and engage online just as they would if they had been in a physical classroom.

Most importantly, the courses he developed constitute an instructional design trifecta. In future terms, Metz can continue to deliver his classes online, or they can be rapidly cloned and presented within a blended or hybrid learning model. If face-to-face instruction is permitted, his courses can be presented in a traditional classroom. They can also be live-streamed to overflow classrooms, dorm rooms, or other locations to allow for social distancing. This flexibility of delivery provides a template that other institutions can follow as they search for ways to deliver value for their tuition dollar.

Activities Promote Online Engagement. Analytics Measure Level of Student Participation

Using Echo360, Metz created four courses in just three days. In the webinar, Metz shared how students in his film studies class used Echo360 to view video content, access his PowerPoint lecture presentations, and provide written answers to questions he posed in Echo360. Their participation and answers accounted for 50 percent of their course grade.

His students completed the same amount of work and participated in the same activities they would have in a traditional face-to-face class; only now their class was conducted completely online. Echo360's analytics allowed him to keep track of his students' participation and identify any students who were struggling to keep pace.

"I was able to use Echo360's analytics to determine if students were doing the work and engaged every day," Metz says. "The system allowed me to weigh classroom activities that I consider to be most important. For me, I wanted to know whether students were answering the polling questions. The data from Echo360 showed me that excellent students responded to more than 90 percent of the questions asked. The system also identified students who were not engaging with the material and I was able to reach out to them regularly via email to offer encouragement just as I would have done in a traditional class on campus."

Improving Equity and Greater Access to Education and Learning

In addition to the four online courses Metz conducted this past term, Metz also taught classes in a program called "Learning in Retirement." The program offers "short burst" classes, taught in local church facilities, where students meet once a week over five weeks. However, the pandemic forced churches to close and these classes were subsequently canceled.

"Once I got the four online courses under control, I started thinking about these students," said Metz. "So, I reached out to these students by email and said wouldn't it be fun to do what we were supposed to do in the church, online from the comfort of your home."

Metz said that his students responded to him with concerns about using the technology. His students are mainly retirees living nearby to the SIU campus and range in age from 40 to 90.

"I replied to them with a few questions," Metz said. "I asked, can you use email? Obviously, they knew how to do that because that is how we were communicating. I then asked, do you know how to watch a YouTube video? And they responded, 'yes.' I then told them I can deliver classes to you with just that level of technology."

Metz says that Echo360 allowed him to hide almost all of the technology from the students. On the day of the class, Metz would send his students an email containing PDF's of a PowerPoint lecture and required reading. He used Echo360 to deliver the associated lecture and students completed their work via email.

"I did a video lecture capture with Echo360," said Metz. "There is a simple 'public link' function that allows me to create a 'hotlink' which allows the student to click on the link, connect to the internet and watch the video lecture."

Metz says this is one small step in the right direction to help bridge the digital divide and improve equity and greater access to education. He says there are implications beyond being able to teach classes to a group of retirees.

"Ensuring equitable access is a significant challenge for higher education," says Metz. "But with Echo360 and a simple email, I was able to teach a class to people who might otherwise be shut out."

"Clone Button" Makes It Easy to Create Hybrid Courses

Metz concluded the webinar by saying that while he prefers to teach his classes in-person, he realizes that online learning will play an increasingly important role in higher education. He considers his ability to deliver hybrid courses in the future, combining online with face-to-face instruction, one positive outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic. That is how he plans to teach his film studies class in the upcoming Fall term.

> "I teach film studies every semester, but this is the first time I ever taught the course online. When I teach this course in the fall, I will make it a hybrid course because I have all the material ready to go. I can push the 'clone' button in Echo360, and it will transfer everything I did this semester into my fall Echo360 course shell for my cinema studies class."

Metz plans to have students review the video film clips and respond to questions at home. In class, he will ask them to make presentations and participate in other group activities.

> "Echo360 is intuitive and easy-to-use," says Metz. "It has allowed me to better innovate new ways of teaching film studies than the software our university previously purchased."

![echo360 logo]

Indian River State College –
Kate Bradford, Assistant Professor
Criminal Justice

The Role of Video in Fostering Deeper Connections with Online Students

Instructors teaching online face many challenges. Among them is how to overcome the sense of feeling disconnected from their students. How can they be present for students, create a sense of community, and encourage them to participate and engage with the course material? Is it even possible to make an online course feel like a face-to-face class?

Video Helps Create Connections Between Instructor and Her Students Online

For Echo360 Academic Champion Kate Bradford, assistant professor in criminal justice at Indian River State College, one tool that helps her meet these challenges is Echo360's video.

Bradford wanted to become more than a faceless avatar in her online courses and the focus of her Academic Champion grant award is to increase the connection between her and her students.

> "One way for me to feel more connected when teaching online is to 'attend class,'" says Bradford. Even though there are no set class hours, the steady stream of videos she provides throughout the term allows her to "check-in" with her online students just as she would in a traditional face-to-face class.

Using Echo360 Universal Capture, Bradford creates a wide-range of videos that she makes available to her online students throughout the semester. She "meets" with her students via discussion boards and email and encourages them to engage with the material she presents in the videos, as well as provide feedback on student discussions and assignments.

Because she regularly posts new videos in her online courses, Bradford says that students feel more like they are "attending class" even though they never physically step foot into a classroom. Bradford says that her students are more engaged and active in the course and the work they submit during the semester has improved from previous semesters.

Video Helps Instructor Explain Important Concepts and Review Student Work

Video is everywhere in Bradford's online courses. She creates videos to introduce herself and make general announcements to students throughout the term.

> "Echo360's video helps me break the ice," says Bradford. "As a way of helping students to get to know me, I will even share photos of my family or talk about places in the area that I like to visit. It helps students feel they are not just interacting with a computer, but with a real person," she says.

But other videos play an important role ensuring students are able to make the most out of her class. Bradford creates videos in Echo360 to highlight important information and concepts and introduces students to each module in their online course.

> "I try to introduce each module either by using my PowerPoint presentation, by highlighting the important points from reading assignments or by presenting information from other material I prepare," says Bradford. "This helps students get a better grasp of the material and helps them understand what the key takeaways are."

At the end of each module, Bradford creates videos where she highlights answers from student discussion boards or individual or group assignments. This helps students review content and also fosters a sense of an online learning community.

Video Increases Instructor Presence and Improves Student Work

For Bradford, and more importantly for her students, the payoff from her increased presence is greater student engagement and improved work.

> "The combination of video and online discussion has resulted in better work from my students," says Bradford. "In an online course, it sometimes can be easy for students to just copy and paste answers and reply by rote. But through video, students literally see me online. That helps break down barriers and students have felt more comfortable responding and asking questions. They now are thinking critically about the material being presented and can apply it in ways that I haven't seen in my classes in the past," says Bradford.

The work Bradford has put into creating video content for her courses has not gone unnoticed by her students. Students also said they didn't expect to receive video content in an online course.

> "This course has been different from my other experiences," says one student responding to an end-of-semester survey. "I usually take online classes, but I've never had an instructor that was so involved or who provided as much learning content as I experienced in this course. The videos helped provide a better understanding of class assignments."

> "I used to take online courses and didn't like them at all," added another student. "The material was very good, and I was very surprised to see a professor upload videos to explain the material so clearly."

In the end, Bradford says that using video in her online classes has helped rekindle the joy she gets from teaching.

> "The connection we make with students is part of the joy we get from teaching," says Bradford. "About half of the classes I teach each semester are solely online. Online learning shouldn't be an inferior learning environment. We owe it to these students to give them the best education possible and Echo360's video has helped us to improve the student experience by making online courses feel closer to what students would experience in a face-to-face class."

Video and Classroom Activities Makes the Learning in Blended Classes Stick

In her on-campus classes, Bradford uses a blended approach, which combines online and face-to-face learning. She creates videos or other presentations that her students view before class. Once in class, she uses Echo360's student engagement features, to create questions and activities where students work in groups to apply what they have learned.

Video Helps Students Come to Class Prepared and Ready to Learn

> "In one class, I noticed from the conversation on one of our discussion boards that students seemed to miss some of the key points," says Bradford. "Instead of writing out a response, I created a short, 5-minute video. Students watched the video and I feel it was a more effective way of communicating with them."

Bradford also believes that video helps students better prepare for class. Many of her students work full-time and balancing work-school-life can be challenging.

> "For blended or hybrid classes to be successful, students need to complete their assignments and come to class ready to work. For a lot of our students that can be challenging since they have many demands on their lives. But video is easy for them to digest. They can watch a video assignment from anywhere and they are more likely to be ready to apply what they have learned in class, answering questions, and participating in group work," says Bradford.

Classroom Activities Encourage Students to Participate

According to Bradford, the activities she creates also encourages students to attend class regularly, despite having video lectures and presentations available to them. To help with this, she assigns credit for students who come to class and participate.

> "Having videos available on Echo360 has not affected my classroom attendance," says Bradford. "We do a lot of active learning in class. If you're in class and do those activities, you'll receive credit. Even when students miss a class, they will watch the video and then ask me if they can participate in an activity. So, if they turn in a response, I will definitely accept it. That is, after all, the whole point. I want students to dig into the material and apply what they are learning," says Bradford.

Activities in Class Promote Deeper Learning

Students do not sit passively in Bradford's classes. Since students receive credit for participation, they are expected to respond to questions individually and participate in group work.

During class, Bradford uses Echo360's engagement tools to scaffold questions to promote deeper learning and understanding. Simple polling questions allow her to quickly assess student understanding and stimulate additional classroom discussion.

> "The engagement tools in Echo360 let me display responses from students," says Bradford. "It's especially helpful when there is a wide range of responses. First, that helps me to clear up any misunderstanding. Second, it gives us the opportunity to discuss the nuances of the law and why one student answered one way and second answered the question differently."

Other questions require that students use that information to solve problems, which are done as group assignments.

> "I set up tables in the class where four students work together in a group," says Bradford. "I will pose a specific scenario and the group has to work together, discuss the scenario among themselves, and come up with an answer. For example, in our Criminal Law class, they may have to determine whether the scenario is a case of kidnapping or false imprisonment. The law is clear, and students have to work through the scenario to determine the correct answer. The groups present their answer to the class and the ensuing discussion helps solidify the learning and understanding."

McMaster University – Christa Morrison, Digital Pedagogy Specialist

Removing Barriers to Accessibility and Inclusivity

At McMaster University of Ontario, Canada, they describe the process of creating an accessible university as a "project of transformation." The goal is to "eliminate visible and invisible barriers that impact the teaching and learning experiences of faculty and students alike."

Initiatives at McMaster to create an accessible university go beyond serving populations people usually think of as being disabled.

> "If we look at all of the learning needs that affect a student's ability to learn, these needs can include sensory, motor, cognitive, emotional, and social constraints," says Christa Morrison digital pedagogy specialist, McMaster University, McPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation, and Excellence in Teaching. "But they also include individual learning approaches or preferences. They include linguistic and cultural preferences. They include generational differences as well as technical, financial, or environmental constraints. All of this has to be considered if we want to provide an accessible and inclusive experience."

Echo360 is among the technologies the University uses to achieve those goals. Survey research conducted at McMaster of students in the Life Sciences Faculty (done by Stefan Mladjenovic and Pulkit Sahi under the supervision of Dr. Katie Moisse) reveal that Echo360 helps reduce barriers to instruction and gives students greater flexibility to access their learning content.

- Of 247 students surveyed, 76% reported using Echo360 in courses administered in the Faculty of Science

- Of those students who have used Echo360, nearly 88% identified as having a flexible learning need (i.e., they are registered with Student Accessibility Services and require an accommodation, they care for a loved one, they commute to campus, etc.)

- 92% of these students reported that Echo360 made their course more accessible

- 84% of these students stated that it helped them to understand course content

The Role of Video in Supporting Universal Design for Learning

> "Echo360 is a powerful learning tool because it leverages the fact that video is everywhere in people's lives today," says Morrison. "This is especially true for Gen Y, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha. Just look at how those groups use social media," she adds. "They are constantly sharing, communicating and learning through video."

Morrison says that Echo360 features create a more accessible learning environment by allowing for multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement—the three pillars of universal design for learning.

> "There are a number of examples," she says. "If you are a working student or have to care for a child, recorded video gives you greater flexibility. Students can access their learning content on their own if they have to miss class," she says. "Students can also record and share their own videos in Echo360, giving them another way to express their learning. For some students, video could take the place of a traditional paper or other written assignment."

Echo360 Student Response Tools Encourage Student Engagement

> "The anonymous polling feature can encourage students to respond to in-class questions and can help lessen the impact of gender or cultural bias," she adds. "Features such as group discussion, student polling, and support for flipped and blended learning can help increase student engagement and collaboration."

Students Help to Drive Demand for Increased Use of Video

Students at McMaster have directly participated in many of the initiatives to improve accessibility and inclusivity.

> "Over the past year students have helped us on a variety of projects," says Morrison. "They have conducted research and helped with the Echo360 Sandpit, where students take on the role of instructors and instructors take on the role of students. We've flipped roles and it gives instructors a chance to experience what it is like to be a student in an Echo360 course."

The Echo360 Sandpit experience focuses on how Echo360 can be used to increase student participation and interact with content in multiple ways—pillars of universal design for learning.

> "Instructors need to understand the students' experience using Echo360," says Morrison. "They want to have confidence that it will enhance learning. In the Sandpit, they experience firsthand how Echo360 allows their students to interact with content in different ways. Very quickly, they realize how these activities, whether they are polling questions, group discussions, or other activities can expand the opportunities for students to learn. That is when they begin to really get excited about the technology."

As a result, students have become advocates for inclusive teaching practices, and for expanding the use of video recordings at McMaster.

> "Students taking on the instructor role helped us to understand their frustrations, how they think, communicate, access, use, and share content," says Morrison. "It has helped us to develop support resources for students and a formal communication plan to inform our community about the work that has been done," says Morrison.

Captions and Video Transcripts Help with Student Comprehension, Focus, and Retention

McMaster University student Sarah Willis-Habibi is a third-year student in the combined Honors Program of Arts and Science. She says that tools such as Echo360's automatic speech recognition (ASR) which can be used to create captions and searchable transcripts of the recorded video are important for all students whether or not they have a disability.

> "There may not always be an interpreter available in class or for an online course," says Willis-Habibi. "Transcripts and captioning are very important for students with hearing disabilities," she says. "But all students can benefit from captions. A searchable transcript can help students prepare and review for exams. And every student who has a need may not have gone through the process of requesting accommodation through the accessibility services office, so having captions and transcripts definitely helps all students."

An article from the Journal of Instructional Pedagogies published in May 2019, Objective Assessment of Closed Caption Video, found that "all students, regardless of whether they have a learning disability, significantly improved their knowledge about the video after they watched a closed-caption version of the video versus a non-closed caption one. This effect was more evident when the question required students to engage in a deeper level of processing of the video content. Interestingly, students who were not exposed to the closed caption videos performed significantly poorer in answering the deeper level question and had less positive attitudes toward the use of closed caption videos in class."

University of Michigan – Dr. Perry Samson

5 Easy Steps for Switching Your Face-to-Face Course to Online

This article was originally published on March 3, 2020, prior to the University of Michigan campus closure. It appears on Dr. Samon's personal blog, "Sage on Stage."

It is not unreasonable to imagine a day coming when colleges and universities will be faced with the decision of whether to allow classes and large gatherings of students to continue. Perhaps it will be as a result of the current coronavirus crisis or some future contagious pathogen. Dormitories could be under quarantine, classroom and other gatherings will be banned. Students might even be asked to go home. I hope that day doesn't come but it begs the question of what could we do if it does? Is it possible we can continue our mission using technologies to deliver courses synchronously or asynchronously and, if so, how will that change our course designs?

For instructors who teach face-to-face courses, I've compiled some rules to consider should you ever need (or simply want) to switch to an online delivery model. These are lessons learned having offered a blended synchronous course for multiple years at the University of Michigan.

Step 1: Acknowledge That There Have Always Been Students Who Couldn't Get to Class

How did you deal with them? Ignore them? Tell them to get notes from a friend? Shame on you.

At a minimum be sure your class is recorded. I know it's painful sometimes to see yourself faltering at the front of the room but empathize with your students. They get ill, they get drunk, they have to travel, let them review later. If you don't allow recording because someone might steal your intellectual property, get over yourself. It's hard enough to get students to reflect on your work and you worry others at your institution might steal your slides? Please.

Step 2: This Could Be a Good Time to Flip Out!

You have a couple of options for teaching online. You could record your session and have the students participate asynchronously or continue teaching at the prescribed days and times (to avoid conflict) synchronously (but record the session, see Point #1). However, it may be wiser to do both. That is, record a session but embed formative

assessment questions into the video, then use occasional synchronous sessions to display their answers and provide feedback. The "flipped" classroom may be less popular with students as they have to do more work than sitting passively in class but has been shown to be a more effective teaching method (Bishop and Verleger, 2013). Now's a good time to try it .

Step 3: Teaching Remote Students Requires Use of "Deliberate Engagement" Methods

Students participating in coursework remotely aren't as engaged as students participating in person. There, I've said it. In this day of MOOCs and blended courses, it's not PC to throw shade on online learning but think back to the last time you participated in a webinar. You THOUGHT you could multitask and deal with an e-mail while the session was streaming. Right? The reality is the immersive environment of a classroom may be boring but, even with the Internet, it doesn't hold a stick to the distractions of a remote location. I swear the refrigerator knows how to signal me that I hadn't eaten all the pickles yet.

I've done research in my blended, synchronous course where students freely decide whether to come to class or watch from away. All students get points for participating in my formative assessment activities. Even with this incentive, the percent of questions answered by remote students is significantly lower than for students who come to the classroom. The system I use (Echo360) also tracks how many of my slides they view during class and, again, the remote students view far fewer slides than the student physically in class. Remote students tend to score 5-7 points less on course exams.

So, if we must move to online teaching the walk-away message is we must find ways to make the online environment more immersive. I think the model of offering periodic formative assessment is key. I further would encourage you to link the students' participation to a part of their grade. If our questions are valuable to their learning, then we should reward participation. Beyond that, think about ways to DEMAND participation. Use chat or other messaging methods and require their participation in class discussion.

Step 4: Don't Teach Like I Bowl

I doubt any of you have seen me bowl but it's not pretty (or effective). Basically, I wing the ball down the alley in the general direction of the pins and then pray. For a long time that was how I taught. Give the best lecture I could and pray that the students learned the concepts I was teaching. But like any good relationship, the key to success is good communication with an emphasis on good listening.

I've been spoiled by the system I use because it delivers a wealth of information about student behaviors. Did they log in during class time? How many activities did they participate in? How many "gradable" activities did they get right? How many slides that I projected did they view (they have to manually switch from slide to slide). With these data, I can track student behaviors and have, over the years, been able to create statistical models about how behaviors are related to their exam scores.

The walk-away here is if you're using a system that can track correctness then watch the results. Students who do well on the formative assessment tend to do well on exams. Those who do not, do not. "Listening" to students' responses to assessments is a pretty strong first step in identifying students in trouble earlier in the semester.

Step 5: Listen for the Ones Who Aren't Speaking

Some of my research has focused on the students who don't speak up in class. In fact, in surveys of students, I've found a dramatic difference in comfort with participating in verbal class discussions between women and men and 1st generation and other students. Many in class are uncomfortable speaking out. In an online environment maybe that will go away but it behooves us to track student questions and find methods that make the class discussions a less intimidating place.

The addition of an anonymous backchannel for students to pose questions digitally has led to a dramatic increase in student participation in class inquiry and those students who professed discomfort with participating in verbal inquiry were found to participate digitally at a level equal to or higher than others in the class. You are intimidating, give all students a less intimidating way to join the conversation.

References

Bishop, Jacob Lowell, And Matthew A. Verleger. "The Flipped Classroom: A Survey Of The Research." Asee National Conference Proceedings, Atlanta, Ga. Vol. 30. No. 9. 2013.

echo 360

echo360.com