

# **Supporting Academic Integrity in a Fully-Online Degree Completion Program Through the Use of Synchronous Video Conferences**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since 2012, we have used synchronous, web-based video conferences in our fully-online degree completion program. Students are required to participate in four live video conferences with their professor and a small group of peers in all upper division online courses as a minimum requirement for passing the class. While these synchronous video conferences create some challenges in implementation, they address concerns about academic integrity in three important ways. First, they provide a structured space for faculty to be present with students in a face-to-face manner. Second, they provide important checks to avoid impersonation schemes which are a common concern with online coursework. Third, they assist students in keeping up on the course material, which may mitigate the temptation to cheat. As distance learning courses and online programs have exploded in number, the issue of academic integrity has taken center stage for program design. In this paper, we share a case of a program built to address academic integrity issues through the regular and highly structured use of small group video conferencing as a requirement for all courses. We describe the video conferencing protocol of our online program and suggest best practices for using video conferencing to address concerns about online coursework/programs. We examine this protocol from a theoretical perspective of the Social Shaping of Technology in order to highlight the importance of viewing video conferencing as a social and technical practice.

**Keywords:** Academic integrity, Online education, Videoconferencing, Google Hangouts, Social shaping of technology