

# The Management and Coordination of Virtual Teams in Large Classes: Facilitating Experiential Learning

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Christina O'Connor<sup>1</sup> , Kenneth Mullane<sup>2</sup> ,  
and Denise Luethge<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

The management and coordination of classroom teaching continues to be a challenge, particularly as enrollment trends suggest that class sizes are growing. In the past, many faculty have divided their large classes into smaller groups to incorporate experiential exercises. In this article, we discuss the challenges of managing an experiential exercise featuring a large number of teams in a virtual setting. These challenges include (a) coordinating class communication with a large number of teams, (b) managing teams and facilitating team communication and trust, (c) managing virtual team performance and instructor feedback throughout the experiential exercise, and (d) managing and evaluating student engagement. We also provide practical suggestions for management educators on how to address each challenge based on insight gleaned from our years of experience using virtual teams in large classes. Finally, we highlight avenues for future research in the area of virtual teams and large class size teaching.

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<sup>1</sup>Maynooth University, Maynooth, Kildare, Ireland

<sup>2</sup>Salem State University, Salem, MA, USA

<sup>3</sup>Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, KY, USA

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## Corresponding Author:

Christina O'Connor, Maynooth University, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

Email: christina.oconnor@mu.ie

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**Introduction**

In many parts of the world, recent trends suggest that class sizes are growing (Barr & Turner, 2013; Darley & Luethge, 2019; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Usher & Cervenak, 2005). Historically, management educators have faced a number of challenges and opportunities when teaching large classes (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). With so many students, faculty are often concerned about their ability to facilitate engagement, provide meaningful or detailed assessments and feedback, and/or ensure that students achieve the desired learning goals (Kuh et al., 1991). To stimulate engagement, faculty are increasingly considering the use of experiential learning in their classrooms (Cooper & Robinson, 2000; Erickson, 2013; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2017; Sousa, 2011). Although there seems to be quite a bit of discussion on experiential engagement in a large classroom, research examining the challenges and benefits of incorporating experiential learning into a large class is sparse (Lund Dean & Wright, 2017). Given the paucity of such research, it is unsurprising that it is even more difficult to find research on the incorporation of experiential learning into large asynchronous or synchronous online classes.

In this article, we explore the challenges of facilitating experiential learning in a large class and the use of technology-mediated communication tools to enhance engagement in that context. Specifically, we describe how we used an experiential exercise featuring multiple teams in a large class format. In our case, students (i.e., team members) were located in different countries, so we used virtual teams (VTs). Liao (2017) defines VTs as groups of dispersed individuals who work on a shared task and interact with technology-mediated communication. These individuals can be co-located within the same organization or located on different continents. The key factor that distinguishes VTs from traditional teams is the use of technology to facilitate communication among team members.

Outside of the classroom, VTs are quickly becoming part and parcel of the everyday team scenario of most organizations' operations (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017; Liao, 2017; Marlow et al., 2017) and are widely regarded as a "strategic tool" (Rowell, 2016). Within the classroom, VTs provide an opportunity for experiential learning in which students can use technology to develop their communication and teamwork skills in an unfamiliar setting (Gonzalez-Perez et al., 2014). In turn, this experience may help prepare them for work in a professional virtual environment.

Due to a confluence of factors ranging from technological advancements to COVID-19, use of communication technologies has rapidly accelerated. As a result, the way faculty and students interact in the learning community continues to change (Cornella-Dorda et al., 2020). Many universities have developed distance learning capabilities, while others have expanded online learning, giving students more choices in the selection of educational options that best meet their needs (Bevins et al., 2020; Heitz et al., 2020; Husbands, 2020). Technology-mediated communication tools are now central, if not critical, to student learning, especially in large classes (Yang et al., 2018).

However, research on using VTs to facilitate experiential learning in large classes remains scant. While some studies involve VTs, their focus is on small class sizes (Clark & Gibb, 2006; Gilson et al., 2013). In another study, Hu (2015) discussed the influence of emerging technologies (e.g., Skype) on experiential learning within VTs, but even this study examined only asynchronous written communication in small class VT exercises. Thus, this article seeks to fill gaps in the literature by identifying the challenges of using VTs in a large class setting and providing related suggestions to facilitate experiential learning.

The article is structured as follows. First, we briefly consider the challenges of teaching large classes and the opportunity for adapting experiential learning activities into that environment. Next, we explore the issues instructors may face when implementing technology-mediated experiential exercises in an asynchronous or synchronous online format, while paying special attention to the challenges associated with managing and coordinating a large number of VTs. We then provide insights on how to address these challenges based on our experiences conducting an experiential exercise featuring 24 VTs. Finally, we propose recommendations for further studies in the area of VTs, large class sizes, and experiential learning.

## **The Challenge of Large Class Education and Experiential Learning**

Benjamin (1991) notes that large classes, often defined as classes with over 100 students, are not a new phenomenon. In fact, classes of over 300 students were typical as early as the 1880s at the University of Leipzig. However, as enrollments increase, scale can adversely affect the teaching–learning environment, often discouraging student–instructor interaction, inhibiting personal responsibility for learning on the part of the student, and negatively affecting student attendance (Cooper & Robinson, 2000; Smith & Cardaciotto, 2011; Yazedjian & Kolkhorst, 2007), thereby causing students to disengage (Kuh et al., 1991). The trend toward large class lectures is well-documented (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Lund Dean & Wright, 2017; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010),

and yet it is widely known that active learning, where students are engaged and involved in the learning experience, is more effective than passive learning, which is more typical of the large lecture format (Bloom, 1956; Cuseo, 2007; Erickson, 2013; Lund Dean & Wright, 2017; Sousa, 2011).

In a classroom, active or experiential learning refers to student participation in an activity, often contrived, that reflects reality and allows students to use and develop their critical thinking skills in order to assign meaning to a task, thus developing insight and knowledge in the process (Bohn & Schmidt, 2008). Active learning activities, particularly those that engage students, such as discussions, role plays, break out groups, and simulations, facilitate learning and involve students in the educational endeavor (Lund Dean & Wright, 2017). Indeed, cognitive scientists have shown that when students are actively engaged with the material, learning is enhanced (Ambrose et al., 2010; Erickson, 2013; Kolb, 1984; Sousa, 2011; Willis, 2006). This allows for placement of the subject matter at the center of the experience, with the student undertaking all four learning cycle modes of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting, as they perceive, interact and engage with the experiential exercise (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). In addition to increasing engagement in the classroom, active learning activities also lead to greater attendance, understanding, social development, and deeper thinking (Christopher, 2003; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Yazedjian & Kolkhorst, 2007). Carver et al. (2007) note that the use of experiential learning encourages the “students’ sense of agency by building experiences into their education that are authentic and afford an appropriate level of challenge to engaged students” (p. 251).

Although the use of active learning techniques is widely discussed, it is often with regard to small class sizes (Cuseo, 2007). In fact, research indicates that large class size inhibits the use of active learning methods (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Thus, it is not surprising that instructors teaching large classes may have difficulty adapting active learning techniques, often designed for a small class context, to a large class (Brownell & Tanner, 2012; Dineen, 2005; Fornaciari & Kauanui, 2008; Frederick, 1987; Lund Dean & Wright, 2017). As a result, the challenge many educators face is how to foster higher level learning, characterized by active participation of students and deeper, more analytical thinking (Exeter et al., 2010; Gordon et al., 2009; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010).

In response to this challenge, to increase engagement, involvement and higher cognitive learning, a number of authors have suggested that educators should increase the amount of active or experiential learning activities in their classrooms, regardless of the number of students present (Benjamin, 1991; Cuseo, 2007; DeCaprariis et al., 2001; McKeachie, 1986). Existing ways to increase active participation in a large lecture format include

brainstorming, short surveys, think-pair-share, role playing, simulations, quick writing followed by discussion, group work and classroom response systems (i.e., polling software; see Mulryan-Kyne, 2010, for a summary of many of these activities). However, Lund Dean and Wright (2017) note that while some small group exercises may be modified for larger classes, others may be best for small groups, ranging from dyads to groups of 30 or fewer.

Numerous authors suggest dividing large classes into smaller groups in order to increase student involvement, stimulate higher order learning, and promote critical thinking (Benjamin, 1991; Carpenter, 2006; Cuseo, 2007; Exeter et al., 2010; Frederick, 1987; Lund Dean & Wright, 2017; Smith & Cardaciotto, 2011). Cooper and Robinson (2000) and Pychyl et al. (1999) note that dividing large classes into smaller groups may go a long way toward encouraging student engagement and promoting multiple benefits such as emotional and social development experiences, diversity awareness, and reduced student attrition. Significantly, a number of authors espouse the use of team learning, especially the use of permanent teams, to foster community, trust, self-confidence, networking skills, and enhanced student satisfaction (Carpenter, 2006; Felder, 1997; Williams et al., 2006; Yoder & Hochevar, 2005). Nonetheless, dividing a large class into multiple smaller groups does not necessarily alleviate the aforementioned problems with large classes. Overseeing potentially up to 50 or 60 small groups is not without management and coordination issues for the instructor. However, we contend that the advantages for students of experiential learning in smaller groups can outweigh the burden on instructors, some of which can be mitigated through the suggestions proposed later in the article.

## **Virtual Teaming and Experiential Learning in Large Classes**

Although the use of teams in large classes to encourage active learning is well-documented, there is limited research on the use of VTs, and by extension technology-mediated communication tools, as a way to increase experiential learning and student involvement in that context (Goldacre et al., 2013; Hu, 2015; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). One such study on VTs observed that team bonding and enhanced team functioning is much more prevalent when students exchanged personal information at the beginning of the project (Olson-Buchanan et al., 2007). As a result, the authors began requiring an initial team development assignment, such as designing a team logo and having students share information and expectations, to build trust and increase team effectiveness. Research suggests that these types of exercises early in a VT's lifespan provide a valuable opportunity for teammates to interact and establish

normative behaviors, thereby facilitating overall team functioning and enhanced learning (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003; Gardner & Mortensen, 2015).

As previously mentioned, two of the most common obstacles to active learning in large classes are student passivity and disengagement (Dineen, 2005). These challenges are also present in VTs due to the complexities associated with having to rely on technology to communicate, which can affect team member (i.e., student) engagement (Kirkman et al., 2006). While research suggests that technology-mediated communication facilitates accessibility between VT members (Lipnack & Stamps, 1997), it can also adversely affect group cohesiveness, interpersonal interactions, group bonding, commitment to the task, and group performance (Driskell et al., 2003). Specifically, relying on technology to communicate makes it difficult for VT members to form relationships with each other due to a relative lack of behavioral or social cues when compared with traditional, face-to-face teams (Gilson et al., 2015). These cues help virtual teammates to understand each other's intentions, facilitate trust, and reduce uncertainty regarding another's actions, which is especially important in VTs since it is difficult for team members to physically monitor each other's activities (Järvenpää et al., 2004; Wilson et al., 2006).

While some studies have found that trust may be more difficult to develop in VTs where basic behavioral cues may be missing (Donath, 1999; Kimble et al., 2000), others have found that technology-mediated teams can develop social relationships and share an intimacy similar to face-to-face teams (Järvenpää et al., 1998; Walther, 1996). Of course, it should be noted that videoconferencing technology has changed dramatically over recent years, including the widespread availability of free conferencing tools for students, making it difficult to apply conclusions from pre-2015 research on technology-mediated communications. For example, it was not until the early 2000s that conferencing software like Skype and WebEx was widely available. FaceTime has only been an option since 2010 and WhatsApp video calling was not introduced until 2016 (Edwards, 2013; Pasha-Robinson, 2016). In 2015, WebEx conferencing was still seen as cumbersome, and newer platforms such as Zoom were just beginning to make inroads into mobile conferencing (Shah, 2020).

Fortunately, due to these advancements, incorporating technology-mediated communication into the classroom has become increasingly feasible (Zwerg-Villegas & Martínez-Díaz, 2016). In turn, this provides instructors with an opportunity to use VTs, which engages students in three basic ways. First, research has shown that trust is an important component in the successful functioning of VTs (Alsharo et al., 2017; Henttonen & Blomqvist, 2005; Järvenpää & Leidner, 1999). Since fostering trust is often directly linked to a

team's ability to understand and appreciate the diversity of its members (Brandl & Neyer, 2009; Malhotra et al., 2007), students operating within a VT have the opportunity to gain valuable experience, not only learning about each other but also establishing trust and facilitating team functioning and collaboration (Alsharo et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2006). These types of experiences are often difficult to achieve through reading or other forms of codified knowledge transfer (Dávideková & Hvorecký, 2016).

Second, VTs provide an experiential setting in which students can use technology to support and possibly advance their communication and collaboration skills firsthand (Gonzalez-Perez et al., 2014). It is important for students to learn how to work with others in any setting and to develop effective communication strategies to overcome their physical distances, which often causes dissatisfaction and disengagement with the team (Hoegl & Proserpio, 2004; Kirkman et al., 2006; Proserpio & Gioia, 2007). VTs are standard experiences in many, if not most, companies (Liao, 2017) and students must learn these skills in order to be successful in today's workplace.

Third, the new generation of students (Gen Z) are much more likely to gravitate toward technology and virtual spaces than any generation in history (Vigo, 2019). As a result, technology-mediated communication tools should be a natural extension of communication for our students. However, most students typically use technology for recreational purposes in which they are often in control. Although these students tend to be quite savvy with the use of various technologies, there is a growing need for them to learn how to use technology in different ways, such as for active problem solving or collaboration (Bull-Schaefer & Erskine, 2012; Proserpio & Gioia, 2007). Thus, VTs facilitate tacit knowledge acquisition while providing students with the explicit knowledge (i.e., VT skills) they will need to function in the 21st-century workplace (Dávideková & Hvorecký, 2016; Figueiredo & Mauri, 2012; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Polanyi, 1966).

In summary, we contend that VTs can help promote student engagement and experiential learning in a large class. Unfortunately, as noted above, dividing a large class into many small groups can make it difficult for an instructor to not only manage these groups but also coordinate communication and feedback with them, thereby jeopardizing the learning and overall experience for both students and faculty. In the remainder of the article, we briefly describe the use of an experiential exercise featuring VTs in a large class and provide suggestions to address some of the challenges associated with managing and coordinating a large number of VTs. In our case, the VTs were global in nature, with teams consisting of students from schools in two different countries. However, these suggestions are equally applicable to VTs located anywhere.

## Lessons Learned Using a VT Experiential Exercise for a Large Class

In our VT exercise, we had 144 students (located in two countries) participate in 24 VTs in order to complete a cross-cultural communication and marketing project. The project required students to compare the U.S. and Irish self-scanning or delivery/pickup options in Kroger (United States) and Tesco (Ireland) grocery stores. Students had to meet both synchronously (virtually with foreign or local members or face-to-face with local group members in some instances) as well as asynchronously (using email, WhatsApp, and Facebook/Messenger) to complete the group assignment. The students were responsible for collecting primary data by visiting their national retailer and capturing written and visual information to be shared with their teammates. Students then had to combine their information into a single, highly structured deliverable showing the strengths and weaknesses of both retailers and the opportunities for development in each retailer, respectively.

We have used this experiential exercise over the past 10 years and have overcome obstacles ranging from team members' disparate majors and the merger of two different university classes, to cross-cultural communication issues and time zone differences, among others. In addition, during this time we have been able to identify a variety of challenges in managing and coordinating a large number of VTs. The following addresses these challenges, and based on our experiences, provides suggestions to facilitate student engagement and experiential learning within a large class setting.

### *Our Challenge*

*Coordinating Class Communication With a Large Number of Teams.* Often it is the case that instructors have "a natural bias to put preparation time into the scholarly subject matter to be covered, rather than the mode of communicating it" (Hawtrey, 2007, p. 145). During our first few years using VTs, we spent a significant amount of time working together preparing the content of the joint project. However, we failed to anticipate the importance of communication and coordination with our students during the project. After a few iterations, we realized that as much as project content was important, the right communication from instructors was essential to set the tone for an experiential exercise using VTs. In a traditional face-to-face classroom, we as instructors can provide detailed explanations in class, and students can ask questions in real-time to confirm or correct their understanding of the exercise/assignment. It became apparent to us that in an online setting, particularly with asynchronous communication, communicating with students from



24 VTs proves much more difficult—even momentary unresponsiveness from the instructor can lead to a great deal of frustration and confusion for students.

### *Our Suggestions*

*Use Multiple Forms of Clear and Consistent Communication.* As an instructor, if this is the first time that you have tried to manage multiple VTs, starting simple is vital. When you cannot be in the same room with teams working on a project together, you cannot see which groups might be having difficulty and which groups are working well. Furthermore, the project that you have designed for a face-to-face class where the instructor is on-site to provide feedback will likely need to be adapted in an online synchronous or asynchronous scenario. Regardless of the chosen exercise, the most important thing for your students is clear and consistent communication so they know exactly what is expected. This starts from the first session with your large class. We recommend a recorded short video outlining the project as well as written documentation of everything teams need to do. We have also found it helpful to encourage students to attend virtual Q&A sessions where they can send written questions for clarification on the project content, process or team formation. There are a couple of advantages to these sessions. First, since most videoconferencing tools such as Zoom have a private chat feature, the instructor can respond to questions while maintaining student anonymity, thereby prompting students to feel more comfortable in seeking help. Second, these sessions can be posted on the learning management system (LMS), so all students have access to the questions and answers, even if they are not able to attend a session. In turn, this precludes the need for an instructor to answer the same question from each VT repeatedly over the duration of the assignment/exercise.

### *Our Challenge*

*Managing Teams and Facilitating Team Communication and Trust.* When we were dividing our U.S./Irish classes into VTs, we realized that our Irish students were unlikely to know anyone on their team due to their large class size. One of the most important aspects in the development of a successful team is the establishment of social bonds, cohesiveness, and trust. Development of strong relationships among team members leads to better performance and higher levels of satisfaction, which is true in the workplace as well as in the classroom (Felder, 1997; Gilbert, 1995). Unfortunately, when students are unfamiliar with each and are not meeting face-to-face in a physical class, establishing camaraderie and social bonding is much more difficult.

## Our Suggestions

*Devise Ways to Increase All Forms of Communication, Both for the Experiential Exercise and Team Cohesion.* In accordance with Benjamin's (1991) findings, when teaching a large class, we recommend conveying to students that time spent in preparation and building relationships is time well spent. Over the course of the semester, students may well do this on their own, but the sooner the team can function effectively, the faster and easier it will be for student engagement to occur and teams to flourish. Therefore, it is critical in large classes that the instructor creates opportunities for students to interact with each other during the early stages of the exercise. Any steps you can take to build community, motivate students, and boost morale fosters an environment for engagement and learning (Cornella-Dorda et al., 2020). One example of this is the use of ice breakers, which in our case entailed assigning teams to create their own team name and write a brief bio on one another. We found that such an exercise allows for a social element, creates a culture of trust and respect among students, and sets a level of healthy rivalry among all teams.

Another means by which we facilitate student interaction is to provide VTs with access to various communication tools. In face-to-face team meetings it may be difficult for some individuals to be heard, particularly those who are shy. This can be especially problematic in virtual meetings if team members cannot see or read nonverbal cues. Although the chat or waving feature is helpful in communication tools like Zoom, we have found virtual whiteboards to be beneficial, enabling even quiet students to contribute. An additional tool we use to facilitate student engagement is the discussion board, where sharing ideas and brainstorming without criticism is the standard protocol.

In addition to the above, we encourage our students to assume that everyone in the group has positive intent. This is an important assumption for students to consider, as VT members tend to experience fewer social cues than traditional, face-to-face teams, making it difficult to express warmth, emotions, and personality, as well as form connections and develop (affective) trust (Huang et al., 2010; Järvenpää & Leidner, 1999; Kirkman et al., 2002). Of course, advances in technology help alleviate some of these limitations. For example, we encourage students to make use of a variety of social media tools to build community (such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Zoom) both within their individual teams and with other VT members. In a traditional university setting, students may gather together after classes, have a coffee at the student union, or join clubs and organizations where they get to know each other. Those options do not exist in a

virtual classroom. To the extent that we can encourage students to communicate by a variety of social media, hold 15-minute “coffee or tea breaks” at the end of each virtual meeting, or have Friday afternoon “chat sessions” to build trust and bonding, the more likely we, and the VT exercise, are to engage the students (Husbands, 2020).

## *Our Challenge*

*Managing VT Performance and Instructor Feedback Throughout the Experiential Exercise.* As instructors in both the United States and Ireland, we often found it difficult to gauge the progress of teams as they worked, regardless of whether they met physically or virtually. With a large number of VTs, it became increasingly problematic trying to monitor each team’s performance, especially within an asynchronous virtual environment. As a result, we found it challenging to take action (e.g., provide guidance and feedback) when a team was not functioning effectively.

## *Our Suggestions*

*Facilitate Feedback at Every Stage of the Experiential Exercise.* We encourage the instructor to continuously seek feedback from the VTs and share pertinent information with the large class as a whole. One way to do so is to meet with VTs as early as possible and develop a frequently asked questions (FAQ) board. Once an instructor meets with four to five teams, if the same questions tend to arise, then providing clarification for the entire class is probably appropriate. Furthermore, not only does the FAQ board provide an opportunity to facilitate communication with a large class but it also helps the instructor identify possible topics for continuous improvement in the next semester. As an additional benefit, we have found that the FAQ board increases student engagement by simplifying the virtual experience—having a single location for regular updates provides students with clarity, guidance, and reassurance during all stages of the exercise.

Although meeting frequency will vary depending on the desired duration of the exercise, we met with teams at least two to three times over the course of 12 weeks. We recommend meeting with five to eight teams at a time for 15 to 20 minutes. Thus, in a period of 2.5 hours, an instructor can meet with 50 teams. Although this represents a large time commitment, it is important for students to see and hear the faculty member. Therefore, when planning the project, the instructor should allocate 2 to 3 days into their timetable for these meetings and to incorporate or act on any resulting feedback from students. As for conducting the meetings, we have used Zoom,

but there are a number of platforms available (MS Teams, Skype) that allow you to see 25 or 30 people on one screen. We would encourage teams to come to these meetings with prepared questions that the instructor can answer via the chat feature. The instructor can then copy and post the chat to the FAQ board or LMS, thereby saving hours of having to respond to repetitious questions.

In addition to meeting with all the VTs, we also suggest meeting virtually with team representatives (one person per team, 10-20 teams at a time) once a week or so. It is difficult to meet with 250 students each week, even with virtual technology. However, it is possible to meet with multiple team representatives. Teams can have the same person represent their team each week or alternate representatives, and these meetings can be recorded and posted to the LMS for team members who do not attend. These types of meetings may also be helpful in large face-to-face courses, when faculty cannot possibly catch up with every team during a physical class. By meeting with team representatives synchronously online, the instructor can keep a finger on the pulse of each of the teams and more easily take steps to intervene when appropriate.

Finally, it is also important to maintain consistent virtual office hours so that students can meet with you outside of their teams. For large classes, we have found that scheduling multiple sets of office hours for a third or half of the class at a time keeps the virtual meeting size down to manageable numbers. However, it may take some trial-and-error to determine the number of sessions that you will need depending on the size of the class and the involvement of the students.

### *Our Challenge*

*Managing and Evaluating Student Engagement.* For traditional team projects in a large class, we as instructors can walk about the room and watch students as they interact in addition to checking in with individual groups to see how they are functioning. However, it is difficult to do this with 30 to 50 teams, and with 30 to 50 VTs, it becomes increasingly more complicated. Adding to the complexity of using VTs is the reduced visibility of team members' behaviors, such as not knowing if other members are working or potentially loafing (Avolio et al., 2014; Espey, 2018; Liao, 2017; Webster & Wong, 2008). This uncertainty is inherent to the virtual environment, thereby leaving VTs more susceptible to disruptions and impaired team functioning (Gilson et al., 2015). As a result, we have noticed that a number of students may be tempted to disengage from an experiential exercise featuring VTs.

## Our Suggestions

*Require Team Meetings, Documented Communication, and Peer Evaluations.* While we encourage informal engagement (general discussions) during the project, we require students to document their formal engagements, such as their VT meetings (i.e., videoconferences). This documentation can be a simple time-stamped screenshot or a more involved recorded video of their team meeting. Time stamps allow for quick views of participation but having documentation of team meetings can be helpful if peer evaluations at the end of the assignment suggest a lack of participation on the part of one or more members. Although this may be much less of an issue with graduate students, we find that it is useful for undergraduate students.

Based on our experiences, videoconference recordings are also useful as students tend to watch their language and converse in a more professional manner if they know that the team meeting will be recorded and available to the professor (which we encourage). In addition, as students become increasingly familiar with recording their video meetings, we then strongly urge students to practice giving team presentations using videoconference software. By the time they have recorded and posted several meetings, recording a team presentation is less daunting and thus provides students with a valuable skill-set. Finally, students can post their presentations on the LMS, thereby sharing the multiple experiences of various teams with the larger class.

To encourage participation and assist students with time management, we built into the team project due dates for each portion of the assignment. Teams then assigned portions of each “chunk” to a team member, so any loafing appeared early and could be addressed sooner rather than later. We also required that teams assign roles and tasks to each team member, which should be documented and shared with the instructor. We believe that this, in addition to peer evaluations, encourages accountability for each of the students. We also urge students to share their team experience via posted team presentations as a way of motivating and encouraging all team members to commit themselves to the learning process.

## Conclusion

Acknowledging the current challenges of growing class sizes and the ever-changing learning needs of students, it is essential that in order to provide a quality education, university faculty need to engage large classes with more active types of teaching and learning activities than what is typically provided within traditional lectures (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Large classes are here to stay, and many are going to be virtual for the foreseeable future; some may never return to the physical classroom (Bevins et al., 2020; Husbands,

2020). As management educators, we need to engage with our students by providing them with in-class experiences that develop the skills they will need for the future. Fortunately, technology-mediated communication has advanced to the point where there are a number of tools, such as virtual groups, videoconferences, discussion forums, and interactive chats, that can assist with engaging students in a large virtual class. These tools enable the instructor to focus on learner-centeredness and agency while encouraging student interaction, trust, and a sense of belonging/community in the classroom, thus immersing students within the learning experience (Baasanjav, 2013; Carver et al., 2007; Huang, 2002; Murphrey, 2010).

Our article shares insights into the management and coordination of a large number of VTs while facilitating experiential learning. We believe that further empirical studies in this area could answer the call for greater examination of the use of technology, experiential learning, and team activities in the classroom in the form of VTs, by which students are able to gain valuable experience in a virtual environment similar to the workplace (Albaugh et al., 2013; Martins et al., 2004). Specifically, our article highlights that VTs provide students with an important experiential learning opportunity and can be used even in class sizes of over 100 students. In the future, it may be beneficial to examine the types of exercises that can be implemented through the use of VTs in the classroom. Furthermore, exploring the types of and challenges with the assessment of VTs in a large class setting may also be fruitful. Given the significant role of VTs in the workplace, additional research in this area is much needed so that faculty are better enabled to help prepare students as they advance into the professional world.

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### ORCID iDs

Christina O'Connor  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5806-5806>

Kenneth Mullane  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3256-5618>

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