

# Challenges, Failures and Successes Teaching Remotely: Shared Experiences

Summary of virtual panel event held on June 25th, 2020  
[\[Link to video\]](#)



In the first session the panelists discussed their experiences teaching online, synchronously and asynchronously, and shared their advice for teaching online during the spring/summer and into the future.

## Panelists:

**Aadil Merali Juma**, DeGroot School of Business

**Catherine Anderson**, Department of Linguistics and Languages

**Adrienne Lickers Xavier**, Faculty of Social Sciences

**Silvie Tan Halim**, W Booth School of Engineering Practice and Technology

## Panel Questions:

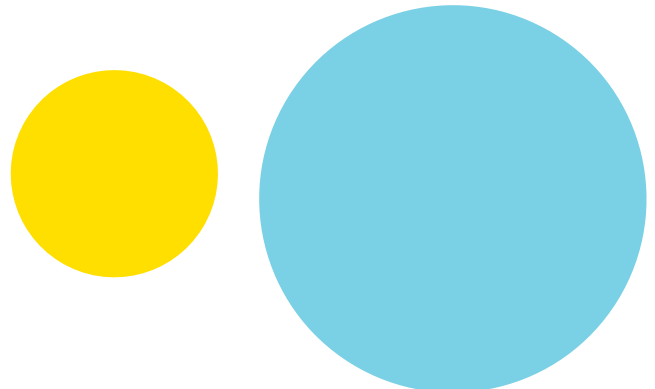
What did you change?

What worked best?

What do you plan to do differently?

## 5 Key Takeaways from the panel

1. Each panelist during this session had different challenges, failures and successes. For example, Catherine Anderson believed that Avenue Checklists were the most valuable when teaching an online course, while Silvie Tanu Halim used the technique of showing her students how to complete a quiz properly before the date of the actual assessment.
2. Many faculty/staff members agreed that the Avenue to Learn Discussion Board is the most efficient way for students to interact with one another. This also helps instructors monitor if students are participating in the course.
3. Zoom was a popular platform for synchronous learning because it is an easily accessible platform.
4. Some panelists tried to incorporate guest speakers into their courses to get another perspective on the topic being discussed.
5. Having students get to know each other is important according to several panelists. Using online platforms such as Avenue to Learn, Microsoft Teams and Zoom makes it easier for everyone to talk and connect.



## Some key takeaways from each panelist

### Catherine Anderson, Department of Linguistics and Languages

- The Avenue to Learn Checklist function makes it easier for students to keep track of what to complete for each week (especially first-year students). [14:56-15:56].
- At the beginning of synchronous classes instructors can begin with social chit-chat (e.g., did anyone do anything interesting, what books are you currently reading? what are you watching?) in the absence of face-to-face interactions to allow space for more social interaction. [16:45-18:05].
- Decided not to do a high stakes final at the end of the course. Rationale: no invigilators checking for ID; and adds anxiety for students. Instead, make quizzes worth more and change the weight of other assessments. [19:05-20:03].

### Silvie Tanu Halim, W Booth School of Engineering Practice and Technology

- Use a Document Camera, which captures images in real-time, in order to point while communicating. Suggests using tools that you're more comfortable with. [23:45-23:55].
- To keep students connected with the course, assign weekly assignments and give 5% participation when students post on the discussion board. As a result, e-mails from students may decrease because they can post questions and tips for homework assignments for everyone to see. It also gives them an incentive to keep checking Avenue. [24:25-27:09].
- For first-year students or students who are new to online courses, one week before the test, spend 20 minutes or so showing students (shared screen) where to go to do the quiz to reduce anxiety (and emails). Consider a mock test with students. [27:23-28:25].

### Adrienne Xavier, Faculty of Social Sciences

- Avenue to Learn Discussion Board was a great way for students to participate in the course and communicate with one another. Also included weekly announcements on the Avenue to Learn platform so they could receive an e-mail when something is posted. [34:45-35:21]
- Discussed things that were relevant to the course, but also talked about current events that tie into the course such as COVID-19, the Black Lives Matter movement and politics in America and Canada. It helped with getting the students comfortable with one another and for conversations to arise. [37:58-38:38]
- Had to redesign the major assignment to be allow it to be done at home. Since the students were required to grow something at home - she noted it was more about the process and there was no failure in trying something. [36:50-40:00].

### Aadil Merali Juma, Degroote School of Business

- Aadil taught BUSADMIN A650 (116 students) and ended up using four programs that McMaster offers: WebEx, Echo 360, Microsoft Teams, Zoom. Decided to do a Course Refinement exercise where students give feedback through a survey on what program they wanted to use; the results were WebEx and Zoom. Created a tool comparison list for students so they could be in control of how they would like the course to be presented. [44:45-45:46].
- Cut speaking time significantly during lectures. Let students practice more problem-solving and active learning. Main goal was to involve them more in the learning process. [45:53- 46:40].
- Leverage a variety of components for the course (e.g., one analysis project, one case study, three quizzes, one midterm, one final exam) which also helps TA hours. [50:30-52:00]
- Stated that there is no one formula. It is not required to use one platform that your colleagues tell you to use, rather it is the experience of the students and the professor teaching the course. [54:40-55:00].

### Resources

- [Avenue to Learn](#)
- [Zoom](#)
- [WebEx](#)
- [Echo360](#)
- [Microsoft Teams](#)