

Blackboard®



Complete Online Transition in Just a Week While Ensuring the Well-Being of Students and Teachers

Established in 2003 in Dehradun, India, the University of Petroleum and Energy Studies (UPES) has emerged as an innovative institution offering industry-focused specialized undergraduate and postgraduate courses that cater to high-growth areas. These include 150 plus specialized courses like cloud computing, mechanical engineering, civil engineering, aerospace engineering, computer science and more, aimed at making specialists.

Given its industry-oriented programs and emphasis on holistic development, UPES graduates naturally become the preferred choice for employers. The university continues to develop and hone students to become future leaders in diverse high-growth sectors in India and globally.

Early Adoption of Hybrid Teaching & Learning Models For a Smooth Transition to Online Education

UPES issued its first health advisory to students and faculty during the first week of March. Leadership shifted the classes online without wasting much time. The fact that UPES has been using hybrid teaching & learning model for 5 years and its relationship and familiarity with Blackboard products and services, helped UPES' leadership make this quick decision.

UPES announced the suspension of face-to-face classes on March 22 prior the national lockdown on March 25, 2020. Teachers were given one week to prepare for online curriculum. During this week, the students stayed home while teachers got busy in planning, brainstorming and preparing for their online instructions. The week was used to orient new faculty members with Blackboard Learn LMS (Learning Management System), Blackboard Collaborate, and other online tools required for online instruction. Resources like SOPs, a 24/7 Support Desk, and a virtual office hours from 11am-6pm daily with the e-learning training team, were created. Recordings of trainings were sent to everyone after each session. Resources were aplenty, ensuring that faculty were equipped with what they needed.

Voila! 100% classes at UPES were online in a week.



Modulating Expectations

“Teachers need to understand that they cannot shift 100% of their syllabus as such online. They need to be creative. I replaced my regular classroom activities like role play and dialogue, with breakout rooms, polls and chatroom discussions. I used Blackboard Collaborate to interact with my students live.” Pooja Khanna, Manager at Career Services expressed her views about modulating expectations while comparing online instructions with face-to-face classrooms.

Classroom management had to be improvised as well. Teachers provided students with their Blackboard Collaborate attendance and engagement records to show that they are being monitored, encouraging them to attend classes on time and stay engaged. Breakout rooms and chats were also supervised. Audio and Video sharing were disabled for managing larger classrooms.

Continuing Interaction After Virtual Classroom Sessions

After virtual sessions, interaction continues for Pooja and her students on Blackboard Learn Ultra, UPES’s main LMS. As part of their employability review, students are asked to upload a 90-second video on why they should be hired and a leaderboard is set up to create friendly competition. To make students fully understand the assignment marking criteria is communicated. Students are also provided with rubrics for self-analysis and self-presentation. Sessions with industry experts and alumni help to coach students in understanding the requirements and expectations of their future employers, thus enabling them to improve and acquire skills.

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We trained students for over 2,100 internships in April 2020 with Masterclasses by industry experts and workshops. I have received over 400 video resume submissions so far. The level of engagement and interaction is better than what I had expected.”

Pooja Khanna

Manager-EDGE, Career Services
University of Petroleum and Energy Studies



Keeping Teachers, Students and Parents Motivated with Extra-Curricular Activities Online

UPES understands that being away from friends and campus is stressful. The sudden switch to fully online teaching and learning is a taxing transition for both students and teachers. To manage stress, the university under its UPES Care initiative runs online extra-curricular programs to promote a positive mindset. Activities include musical nights, BYOC sessions with faculty and management, origami classes, grooming sessions, cooking classes, Zumba classes, meditation and live sessions with experts for anxiety management. These are done live on Blackboard Collaborate and other web conferencing tools. Some of these activities are hosted on weekends, such as “Saturday Night Live” which has become really popular even with families!

Looking ahead

Although there were lots of worries and anxieties at the start, teachers and students are now comfortable in their spaces. The job market has become tough because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but undergrads are building on their skills of agility and adaption through online certifications provided by the university through a collaboration with Coursera and EdX.

“Now is the time to start investing in skills and expand knowledge. Get comfortable with technology. It is more important than ever to be agile and flexible. I tell my students to spend time not only on building skills for their chosen career and domain, but also work on business skills, personality and storytelling. Learn something new every day while being focused on your goal” expresses Pooja.

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