

# Chapter 14

## Transforming Traditions of University Convocations Through Virtual Platforms: A Case of Amity University India

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### ABSTRACT

*Covid has brought many challenges to the ceremonial events at educational institutions. Holding graduating ceremonies or convocations are an integral part of the life of any graduate, but Covid, like in many other facets of life, has changed the way convocations were held at the universities. This book chapter presents a detailed case study on the innovative utilization of virtual platforms to revolutionize convocations at Amity University, India. Through a lens of transformation, the chapter not only examines how Amity University has successfully embraced digital technologies to re-envision its convocation ceremonies, blending tradition with modernity but also the challenges which the administrative support team has encountered during such a virtual ceremony. The authors have interviewed administrative staff at the university who were front-runners in providing such an experience to the post-covid graduates. The findings of the report have been examined in the light of the chapter theme.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unexpected challenges to various sectors including the field of education (Alina et al., 2021; Langston, 2020; Mehla et al., 2021; Sing Yun, 2023). As physical distancing measures and lockdowns became the new normal, educational institutions worldwide were forced to rethink and reshape traditional academic practices (Gómez-Rey et al., 2021; Jyotsna & Madkaikar, 2020). At this time only, virtual platforms came into full existence, ensuring that academic practices do not hamper at any level. With video-conferencing tools and technologies around, the disruptions caused by the pandemic were reduced and the academic processes continued to support teaching- learning environment. Almost overnight, educators had to adapt their pedagogical approaches to virtual environments, utilizing video conferencing tools, learning management systems, and collaborative platforms (Chen, 2020; Fatima Samer et al., 2023). The use of virtual platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic also extended to non-academic aspects of student life. Virtual counseling services (Roberts et al., 2023), career guidance sessions (Choi et al., 2021), and extracurricular activities (Semiz & Čutović, 2023) helped address the holistic needs of students. Social connection platforms and virtual clubs provided avenues for students to engage with their peers, fostering a sense of community even when physical interactions were limited. Live virtual classes became the lifeline of education, allowing students to connect with their teachers and peers in real-time. Through platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet, lectures, discussions, and even group projects were conducted virtually, fostering a sense of continuity amidst the physical isolation imposed by the pandemic. To some extent, these virtual classrooms brought normalcy to academic delivery in those tough times. Beyond the classroom academic activities, these virtual environments also provided a great chance of conducting other academic activities like online conferences, webinars, and virtual convocations as well. Virtual platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet provided great scholars with a place to exchange their ideas and knowledge. These virtual platforms helped continue academic discourse and networking opportunities in a virtual space. Faculty members, researchers, and students could participate in and organize events, ensuring that intellectual engagement persisted despite the challenges posed by the Covid.

Conducting events like convocations in hybrid mode offered a range of benefits that blend tradition with innovation, providing a dynamic and inclusive experience for participants. Hybrid convocations allow participants from around the world to join the final day of their college or university. Graduates and their families could actively participate regardless of geographical constraints due to ongoing pandemic. This also fostered the making of a truly global community. The hybrid model of university convocations also helped individuals who might have faced challenges

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