# Virtual classroom

**Dr. Mirza Mahefooz Baig**
Marathwada College of Education, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India

**Abstract**
A virtual classroom is an online learning environment that allows for live interaction between the tutor and the learners as they are participating in learning activities. Virtual classroom can be supervised or unsupervised. The most common tools you can find in a virtual classroom are –Videoconferencing, Online whiteboard for real-time collaboration, Instant messaging tool, Participation controls, etc. The characteristics of virtual classroom are non-restricting, affordable, flexible learning, practical and proven and accessible. The virtual classroom have benefits like flexible learning solutions, give students more option, access anywhere anytime, combination of structure and freedom, immediate feedback, etc.

**Keywords:** Virtual Classroom, Virtual learning environment, online learning environment, digital space, Videoconferencing, Online whiteboard, Instant messaging tool, etc.

## Introduction
A virtual classroom is an online learning environment that allows teachers and students to communicate, interact, collaborate and explain ideas. A virtual classroom is also known as a virtual learning environment (VLE).

## Virtual classroom
### Definitions
A virtual classroom is an online learning environment. The environment can be web-based and accessed through a portal or software-based and require a downloadable executable file.

Just like in a real-world classroom, a student in a virtual classroom participates in synchronous instruction, which means that the teacher and students are logged into the virtual learning environment at the same time.

A virtual classroom is a teaching and learning environment where participants can interact, communicate, view and discuss presentations, and engage with learning resources while working in groups, all in an online setting. The medium is often through a video conferencing application that allows multiple users to be connected at the same time through the Internet, which allows users from virtually anywhere to participate.

Virtual classrooms are online spaces that are designed for learning. A virtual classroom is also known as a virtual learning environment (VLE).

## How different is a virtual classroom to a physical classroom?
In many ways, an online classroom simply mirrors the physical classroom. In a physical classroom, the student needs to be able to see & hear the teacher, see & hear the other students, have a good view of the whiteboard and their own learning materials. In a virtual classroom, a student can see & hear the teacher via the video/audio stream. The online whiteboard allows teachers to explain ideas visually and work through exercises collaboratively.

## Types of virtual classroom
The Virtual Classroom can be classified on the basis of presence of active instructor to supervise students

## Unsupervised virtual classroom
The participants, of course, include one or multiple instructors and students. When, there is no instructor at all. This type of virtual classroom is called an unsupervised virtual classroom, which is characterized by ready-made learning materials that students can follow without the aid of an instructor, essentially a self-paced tutorial course where the exams can be automated after every activity. This is the most common form of virtual classroom, where students just read a PowerPoint presentation or watch a video tutorial. This makes YouTube, by association, the most widely used virtual classroom thus far (even if it is not considered as one).

## Supervised virtual classroom
The second type of virtual classroom is the supervised or instructor-led classroom. This conforms more to a traditional classroom definition. There is at least one active instructor

present and the lesson is carried out in real time at a specific time and date, with the students being in attendance virtually through a video conferencing application. Here, students and teachers can truly interact and actively participate in class.

## Common tools of VC
The most common tools you can find in a virtual classroom are:
- Videoconferencing
- Online whiteboard for real-time collaboration
- Instant messaging tool
- Participation controls
- Breakout rooms

## Characteristics of virtual classroom
Some of the characteristics of a virtual classroom are

### 1. Non-restricting
A virtual classroom allows both learners and instructors around the world to participate in live classes to collaborate and interact. MOOC programs like Coursera are a great example of this concept in action.

### 2. Affordable
The low costs of virtual classrooms are considered to be a major advantage. Learners can save money by not having to worry about travel expenses. Participants also save time since all that is needed is an internet connection.

### 3. Flexible learning
Online classes also allow for the ability to record class as it happens, including any presentation audio and visuals. This means that the content is accessible even after being delivered, an added benefit for those who want a quick refresher, or perhaps did not fully understand the first time.

### 4. Practical and proven
Synchronous learning is a learning environment where everyone takes part in the learning at the same time. A traditional lecture is an example of this type of learning, and has been used for hundreds of years. Online learning enables this same type of experience, but with far more conveniences and tools.

### 5. Accessible
Virtual classrooms can be used to deliver lectures or even tutorials online. They are also great options for impromptu meetings and group projects where members need to check-in on progress and bounce ideas of one-another. With the virtual environment, ideas and collaborators are never far away.

## Benefits of virtual classroom
### 1. Flexible learning solutions
Virtual Classroom can help the concern institution/college/University support more students and meet Local needs. Institution/college/University running their own virtual Classroom can help them offer students and staff more flexibility, expand course catalogs, and even offset teacher shortage.

### 2. Virtual classroom give students more options
Virtual Classroom offer students more flexibility and learning opportunities, so those who are homebound, working full- or part-time, or participating in other activities can still get the quality education they deserve. And with many standards-aligned courses, institute / college/ university can easily expand course offerings, and introduce students to new subjects and interests, as well as additional options for career.

### 3. Access to coursework from anywhere at any time
You have the freedom to study and complete your coursework 24/7 from anywhere and at any time that suits your busy schedule. All you need is your laptop or other digital device.

### 4. Combination of structure and freedom
Virtual Classroom or programs are built on a structure of weekly assignments and due dates that one must meet, whether it's taking an online test; posting homework, papers, and projects; watching a faculty presentation; or participating in a discussion with fellow classmates. However, within the program's structure one have the freedom to choose the best times to participate that sync with your schedule.

### 5. Immediate feedback on tests
In certain virtual classroom or program, tests taken online, are usually scored when finished. One can quickly see where he/she did well and where he/she needs improvement. When one submits papers and projects, teacher will access assignments and provide written or video feedback.

### 6. Sharpened digital skills
While increasing once knowledge and skills in his/her area of study, he/she will also be honing his/her digital skills on the most sophisticated online learning technology. As one continue to learn and study in an online world, he/she will become confident and highly productive using interactive online tools such as online tests, drop boxes for homework, collaboration tools, e-mail communications to faculty and fellow classmates, and video presentations by faculty.

## Virtual Classroom can also help institutes/colleges/ universities
- Reengage at-risk students
- Increase enrollments and the funding associated with them
- Address specialized teacher shortages

## Virtual curriculum helps in developing skills
These courses also develop skills in the important "four Cs":
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Communication
- Creativity and innovation
- Collaboration

## Virtual classroom is supposed to support many 21st century skills, including
- Cultural and global awareness: Students have access to a wide network of people and information.
- Self-direction: Students are able to work at their own pace.
- Information and communication technology literacy: Students use technology to obtain and present information.

- Problem solving skills: Students are required to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in order to be assessed, and they often participate in group thinking and discussion.
- Time management: Students are required to meet deadlines.

**Conclusion**

A virtual classroom is a teaching and learning environment where participants can interact, communicate, view and discuss presentations, and engage with learning resources while working in groups, all in an online setting. Virtual classroom can be supervised or unsupervised depending on the presence of instructor. The virtual classroom uses following common tools-Videoconferencing, Online whiteboard, Instant messaging tool, etc. The virtual classroom has characteristics like non-restricting, affordable, flexible learning, practical and proven and accessible. The virtual classroom has many benefits.

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