

# The Higher Colleges of Technology Expands Its Horizons With Zoom's Flexible Solution



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## Summary

- Zoom is deployed across 17 HCT campuses
- Use Zoom for faculty meetings and to teach students
- Best features: ease-of-use, quality, Zoom Meeting Connector

Higher education institutions are meeting challenges today with technologies we couldn't have dreamed of a few decades ago. The Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) in the United Arab Emirates is one such school, which has adopted technologies to raise the standards by which it educates its pupils.

Founded in 1988, the Higher Colleges of Technology is the largest provider of educational services in the United Arab Emirates. Its 20,000 students are distributed across 17 campuses in many of the country's cities. Zoom is deployed across these campuses.

We had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Hamad Odhabi, the dean of computer & information science and applied communications at HCT, and Mohammed Tabbara, a professor of computer & information science at HCT.

In our conversation, they told us how they came across Zoom, how the software was implemented, and how it benefits HCT.

"We have 17 locations in the Higher Colleges of Technology," said Dr. Odhabi. "Including two schools - one for men and one for women - in each of the seven emirates in the UAE."

"In 2013," he added, "our faculty structure changed. Previously, we had deans for each separate college. Now we have deans for departments that span multiple colleges. As a result of this change, I became the dean of Computer & Information Science and Applied Communication throughout all of the colleges. This meant that I needed a way to communicate with all of the faculty and students in this department from each campus."

In many cases where this scenario is encountered, deans and faculty would travel periodically to meet together in a conference room. Given their widely dispersed campuses, this approach would have been cumbersome and expensive at best. Discussions by phone are also less-than-preferable, since you cannot share materials. Dr. Hamad Odhabi had one workable choice. He had to use a video conferencing solution that would allow all the participants to meet face-to-face online.



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Dr. Odhabi explains: "I started evaluating online meeting software. Eventually, I happened to come across a website that was using Zoom in its back-end. It was easy to connect, very simple to use, and had great quality audio and video. As I investigated further, I discovered Zoom's Meeting Connector, where we could host our meetings on local servers."

Zoom's powerful platform was sufficiently easy to use that HCT could immediately start using it to connect their faculty.

"We now use Zoom to coordinate our 17 locations," he said. "There are many meetings between the department chairs and the faculty and they need to discuss and assess situations constantly between all of the colleges."

"To further facilitate the use of Zoom, we have given our faculty guidelines for its use," he added. "Within the guidelines are instructions they may choose to follow to make their meetings smoother, such as how to mute others' microphones and optimize bandwidth connections to ensure a better meeting quality."

"I've tried a variety of different video conferencing solutions and have found none of them to match up to what Zoom can provide," added Tabbara. "I found Zoom to be the most comprehensive solution."

HCT's relationship with Zoom didn't end there, though. HCT also uses Zoom as an important teaching tool for students learning remotely.

"When Dr. Odhabi introduced Zoom to our department, I immediately started adjusting my courses to run through the software," said Tabbara. "This year, I have been assigned to a new section in Fujairah City, and I live in Abu Dhabi. To be able to interact with my students from a distance of 250 kilometers, I had to use Zoom. I have been able to introduce my students to it, all of whom started out without any previous Zoom experience. They found it very intuitive and easy to use. Eventually, I started running all of my courses through it. My students love Zoom."

Zoom has become an integral part of how HCT operates. Teaching classes remotely means that students do not necessarily have to travel to colleges in order to participate. They now have another option, allowing them much-needed flexibility. Our software's multi-platform support ensured that they were able to view their courses across their personal devices.

"A number of our courses run Zoom, mainly to provide flexibility for our students," said Dr. Odhabi. "Using Zoom to connect to their courses allows our students to attend them from any location on any device."

Previously, HCT was using an e-Learning software suite to connect with its remote students. This has generated a disparity since the platform could not offer the students the same engagement they would have in an in-person course session.

"We have used a bulletin board collaboration software to connect with our students for e-Learning," he said. "The only problem with this setup was that we couldn't see the students face-to-face in video meetings. This situation has prompted us to use Zoom for our students. It gives instructors and students the feeling of being part of a group."

In addition to learning more fluidly through our software, there is another advantage that affects women's colleges in particular. A number of female students attending HCT wish to use school as a way to venture out of their homes, but still want to take the classes that operate through Zoom. Dr. Odhabi tells us how this was facilitated.

"In our women's colleges, many of the female students wish to take the opportunity to leave the home," he said. "For this, we set up a room at one of our schools with conferencing hardware and let them use Zoom in that location. There are others who still connect from their homes - some even connecting from their local coffee shops."

Occasionally, HCT may be short on faculty in one of their colleges. Zoom offers the possibility of faculty teaching courses in another school without them having to bear the expense and wasted time of having to travel from one location to another.

Aside from teaching students and hosting faculty meetings, HCT also recruits new faculty members and students on Zoom. In the past, the institution used video conferencing room software, but it was a hurdle to use internationally. Zoom has proven extremely flexible for this purpose because it is compatible with the majority of hardware setups.

"We also use Zoom for recruitment," he said. "In the past, we used other video conferencing software for this purpose, but we've had challenges with booking rooms for international interviews. Once we've tried Zoom, we

started moving most of our interviews to it. This allows remote participants to join meetings from their homes, offices, and on the move.”

There is one more piece of the puzzle that we have not yet mentioned. HCT is reaching out to teach students in other countries. Its international outreach initiative has allowed it to reach students in places like Kenya. Zoom has since become the binding element behind this initiative.

“Aside from our everyday usage of Zoom, we’re also using it for various other initiatives,” said Dr. Odhabi. “For example, some of our students went to Kenya created a wireless network that allowed Kenyans to attend a remote training center running through Zoom from the UAE. Something similar will happen soon in Indonesia. We are also offering a course every semester for students in high schools across the UAE. This gives them a more in-depth perspective of how our program works before they join our colleges.”

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits Zoom has provided for HCT’s students is the ability to more easily petition for new courses. Since HCT requires that at least 15 students show interest in a new course before it is considered, the interested students can now attend any new courses remotely regardless of their geography, thereby increasing the group of possibly interested students.

“This will allow us to start new courses that previously were not possible given the constraints we faced,” explained Odhabi.

Last month, the Higher Colleges of Technology had 935 meetings, 4,618 participants, and about 191,000 total minutes through Zoom. There’s no doubt that our software has now become the lifeblood of this institution’s communication.

Altogether, Zoom has provided HCT with a solution to various infrastructure needs and has fostered effective communication among its faculty and students. Because of our software, they will be able to further expand and strengthen their initiatives. HCT is now a more collaborative and student-friendly institution with the ability to communicate with anyone on any device in an environment that provides high-quality audio and video streaming on technology that is very easy to use.



#### About Zoom

Zoom, the cloud meeting company, unifies cloud video conferencing, simple web meetings, and group collaboration into one easy-to-use platform. Our solution offers the first available mobile-screen sharing and an innovative hybrid cloud service, and works across desktop, tablet, mobile and room systems. Zoom services over 40 million participants and more than 100,000 businesses globally.

**Website**  
[zoom.us](https://zoom.us)

#### Innovations

First 3-in-1 Cloud HD Meeting Platform  
First Mobile Screen Sharing  
First Hybrid Cloud Service