Virtual Class Aide Guide

General Information and Responsibilities

Virtual Class Aides (VCAs) help create a well-functioning Encore Learning virtual classroom and serve as hosts for each class session on Zoom.

- Arrive online early—30 minutes before the first class and 15–20 minutes before subsequent classes.
- Confirm that the instructor is ready and comfortable with the virtual classroom.
- Check that the instructor can be heard, seen, and share presentation materials successfully.
- Monitor the waiting room when it is enabled and admit late arrivals using the class roster as a guide.
- Use Chat to ask participants to update their Zoom name when needed.
- Ensure participants can see, hear, and participate as directed by the instructor.
- Monitor Chat and/or Q&A according to the plan established with the instructor.
- Collect course feedback and share relevant concerns with staff.
- Coordinate responsibilities with your co-VCA.
- Report technical or course-related issues to the appropriate Encore Learning staff member or the Academic Programs Committee co-chairs.

Encore Learning provides Zoom training, online resources, a staff host, and a pre-course run-through with the instructor, VCAs, and staff. Contact info@encorelearning.net with questions.

Working with Your Co-VCA

Most courses have two VCAs. Before the course begins, you will receive contact information for your co-VCA and the instructor.

- Introduce yourself to your co-VCA and exchange cell phone numbers.
- Review this guide and agree on who will handle each responsibility.
- Divide tasks according to your strengths; this is one of the most important practices reported by successful aides.
- Review the current class schedule and discuss how to cover any sessions one of you cannot attend.

Technical Rehearsal and Instructor Contact

The staff host will coordinate a technical run-through 1–2 weeks before the course begins. This is the primary opportunity for the instructor, VCAs, and staff to establish how the class will run.

- Exchange cell phone numbers for quick communication.
- Confirm class dates and times. Confirm that everyone will log in 30 minutes before the first class and 15 minutes before subsequent classes.
- Confirm whether the class will use a Zoom meeting or webinar and review any feature differences.
- Remind the instructor to send supplemental materials to courses@encorelearning.net at least one week before each session if they want them shared with members.
- Ask the instructor to provide VCAs with copies of documents they will share during class, such as PowerPoint files and PDFs. A VCA may need to share these if the instructor loses Internet connectivity or has reduced bandwidth.
- Discuss whether the instructor wants a mid-class break, particularly for two-hour classes.

- Agree on when and how questions will be handled—Chat, raised hands, Q&A, during the presentation, or at the end.
- Determine who will monitor and present participant questions. The VCA may condense questions for the instructor when appropriate.
- Discuss how the instructor wants to engage participants, such as using Chat prompts, inviting video, or encouraging participants to speak.
- Have the instructor practice screen sharing. If videos or audio will be shared, remind the instructor to select the option to share computer audio.
- Forward additional instructor support needs to the Academic Course Coordinator at courses@encorelearning.net.

Day-of-Class Responsibilities

The staff host handles the Zoom session setup and provides support. Depending on the class, the staff host may open the session, admit or broadcast to registered students, start recording, enable live transcription when permitted, assist with polls or breakout rooms, address registration/technical issues, and transfer Host designation to an aide before leaving.

VCAs are responsible for the following:

- For the first session, arrive 30 minutes early; for subsequent sessions, arrive 15–20 minutes early.
- Make the opening introductions and housekeeping announcements.
- Keep participant audio muted and video off unless the instructor prefers otherwise.
- Ask participants with unclear Zoom names to update them to their registered names.
- Monitor and admit late arrivals when the waiting room remains active, following the staff host's instructions.
- Monitor Chat and Q&A as agreed with the instructor.
- Respond to participant concerns and relay issues to Encore Learning staff.
- Notify staff promptly about technical or other problems that arise.
- End Meeting for All.

For detailed setup and operating procedures, use the appropriate Virtual Class Aide Day-of-Class Checklist.

Creating a Professional Virtual Classroom

- Virtual background: Consider using a virtual background to reduce visual distractions such as people or pets in the background. Avoid video backgrounds because they use more bandwidth.
- Start and end on time: Zoom licenses are shared among classes, and participants may have commitments immediately afterward.
- Waiting room: Agree with the instructor when participants should be admitted—often **five** minutes before class or at the scheduled start. Once the staff host leaves, the waiting room will be disabled, unless the instructor prefers it not to be, so late participants can enter directly.
- First class: Consider sharing a simple introductory slide while participants enter and during opening announcements. Stop sharing when the instructor is ready to present.
- Spotlight the Instructor to keep the instructor as the primary on-screen participant when appropriate.
- Subsequent classes: The instructor may want a slide, music, or video displayed before class. Confirm the plan in advance.

- Host controls: The staff member generally transfers Host designation to a VCA about 10 minutes after class begins. The Host can adjust settings such as Closed Captioning and participant access to webinar questions.
- On-camera presence: When your video is on, face the camera and keep your full face centered in the frame. When you are not speaking, turn your video and audio off unless directed otherwise by the instructor.
- Participant controls: Use the Participants panel to monitor mute/video status. You can mute or turn off a participant's video when necessary and, in rare cases, remove an unruly or unauthorized participant.
- Chat monitoring: If you are responsible for Chat, keep the Chat panel visible so you can easily monitor questions and comments.
- Saving Chat: Chat is not automatically saved. If the instructor or VCA wants to preserve it, use Save Chat at the bottom of the Chat panel. Remember that Chat may include participant-to-participant comments when those settings permit it.

Sample Introductory Slide

A VCA may share a one-page introductory slide before class begins. Suggested information includes:

- Course number and title
- Instructor name
- VCA names
- Reminder to make sure your name appears in the Zoom thumbnail
- Reminder to keep audio muted and video off unless otherwise directed
- Any applicable date reminder (i.e., skip dates)
- Where to find Class Media in the Encore Learning Member Account

If an instructor has difficulty sharing their screen, consider omitting the VCA's shared slide or providing the slide to the instructor to include in their presentation.

Class Contact

VCAs are available to members in the virtual classroom for general questions, but do not email or call class members. Members should direct questions and calls to Encore Learning staff at info@encorelearning.net.

If members want to see who else is in the class, they can use the Zoom participant list or introduce themselves through Chat.

Class Materials

Instructors should send supplemental materials directly to the Encore Learning office well in advance of each session at courses@encorelearning.net. ***Do not*** accept course materials from the instructor. Staff will upload materials to the class website and notify members when they are available.

Attendance

VCAs do not take attendance. Staff will track attendance and verify registrations. You will receive a class roster a few days before the first class for informational purposes.

- If someone is in the waiting room but does not appear on the roster, admit them; staff will verify registration.
- If a participant's Zoom name is unclear, send a private Chat message asking them to change it to the name used for registration.
- You may update your roster when staff notifies you of additions or withdrawals. Draw a line through students who have officially withdrawn.
- If changes become difficult to track, request an updated roster from courses@encorelearning.net.

Emergency Communications

If an instructor says a session must be canceled unexpectedly, such as due to illness, notify Encore Learning staff by email as soon as possible. Staff will notify class members.

For a missed session, staff will ask the instructor whether they want to make up the session and will determine whether a course extension can be accommodated.

Reading Assignments

Reading assignments may appear in the course description, but Encore Learning cannot guarantee that suggested texts will be available. Most instructors use books available through local bookstores, libraries, or online.

Liability Insurance

While acting within the scope of their appointments, Class Aides are considered agents of Encore Learning and are covered by its liability insurance. Coverage does not extend to illegal activity, improper conduct, willful disregard of safety, transportation, or holding class in an unauthorized location.

Privacy and Conduct Policies

Please review Encore Learning's current Privacy and Conduct policies, including the Discrimination and Civility clauses, at encorelearning.net/about/policies/.

Last Class Session Announcement

Please make the following announcement at the final class:

"We are so glad you participated in this class. You should have received a SurveyMonkey class feedback form in your email this morning. If you did not, the survey link is available on the class webpage. We encourage you to share your feedback to assist our Academic Programs Committee with planning for future classes. Your feedback will also be shared with the instructor.

"We'd also like to let you know about opportunities to meet other Encore Learning members and share your time and talents. Some opportunities take just a couple of hours, such as distributing flyers or helping at an outreach event. Others involve contributing ideas for future classes or helping organize a social event. If you are interested, please contact an Encore Learning staff member at info@encorelearning.net. We'd love to have your help and expertise!"

Virtual Class Aide Benefit

As a thank-you for serving as a VCA, you will receive a credit for a free class registration. The credit is applied after the course ends and may be used within the next two terms.

Key Contact Information

Encore Learning Staff (Voice mail messages left at (703) 228-2144 for Encore Learning staff are checked throughout the day.)

Lora Pollari-Welbes, Executive Director — exec@EncoreLearning.net — (703) 228-2144 ext. 3

Kerry Fraatz, Course Manager — courses@EncoreLearning.net — (703) 228-2144 ext. 4

Patty Rowland, Administrator — info@EncoreLearning.net — (703) 228-2144 ext. 2

Donna Banks, Program Associate — virtual@EncoreLearning.net — (703) 228-2144 ext. 5

Francesca Chilcote, Program Associate — francesca@encorelearning.net — (703) 228-2144 ext. 6

Class Aide Co-Chairs: Contact with questions regarding the class aide role.

John Metzler — johnmetzler3@outlook.com — (703) 850-9439

Michael Stutts — stuttsml@gmail.com — (757) 641-9248

Academic Programs Committee Co-Chairs: Contact for course feedback or questions at any time.

Susan Bornstein — susanbornstein@me.com

Deb Spero — deborahspero@gmail.com