

# Georgetown University's Qatar campus taps into global resources with Polycom's Telepresence System



## CASE STUDY

**User:**  
Georgetown  
University School of  
Foreign Service in  
Qatar

**Country:**  
Doha, Qatar

**Industry:**  
Education

### Background

Georgetown University students and faculty work, study, and perform research around the globe. In 2005, the University deepened its commitment to global education by establishing the first branch campus of its world-renowned School of Foreign Service. Located in Doha, Qatar, the program provides a 4-year undergraduate degree in international politics to students from the Middle East and around the world. The degree is identical to that offered to students in Washington, DC. The program accepts about 50 students annually.

### Challenge

Two classrooms, two groups of students in two separate cities, two time zones, one professor, one class – this is what the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar aims to achieve with the launch of its new classrooms using Polycom® RealPresence™ Experience High Definition (RPX™HD), making it the first university in the Middle East to adopt immersive telepresence video conferencing as an educational tool.

The University was using standard video-conferencing equipment to link its classrooms between Doha and Washington, DC, but there were limitations, according to Johnathon Chapman, CIO at Georgetown's Qatar campus. These limitations included inflexibility of where the professor had to stand or where he could position himself, his view of the students in Doha (or the students' view of him) which in turn limited his interaction with the students since he was unable to identify them, and limitations in the number of students that could attend any one class.

"Most video conferencing solutions in the market are geared towards the boardroom and not the classroom," pointed out Chapman. "This restricted the degree of communication between professor and students and they were unable to interact as easily as they would in a real classroom."

Georgetown University was looking for a video conferencing solution that would provide a realistic classroom environment, provide a camera environment that could change focus to students when they asked questions, and display digital content to all participants with the least amount of intervention. The IT team at the University – both in Washington, DC, and in Doha – researched and visited three vendors to not only check the full extent of their offerings but to test in real time the effectiveness of each system. Each system was tested under different environments to ensure that the technology finally selected would enable the University to use improved teaching methods to provide the best classroom experience.

### Solution

The final selection - Polycom's RPX™HD Immersive Telepresence System – was made based on its ability to deliver an experience that was as close as possible to a real classroom.

TechnoQ, FVC's authorised Polycom reseller in Qatar, was contracted to supply and install the system at the School of Foreign Service in Qatar. The complete Polycom RPX™HD Immersive Telepresence System solution included the RPX 218M system in Doha and the 210M system in Washington along with 8 HDX 9002, true high definition video with 1280 x 720 video resolution at data rates from 1Mbps. The Polycom solution will deliver undergraduate courses between



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Washington DC, USA, and Doha, Qatar. Unlike other solutions available in the market, this telepresence solution will accommodate up to 18 students in tiered seating in Doha and 10 students in Washington DC.

The University is using its high-bandwidth Internet2 network provided by the Qatar Foundation to enable the high-end Internet link to make the whole project feasible.

### Result

Georgetown University will be evaluating the system to fine tune it before implementing it in other courses. At the moment, the Polycom solution is only on offer for one of the courses at the Qatar campus. Evaluation will be based on feedback from students and professor and their experience in the classrooms.



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