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Online delivery modes – asynchronous or synchronous?

When designing your teaching for an online format, two modes of interaction should be considered: an asynchronous and a synchronous mode. In this document, the different modes are described and some guidance into when to use what will follow. Remember that every course, teacher and class is different – therefore, consider your learning objectives, your students and the course format and material when deciding what approach to take.

What is asynchronous delivery of online teaching?

The learning style of asynchronous teaching is flexible and can be self-paced or facilitated to varying degrees depending on the learning content and type of course. Students do not need to be online at the same time (which could be a challenge if you have students across different time zones) and you are not reliant on bad or missing internet connections.

The main pedagogical benefits of this approach are:

- It can promote higher level thinking when engaging with course material
- Students can revisit teaching material and repeat specific topics
- It allows for students to test how well they understand certain parts of the curriculum
- Students can share knowledge and collaborate with each other via assignments and other online productions.

Below is a list of examples of asynchronous online activities and their benefits and disadvantages in the online environment. Please note that this overview serves as a guideline and that the benefits and drawbacks may vary in relation to how the tool is utilized.

Asynchronous activities	Tool (example)	Benefits	Disadvantages
Watching a video lecture to acquire knowledge	Panopto, Teams, Zoom	Gives the option to forward/rewind/pause and repeat topics	No option for asking questions or clarifying doubts (<i>unless a chat is added elsewhere</i>)
Listen to a podcast to acquire knowledge	Panopto, Teams, Zoom	Gives the option to forward/rewind/pause and repeat topics	No option for asking questions or clarifying doubts
Engage in discussion boards to adapt and apply knowledge	Canvas	Students can interact with their peers and/or teacher; encourages higher level thinking	Participation is necessary for it to work effectively
Take quizzes to practice, acquire and adapt knowledge	Canvas	Provides feedback and possibly multiple attempts to practice certain topics or teaching material	No option for asking questions or clarifying doubts

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Adapt and apply knowledge via assignments and productions	Canvas	Allows students to practice, adapt and apply their knowledge through specific assignments, productions or artefacts – in groups or individually.	Takes time to set up clear guidelines and criteria
Give peer feedback to adapt and apply knowledge	Peergrade	Students can interact with their peers; collaborative learning	Takes time to set up clear guidelines and criteria
Work in collaborative documents to adapt and apply knowledge	Office 365, Mindmeister	Students can interact with their peers; collaborative learning; can be facilitated both asynchronously and synchronously	Participation is necessary for it to work effectively
Read uploaded material (articles, book chapters, web links, etc.) to acquire and adapt knowledge	Canvas	Quick to set up; self-paced	No opportunity for feedback; static

What is synchronous delivery of online teaching?

Synchronous teaching is the live, direct streaming of teaching and more closely resembles on-campus teaching.

The pedagogical benefits of this approach are:

- Conveying information and material in real-time can help create a sense of social presence with your students
- It can be helpful when immediate feedback is required
- Ensure that students have understood the content as intended
- Group work

Below is a list of examples of synchronous online tools and their apparent benefits and disadvantages in the online environment. Please note that this overview serves as a guideline and that the benefits and drawbacks may vary in relation to how the tool is utilized.

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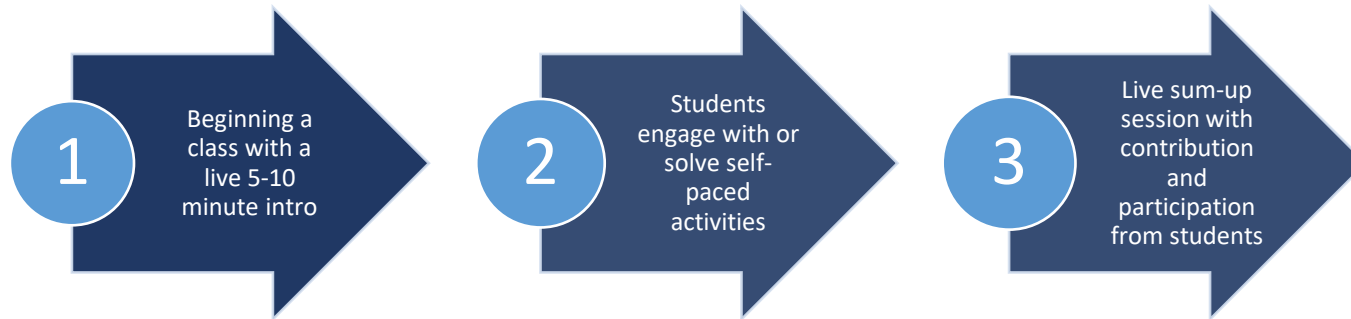
Synchronous activities	Tool (example)	Benefits	Disadvantages
Participating in a live lecture or session to acquire knowledge	Teams, Zoom, Adobe Connect	Students can ask questions and clarify doubts instantly; class and student interaction; sharing options	Risk of technical issues such as bandwidth or bad internet connection;
Watching a live stream to acquire knowledge	Panopto	Students receive real-time teaching; optional chat feature	Risk of technical issues such as bandwidth or bad internet connection; low or no interaction between in-class and at-home participants
Engage in a chat session to adapt and apply knowledge	Canvas	Students can ask questions and clarify doubts instantly; class and student interaction	Lower degree of “connection” with teacher, students and the rest of the class
Work in collaborative documents to adapt and apply knowledge	Office 365, Mindmeister	Students can interact with their peers; collaborative learning; can be facilitated both asynchronously and synchronously	Participation is necessary for it to work effectively
Group discussions or break out rooms	Zoom, Teams (coming soon)	Students can discuss topics or questions in smaller groups which allows for them to get a deeper understanding of the content	Risk of technical issues such as bandwidth or bad internet connection; may be time consuming to set up

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A combination of both asynchronous and synchronous teaching

A combination of asynchronous and synchronous teaching can be beneficial through giving students the opportunity to explore and understand teaching content at their own pace and then having the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any doubt. Examples of a combination of online delivery modes are:

A mixed model:



A combination of shorter, online classes (e.g. exercise classes) and weekly readings:



Live Q&A sessions in-between self-paced student activities:

