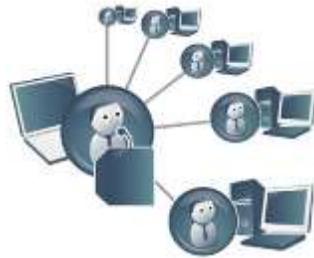


# Planning a Synchronous Online Lesson

## Guidelines

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# **PLANNING AN ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS SESSION**

## **DRAFT A TIMELINE**

- As online synchronous sessions happen in real-time, it is helpful to think of each single session as a sequence of timed teaching and learning activities. Similar to a normal lesson plan, this ‘scheduling’ allows you to incorporate a variety of activities and plan ahead for smooth transitions.
- Developing a timeline for your synchronous session is particularly important as you will have to prepare the majority of your learning materials in advance and have them ready at hand to share with students. This timeline will provide a natural structure for your session and will keep students engaged throughout the session.
- The timeline can be structured as ‘Pre-session’, ‘Session Timeline’ and ‘Post-session’.
- A sample timeline is attached at the end of this document.

## **Pre-session**

- We recommend you to direct your students to the synchronous sessions via Moodle. Post the link to the Hangout Meeting (online live lesson) with instructions for students on preparing for the session with relevant material in advance, such as links to relevant readings, embedded videos, or questions to consider.
- Provide clear directions on how to process any pre-session materials for students (e.g., “briefly review”, “make detailed notes of the outcomes outlined in pages 12-19”) so that they are aware of how their work will be used in the synchronous session.

## **Session Timeline**

- Now that students are prepared for the synchronous session you can utilize the tools available on Google Hangout for an interactive, active learning experience for students.
- Google Hangout allows the lecturer to share the screen, and conduct video conferencing or even audio only conferencing.
- There are some other tools we can integrate with Google Hangout such as whiteboard (e.g. Jamboard or even MS Paint) and the G-suite options such as Google docs, Google sheets and Google PPT etc.
- It is important that you clarify what you want the session to achieve, what materials and student activities to develop, and what features you will be using during the session. (Please take a look at the sample timeline).

### **Post-Session**

- The synchronous Google Hangout session can be recorded.
- Student activities of the session can be captured in Google docs or other digital formats and it is highly recommended that you use this to inform your instructions for the future sessions as well as provide connection between their work in the 'digital classroom' and their independent individual learning and assignments.

## **GRADING /PARTICIPTION CHECK IN SYNCHRONOUS SESSIONS**

Because synchronous sessions facilitate such a wide variety of student learning activities, they also give you many opportunities to assess and grade participation. Rather than have participation grading based on your impression of students' engagement and effort, think about using the different varieties of work students produce from synchronous sessions as a basis for your participation grading. There are many different approaches toward grading participation clearly and fairly, using student work to ground your assessment. Several ideas are listed below.

1. **Key Activity:** Review your session timeline and decide on a key activity. A key activity should be one that gets to the heart of the session's content, involves all students, and results in a product of some kind (live discussion and discussion notes on a Google Doc, annotated whiteboard screen, recorded responses, verbal or written responses, etc.). Base participation from student work on the key activity. Developing a rubric based on the criteria you believe is required for success in this activity, and sharing this with students beforehand, will make grading quick and communicate to students what they need to focus on in the activity.
2. **Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs):** this is a quick way to gauge student participation. Assigning a quick survey at the end of class, asking for a 5-sentence written summary of main points, or having students formulate their remaining questions can all be great ways to measure engagement and comprehension. Self-reflective activities can be especially useful in revealing student thinking and depth of participation.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- When drafting your synchronous session timeline, the most important thing to consider is what you want your students to learn from the session. Focusing on this question guides you as you choose your content for a session, your students' active learning tasks, and your own teaching strategies. A constant reference to student learning outcomes for the module in question allows you to craft relevant and engaging sessions for your students.
- Plan your content delivery around student activities: rather than a livestream lecture, think of how discussions, student input, written brainstorming, student collaboration can be used within the lesson.
- Use the strengths of video conferencing – visuals and synchronous interaction. The instructor uses an interactive chart – a visual aid – and requires the students to present their activities visually, using Google Docs and desktop share.
- Interaction is at the heart of the session both between the students and the instructor and the students and each other. Carefully thinking through and structuring interaction gives purpose to the planned activities by taking advantage of the platform's features to adapt to your content and increase student learning and engagement.
- Teach students the prerequisite technical knowledge: Features of Google Hangout, how to use the Google Drive etc.

*Adapted from 'Virtual Communications' presented by The Centre for Teaching Excellence, Boston College: <http://cteresources.bc.edu/documentation/synchronous-teaching-considerations/planning-an-online-synchronous-session/>*

Image: <https://www.andyhinesight.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/virtual-class.png>