

Guidelines for Zoom Synchronous Sessions

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Number of Zoom Sessions

Our surveys with instructors have indicated that there is a preference to host more Zoom sessions. Instructors also prefer shorter sessions (1-2hrs) rather than longer sessions that are equal in length to an on-campus course schedule. The number of Zoom sessions (scheduled and optional virtual office sessions) should be driven by pedagogy with a balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities throughout a course (Chen et al., 2020; EEF, 2020; Young, 2020). Students report synchronous sessions that are interactive (e.g., Q/A, Case-based learning, small group discussions) are engaging and reduce burnout (Chen et al., 2020). Instructors can provide a clear rationale in the course syllabus, via email, or in first session why the Zoom sessions are taking place, why a particular number of zoom sessions are scheduled, and why some zoom sessions are optional.

Video ON/OFF in Synchronous Sessions

There are numerous factors influencing the use of video by participants in an online session. Instructors report discomfort when students do not turn their cameras on during synchronous sessions. An assumption might be videos on are indicators of student engagement and connection during the session. However, requiring cameras on is counter to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles of providing students with multiple means of engagement (Costa, 2020; DeWaard, 2016). Decisions to use or not use video can be based on a desire for privacy on the part of the individuals, social pressure/anxiety about personal or home appearance, discomfort in a public setting, connectivity issues, preference not to share cultural artifacts publicly, and worries about learning challenges, to name a few (Bushchet, 2021; Duncan, 2021; Finders and Muñoz, 2021). Alternative approaches can be used to make lessons more interactive regardless of video use, such as the chat function, exit tickets (forms, questionnaire), polls, collaborative documents, breakout rooms, annotation, or using reaction buttons.

Recording of Synchronous Sessions in Zoom

Recording in Learning Environments is a suggested resource for instructors with key information about recordings:

The instructor may use media recordings to capture the delivery of a lecture. These recordings are intended to be used for lecture capture only and will not be used for any other purpose. Recordings will be posted on D2L for student use and will normally be deleted at the end of term. According to the operating standards and practice for Media Recording of Students in Learning Spaces, "Student participation in media recording in learning spaces is not mandatory" (p. 1). However, students are responsible for turning off their camera and/or microphone if they do not wish to be recorded. While there is now an automated message in Zoom informing participants that a session is being recorded, the instructor should notify students about the recording.

Sample statements are available in the resource for use in a syllabus and consent forms for guest lecturers. If Traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders are presenting in an online course, it is important to be mindful of cultural protocols. Often photographs, audio, or video recordings are not acceptable while an Elder is conducting a spiritual ceremony (explicit consent must be obtained before recording). No recordings are permitted for level 4 data, such as restricted information or personal health information. Instructors can access the complete UCalgary operating standards and practices for media recording of students in learning spaces and zoom guidelines for more detail.

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