Office Hours

Office hours are an important component of any course. As we pivot to facilitating student learning online, we also need to shift how we think about planning for and implementing office hours. While in-person office hours may be ideal, online courses (and current circumstances) may necessitate moving those office hours to a virtual format. Faculty should clearly mention the time, and preferred format of office hours in the course syllabus and preferably on the announcements page of their course sites as well.

**Option 1: Synchronous, “Drop-in” office hours**

Set up virtual office hours as a recurring meeting that the whole class can attend. If there is no “waiting room,” any student will be able to just “drop in.” The benefit is that there is a consistent schedule for any student to drop in and get help. Thus, if students have last-minute questions, they can attend your synchronous office hours to ask for assistance. One drawback is that there may be sessions in which no students show up and you are left waiting. On the other hand, you may also have multiple students drop in at the same time, and you will have to decide how to handle that influx while maintaining each student’s privacy.7

Suggested Platform: Zoom, MS Teams

**Option 2: Synchronous, “By Appointment” office hours**

Set up virtual office hours and then ask students to choose one of the meeting slots that you’ve made available. Typically, office hours are scheduled in 20-minute increments. If multiple students have the same concern, seek their permission to host them together.

Suggested Platform: Zoom, MS Teams

**Option 3: Asynchronous office hours**

Asynchronous office hours could be delivered through your online course, e.g. in a discussion board where students could post questions and receive answers that the entire class can access. The benefit to adding asynchronous office hours is that you can address FAQs, which could cut down on the amount of emails you receive with repeat questions. It could also help the entire class enter into a dialogue on the topic and lighten your workload by outsourcing some responsibility for responses to the rest of the class. While asynchronous office hours are useful in their flexibility, they should not necessarily replace at least some synchronous office hours.8

Suggested Platform: Canvas Discussion Boards

*Note: In Zoom, it is recommended to disable the” record meeting automatically” option while scheduling the meeting. Recording the meeting may transfer it automatically to the Panopto Recordings area of your course and be available for other students to view.*

*You may also use the “Waiting Room” with your Personal Meeting Room on Zoom. This will allow you to use the same meeting link for all of your office hour sessions throughout the semester, but to admit only one student at a time into a meeting for privacy.*

**Useful Links:**

* [University of Washington, Virtual Office Hours](https://www.education.uw.edu/technologycenter/zoom-resources-for-faculty/use-zoom-for-virtual-office-hours/)
* [Columbia University, Virtual Office Hours](https://ctl.columbia.edu/resources-and-technology/teaching-with-technology/teaching-online/office-hours/)