

**This document has been sent to faculty who completed the four-session FAS module on remote teaching. That module is required of all faculty who head courses.**

## **Options for Your Choice of Online Course Format**

The choice of how to structure the activities of the online version of your course is yours, subject to a few key constraints:

- Every student in your course should be expected to participate in 2-4 hours of synchronous interaction with you, your teaching staff, and/or their peers each week. A student watching a recording of a class session they did not attend does not count as synchronous interaction time.
- Students should be able to make progress toward their degree with robust curricular choices without having to attend classes in the middle of the night in their local time zone.
- Faculty and TFs weekly teaching time should be comparable to what would be spent in an on-campus semester.

### Online Course Format Options

Within these three constraints, there is substantial room for creativity. What's right for your course will depend on your pedagogical preferences, your class size, and the role of your course in the curriculum. The list of formats below will include something to fit most courses, but it is not exhaustive. Once you see how these models fit both the constraints and the catalog options, you can pick one or create your own variation.

Our handy dandy Course Format Wizard ([Links to an external site.](#)) uses diagnostic questions to help you narrow in on some good options for your course. We recommend that you use it together with this page of more in-depth descriptions to help you think about how to structure your teaching time and the 2-4 hours of synchronous time students are expected to spend weekly.

### The Traditional Class Model

- Class sessions are listed in the catalog and attendance is expected
- Class sessions count towards 2-4 hours of student synchronous time weekly

In this model the instructor holds regular class sessions that all students are expected to attend. These need not be two 75-minute classes, but they will likely make up a significant amount of the instructor's weekly teaching time as well as the students' synchronous interaction time. The rest of student interaction time might be spent in section, peer group activities, or office hours.

This option is good for courses for which there are other curricular options for students whose time zone is not compatible with the course meeting times. This is true for groups of courses/sections that are curricularly interchangeable like Expos, introductory math sections, Freshman Seminars, certain concentration tutorials, etc., or for elective courses.

One significant advantage to of this model is that, since class attendance is expected, you do not need to create alternative activities to replace the class session for students who cannot attend. (You will still need to record sessions so that they can be available in case a student is absent for usual reasons such as illness or a temporary Internet outage.)

#### The Alternative Session Model

- Two or more meeting times are listed with times in the catalog, students sign up for one
- Class sessions can be led by any members of the teaching team
- Class sessions count toward 2-4 hours of weekly synchronous time
- Instructor provides additional opportunities for interaction with students

In this model, students register for a class meeting time that they can attend. Since all students should have opportunities to interact with the instructor(s) of record, instructors should always provide alternative opportunities for interaction such as office hours.

This option is good for courses with highly interactive class meetings for which asynchronous participation is not a good substitute. It also works well in classes that are team-taught or have an experienced preceptor. One model is that the instructor of record leads one session and a co-instructor or preceptor leads the other. A variant of this model that works for courses with a single instructor is for the instructor to divide teaching time between two shortened class meeting times and move some in-class activities into asynchronous activities.

Examples of classes that would fit well in this category are be courses that are already taught in an active learning, flipped, team-based, problem-based, lab-based, case-based, or discussion-based format. This is also a good option for faculty who are able to invest time in pre-recording lectures, which frees up time to hold highly-interactive class sessions and/or to lead multiple sessions weekly.

#### The Flexible Live Lecture Model

- Instructor teaches class sessions at a fixed time. Students are encouraged, but not expected, to attend
- Because not all students can attend live, class sessions do NOT count toward 2-4 hours synchronous

- Class sessions are recorded and provided with interactive asynchronous learning activities
- 2-4 other hours of weekly synchronous time are expected of students
- Instructor offers other opportunities for interaction with students who cannot attend class

In this model, the instructor teaches live class sessions over Zoom and records them. Even though the live sessions are at a particular day/time, the course is open to students who cannot attend at that time. Because not all students can attend live, the course should expect at least two additional hours of synchronous student time weekly. Since the instructor is spending a significant amount of their teaching time in the live sessions, the additional 2 hours of synchronous times for students would most likely be spent in TF-led sections and peer-group activities.

This option has significant advantages and challenges. Teaching live will require a less daunting amount of preparation than pre-recording lectures and planning new live sessions. It also permits you to teach with a live audience, which can be particularly important if you already incorporate interaction with students into your teaching. A challenge of this choice is that recordings of full-length live class sessions may not work very well for the students who cannot attend. It will be important to identify techniques to make the asynchronous class experience interactive and engaging.

This option is good for courses for which the instructor prefers to teach live and where students watching the recording asynchronously with additional interactive activities is a good substitute for live attendance. The additional 2-4 hours of expected synchronous time can be made up of sections, student group work, TF office hours, and faculty office hours.

#### The Flex Model

- Students are assigned to attend a subset of class meetings and watch recordings of other class sessions.
- Class meetings count toward 2-4 hours synchronous time weekly.
- Class sessions are recorded and provided for all with interactive asynchronous learning activities.
- At least 2 hours of synchronous time weekly is expected of students in addition to the instructor-led sessions.

This model is based on the law school “panel” model in which a different subset of students are assigned to attend each class and may be asked to do additional preparation and/or a follow-up assignment. The instructor leads the live class sessions with the panel, producing a high-quality recorded discussion which other students watch asynchronously.

This model is good for highly-interactive classes in which the instructor could benefit from only having to manage a smaller number of students in class. Depending on the size of the course, panel size can vary as can the number of panel assignments for each student. It is also a good option for adapting courses for which there are not curricular alternatives. Since each student is “on panel” only some of the time, attendance at inconvenient times is only needed sometimes. It may also be possible to construct panels that take time zone into account so as to be able to move the time of those sessions to adapt to student location.

### The Tutorial Model

- Instructor arranges shorter meeting times with individual students or small groups of students, taking their time zones into account
- Class sessions count toward 2-4 hours synchronous time weekly
- The remainder of the 2-4 hours of synchronous time weekly is in TF-led or peer groups

In this model the instructor splits their time to allow weekly small group or individual meetings with all students. The sessions are shorter than an on-campus class session to manage total teaching time. Because there are multiple group or individual sessions, they can be scheduled to accommodate student time zones. To support class community and peer interaction, the remainder of synchronous time is spent in peer groups or TF-led activities. This model is good for small courses.

### How this Works in the Course Catalog

Practically speaking, this will be implemented by the registrar in the course catalog with one of the following variations in how courses are listed:

1. Expected attendance class meetings. Courses may be listed in the course catalog with a specified class meeting time for the whole class, as is typically done in an on-campus semester. This notifies all prospective students of the times at which they are expected to be present so that they may make their own choice as to whether they can productively attend class at that time. Once a student has registered, it is their responsibility to attend, not the responsibility of the course to provide an alternative session. Although some students may elect to take a course that meets between 10pm and 8am in their local time zone, the presumption is that the course is not a curricular option for those students. As a result, this class listing option should only be used for elective courses and courses with curricular alternatives.
2. Pre-scheduled section or small group meetings with expected attendance. Courses may be listed in the course catalog with specified section or small group meeting times among which students must select. By providing meeting times that are sufficiently spaced, students anywhere

in the world can take the course in their local time zone. Note that these scheduled meetings may be led by the instructor of record or by a TF; they do not need to be standard TF-led section meetings.

3. No pre-set times. Courses may be listed in the catalog without any specified meeting times. By not providing meeting times, the instructor commits to adapting course meetings to ensure 2-4 hours of synchronous interactive time weekly for every student at a reasonable time in their local time zone regardless of where they are located in the world.

A subtlety in the above options is that listed class times will often not account for the full 2-4 hours of student synchronous interaction time. Significant amounts of that weekly time may be spent in peer group meetings or in other types of interaction with teaching staff, such as office hours.

Questions? Ideas?

It's hard to imagine not having questions. We'll be discussing course formats and what this means for your course activities at the live session. In the meantime, ask questions in Slack.