



In this Issue: Successful Synchronous Strategies

- Using Synchronous Sessions: Learning in Real-time
- Synchronous Session Hack: Use Your Phone as a Document Camera
- USask Instructor Engages Students with "Escape Room" Learning Activities
- Get inspired! Share your synchronous success story
- Articles of Interest for Synchronous Online Learning
- DEU support and contact information

Using Synchronous Sessions: Learning in Real-time

In discussing online learning broadly with faculty, instructors, students, staff, and the public, it becomes evident very quickly that there are as many different interpretations of what it means or can look like as there are people to talk about it with. In higher education in particular, it is quite common for online learning to seem like it is an asynchronous (anywhere anytime) setting. Live real-time classes have existed in a variety of formats over the decades, from classes broadcast over television and radio networks, to closed network screens, and now through the use of web conferencing tools such as Zoom and Webex.

[This post includes just a few ideas for using synchronous strategies in your online class as a first step.](#)

Synchronous Session Hack: Use Your Phone as a Document Camera

There are times where a **hand-drawn sketch, diagram, or solution** might be the best way to illustrate something to your students, or walk with them through the steps of solving a new problem. The ideal option for doing this in synchronous video sessions would be to connect a dedicated **document camera** to your computer, and switch the video feed. But, what if you don't have access to one?



[This blog post will walk you through a quick alternative "hack" in order to use your smart phone as a document camera.](#)

USask Instructor Engages Students with "Escape Room" Learning Activities

This past year Dr. Michel Gravel, a faculty member in Chemistry in the College of Arts & Science, challenged his students by developing an "escape room" activity which combined WebEx breakout rooms and a variety of tools and options in Canvas.



"I think I may have had even more fun than them. The students and I definitely want to do it again."

In this DEU blog post we describe the learning activity in full and Dr. Gravel shares detailed instructions for you to set up your own escape room learning activities that are sure to engage your students in fun and learning.

[Find out more about creating an "escape room" learning activity in your class.](#)

Get inspired! Share your synchronous success story

We're starting a new **interactive component** to the DEU Digest this week and we need your great ideas to make it a success.

Share with us, and your fellow USask instructors, some of the best synchronous learning activities you used to engage students in learning over this past year.

[Follow this link to join the conversation and see what other USask Instructors are doing in their Successful Synchronous Sessions.](#)



Image source: [Interactive Content](#) CC BY via Flickr

Articles of Interest for Synchronous Online Learning

- [Bringing Out the Human in Synchronous and Asynchronous Media for Learning.](#) “This practical-focused chapter discusses the affordances of synchronous versus asynchronous technologies that can be used to make online learning feel more personal and human.”
- [Chapter 5: Effective Practices](#), in [Creating Online Learning Experiences](#). “One possible way to foster teaching presence is to schedule time for synchronous interactive sessions during your course. This could include virtual office hours, live sessions, unhangouts, or other ways for you to connect with your learners virtually ‘in person.’”
- [Chapter 6: CLASSES \(SYNCHRONOUS SESSIONS\)](#), in [REMOTE TEACHING: A PRACTICAL GUIDE WITH TOOLS, TIPS, AND TECHNIQUES](#). “In this chapter, we describe how to plan, facilitate, and wrap-up synchronous online sessions (i.e., classes).”

DEU support and contact information

The [Distance Education Unit](#) (DEU) works with departments, colleges, and schools to develop high-quality, engaging, and innovative online classes for diverse learners. As part of your long-term online strategy, we offer a full range of administrative supports for online class delivery both on and off campus.

DEU offers a wide range of support services in Development and Delivery:

- [Instructional Design for Distance and Online Course Developments](#) as well as,
- Administrative [Support for Distance and Online Class Delivery](#)

Our Instructional Design Team is always happy to share our experiences designing online learning activities and using learning technologies effectively in online or blended classrooms and even across an entire program. Our staff can help you with questions about,

- Full online course development support
- Customized program development templates
- Learning design strategies for a unified online program
- Hybrid, multi-access and blended learning designs
- Open textbook and OER developments
- H5P and other interactive learning design
- ePortfolios and implementation
- Assessments and exam strategies for online learning
- Academic Integrity online
- Copyright clearances, acquisitions and OER licensing
- Ensuring accessibility standards are being addressed
- Ed tech support before and during delivery
- Course quality reviews and recommendations
- Resource curation and dissemination
- Non-credit learning design

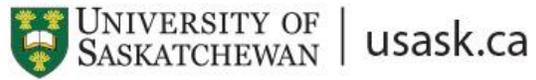
And much more. Contact us at deu.support@usask.ca to discuss your course or project.

Visit <https://sites.usask.ca/edtech/> for more helpful tips and tutorials as well as information on our support services and contact information.

If you wish to be added to the DEUD mailing list, please send your NSID to deu.support@usask.ca

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We acknowledge that the University of Saskatchewan's main campus is situated on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.