Considerations for Synchronous or Asynchronous Course Delivery

When designing your course for virtual instruction, there are several considerations regarding how to deliver course content to your students. Holding synchronous class meetings online via a live video platform, such as Zoom, can bring students and instructors together at regularly scheduled times, similar to the face-to-face environment. Alternatively, delivering content asynchronously, using prerecorded lectures, readings, discussion boards, etc., may provide flexibility for students and eliminate unnecessary barriers.

**Synchronous Meetings Work Well When:**
- You want to provide real-time information and answer pressing questions
- You want to encourage high levels of social engagement and interactivity
- You want real-time student discussion with faculty support; breakout rooms can work to encourage small group conversation
- You want to address content milestones in the course or make connections between modules
- You want to work on tricky material or in places where students are likely to get stuck
- You want to address issues that might lead to bigger problems down the road in student understanding or their ability to handle complex assignments

**Asynchronous Delivery Works Well When:**
- Many of the students in the class do not have access to a private, quiet place, as this may cause some difficulty in attending synchronous class meetings
- Learning is self-reflective in nature
- Content is provided in several formats, such as readings, videos, and asynchronous discussions
- You provide prerecorded lectures or other media for students to view on their own
- You are able to provide information and feedback to individual students regularly
- You want to sustain dialogue and collaboration over a lengthy period of time
**Keep in Mind:**

- Synchronous meetings do not need to be held every week. You may find that two or three times during the term is enough. Mixing synchronous and asynchronous course delivery benefits those students who do best in live class settings as well as those students who may do better accessing content on their own in ICON.
- Consider recording each live class session and posting it in ICON. This will help with review and provide access for those students who may have missed the live meeting. Remember that no HIPAA information can be recorded.
- Fully asynchronous courses can still be interactive. Discussion boards and other tools can provide alternative ways for students to communicate with each other and with the instructor.
- Consider whether most of your students are able to attend the class meeting at the scheduled time.
- It’s a good idea to offer alternatives to video if an issue arises during a live course session. For instance, you can enable students to access the session via phone.