Delivery and Engagement Modes for Each Course Element
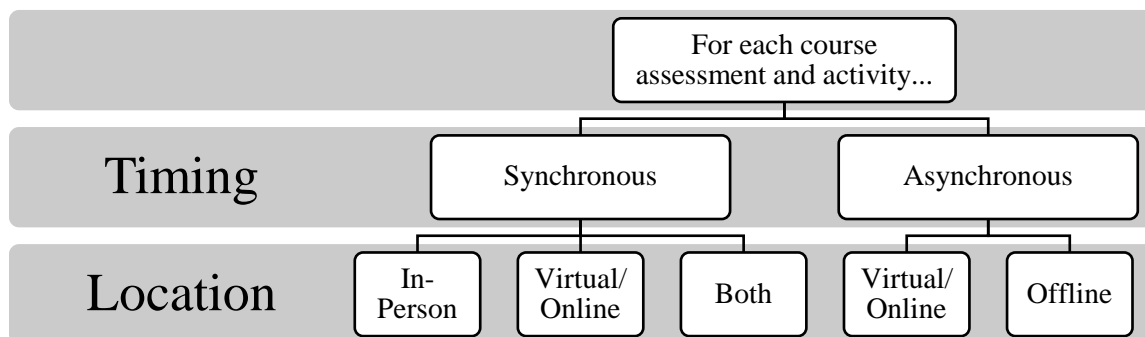
> (◎) **GOAL:** As you plan your course, consider how you might offer a variety of ways for students to engage with the course content and activities, with you, and with each other.

Whether the overall design of your course is blended, hybrid, flipped, hyflex, remote, or face-to-face, most courses offer students a variety of "engagement modes" (how students engage with activities, content, or assessments) or "delivery modes" (how these course elements are delivered to students).

We can think about engagement or delivery modes in terms of their:
→ **timing** (synchronous or asynchronous), and
→ **location** (in-person, virtual/online, offline, or a combination)

For each course assessment and activity...

Timing

Synchronous — Asynchronous

Location

In-Person | Virtual/Online | Both | Virtual/Online | Offline

Engagement and Delivery Modes

Engagement/ Delivery Mode	What is it?	Examples
Synchronous In-Person (SI)	Instructors and learners engage at the **same time** in the same physical location	Meeting in-person for a lesson, simulation, lab, tutorial, field trip, group meetings to complete collaborative activities
Synchronous Virtual (SV)	Instructors and learners engage at the **same time** in different locations	Meeting over a conferencing platform (e.g., Zoom, Teams), real-time use of a collaborative tool (e.g., Google Docs, Mentimeter)
Asynchronous Virtual (AV)	Instructors and learners engage at **different times** in the same virtual location or using the same tools	Viewing recorded lectures, videos, podcasts, online modules in CourseLink, contributing to online documents or discussions on their own time (documents may be collaborative), completing surveys/polls, quizzes
Asynchronous Offline (AO)	Instructors and learners engage at **different times** without the use of technology	Completing readings, demonstration kits, practicing skills independently (e.g., music, art), visiting physical locations to gather data (e.g., parks, ponds)

Blended, Hybrid, and HyFlex course designs typically use all four engagement/delivery modes.

Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Modes: Advantages and Disadvantages

	Synchronous	**Asynchronous**
Ideal for	• Activities requiring real-time feedback or clarification to keep students on track • Building community through real-time interaction • Support and feedback (e.g. office hours and check-in meetings with student group)	• Most content delivery (e.g. readings, videos, problems, assessments) • Independent learning activities requiring critical thinking, analysis, reflection, or practice • Collaborative learning activities that require students to work and interact over a period of time
Advantages	• Real-time interaction between students and instructors, which can create a sense of community and social support • Immediate exchanges of information, questions, and feedback between students and instructors • Clarify misconceptions in real-time • Social & structured motivation & discipline • Limited technological barriers	• Flexible and accessible • Learning autonomy and agency (e.g. self-paced learning; allows students to re-read or re-watch content to clarify their understanding) • Eliminates barriers (location/time/communication) • Time for students to engage in critical thinking, reflection, practice, and refining their contributions to class activities • Generates an archive of information that students can return to throughout the semester
Disadvantages	• Less flexible/accessible (e.g. students' other responsibilities and circumstances may prevent them from attending or engaging; increase barriers) • Difficult to maintain student attention if effective opportunities for active engagement and participation are not integrated • Less autonomy and agency	• Potential for feelings of isolation if there is a lack of opportunity to interact with the instructor and peers • Feedback can be delayed (assessments, clarifications) • Can cause barriers (e.g. technology) • Requires more self-directed learning skills from students, and more guidance, structure, and support from instructors (see our resource on supporting students' self-directed learning in the remote environment) • Isolation and possible lack of social engagement • No immediate engagement (peers & instructor)

From Balancing Synchronous and Asynchronous Teaching: Effective Strategies for Enhancing Flexibility without Losing Student Engagement, Office of Teaching and Learning, University of Guelph

Finding Balance Across Different Engagement Modes
The purposeful fusion and balance of different delivery/engagement modes across course elements is key to creating a meaningful and effective learning experience for students.

Questions that may guide your decision making:
→ What would be the ideal use of in-person time to support students' achievement of the learning outcomes? What learning activities would best lend themselves to an online format?
→ What combination of online and in-person activities would help students practice and meet the learning outcomes? How will I balance course activities across different timings and locations in a way that provides consistency and predictability in the course structure and flow?

For more questions and planning resources, see **Worksheet 2: Where and How? Deciding on the Engagement/Delivery Mode for Each Course Element** and How should I offer this course? The Course Delivery Decision Model.

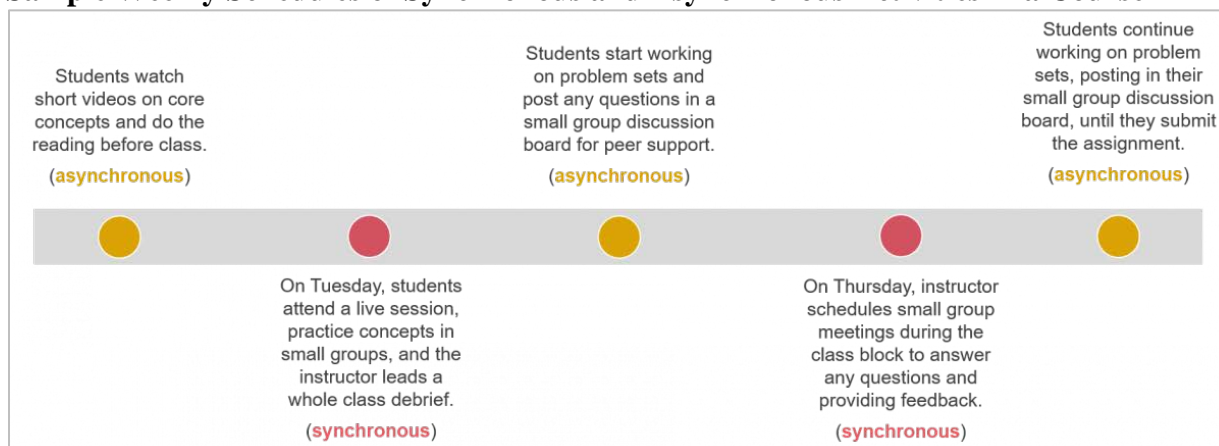**Sample Weekly Schedules of Synchronous and Asynchronous Activities in a Course**

Image from: https://www.umass.edu/ctl/how-do-i-balance-synchronous-and-asynchronous-learning