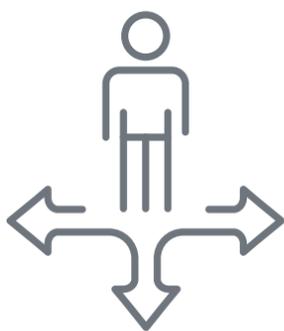# FACILITATE LIVE DISCUSSIONS

SYNCHRONICITY

Integrated Synchronous Online Learning Experiences
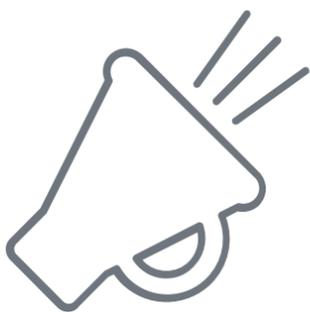
Schedule early.

At the beginning of the course, or even 1-2 weeks before the class starts, announce the dates and times that students will be given the **option** to participate in synchronous discussion sessions using course-embedded discussion topics and prompts. Communicating the dates and times early allows students time to adjust their work or personal conflicts to attend the live session(s).

Offer a second option.

Live sessions should be optional for students to attend unless live sessions are already built into course or program expectations. Students do not attend live sessions should be given access to audio and video recording(s) of the live session(s) and should be expected to follow-through with traditional text-based discussion expectations.

Promote the live session.

Don't forget to advertise the live discussion sessions. Students are more likely to attend the optional live discussion if you sell them on the value of the experience. Why should they attend? Common motivators include discussion credit (students that participate in the live discussion do not need to post in the text-based forum), social interaction, and immediate feedback.

Plan preparation activities.

Preparation activities can help students develop meaningful questions and may result in richer discussions. Example of module flow: read -> reflect -> live discussion. Students complete assigned readings, submit private reflections using the assignments tool, and end the module by participating in the live discussion session **or** in the traditional, text-based discussion forum for discussion credit.

Consider breakout rooms.

Zoom videoconferencing gives you the option to use breakout rooms for large class sizes. The breakout tool allows you to take a large group discussion and assign students to smaller groups, send them to breakouts, and then bring the large group back together all within the same live discussion. Visit https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us for tutorials on managing Zoom breakout rooms.