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## Hold Virtual Group Office Hours

Since many online courses are asynchronous and can sometimes be isolating, virtual office hours are a good way to give students an opportunity to connect with you and the other students to create a supportive learning environment (Nilson & Goodson, 2018). Videoconferencing platforms, such as Zoom and Google Hangouts, allow students to communicate by phone, webcam, or in a chat room. Instructors can share their screen as they explain ideas, work through example problems, and answer questions. To accommodate the schedules of as many students as possible, offer virtual office hours a couple of times per week. These platforms also provide an option to record the session for students who are not able to attend any of the available sessions.

Below are a few ways to use virtual group office hours.

- **Q & A before a test or assignment.** Start with a short overview of the upcoming test or assignment. Then allow students to ask questions using voice, video, or chat.
- **Extra help.** After introducing new content that is particularly challenging, offer an extra-help session to provide students with an opportunity to work through practice exercises or problems and ask questions.
- **Open drop-in.** Let students know that you will be available in your virtual conference room for a set period of time and invite them to drop in at any point to meet with you. This informal meeting opportunity may encourage students who want to talk to you but may not feel it is important enough to set up an appointment. If several students come around the same time, you can engage in an informal group discussion to help foster a sense of connection among the students and with you.