

Office Hours for Online Courses

Traditional on-campus office hours approaches do not work well for most Ecampus students. Consider that:

- One in four OSU students is an Ecampus student, taking all of their classes online.
- Over 70% of these students live outside of Oregon and are not able to come to campus to attend office hours.
- The vast majority of Ecampus students are working adults who complete coursework in the evenings and on weekends, outside of regular business hours.

Ecampus students **do** need to ask questions about course concepts, get clarification on assignments, seek a personal connection or mentorship from instructional faculty, and communicate personal or private information relating to their academic progress. The following best practices will help you meet the needs of their Ecampus students.

Best Practices

1. **Re-brand “office hours” to be less intimidating and more welcoming**, such as labeling them *Homework Help*, *Q&A Session*, or *Happy Hour*.
2. **Be flexible with scheduling**. Rather than schedule set office hours each week, make at least some of your office hours available by appointment to accommodate students with varying work schedules and from different time zones. Include evenings and weekend hours on occasion if possible. Don't assume that students will know they can make an appointment if you haven't explicitly said they can, too.
3. **Encourage students to attend**. Post announcements, mention office hours in discussion posts, class lectures, and assignment feedback. (*Follow up with me in office hours if this isn't clear!*)
4. **Use the tools you and your students are comfortable with**, such as those with university-wide support and available at no cost (Zoom, Microsoft Teams), or those you and your students are already using for other purposes (cell phone calls, text messages). A few helpful features to use:
 - a. Zoom meetings allow face-to-face video conferencing and can be set up with a waiting room so that private conversations are not interrupted.
 - b. Zoom and Teams allow for group conference calls, which can help faculty meet with multiple students at once – saving time, and allowing students to collaborate.
 - c. Zoom also allows you to record meetings or parts of meetings, enabling you to record an explanation of a concept or assignment that can be shared with other students or the whole class. (*Recording only you is best to enable reuse; otherwise, be sure to request student permission before recording and posting. Also, if you have a student with DAS accommodations for captioning, be sure to alert DAS of this video addition.*)
 - d. Zoom and Teams allow for audio-only calls, for faculty or students with limited bandwidth or who may desire more privacy.

e. Teams, Slack, and text messaging allow for asynchronous back-and-forth communication, including file sharing.

5. **To be equitable, solicit questions from students who can't attend, and provide a recording with answers.** Questions can be captured through a Canvas survey, Google Form, etc.

Most students say instructor/student interaction is the single most important factor affecting their satisfaction with the learning experience and their success in your course.

Your availability in office hours matters! Not everyone will take advantage of office hours, but our students say they feel reassured knowing that they can meet with you if needed.

Contact us at ecampusfacultysupport@oregonstate.edu if you have questions about how to implement these best practices.