Delivering Effective Asynchronous Lectures

Recorded lecture videos do not need to be highly produced or beautifully designed to be effective. But neither can they simply reproduce our imagined archetype of a 50-minute in-person talk. Attention to 3 areas—setup, video length, and slides—can help you create asynchronous lectures that facilitate student learning, and that smooth the process of transitioning to remote instruction.

Setup
Make sure you have the right equipment at your disposal and that your setting is conducive to maintaining your concentration and your students' attention.

- **Equipment:** Install a desktop recorder app like Panopto or Screencast-O-Matic. Have a webcam and microphone, and make sure they work. If available, wear a headset or earbuds with an integrated mic to ensure the clearest sound.
- **Setting:** Record in a space where you will not be disturbed and can avoid distracting background noise. Minimize visual distractions in the background, avoid busy or patterned clothing, and adjust your webcam so you are looking at it straight on.
- **Lighting:** Make sure your space is bright and evenly lit. Backlighting can cast you in shadow and make you difficult to see. High contrast created by side lighting displays poorly on a webcam.

Length and Structure
Research shows (PDF) that even in an in-person classroom, students' attention to lectures diminishes after about 15 minutes. And a 2015 survey (PDF) of 1,200 educators and students found that the optimal length for recorded lectures is no more than 10 minutes. Because of this, **the accepted best practice for online education is to segment longer lectures into short chunks**, recording and uploading each chunk separately.

MEHP Online recommends that recorded lecture segments 1) each develop 1 key point; 2) include a brief introduction that previews the content of the segment; and 3) include a conclusion that connects the segment to larger course themes.

Slides
Many desktop recording apps allow you to include slide presentations with your lectures. To make sure your slides encourage comprehension rather than causing distraction:

- **Follow the 1/6/6 rule:** Each slide should have only 1 idea, no more than 6 bullet points, and no more than 6 words per bullet.
- **Use large fonts:** Make sure your text is readable even in a small browser window or on a smartphone.
- **Use white space:** Reduce the density of your slides to make them easier to read and convey the importance of the text that *is* on the slide.
- **Proofread:** Errors on slides distract from learning and make the content difficult to comprehend.

If you have questions about best practices for asynchronous video lectures, contact the MEHP Online team.