Virtual Office Hours

There’s something about knowing that you, the instructor, will be there. Available and ready to assist with a student’s question or difficulties. It’s part of the essence of the student-instructor relationship and its one reason why instructors hold regular office hours.

This need is no less essential in an online course. In fact, it may be more critical if an instructor’s course has an isolated structure with few to no collaborative student activities because many, perhaps most students benefit from interacting with others as part of learning. Online instructors should provide the equivalent of office hours – virtual office hours - to provide students an opportunity to meet for a live (i.e. synchronous) conversation to handle questions and issues. It also helps a student establish a connection with you – the instructor.

Virtual office hours don’t have to be high-tech, but high-tech options are available, and multimedia offers a multi-sensorial interaction. Technical options for virtual office hours include: telephone, Blackboard Chat, Elluminate, Lync, and Adobe Connect. You can find more information about technical options for enabling office hours in your online course here: Virtual Office Hours Tools.

A few guidelines for virtual office hours:
• Set and keep defined hours.
• Post the hours in your online course. There is a Faculty Info section in the LCB template specifically for that purpose.
• Vary the hours that you set. Tue and Thu from 1-2 probably doesn’t work for most of your online students who are at work during normal business hours. Give strong consideration to carving out time during an evening to be available for virtual office hours.

Tip: If you’d like to use Adobe Connect for virtual office hours, set up a practice session with one of the online learning support team members at LCB.