Inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment practice

Inclusive practice is an approach to teaching, learning and assessment that promotes inclusive education, where all students have equitable access to learning, feel valued, and are supported in their studies – regardless of their individual preferences, abilities, disabilities, or socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. At its core, inclusive practice is about creating learning environments that respect and celebrate diversity, while actively removing barriers to participation and achievement in learning.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework which can be used to enhance inclusive education practices. While UDL practices are essential for some, they benefit all students. Adopting UDL is an effective way to adapt course design to be more inclusive and accessible.

CAST UDL Guidelines 3.0

CAST's UDL Guidelines (2024) were developed by a multidisciplinary team, rooted in the learning science with foundation in pedagogical, neuroscience, and practice. It conveys UDL in an accessible manner, with three pillars, each of which has three guidelines, each of which has multiple considerations for action.

1. **Multiple means of engagement**: the 'why' of learning, focuses on student engagement with learning tasks with aim to help learner become more motivated in their learning.

2. **Multiple means of representation**: the 'what' of learning, focuses on providing learners with choice around their learning with the aim to provide information in multiple formats for the learner to engage with.

3. **Multiple means of action and expression**: the 'how' of learning, focuses on ensuring learners can navigate the learning environments and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

Implementation of UDL

There is no one way to approach embedding inclusive practices into your course. And approachable way to get started is using CAST's UDL Guidelines provide a structured way to consider, add, and alter aspects of your course which increase inclusivity. Instead of aiming for a single, universally perfect learning experience (which is unattainable), focus on one change at a time in a plus-one thinking approach. Some ideas:

- Pick one principle from the CAST UDL Guidelines, and focus on one of the considerations. Read through strategies on the consideration webpage (e.g. Consideration 1.1), and adapt for what suits your course context.

- Target the low hanging fruit in your course that are easy and approachable changes to enact.

Low hanging fruit for UDL implementation

Means of Engagement

- Build in more collaborative discussion into class time.
- Use students' preferred names and inclusive language that is respectful and promotes the acceptance and value of all people.
- Encourage participation with options for anonymity, for example, using Padlet to collect individual ideas that can inform group activities.
- Walk around your teaching space and talk to as many students as possible.
- Give students opportunities to be heard in class. Encourage contribution or responses from all students. Avoid relying on a small number of students.
- Provide feedback beyond correct responses. Model thinking processes that lead to incorrect or flawed responses, and subsequent learning.

Means of Representation

- Use visually accessible fonts like Verdana or Arial. Avoid fonts that are stylised, narrow, condensed, and light. If typesetting math in LaTeX or Mathematica, consider using Luciole math.
- Use visually accessible colours (dark text on light background or vice versa). Use a contrast checker to test. Use colour palettes accessible for colour blindness.
- Use visually accessible layouts with headings, spacing between paragraphs, dots points lists, and contrast between background and images.
- Provide class notes in multiple formats (PDF, Word, digital and print formats) or in an easily adaptable format (Word, Markdown) on Bb. Consider uploading any notes that were annotated during class, post-session.
- Ensure captions are enabled on video resources that you create.
- Clarify language, symbols and terminology, including mathematical equations by modelling use in explanations. Use directional language when referring to items on a screen to draw attention.
- Make connections between any assumed prior knowledge and new knowledge in the course explicit throughout the semester. Provide resources or support that can help students fill any gaps.

Means of Action & Expression

- Set the expectations for how to be successful in learning in the course in Week 1. Include these on Bb so they are accessible throughout semester.
- In Bb, provide direct links to activities, assessment or resources for each week.
- Offer assessment options where the best x out of y tasks that count to final marks (for example, best 8 out of 10 quizzes or best 3 out of 4 worksheets). This provides flexibility if a student is ill or absent during semester (and fewer extensions).
- Provide a clear pathway(s) for students to communicate with the course co-ordinator and teaching team so that students to ask questions. Ed Discussion (Bb) is an excellent option.
- Provide access to digital resources or tools that are accessible on campus to include students who may have limited access when off campus.

Additional resources and acknowledgements

- Low hanging fruit examples adapted from the UQ inclusive education team
- CAST UDL Guidelines 3.0 Graphic Organiser
- ITaLI: Inclusive practice
- Self-paced module: Designing effective and inclusive learning environments at UQ
- UQ Library: Create accessible content guide
- Rossi, V. (2023). Inclusive learning design in higher education: a practical guide to creating equitable learning experiences. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. And companion website
- UDL in Tertiary Education Plus-One Pledge
- Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) newsletter

Contact the EAIT Learning Enhancement Team let@eait.uq.edu.au.