## Develop an Inclusive Course design with Assessments

Inclusive course design along with assessments provides the opportunity to take into account the cognitive load of students as well as address the diverse learning abilities within the classroom. Here we have course design and assessment recommendations to help you the instructor develop an inclusive course.

Course design: [Considerations](#_Important_Considerations_When) - [Content](#_Content_Considerations_<h3>) - [Structure](#_Course_Structure_Recommendations<h3) | Assessments: [Assignments](#_Assignments<h3>) - [Test/Quizzes/Exams](#_Tests/Quizzes/Exams_<h3>) - [Group Assessments](#_Group_Assessments_<h3>) | [Resources](#_Resources_<h2>)

## Inclusive Course Design

### Important Considerations When Designing a Course

Review the types of things you should consider when designing your course to be inclusive.

**Anticipate** that your students will have diverse characteristics, including that they:

* cannot see (e.g., are blind or have low vision);
* have difficulty reading or writing (e.g., learning disabilities such as dyslexia);
* have difficulty with typing, handwriting, tor handling a mouse (e.g., fine motor impairments);
* have difficulty hearing (e.g., are Deaf or hard of hearing)
* have difficulty moving around (e.g., mobility impairment); and
* use smartphones, tablets, or other mobile devices, which have a variety of screen sizes, and use gestures or other user interfaces to interact with their devices and access content.

**Do not assume** that students have a wide range of technology skills and varying levels of access to technology

* Try to minimize the technology skills needed to access the course
* Provide specific instructions about how to navigate the course management system and required software and apps
* Offer students resources to develop necessary technology skills such as:
	+ IT training at your institution. For example - [IT Training at Concordia University](https://www.concordia.ca/it/training.html)
	+ YouTube demos about how to use specific software

### Content Recommendations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Provide a video and instructions telling students how to navigate your course. |
| 2 | Use simple page structure that is consistent from page to page. |
| 3 | Make it as easy as possible to find content and assignment instructions, and to follow the schedule. |
| 4 | Break up content with subheadings and bulleted lists. |
| 5 | Use descriptive wording for hyperlink text (e.g., “chapter one” rather than “click here”) and make sure links are clearly identifiable as links. |
| 6 | Post instructor-created course content within course management system content pages in a text-based and structured format (e.g., HTML and Microsoft Word).* If a student requests a PDF, upload it only as a secondary source of information. Keep in mind - PDFs may not be accessible to students who us screen readers and text-to-speech software or apps.
 |
| 7 | Create a course glossary to define terms that students may find difficult to understand. |
| 8 | Make examples and assignments relevant to students with a wide variety of interests and backgrounds (e.g., gender, race, abilities, and culture). |

### Course Structure Recommendations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Provide resources or materials equivalent to any materials that cannot be made accessible to learners with various learning challenges. |
| 2 | Allow students to work in pairs in activities (e.g., labs) where physical effort may disadvantage someone with a disability. |
| 3 | Ask students for mid-semester feedback to improve the quality of the course and identify any specific problems they are experiencing. |
| 4 | Provide options for learning by presenting content in multiple ways (e.g., text, video, audio, and/or image format). |
| 5 | Post teaching materials before class so that students who would like to review the material before class or modify the format to accommodate for a disability can do so. |
| 6 | Whenever possible use [EPUB](https://docs.fileformat.com/ebook/epub/), Word or PowerPoint formats for course material, to increase students’ ability to use their assistive technology. |

## Inclusive Assessments

Assessments includes assignments, test/quizzes/exams and group assessments.

### General tips

* Use a variety of types of assessments, rather than only two or three high-stakes tests
* When grading class participation or engagement, allow many different options to accommodate students’ different comfort levels and preferences
* Use formative and summative assessments

### Assignments

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Design and structure** | 1 | Provide students with a choice of assignment topic and format if possible* Examples of assignment formats include: Portfolios, Videos, Blogs, Podcasts, Essays, Group projects
* If you are unsure what format options to include, consider asking students for suggestions
 |
| 2 | Share sample assignments from former students as models |
| 3 | Make sure that assignment instructions are clear and easy to understand |
| 4 | Include assignments that require students to work alone and in groups |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Time management**  | 1 | Provide ample time for the completion of assignments. * For example - Determine how much time would be required for a typical student to complete the assignment and add a “buffer” to address various contingencies.
 |
| 2 | Design assignments to minimize nonessential tasks (e.g., learning irrelevant software just to access information) or nonessential physical travel. |
| 3 | Allow for flexibility in the due dates of assignments. * For example - Provide a ‘slip day’ for assignments - A slip day allows students to submit one assignment after the due date without penalty. Allow students to choose which assignment they will apply the slip day to.
 |
| 4 | Post assignment instructions early in the semester, so students can start working on them in advance. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Grading and evaluation** | 1 | Provide students with a checklist of criteria that will be used to evaluate the quality of their work |
| 2 | For writing assignments, allow for drafts and revisions; consider using peer review |
| 3 | Use some ungraded assignments or those worth a small percentage of students’ grades (e.g. assignments worth 5%) |
| 4 | Offer early and frequent assessments that build skills for other assignments that students must submit later in the course |
| 5 | Break writing assignments or projects into smaller pieces assigned across the semester* Provide constructive feedback and support for each piece
 |

### Tests/Quizzes/Exams

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Preparing students  | 1 | Share sample test questions and answers with students. |
| 2 | Have a discussion with students about how to study for course exams. |
| 3 | Provide students with study guides that indicate: * What information students are expected to know
* How they will be expected to demonstrate their knowledge
 |
| 4 | Help decrease students’ test anxiety by giving them as much relevant information as possible about the test content and format, including: * the number and format of questions (e.g., essays, multiple choice, true-or-false)
* the relative point value of test questions
* the amount of time allowed to complete exam
* test-taking aids that students are allowed to use (e.g., calculators, dictionaries)
 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Alternative designs** | 1 | Use different types of items on tests (e.g., multiple choice, short answer, true-and-false, fill-in-the-blank, and crossword puzzles) |
| 2 | Incorporate writing into multiple choice or true-and-false questions by giving students the option or requiring them to write a justification for their answers |
| 3 | Include test questions that relate to current events or that ask students to apply course concepts to contemporary, real-life situations |
| 4 | Create more than one version of tests and exams to enable make-up options * Provide an opportunity to make up a missed midterm rather than adding those marks to the final exam
 |
| **5** | Draw test questions from a variety of informational sources (e.g., lectures, assigned readings, and videos viewed in class)   |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Grading and time management** | **1** | Avoid final exams worth more than 30%-35%, so that the majority of students’ final grade is not determined by how they perform on one test |
| **2** | Allow all students extended time on tests, unless speed is an essential course competency. |
| **3** | For online quizzes and tests adjust the time limits according to students’ disability related accommodations  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Providing and Gathering feedback** | **1** | Using Moodle, give students feedback on ungraded quizzes and allow multiple opportunities to answer questions correctly  |
| **2** | Assess the quality of exams by giving students a post-exam evaluation form, including questions such as: * Was there anything on the exam that you did not expect to see?
* Which questions or parts of the exam did you find to be most challenging? Least challenging?
* Do you think your test grade was what you deserved for the amount time and effort you put into studying for the test?
 |

### Group Assessments

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Clarify expectations about how individual contributions to group work are going to be assessed (e.g., peer evaluation forum) |
| 2 | Make the necessary adjustments to ensure that all group members have an equitable opportunity to contribute* This is especially important for groups with students with disabilities, including those with mental health related disabilities
 |
| 3 | When grading group discussions, make sure that adjustments are made to ensure that students with communication difficulties have an equal opportunity to contribute* For example, allowing students to contribute by speaking in class, writing in a discussion forum projected on a screen, or via a social media chat forum
 |

## Resources

### Resources and videos for Inclusive Course design

Burgstahler, S. (n.d.). *A tutorial for making online learning accessible to students with disabilities*. DO-IT. <https://www.washington.edu/doit/tutorial-making-online-learning-accessible-students-disabilities>

Center for Teaching Excellence. (n.d.). *Universal design: Course design*. University of Waterloo. <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/planning-courses-and-assignments/universal-design-course-design>

The DO-IT Center. (2017, October 3). *20 tips for instructors about making online learning courses accessible* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_KBhUORLB20>

University of Guelph. (n.d.). *Universal instructional design (UID): A faculty workbook*. <https://opened.uoguelph.ca/instructor-resources/resources/uid-workbook-FTF.pdf>

### Resources for Inclusive Assessments

Cuseo, J. (2015). Effective Culturally-inclusive assessment of student learning and academic performance. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.4115.5281>

Kenyon, A. (2018, November 2). Best practices for inclusive assessment. *Duke Learning Innovation*. <https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/blog/2018/11/inclusive-assessment/>

Ryerson University. (n.d.). *Tips for inclusive teaching*. [https://www.ryerson.ca/accessibility/guides-resources/teaching/#checklist](https://www.ryerson.ca/accessibility/guides-resources/teaching/%23checklist)

Tufts – Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. (n.d.). *What are inclusive assessment practices?* <https://provost.tufts.edu/celt/inclusive-assessment/>

University of New South Wales. (2021, June 13). *Assessing inclusively: Assessment as a learning toolkit*. <https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/upload-files/assess-inclusively_1.pdf>

**Authors**: Mary Jorgensen, Susie Wileman, Catherine Fichten, Alice Havel, Maegan Harvison, Olivia Ruffolo, Rosie Arcuri, Lorraine Chiarelli

**How to reference**: Jorgensen, M., Wileman, S., Fichten, C., Havel, A., Harvison, M., Ruffolo, O., Arcuri, R., & Chiarelli, L. (2021, September 24). Develop an inclusive course design with assessments. Adaptech Research Network, E-Access Concordia.