

Introduction to Universal Instructional Design (UID) at the University of Guelph

What is UID?

- Universal Instructional Design (UID) is a process that involves considering the potential needs of all learners when designing and delivering instruction.
- UID means identifying and eliminating unnecessary barriers to teaching and learning while maintaining academic rigour.
- UID evolved from the concept of universal design in the physical world, where domains such as architecture and industrial design have identified key goals for their products, including flexibility, consistency, accessibility, explicitness, and supportiveness. UID applies these very same principles to teaching and learning.
- UID is about truly universal thinking – it goes beyond just accessibility to reflecting on how to maximize learning for students of all backgrounds and learner preferences while minimizing the need for special accommodations.

Why do UID?

- It's consistent with and promotes achievement of the University's guiding principle of learner-centredness, as well as our learning objectives.
- It's consistent with universally recognized principles of good teaching (e.g., see Chickering & Gamson), which have been proven to enhance learning for all students.
- It's been shown to create conditions conducive for learning (see UID project research report).
- It helps us meet the spirit of emerging legislation on accessibility.
- It reduces the need for special accommodations for our learners, thereby contributing to a more equitable, inclusive environment while reducing time spent by students, instructors and staff to seek and support these accommodations.

How do I apply UID?¹

The Seven Principles of UID describe how instructional materials and activities should: 1) be accessible and fair, 2) be flexible, 3) be straightforward and consistent and, 4) be explicit, and how the learning environment should 5) be supportive, 6) minimize unnecessary physical effort, and 7) accommodate students and multiple teaching methods.

The following is a summary of ways that UID can be applied to your course:

- **Delivery Methods:** Use a variety of delivery methods and learning approaches, including lecture, discussion, hands-on activities, projects, cases, internet-based interaction, etc. Make sure each is clear and accessible to students with a wide range of abilities, backgrounds, and previous experiences.
- **Learning Methods:** Make print materials available in electronic format. Provide text descriptions of graphics presented on web pages. Use PowerPoint to make presentations legible in large spaces. Use captioned videotapes. Provide outlines in advance to allow students to prepare for the topic to be presented. Create printed and web-based materials in simple, intuitive, and consistent formats.

- **Interaction:** Encourage different ways for students to interact with each other and with you. This may include in-class questions and discussion, group work, and Internet-based communications.
- **Feedback:** Provide effective prompting during an activity and feedback after the assignment is complete. Use feedback to help correct errors and misconceptions. Allow opportunities for self-assessment. Ensure that web or CD-ROM-based learning tools provide proper feedback for both navigation and learning.
- **Assessment/Demonstration of Knowledge:** Ensure that students' opportunity to demonstrate knowledge is frequent and if possible, flexible. Consider options besides tests and papers for demonstrating knowledge, such as group work, demonstrations, portfolios, and presentations.
- **Physical Effort and Access:** Ensure that classrooms, labs, and field work are accessible to individuals with a wide range of physical abilities. Make sure equipment and activities minimize sustained physical effort, and accommodate people with different physical abilities (e.g., something as basic as left-handedness). Assure the safety of all students. Minimize the need for unnecessary physical travel by making materials available or allowing them to be submitted electronically.

Where can I get more information?

Online Resources <http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/UID>

Contact the appropriate area of TSS for help applying UID:

- Peter Wolf (pwolf@uoguelph.ca), ID Group, ext.52468, for instructional support
- Aldo Caputo (acaputo@uoguelph.ca), LTCi, ext.52936, for technology-based support
- Steve Borho (sborho@uoguelph.ca), CTS, ext.52956, for learning space design

References

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Strategic Planning Commission to the President (June 1995) *Making Change: The Strategic Plan for the University of Guelph*.

Footnotes

1. Adapted from Burgstahler