

I Develop My Course

Are you designing a new course or rethinking an existing one?

Designing your course with Accessible Educationⁱ in mind can have benefits for all your students, including learners from a variety of backgrounds, abilities and learning styles.

There is no single way to teach. Research on best practices in teaching and learning shows that people learn in a variety of ways; using different instructional methods helps meet the needs of the greatest number of learnersⁱⁱ.

When you design your course accessibly, you anticipate the needs of diverse learners and ensure that all learners are successful.

What is Accessible Education?

Accessible Education is the process of designing your courses and developing your teaching style to meet the needs of your learners from a variety of backgrounds, abilities and learning styles. It takes into account many student characteristics within the student body, including ethnic backgrounds, race, abilities, disabilities, age, gender, language abilities and learning styles.

You can apply Accessible Education to all aspects of instruction (e.g. course delivery methods, physical spaces, information resources, technology, personal interactions with students, and evaluation and assessment)ⁱⁱⁱ.

What are some of the best practices in Accessible Education?

- Identify and clearly express the essential course content
- Recognize there is flexibility, or multiple ways that students can express understanding of the essential course content
- Present core material through a variety of mediums: lectures, readings, hand-on activities, visuals
- Choose course materials that can be accessed and used by all students (e.g. digital textbooks and readings that can be accessed on multiple devices and computer programs and can easily be converted into other electronic formats, captioned videos and audio files with transcripts)
- Make course materials (e.g. notes, PowerPoint slides, descriptions of assignments, syllabi) available online in accessible formats for all students
- Provide students with clear expectations of course requirements and feedback on assignments
- Design long-term course projects or assignments so that students have the option of handing in and getting feedback on components prior to delivering and integrating the final product
- Use a variety of assessment methods, such as exams, presentations, papers, etc. There may be more than one appropriate way to meet and measure learning objectives.
- Include an accessibility statement as part of your syllabus
- Promote interaction and collaboration among students, e.g. help students set up study groups or set up an accessible on-line forum for students to collaborate, share and conduct peer-evaluation of each other's work, either formally or informally
- Consult with your colleagues and experts at [Open Learning and Educational Support](#) on best practices that might work best for you and your courses

Introduction to Accessible Education

Getting Started

To get started, consider using the timeline below to ensure that you address the accessibility of your course materials in proactive manner. You can also consult with a curriculum developer or education specialist at [Open Learning and Educational Support](#), as well as staff at the [Centre for Students with Disabilities](#).

Timeline for the Preparation of Accessible Course Learning Materials

Two months before the start of the course:

Review Multimedia Materials

- Check course video to ensure that it is captioned. If it isn't, look for an equivalent video resource that includes captions. If you can't find any, contact [Library Accessibility Services](#) as soon as possible to investigate captioning the video.
- Ensure that transcripts are available for audio material such as podcasts. If you need to create transcripts, contact [Library Accessibility Services](#).
- Check the accessibility of on-line or computer-based learning tools used in your course, or ask publisher or company representatives regarding their accessibility. If they are not accessible, ask the representative about their plan for addressing the accessibility of their tools.

Select a Textbook

- Choose a course textbook if you're planning to use one. This is important even if an instructor has not been selected for the course. It takes up to 8 weeks at the [Library Accessibility Services](#) to create alternate formats for textbooks that are not in accessible format.
- If a potential textbook comes with access to web-based information and activities, ask the publisher's representative about the accessibility of these resources. Make it clear to the representative that the accessibility is an important consideration in your choice of a textbook.

One month before the start of the course:

Choose Required Readings

- Know which chapters you're going to assign from a required textbook as well as the order in which you will be using the chapters.
- Know which readings you're going to assign via [CourseLink](#) or [Library Reserve](#), as well as the order in which you will be using them.

Accessibility of CourseLink and E-Reserve Readings

- Assess the accessibility of any readings you're planning to place on [CourseLink](#) or [Library E-Reserve](#). See the tip sheet [Using Word Documents and/or PDFs](#) for more information or contact the [Open Learning and Educational Support](#).
- [Library E-Learning and Reserve](#) can help with ensuring that your readings are both accessible and copyright compliant.

Course Reader Materials

- If you're providing copies of readings for a course reader, ensure that the readings are clearly and carefully photocopied. The pages should be straight and free of underlining and annotations and the shadow in the binding should not touch the text.
- Consider using [Library E-Learning and Reserve](#) to help you switch from a course reader to posting digital copies of your readings on [CourseLink](#) or [Library E-Reserve](#).

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Two weeks before the start of the course:

Lecture Slides

- Ensure that your course lecture slides are accessible - see the tip sheet **Using PowerPoint**, or contact [Open Learning and Educational Support](#) for more information.
- Be prepared to share the slides in PowerPoint as well as PDF format.

Handouts

- Ensure that any handouts you use are available in accessible electronic formats (see the tip sheet **Using Word Documents and/or PDFs** for more information or contact the [Open Learning and Educational Support](#)).
- Students should be able to access the electronic versions before the class in which the handouts are used.

Accommodating Students

- When a student contacts you regarding a disability, try to anticipate any accessibility barriers that could be created because of the formats of course instructional and evaluation materials.
- Think of ways to address the accessibility of these materials so that, as much as possible, the student is given equivalent access to them.

More resources on Accessible Education:

[Center for Applied Special Technology \(CAST\)](#)

[Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology \(DO-IT Centre\)](#)

[National Centre on Universal Design for Learning](#)

[University of Guelph, UID Project](#)

[UDL- Universe](#)

To obtain this document in an alternative format, please contact:

Library Accessibility Services
First Floor, McLaughlin Library
University of Guelph
Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1

Tel: 519-824-4120 ext. 52312
Email: liblcsd@uoguelph.ca
Web: www.lib.uoguelph.ca/assistance/LCSD/

ⁱ There are two Accessible Education frameworks: Universal Instructional Design (UID) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Both of these frameworks were informed by the architectural concept of Universal Design, which is “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Centre for Universal Design, [The Principles of Universal Design](#)).

“UID is not just about accessibility for persons with a disability – it’s about truly universal thinking – maximizing learning for students of all backgrounds and learner preferences while minimizing the need for special accommodations.” (University of Guelph, [UID Project](#))

“UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone--not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.”([National Centre of Universal Design for Learning](#))

The term “Accessible Education” has been adopted in order to capture the value of both of these frameworks in improving the accessibility of university education.

ⁱⁱ Nilson, Linda B. [Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors](#). 3rd Edition. John Wiley and Sons, 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DO-IT) Centre at the University of Washington, [Universal Design of Instruction \(UDI\): Definition, Principles, Guidelines, and Examples](#).