Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Concordia University is home to a culturally and linguistically diverse, and engaged student body with a multitude of educational and learning needs.

What is UDL?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework that guides the design of learning goals, materials, methods and assessments while keeping the diversity of learners in mind.

Instructors remove barriers to learning and empower students to take control of their learning.

UDL is about teaching excellence and ensuring access for all.

Who does UDL benefit?

UDL creates greater access to learning for **all students**, not only students with disabilities.

Applying the principles of UDL reduces the need for instructors to make individualized accommodations.

UDL provides opportunities for learners to fully demonstrate their knowledge.
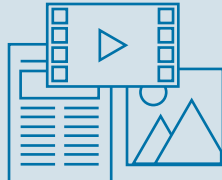
The three principles of UDL

The UDL principles are based on the *three-network model of learning* that take into account the variability of all learners by designing to the edges of the curriculum to support all students, including those that were traditionally excluded.

With UDL, instructors proactively design courses that provide:

Multiple means of engagement:

Engaging learners to support interest, motivation and persistence in the face of challenges.

Multiple means of representation:

Ensuring information is accessible and presented in a variety of ways (i.e., audio, print, tactile, graphics, video, etc.)

Multiple means of action and expression:

Providing different ways to express achievement, exhibit mastery, and articulate knowledge and learning.

Inclusive Teaching Practices

To create inclusive learning environments that incorporate the UDL principles, consider these **five inclusive teaching practices:**

1 — Create accessible course material.

Accessibility is one of the many important components of UDL. This includes making your course material (including videos, images, documents, PowerPoint presentations, Moodle) accessible and presenting it in a variety of formats.

Resources:
Brickfield: Moodle Accessibility Checker
*Making Learning Inclusive and Accessible Video modules*

2 — Include accessibility and diversity statements in your course syllabus.

An inclusive syllabus includes policies and resources that help ensure all students are supported in their learning process. Including an accessibility and diversity statement can help students understand its importance and relevance.

Resources:
UDL syllabus
Accessibility statements
Diversity statements
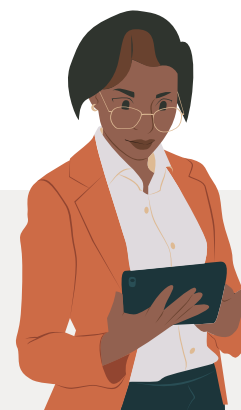
3 — Use inclusive language. Words matter.

Language impacts our sense of belonging. By using inclusive language, students feel respected and valued. Our differences unite and strengthen our campus community.

4 — Be flexible. Give students options to express knowledge and achievement in different ways.

As students master classroom material, provide them with options for expressing their achievement. For example, consider podcasts as an acceptable alternative to a literature review or final papers. Embed flexible due dates in course syllabi so that students can choose submission dates based on workload.

5 — Engage with students: Use an interest survey to connect with students and offer inclusive office hours.

Use an online questionnaire that asks students about their preferred name/pronouns, work experience, plans for the future, what they are most looking forward to and most concerned about related to your course, to help you connect with them and better meet their learning needs. Offer a variety of times and ways (e.g. Zoom, email, in-person) for students to meet with you.
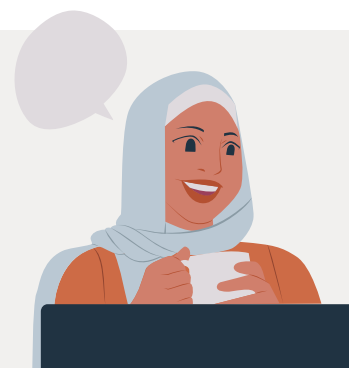
Find more resources about UDL and inclusive teaching practices on *our website.*

Learn more about accessibility in the classroom
Access Centre for Students with Disabilities
Centre for Teaching and Learning

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