

Applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to Academia

Land acknowledgment

McGill is located on the unceded Indigenous lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, known as Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. The Kanien'kehá:ka, also known as the Keepers of the Eastern Door, are one of the nations that make up the Haudenosaunee Confederacy on Turtle Island/North America. Our presence on this land contributes to the dispossession and ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples. Our goal is to promote learning and generate allyship with local Indigenous communities, by honouring and respecting the many nations removed from, as well as those still connected to this land. Consult [Native Land](#), McGill Indigenous Initiatives' [The Land and Peoples](#), and [Indigenous Education Resources](#) to learn more.

Throughout the workshop we encourage you to consider how systems of oppression manifest such that not all learners have the equal opportunity to succeed. Educational institutions like academia present many barriers that hinder people affected by ableism, classism, and racism, and their intersections, from accessing learning opportunities, materials, and technology.

Session description and outcomes

This workshop offers participants ways to critically engage with and disrupt barriers to participation in academia. Learners will go over basic vocabulary related to disability, accessibility, and ableism, then will be introduced to foundational aspects of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. They will then unpack inaccessible scenarios and apply their learnings with the lens of UDL in academic spaces to find ways to navigate them. Both the virtual and in-person learning sphere is considered in this workshop.

By the end of this workshop, you will have had the opportunity to:

- Identify and eliminate barriers to participation in academic settings
- Define and recognize UDL and its approaches in academia
- Optimize access to information by applying UDL to virtual and in-person communications

Working definitions

“Person-First” Language: Language that centers the person first instead of the disability. Example: “A person living with a disability.”

“Disability-First” Language: Language that highlights disability as an identity. Example: “A disabled person.”

Ableism: A system of oppression based on the systemic favouring of abled people. Ableism is influenced and constructed by other systems of oppression, including racism, sexism, transphobia, queerphobia, and others.

Accessibility: Refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments that allows everyone, regardless of ability, to engage fully.

Disability: What constitutes “disability” is very personal, but also defined by other systems of oppression. A disability can include physical, mental, or invisible illnesses, and it may or may not be diagnosed. A disability is any

condition that impairs one's ability to function and navigate through society, as it was constructed for abled people.

Activities

This workshop will involve personal reflections with the option to share, an interactive component, and group activities and discussion.

Before the workshop, consider reflecting on the idea that accessible teaching methods can be beneficial to ALL learners, not just those with disabilities.

Your next steps

1. Write down one thing that feels missing from our conversation on universal design and disabilities in teaching and learning environments.
2. Write down one thing related to today's topic that you would like to do some more research on.
3. Reflect on how you might incorporate today's discussion into your teaching and/or learning environments.

Space for your notes

Resources

Ableism in Academia book: <https://www.uclpress.co.uk/products/123204>

Case study adapted from: http://udloncampus.cast.org/page/udl_examples

Check the readability of your documents:

- <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2?ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us>

Think UDL podcast: <https://thinkudl.org/episodes/indigenous-ways-of-teaching-learning-being-with-libby-roderick>

Three principles or themes of UDL: <https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl>

Types of learners: <http://englishamateurs.blogspot.com/2011/05/types-of-learners.html>

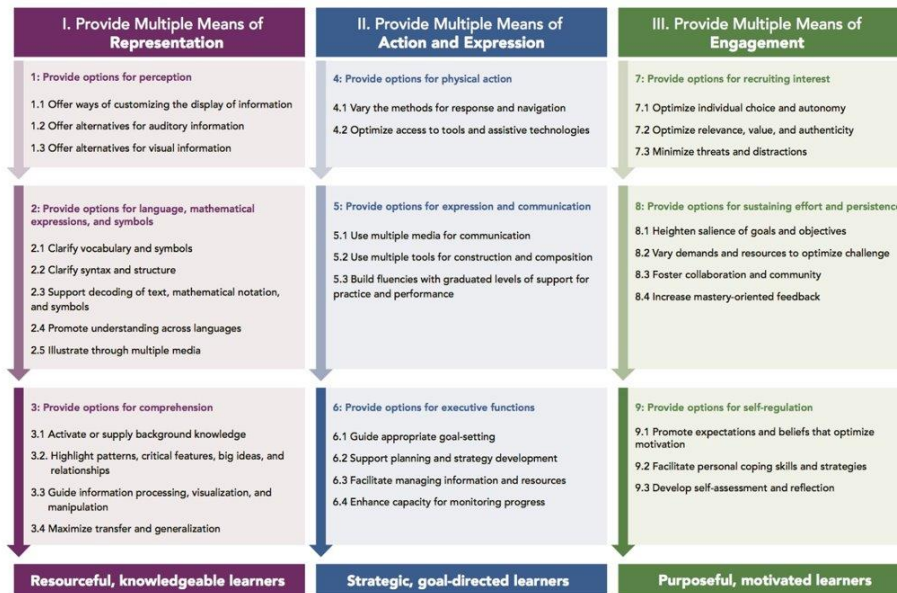
UDL on campus: Legal Obligations for Accessibility: http://udloncampus.cast.org/page/policy_legal

UDL practices for various types of learners checklist

- https://www.oakland.edu/Assets/Oakland/cetl/files-and-documents/QuickNotes/UDL_EngagementQNFeb9.pdf

'What is UDL?' By Katie Novak: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYN-qrKIIYI>

Universal Design for Learning Guidelines



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 APA Citation: CAST (2011). *Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.0*. Wakefield, MA: Author.

Talk on YouTube: Todd Rose - VariabilityMatters



Register for [SKILLS21](#), McGill's workshop-based skills development program for undergraduate students.

Consult the [learning resources](#) created by Teaching and Learning Services.

Explore [Stay on Track](#), a peer-to-peer program that enhances undergraduate students' learning and wellness skills. Learn more about the three pathways available: reminders, coaching sessions, and study groups.

Visit [Learner Supports](#) from Student Accessibility & Achievement.

References

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Centers for Disease and Control Prevention. *Common Barriers to Participation Experienced by People with Disabilities*. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability-barriers.html>.

Council of Ontario Universities. *Understanding Barriers to Accessibility*. <https://www.uottawa.ca/respect/sites/www.uottawa.ca.respect/files/accessibility-cou-understanding-barriers-2013-06.pdf>.

Exley, C. (2016, April 5). *Definitions*. Accessibility Services Canada. <https://accessibilitycanada.ca/aoda/definitions/>.

Microsoft. *Get your document's readability and level statistics*. <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Test-your-document-s-readability-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2>.

Public Works and Government Services Canada. *Plain Language*. <http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tcdnstyl-chap?lang=eng&lettr=chapsect13&info0=13>.

Contact information

For any questions about the workshop material or other related information, visit mcgill.ca/tls/students.