Making course materials accessible

Iain Johnston (he/him) i.e.johnston-white@rug.nl

Rina Fokel de Vries (they/them) r.f.de.vries@rug.nl

The Inclusive Teacher

- self-paced e-learning: training and tools
- interactive, with opportunity for discussion with colleagues

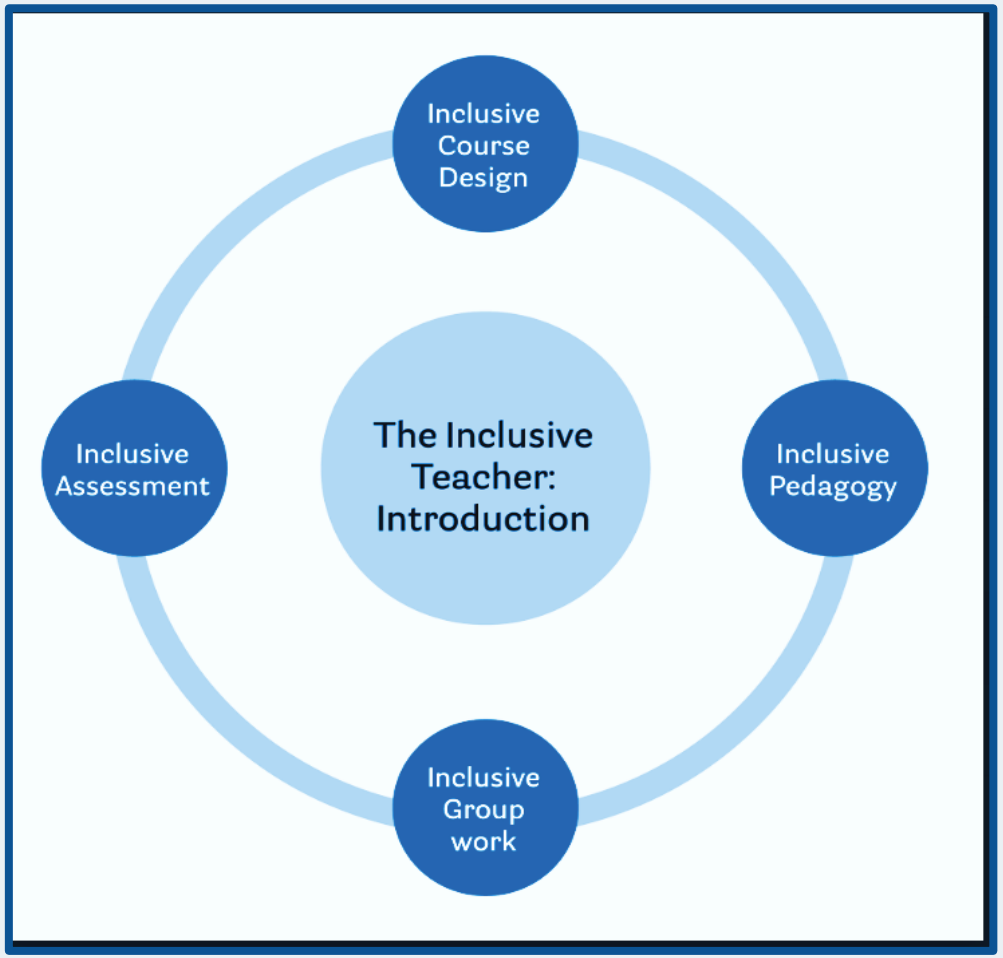
Aims

- promote awareness of (importance of) D&I in teaching
- help teachers build on their existing skills set
- show practical steps that can make a true difference

How we developed content. Information from:

- Teachers and students, to build on real-life experiences
- D&I experts across the University of Groningen
- Academic literature on inclusive teaching
- Special interest organisations (e.g. ECIO in the Netherlands; Advance HE in the UK)

Our course was granted the Jury prize for the ECIO Inclusion AWARD 2025!


Inclusive Course Design
Inclusive Assessment
The Inclusive Teacher: Introduction
Inclusive Pedagogy
Inclusive Group work

Source: Gardenswartz & Rowe (2003)

Inclusive Course Design

- Applying the principles of Universal Design for Learning
- Finding ways of diversifying the curriculum
- Making course materials more accessible

UDL

Source image: Chonglian at Wikimedia

UDL design principles

Multiple Means of Engagement	Multiple Means of Representation	Multiple Means of Action/Expression
Stimulate motivation and sustained enthusiasm for learning by promoting various ways of engaging with material.	Present information and content in a variety of ways to support understanding by students with different learning styles/abilities.	Offer options for students to demonstrate their learning in various ways (e.g. allow choice of assessment type).

UDL

Guidelines

The Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

The goal of UDL is **learner agency** that is purposeful & reflective, resourceful & authentic, strategic & action-oriented.

	Design Multiple Means of **Engagement**	Design Multiple Means of **Representation**	Design Multiple Means of **Action & Expression**
Access	Design Options for **Welcoming Interests & Identities** • Optimize choice and autonomy • Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity • Nurture joy and play • Address biases, threats, and distractions	Design Options for **Perception** • Support opportunities to customize the display of information • Support multiple ways to perceive information • Represent a diversity of perspectives and identities in authentic ways	Design Options for **Interaction** • Vary and honor the methods for response, navigation, and movement • Optimize access to accessible materials and assistive and accessible technologies and tools
Support	Design Options for **Sustaining Effort & Persistence** • Clarify the meaning and purpose of goals • Optimize challenge and support • Foster collaboration, interdependence, and collective learning • Foster belonging and community • Offer action-oriented feedback	Design Options for **Language & Symbols** • Clarify vocabulary, symbols, and language structures • Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols • Cultivate understanding and respect across languages and dialects • Address biases in the use of language and symbols • Illustrate through multiple media	Design Options for **Expression & Communication** • Use multiple media for communication • Use multiple tools for construction, composition, and creativity • Build fluencies with graduated support for practice and performance • Address biases related to modes of expression and communication
Executive Function	Design Options for **Emotional Capacity** • Recognize expectations, beliefs, and motivations • Develop awareness of self and others • Promote individual and collective reflection • Cultivate empathy and restorative practices	Design Options for **Building Knowledge** • Connect prior knowledge to new learning • Highlight and explore patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships • Cultivate multiple ways of knowing and making meaning • Maximize transfer and generalization	Design Options for **Strategy Development** • Set meaningful goals • Anticipate and plan for challenges • Organize information and resources • Enhance capacity for monitoring progress • Challenge exclusionary practices

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Suggested Citation: CAST (2024). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 3.0 [graphic organizer]. Lynnfield, MA: Author.

Tips

- Keep it small and simple: step-by-step (+1)
- Ask students. What do they need? What works for them?
- Talk to colleagues. What tips can they give? Can they get tips from you?

Diversifying course materials: why important?

‘Some groups are misrepresented in the curriculum or possibly not represented at all.

‘On the whole, there is a lack of different perspectives presented, and the Western perspectives are assumed to be normal and not questioned. Students are just not taught how to think critically. It just results in the bias being perpetuated, or students taking on the view of the majority.’

‘The curriculum often has a strong focus on the previous knowledge and educational background of Dutch students. Non-Dutch students can feel unseen, erased. Also, if they go back to their own country, there can be a discrepancy between what they learned here and what they need to know for their employment career. This goes for Dutch students as well: in a professional setting, students are faced with more than just western views, but they are not prepared for it.’

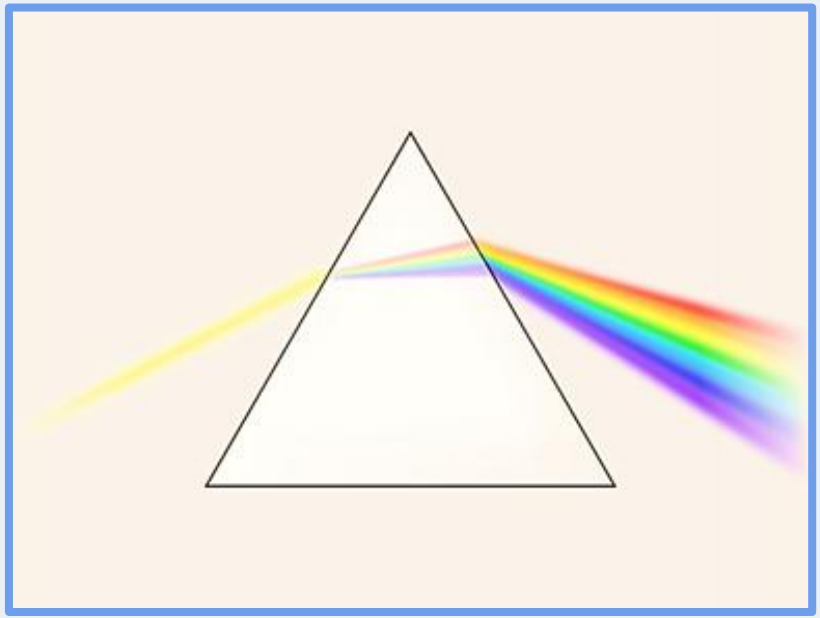
Diversifying course materials: why important?

- Student representation & engagement
- Integrated knowledge
- Student employability

Prism of diversity

Check your course materials: do they represent diversity?

- What can you do?
- What can you not do?



university of groningen
Digital accessibility
General guidelines for digital content

Accessibility in design of materials, e.g.

- Clear language, short paragraphs + accordion
- Layout: left-aligned, dyslexia-friendly font, background
- Icons & visuals to support text
- Text + audio option, pictures + Alt-text, videos + captions
- Hyperlinks specifying what they link to

Examples: Use of Colours

Normal view

Dichromic view: Red-Blind/Protanopia

Dichromic view: Red-Blind/Protanopia

Try to avoid colour-coding in your materials. For instance, instead of using the red and green lines in a graph, you can use a solid line and a dotted one. This will make the graph much clearer to students with colour-blindness.

Source images: Colblindor (2006-2021). Coblis - Color Blindness Simulator. Available at: https://www.color-blindness.com/coblis-color-blindness-simulator/. Accessed 24/04/2024.

Examples: Structuring a text

‘In the second lecture, after briefly spending a few minutes reiterating what we covered in the session the week before, which focused on combating stress in people suffering from cardiovascular disease, we’ll be dipping into some case studies that you might find particularly interesting and useful, as they’re part and parcel of what you need to prepare for the end-of-term open-book exam on 1st April, straight after lectures end on the 25th of March, which is also the final exam registry date.’

Lecture 1

- Topic: reducing stress in heart patients

Lecture 2

- Review of lecture 1
- Topic: case studies (for exam)

Last lecture on 25 March

Exam

- Exam = open-book
- Register before 26 March
- Exam on 1 April

UG staff: access the course on Brightspace

Externals: request a guest account at: inclusiveteacher@rug.nl