

Office for Students with Disabilities & Deaf Services
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Universal Design (UD)

OSDDS wholeheartedly supports practices that are inclusive of all persons, respects the dignity and worth of all persons, and are consciously designed to maximize access to opportunities and success for all persons, whether a disability is known or unknown. A Universal Design (UD) for classrooms is one in which the environment and all materials are consciously selected and arranged so that everything is accessible and user-friendly to all students, which maximizes the opportunities for everyone to reap the full benefit from the course. Consider incorporating UD principles immediately into your courses, and join HCC in moving toward achieving UD in all classrooms!

UD is proactive. Accommodations are reactive.

Rather than trying to “accommodate” several students with specific and known disabilities each semester, make your classroom one in which anyone can enter, feel welcome, participate, and engage with the material and with other students. This, in the long run, will save you considerable time. Below is a list of characteristics of an accessible, fully inclusive classroom that respects the highly variant learning styles of our students:

- 1) Be approachable and receptive
 - Learn students’ names
 - Invite students to meet with you privately to discuss confidential concerns and to receive extra help
 - Especially encourage students with disabilities, military participation, and non-traditional students to meet with you, and respect their difficulty in coming forward
 - Maintain appropriate boundaries, and be culturally competent about boundary issues
- 2) Respect different learning styles
 - Some students are not as forthcoming or talkative in class as others; do not penalize those whose process is more intrinsic
 - Be creative in presenting key information in multiple ways
 - A variety of instructional methods (visual, auditory, experiential/kinesthetic, social, etc.) enhance learning for everyone
 - Vary activities and participation to keep students engaged
 - Plan activities in which everyone can fully participate
- 3) Large assignments
 - Courses with high reading/writing demands, many students need substantial processing time for written assignments and projects
 - Consider giving assignments early, break larger assignments into small parts with specific due dates, allowing significant time for completion

- 4) Create a classroom environment that is conducive to seeing, hearing, and interacting fully
 - Help to maximize the potential for everyone to hear what is being said. Face your students as much as possible, speak clearly, and do not rush. Do not speak while writing on the board or from the back of the room.
 - Get in the habit of repeating student's comments and questions before responding to them
 - Ask students to raise their hands before speaking. This allows for one speaker at a time, which is easier to follow. Give gentle cues if a student is speaking too long or off topic.
 - Ask quieter students to speak up
 - If possible, have the class sit in a circle (or semi-circle) for clear viewing
 - Write important information on the board, especially test dates and due dates
 - Whenever possible, read aloud material that is written on the board or that is given out in handouts or PowerPoint presentations. This benefits everyone in the class.
 - Videos shown in classrooms should be captioned (cc) (*See additional information re: CC below*)
 - When dealing with abstract concepts, paraphrase them in specific terms, and illustrate with concrete examples, personal experiences, hands-on models, or visual structures such as charts and graphs

- 5) Help keep your students organized and in the loop
 - Provide early and regular feedback about student progress
 - Ask to meet with a student if you have a problem or concern
 - Confirm plans and follow up on discussions with an email
 - Post notes and outlines online (Moodle) if possible
 - Allow one student to take a picture of board and post it to Moodle for all to reference
 - Leave time each class for questions, answers, and feedback
 - Share your mnemonics and other memory strategies
 - Provide study guides, practice exams, and review sessions

- 6) Make fair evaluations of student progress
 - Create multiple opportunities for learning to be reflected
 - Give frequent, scheduled quizzes (not "pop quizzes"). Consider dropping the lowest score(s).
 - If possible, offer multiple sections on exams with different types of questions (e.g. MC, T/F, short answer, essay, graph, map) and allow students to choose two out of three of the sections. If you include essay questions, allow students to pick from a selection of questions.
 - Testing: Avoid over-complicated language on exam questions. Clearly separate the questions on the exam sheet. For students with perceptual deficits or who have difficulty transferring answers, avoid using separate answer sheets, especially computer forms. Consider alternative test designs. Some students find essay formats difficult, and perceptually impaired students have trouble with matching.
 - Return quizzes and exams promptly and make time to thoroughly review answers
 - Unless it is an essential component of the class, provide alternatives to student presentations in front of the class. While this experience can be extremely beneficial, many students have severe difficulty talking, responding, and reading in front of groups. Likewise, give students the opportunity and encouragement to speak in class, but do not compel them to participate or lower their grade if they do not. This respects the diverse abilities and personality styles of our rich student body.
 - Consider allowing students to choose between an exam and a project
 - Return final papers and projects with constructive comments

7) Create a physically inclusive environment

- Use seating and adjustable desks that everyone can be comfortable in regardless of size and physical needs. If that is not yet available, then at least be sure that the desks and chairs in your room are arranged in ways that they can be easily accessed.
- Remove obstructions from walkways
- Equip labs with tactile models, projection screens (for microscopes), and other user-friendly equipment. (HCC has recently purchased some of these.)
- Make sure that sinks, resources, supplies, light switches, handles, etc. are within everyone's reach. If these are outside your control, meet with your division dean about making necessary corrections.
- Quickly address environmental issues: buzzing or flickering light bulbs, windows without shades, cross-talk in the classroom and distractions in the hallways. Do what you can to eliminate those.
- White boards with black erasable markers are usually easier to see than chalkboards. If using a chalkboard, erase well, write legibly and large enough. Use high-contrast colors (avoid pastels). Thicker chalk also improves visibility.
- Make sure you leave the classroom accessible for the next class
- As always, you can use OSDDS as a resource. Meet with us for suggestions on creative ways to make things inclusive, to ask questions or get clarification, to discuss problems or concerns (as soon after they arise as possible), for help with transcriptions and scanning, to share your ideas, etc.
- **OSDDS is here to support both students and faculty/staff.**

Please remember that the “extra mile” you may need to go for your students is critical for them in learning what you are teaching.

Other Resources:

- Website: <http://tep.uoregon.edu/resources/universaldesign/intro.html>
- *Universal Design in Higher Education: Promising Practices* (Online Text)
http://www.washington.edu/doit/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Universal%20Design%20in%20Higher%20Education_Promising%20Practices_0.pdf

Creating Accessible Course Materials

Many of our students have what can be referred to as a "print disability." This can be a learning disability, a visual impairment, or a physical disability. Although the manners in which the disability occurs vary, they all share one characteristic: individuals with a print disability cannot access print in the standard way. For example, if you forget to bring large print handouts to class for your student with low vision, the student will not be able to participate fully in real time and may fall behind peers through no fault of their own.

The accommodation for these students is "text in alternative formats" or "digitized text" that can be transformed as needed to Braille, large print, different color combinations, or audio via text-to-speech software. OSDDS collaborates with Faculty/Staff to coordinate the necessary digitation of the course materials based on a student's specific needs. This process can take up to four weeks and we ask your assistance with the following:

Textbooks and Printed Materials

Use only fully accessible text and media

- Use captioned (cc) films
- Offer electronic versions of all print materials
- Post classroom notes, handouts, and outlines where they can be easily accessed by all of your students, and make them available in print; allow them to be retrieved ahead of class and used during class
- If you post sign-up sheets and notices on walls or doors, make sure they are at a height that allows everyone to read (or sign) them, and offer alternative formats for students with print disabilities; make other arrangements to ensure message is received by *all* students
- Textbook information should be available along with course registration; and all required textbooks should be ordered at least 8 weeks prior to the term. Having all the information (title, author, edition, publisher, ISBN) on the HCC College Store website (& MBS Direct) is absolutely necessary to assure student text access at the start of the term.
- Be certain that all handouts can also be available for students in electronic format as Word documents or searchable PDF files
- Whenever possible, source reading materials from the library databases as these are most often accessible full-text PDF files
- Post your syllabus on Moodle along with the required reading order so OSDDS can prioritize when filling accessible text requests
- Include the Accessibility Accommodations Statement in your syllabus:
HCC is committed to full inclusion of all students. Students with a documented disability should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities and Deaf Services at 413.552.2417 or 413.650.5502 (Video Phone for Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing students) to request an intake appointment and discuss accommodations. Collaboration between students, OSDDS, and instructors is essential for timely accommodations, so students are urged to provide their accommodation agreement to instructors in the first week of the term or immediately after receiving the approved accommodation from OSDDS.

If digital materials are not readily available and you will be copying/scanning to create electronic files, please consider the following guidelines:

- Select "clean" source materials (free of underlining, margin notes, or highlights) and avoid materials that have been copied multiple times. It is always best to copy/scan directly from the book or journal source.
- Be consistent with filenames to ensure they match the syllabus reference. Recommended format: author's last name and title.
- Post your materials at least two weeks before they are due in class. This allows OSDDS the time to further digitize if necessary and still provide the student time to complete the reading.
- Always scan in black and white.

PowerPoint Presentations

- Post to Moodle before class meeting so that students can print and use as a guide in class, or view it on a laptop in class if they cannot clearly see the projection in class
- Utilize default auto layouts that best fit the purpose of your slide content and avoid using text boxes. This will ensure the all content is translated into the outline view if needed.
- Use strong color contrast between background and text for readability

Audio, Video, YouTube and Publisher Media

- Videos shown in classrooms should be captioned (cc)
- CC benefits the entire class (students with known or unidentified hearing loss, older students, students in the rear of the room, students for whom English is a second language, students easily distracted, students with particular learning styles, etc...)
- When using publisher content via CD, DVD or a publisher's web portal, please contact the publisher and inquire about accessibility of the interface and content before implementing in your courses
- Commercially produced videos and DVDs, as well as publisher produced media may already have subtitles. Make sure they are turned on through View Menu. For YouTube videos, click on the cc button on the lower right.

Thank you for joining us in our vision of a college community where access has arrived.