Designing and Developing High-Quality Student-Centred Online/Hybrid Learning Experiences

Designing and Developing High-Quality Student-Centred Online/Hybrid Learning Experiences

SENECA COLLEGE; HUMBER COLLEGE; KENJGEWIN TEG; TRENT UNIVERSITY; AND NIPISSING UNIVERSITY

Contents

What's Next?

Relating to the Land

The collaborators who developed this resource live, work and reflect on the land that stretches across Turtle Island. Each of us holds unique ancestral histories and has forged a different ongoing relationship with the land.

As Indigenous collaborators from Kenjgewin Teg, we share teachings on how the Anishinaabe came to Mshkakami-Kwe and used the law of the Dish with One Spoon to share land for the mutual benefit of all inhabitants.

As non-Indigenous collaborators from Seneca College, Trent University, Humber College and Nipissing University, we acknowledge the traditional territories where we live and work. As guests on this land, we hold deep gratitude to its caretakers, past and present.

Welcome

Introductory Video

📄 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=22#oembed-1*

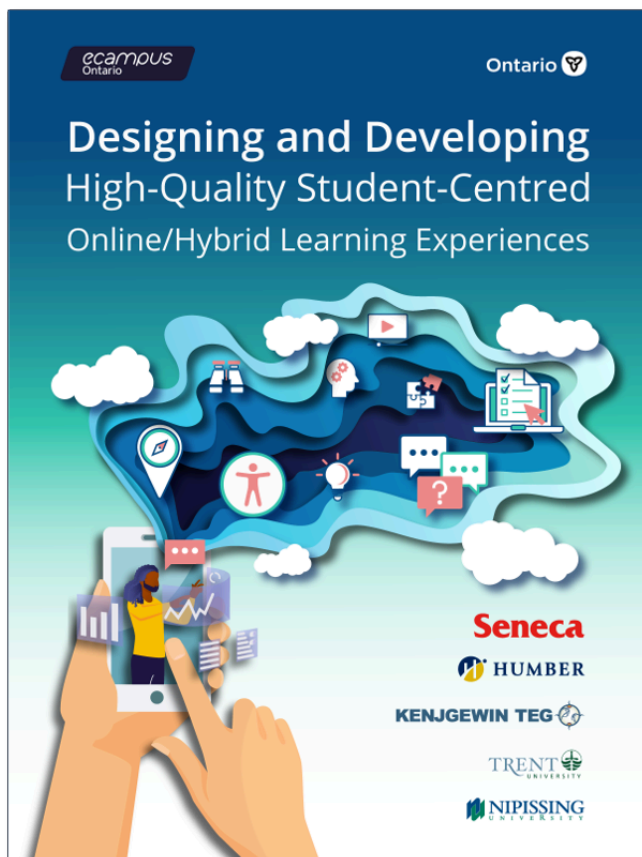Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the ~3-minute Introductory Video [Video].

Course Overview

This collaborative project between Seneca College, Humber College, Kenjgewin Teg, Trent University and Nipissing University provides learners with the knowledge and skills to design, develop and deliver high-quality, interactive and engaging online learning experiences.

Over the past few years, there has been an unprecedented challenge for academic institutions across both college and university sectors to shift from in-person to online course delivery. But, with limited resources to guide and support high-quality online course development, how can we be certain that all the effort put into online development results in a quality learning experience that sets students up for success?

This accessible and flexible four-week asynchronous online course provides learners with strategies and tools to create well-organized, accessible and culturally inclusive courses that engage learners and help them achieve their learning goals in a virtual environment.

Each of the four modules contained within the course are learner-centred and include transferable supports that allow for reskilling and upskilling of faculty. Post-secondary institutions can use the course to support faculty development and use the content within the course (e.g., authentic assessment, Indigenous Ways of Knowing, and designing with international students in mind) to frame new online courses. This online course will support colleges and universities in driving high-quality and innovative online/hybrid learning by modelling best practices in online course design and delivery.

Course Learning Outcomes

This resource aims to support individual faculty members, as well as teaching and learning centres at colleges and universities, with resources and guidance to meet the following outcomes:

1. Build a well-structured and organized online learning environment that is easy to navigate and sets students up for success.
2. Design and implement an online assessment strategy that aligns to identified course learning outcomes and allows students to demonstrate and apply their learning.
3. Create an online course and all associated materials to comply with accessibility and legal requirements (AODA, Canada Copyright, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy).
4. Plan and implement activities that increase student engagement.
5. Apply principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to support a meaningful and student-centred learning experience.
6. Incorporate the principles of UDL to ensure that all students can participate and engage fully with content, each other and faculty.

7.   Use a community of inquiry framework to build and support a learning community within a virtual classroom.

How to Navigate Pressbooks

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Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the ~1:30-minute How to Navigate Pressbooks Video [Video].

About This Resource

Funding

Project Leads

Thank you to our project leads from Seneca College, Trent University, Kenjgewin Teg, Nipissing University and Humber College.

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How to Reference (APA Style)

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In-text citation, paraphrase:

- (Seneca College et al., 2022)

In-text citation, quote:

- (Seneca College et al., 2022, Three Principles of UDL, Plus One section)
  - Note: Because this work does not have page numbers, other information such as chapter and/or section is given so that the reader can easily locate the quote.

Accessibility Statement

Seneca is committed to providing an accessible teaching, learning, living and working community that is barrier-free and inclusive for all individuals. Seneca's Accessibility Statement Policy is in place to ensure practices and procedures are consistent with the accessibility standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Accessibility Standards

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) defines requirements for designers and developers to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. It defines three levels of conformance: Level A, Level AA and Level AAA.

Designing and Developing High-Quality Student-Centred Online/Hybrid Learning Experiences has been designed to conform with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA, as required by the AODA.

Accessible Features of This Resource

The course content has been optimized for accessibility:

- All content is navigable by keyboard.
- Hyperlinks are visually distinct and are formatted with meaningful text.
- Proper heading structures were implemented to optimize screen reader navigation.
- All images have alternative text, and when appropriate, a long description.
- The colour contrast of text complies with accessibility guidelines.
- Colour is not used alone to convey information.
- All videos have closed captioning.
- Video transcripts have been created for videos created in-house and for some externally sourced videos.

Accessibility Tips

- Hyperlinks to other pages of the site will always open in the current window.
- Hyperlinks to external sites will always open in a new tab.

Known Accessibility Issues and Feedback

We have made every attempt to ensure that this resource is as accessible and usable as possible. We welcome your feedback on any accessibility issues you may find with this resource. Please contact us and let us know if you encounter any accessibility barriers. We try to respond to feedback within two business days.

If you find any issues, please provide the following information:

- the page title and a link to the page with the issue

- a detailed description of the issue
- the operating system, browser and assistive technology (if applicable) used
    - for example: Windows 10, Google Chrome (Version 98.0.4758.102), Jaws screen reader

Currently, there are no known accessibility issues in this resource.
Any accessibility issues that have been identified will be listed below.

List of Known Accessibility Issues

Location of issue	Required improvement	Timeline	Workaround
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Contact Information

- E-mail: teaching@senecacollege.ca

This statement was last updated on 23 February 2022.

How to Proceed

Navigation

To navigate through this course, you can use:

- The **Contents** panel is located at the top left. Select it to view the table of contents to navigate across the different modules and sections.
- **Previous** and **Next** buttons are located at the bottom of the browser to go forward and back.

There are several interactive elements and videos throughout this resource. We have included helpful instructions in *italics* before the interactive elements.

Legend

Throughout this course, you will find some recurring elements. Below is a legend to help you decipher these elements.

Learning Outcomes & Conclusion

- Each module is bookended with "**Learning Outcomes**" at the beginning and a "**Conclusion**" at the end.

Activity

- Throughout this course, "**Activities**" will help you practice and apply concepts or skills to online/hybrid classroom environments.

Reflection

- You will be prompted with a "**Reflection** when we want you to pause and think about your current practices and how they compare to the concepts outlined. For some reflections, we have included an interactive element (H5P Documentation Tool) to allow you to capture and export your thoughts as a PDF.

Explore

- You will be prompted with "**Explore**" when we recommend that you take a closer look at an external resource.

Tips

Keep an eye out for useful "**Tips**" scattered throughout the course.

Key Takeaways

- Throughout the course, you may find "**Key Takeaways**" at the bottom of each page. You will find the important concepts and terminology highlighted here.

Course Layout

This course is composed of four modules with embedded activities and videos that will provide you with knowledge and support in developing the skills required to design and develop high-quality student-centred online/hybrid learning experiences.

The modules can be taken in sequence beginning with Module 1 or you may choose a learning path that meets your learning objectives.

Module 1: Structuring Your Online Course

- intuitive structure and navigation are key to student success in online courses
- tips and strategies to help you design your course so your students spend their brainpower engaging with the course content — not looking for it

[Module 2: Accessibility, Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning](#)

- leverage our legal and moral obligations regarding accessibility, our need to respect diversity and embrace inclusivity — to truly design for all
- how the guiding principles of Universal Design for Learning can provide further insights into inclusion

[Module 3: Assessment Strategies for a Virtual Environment](#)

- walks you through how to design authentic online assessments
- how to evaluate online assessments and develop an assessment strategy
- how to create non-traditional assessments that incorporate different worldviews to foster an intercultural and inclusive learning environment

[Module 4: The Virtual Classroom as a Learning Community](#)

- how to create a virtual space that promotes engagement and communication
- tips and strategies to harness technology for engagement and communication, and to create a learning community in the virtual classroom

MODULE 1: STRUCTURING YOUR ONLINE COURSE

Structuring Your Online Course

Introduction

> 🖥️ *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=37#oembed-1*

Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the ~1-minute video Module 1: Introduction [Video].

First Impressions Matter

When students walk into a classroom, they usually know where the front of the class is (the projector screen gives it away). They can decide to sit at the front or the back. They know if they have a question, they can raise their hands or speak to you after class.

They see you as soon as they walk in and take in your appearance. Maybe you look serious, dressed in business attire, or more laid-back in casual dress. Perhaps you are smiling at each student as they walk in, or have your head buried in a computer. Either way, these first interactions with students are full of subconscious observations.

In an online space, there are fewer norms. Each online course can look different, and students don't immediately get a sense of who we are or how our course is conducted. As faculty teaching online courses, it is important to create a space that is easy for students to navigate and to warmly welcome students to that space.

As a result, this module will focus on these two aspects: the course's structure and strategies for orienting students to the learning environment.

Learning Outcomes

- Explain the importance of an easy-to-navigate online learning environment.
- Evaluate an existing course website for ease of navigation.
- Formulate ideas to implement into your own course websites to improve navigation.
- Craft a communication plan to orient students to the online learning environment in a supportive way.

Guiding Questions

- Can students find their way around the course easily and intuitively?
- Are items labelled clearly so that students know what they are?
- Is course content well organized?
- Do students know how they can contact the instructor and ask questions?
- Do students know the structure of the course and how learning will take place?
- Has there been an effort to introduce students to the course in ways other than text?
- Do students have a clear understanding of your expectations for the course?
- Is there a plan in place for ongoing communication throughout the semester? Do students know how often they will hear from you?

Structuring the Online Environment

Our course shells are essentially websites for our courses. Though their use is restricted to registered students, and doesn't involve much actual web development, they are used by students like websites. This layout can have an impact on the overall quality of the course.[1]

Reflection

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=47#h5p-1

The Goal: Creating a Learner-Centred Shell

We are all familiar with the learning outcomes that drive our course content and our assessments. But what is our goal when we are designing the structure of the course?

In a basic sense, the goal of a learning management system is to facilitate the transmission of course content and learning activities. We might say that a successful course structure is one that involves the least time spent finding things, and the most time spent engaging with learning materials. Instructors should aim to create course shells that are clear and easy to navigate.

A recorded lecture, no matter how good, is useless if students can't find it. A discussion thread is only engaging insofar as students can easily participate in it. As a result, the goal of the LMS is to be learner-centred. We are creating a structure for students, and its success is dependent on how well students are able to find the materials they need, participate in activities, and engage in learning.

1. "Designing a High-Quality Online Course," California Department of Education.

How to create a learner-centred course shell?

One thing we can do is put ourselves into our students' shoes. Pretend that you are the student who is logging in for the first time and navigating your course. Look back at the reflection activity that you've just completed, and then take a look at your course. Would your course be enjoyable or frustrating to navigate? Is your course easy to use? Is everything laid out clearly? Would you find everything easily if you were logging in for the first time?

Tip: Your LMS should have a "Student View" or similar feature that displays the course from the student's perspective. This is a great way to evaluate your own course design.

Activity: Course Scavenger Hunt

Pick one of your courses (an old course works well), and ensure that all content items and assignments are visible. Turn on Student View and find a partner/friend/child (don't ask a fellow instructor!) Ask them to navigate through your course. They should have no trouble finding anything, even if they haven't been in school for years or have never used this LMS. See if they can locate the following items. They are not allowed to ask you any questions.

If you don't have anyone to ask, enter Student View and try your best to emulate a user entering the course for the first time.

Basics:

- the course's schedule
- the date of the final exam (if applicable)
- the first assignment: what is it, when is it due, and where can they submit it
- the instructor's email
- the location of the first week's material (if synchronous, where can they find the virtual classroom; if asynchronous, where are the learning materials)
- the topic taught in week five

Advanced:

- the weighting of all assignments
- the course's learning outcomes
- the course's late marks policy
- how can they submit their assignments?
- are quizzes done synchronously as a class, or are they open for a longer period of time?

Feel free to add anything here that is relevant to your course.

How did they do? Was everything easy to find? Was it frustrating? Anything in particular that confused them?

Explore your LMS

Whatever the results of your first analysis of your own course, the sky is not the limit. In reality, we are limited by our LMS. Whether you use Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle, D2L, or another course management tool, we as faculty must create our courses within the bounds of our LMS. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is important to explore its functionality and limitations. Knowing what you can and can't do will help you brainstorm realistic design and structural changes to implement.

Tip: Ask your department coordinator or chair to see if you can get an empty course shell without students. This will give you a sandbox area to play with, testing out ideas and structures without interfering with a live course. If you can't get a course, ask your IT department when students lose access to a course. Once they do, a course from an old semester can be used to test out new ideas.

Ease of Navigation

We want our courses to be easy to navigate. We want students to spend as little time as possible looking for material and as much time as possible engaging with the material.

Source: "*Student in an online class looking at instructor on computer screen*" by *freepik*

In 2001, a web designer popularized the idea that good websites should be structured such that everything a user wants can be found within three clicks.[2] This makes sense: we might assume that students would get frustrated if they can't find what they are looking for. The more clicks it takes, the more likely it is that a student will give up.

We definitely want to avoid frustrated students: students who are angry or anxious are not going to learn well.[3]

2. Zeldman, J. (2001). *Taking Your Talent to the Web: A Guide for the Transitioning Designer.* Indianapolis: New Riders.
3. Goleman, D. (2020). *Emotional intelligence.* New York: Bantam Books, 183.

However, the three click rule is heavily disputed and has generally been abandoned.[4] This is probably good news, since the restriction would be very onerous for faculty.

> This module proposes a different principle: **Everything should be easily findable. Don't make students think about where to find things. Make them think about the course material.**

The path to any item (an assignment, video, or discussion board) should be easily understood. We don't want students to think about where things are. We want that part to be obvious. We want them to save their brain power for engaging with the material, not finding it or trying to figure out what it is. Unsurprisingly, students responded positively to courses that involved minimal time finding specific pieces of information.[5]

Below are a set of tips for faculty to apply in their own courses to make content obvious in its location and its place in a course. Select an item to learn more about it.

Naming Tips for Clarity:

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Descriptive Naming

Whenever you create something in your course, you have the opportunity to name it. Using names that describe the content is a simple way to create a sense of order in your course.

For example, instead of naming something "Lesson 1," use a title that describes the content of the lesson, such as "Lesson: Introduction to Plato." Instead of naming something, "Assignment," try, "Assignment 1: Annotated Bibliography."

Your course template may have default items in them. Rename them to better reflect how you use them. For example, if you have a "Course Information" section that has only the course outline and schedule, you could rename it. "Course Outline & Schedule." Though it is a small change, these things add up and make navigating the course much easier.

4. See: Laubheimer, P. (2019, August 11). *The 3-click rule for navigation is false*. Nielsen Norman Group. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://www.nngroup.com/articles/3-click-rule/, UX myths. (2010, June 1). *Myth #2: All pages should be accessible in 3 clicks*. UX Myths. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://uxmyths.com/post/654026581/myth-all-pages-should-be-accessible-in-3-clicks and Porter, J. (2016, March 25). *Testing the three-click rule*. Centre UIE Center. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://articles.uie.com/three_click_rule/

5. Troop, M., White, D., Wilson, K. E., & Zeni, P. (2020). The user experience design for learning (UXDL) framework: The undergraduate student perspective. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *11*(3), 11-12. https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2020.3.8328

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=47#oembed-1*

Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the ~20-second video Module 1: Descriptive Naming [Video].

Tip: AODA requires us to rename links to a description of where they go. Consider the following:

- A raw link: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1656/1656-h/1656-h.htm
- A descriptive link: Read Plato's Apology

A screen reader or other assistive technology will either read out a link's text to the user or ignore the link entirely. Neither is ideal for students. So, naming your links is not only great for clarity, but also a requirement under AODA.

Listen to a screenreader read out this tip:

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=47#audio-47-1*

Provide Metadata

Similar to naming things descriptively, adding in metadata to the names will make mental indexing easier. Consider the following ways of organizing a course's weekly learning modules:

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=47#oembed-2*

Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the ~20-second video Module 1: Provide Metadata [Video].

You can probably imagine that, over the course of a 14-week semester, adding the week number helps students (and yourself) mentally index content to easily find what they are looking for.

In the same vein, we can provide students with metadata in other places:

- number assignments
- differentiate between: assignments, discussions, knowledge checks, and other activities
- include key information for assignments (due date and weighting) in their name or description

> *Be Consistent*
>
> No matter how you organize your course, it should be consistent from week to week. Whatever organizational method you adopt, it should be applied throughout the course. It helps if each week has a similar layout. For example, you could start each week with an introduction and to-do list, then move onto the lectures and activities.
>
> This doesn't mean that you need to use the same activities each week, but that the general organization of each week should be consistent.

Navigation Tips for Easy Pathways:

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Use Course Links

We don't know how our students will interact with our course. Course links are a great way to provide multiple pathways through our course. For example, we could have all our assignments in an "Assignments" folder. In addition, each weekly folder can also have links to that week's assignments. This way, students could get to the assignment directly from the "Assignments" folder, but also access their assignment the week they are introduced to it.

You might also want to put a link to an assignment when creating a weekly communication with students or if you're creating a to-do list. The idea is to create pathways that are relevant to the student at an appropriate time. You wouldn't put a link to the first assignment in a communication in the middle of the course, and neither would you put a link to an "Introduce Yourself" activity in week 5.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=47#oembed-3*

Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the ~1:30 minute video Module 1: Use Course Links [Video].

Use the Menu

Your course should have a main menu that you can customize. Using this menu to your advantage can create a really easy navigation experience for students. In addition to considering the names of these items (remember to give everything in your course an accurately descriptive name), consider whether your most commonly used tools and places are there.

Take a high-level look at your course and reflect on what tools and places students often visit in the course. Are they easily accessible from the menu? Is the path to each destination clear?

For example, if you use a discussion board a lot, it might be worth creating a link to the discussion board in the main menu. If students have multiple journal assignments throughout the semester, it makes sense to add a shortcut to their journal page in the menu. Combining these general shortcuts with individual shortcuts (e.g., a link to the first journal in the first week, a link to the third journal in the appropriate week) makes everything easier to find.

Here are some example course menu items:

> 📊 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=47#oembed-4

Watch the ~30-second video [Module 1: Course Menus [Video]](#).
Consider your Landing Page

Your LMS may let you change your course's entry point. If this is the case, consider changing it to create a "homepage" that has the information that students need. Perhaps it is a to-do list for the week, or a reminder about an upcoming assignment, or a link to the schedule or calendar, or your most recent announcement. Maybe the current home page goes somewhere that is useful for your course.

Unlike a website, which can have multiple entry points, your course usually has only one. Thinking about what information you want students to see when they enter the course can be very helpful.

A Matter of Balance

We are all familiar with the concept of chunking content to present it in more digestible formats. The idea was popularized in the 1950s by a thinker who concluded that human short-term memory is capped at remembering seven things.[6] However, since then the simple rule of seven has been criticized. Others have suggested four chunks, but reaching any particular number is controversial.[7] Rather, it is more likely that the limit of visual overload and short-term memory retention varies from person to person, task to task. Humans in general might remember fewer rather than more, and prefer smaller groupings, but each individual's limits are determined by their individual context.

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6. Miller, G. A. (1956). The magical number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing information. *Psychological Review 63 (2)*, 81–97.
7. Cowan, N., Morey, C.C., & Chen, Z. (2007). The legend of the magical number seven. In Sala, S. (Ed.), *Tall Tales about the Mind and Brain: Separating fact from fiction* (pp. 45-59). Oxford University Press.

> Creating balance in your course is important. Put too many things into your menu (in an effort to make everything easily found), and the menu will quickly overwhelm and each individual item will lose its emphasis. Place too few items in the menu and it ceases to have value. You might be able to use dividers, headings, or hierarchy trees in your menu. This will certainly help create structure. You'll need to explore your LMS to find out what you can and can't do. The same goes for navigational pathways. Put too many pathways, from everywhere to everywhere, and there is no logic anymore. Finding a balance that works for you and your students takes time and experimentation.

Grouping Tips to Keep Students Focused:

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Create Folders or Modules

Folders or modules are a powerful way to group content. Without it, our course will just be a list of items, activities, text, images, and videos. We might have nice descriptive labels, but without folders all these things will be in one big list.

Think about your own computer: are all your documents in the same place as your music, videos, and photos? Probably not. You likely create and use folders to give a sense of structure to your computer. Applying the same principles to your course is a good idea.

It's a good idea to create folders or modules for each week's materials, putting them into one convenient place, especially if you have many each week. If your course is synchronous and doesn't have more than one item per week, creating folders might wind up being counterproductive. There's no point in making a folder if you'll only put one thing in there!

On the other hand, if you have several pieces of content for one week, and three of them are all information about a quiz, consider creating a folder called "Quiz 1 Information" (or something similar) to help visually separate and group similar categories of content.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=47#oembed-5*

Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the ~1:00 minute video Module 1: Create Folders [Video].
Embed Content

Embedding refers to the ability to integrate web items (activities, graphics, videos) into another post. For our purposes, this means that instead of linking out to an external website with a video (YouTube, for example), you can embed that video inside your course's LMS. Primarily, this speaks to the grouping principle, where students will be able to see text content, images, videos, and activities all in the same page without having to navigate out of the course.

It also helps generally when we talk about confidence and clicks. Opening multiple tabs, going to multiple websites can easily overwhelm a user and cause them to get lost. By embedding content, we can keep things visually together as much as possible and keep the student from having to navigate outside our course.

Tip: Many activities and videos that you might use will have their own embed code. It is usually denoted by the "< >" symbol. Simply copy the embed code into an HTML editor in your LMS. If you need help figuring out how to embed content, contact your library or educational technology expert to show you the ropes.

Not everything can be embedded, and some things that can be embedded don't always offer you a neat code to use. You can try this code to see if it works:

<iframe width="825" height="825" src="URL"></iframe>

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=47#oembed-6

Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the ~1:00 minute video Module 1: Embed Content [Video].

What can you embed?

- videos and multimedia (YouTube, Vimeo, MS Stream, SoundCloud)
- Google Forms/Microsoft Forms
- Google slides and other Google Office Products
- PowerPoint slides (when hosted on OneDrive)
- Activities such as:
  - Mentimeter
  - Padlet
  - EdPuzzle
  - Mural
  - Quizlet
  - Flip Grid
  - H5P

Reach out to your librarian or ed tech specialist to determine which ed tech tools your institution currently recommends, alongside tips and tricks to help you embed content.
Linking Out: Websites and Files

Sometimes we can't help but have students navigate outside of our course. They'll need to visit web pages, go to the library, review documents, or participate in activities that can't be embedded into the LMS.

When linking out (to the library for example), set the link to "Open in the current window." This allows the user to use the backspace to get back to the LMS. Students who don't realize that they are in a new tab can find the experience disorienting and frustrating when the "Back" function on their browser doesn't work. Of course, there may be times when a workflow is interrupted or there is a loss of data (such as when filling in a form) that results from opening a link in the same window. In such cases, opening a link in a new window is preferable. You can also use descriptive names for the links to specify when it opens in a new window, which provides useful metadata for your students.

For files, we are tempted to upload Word documents, since that is usually the file type we do our work on. However, most internet browsers do not support viewing word documents online. This means that when you upload a Word document, the student will download it to their computer. They will then have to open it on their own computer.

On the other hand, all browsers support viewing PDFs online. So, when a student clicks on an uploaded PDF it will open on their browser. They will be able to download it from there if they choose. Essentially, this keeps the student's attention on their internet browser where the course is housed. They can easily flip between the PDF and anything else housed on the LMS.

More information on linking and accessibility.

More information on Word documents vs PDFs

Keeping Students on the Same Page

Research has shown that students are more engaged when learning items (readings, assignments, activities, etc.) for a particular week are grouped together visually on a single page.[8] This makes sense — students can get lost quickly if they need to jump around the course shell to complete their assigned tasks.

Introducing Your Structure to Students

Now that you've created your course's structure, you'll have to introduce this structure to students. Your students may be familiar with navigating other courses using the same LMS, but it's their first time using your course. You might do things a little differently from other instructors, so it's important to present an overview of your course. We'll want to introduce two parts of our course: how to navigate the structure we've built in

8. Rubin, B., Fernandes, R., Avgerinou, M. D. & Moore, J. (2010). The effect of learning management systems on student and faculty outcomes. (S2). *Internet and Higher Education 13,* 82–83.

the LMS, alongside how the pieces of the course (activities, readings, lectures) fit together. Introducing the first helps students understand the lay of the land, while introducing the second helps them figure out what they are looking for.

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Create a High-Level Course Overview

Take a look at your syllabus — it probably lists the assessments you'll use and their weighting. That's a really useful way for students to see what is involved in the course. But there is much more that takes place in your course. Things like lecture attendance expectations, educational tools used, whether office hours are regularly scheduled, time commitments, whether there are readings or activities, or how often learning materials are posted.

Similar to the course description in the syllabus, you are providing a description of how the course will run. Knowing these things can help students better understand what they need to succeed and what sorts of things they should be looking for. You could share this information via a graphic or text paragraph.

You can download the following High-Level Course Overview template of the image below and edit it to suit your own course in Adobe Acrobat or other PDF editing software.

Course Name Here		
This course is online and asynchronous, which means you complete the work on your own time. There are optional office hours if you want to connect with your instructor.	**All course materials - articles, notes, images, podcasts and videos are posted on the course website and on (Name of LMS).** *All course details and due dates of assignments are in the course outline/addendum.*	If you have a question, a comment or resources to share don't hesitate to let me know. Send me an email at (your e-mail here).
You should expect to dedicate 6 hours a week to this course and more when working on a major assignment.	Every Monday I upload the course content for that week. I will send occasional reminders for important messages.	To do each week: • Check the weekly folder on Blackboard and ask questions • Read/watch/listen to the content resources • Complete learning activities/assignments
To be successful in this course you must keep up with learning content and assignments.	This course is designed to be inclusive and accessible for all learners. All work for this course must be your own.	In addition to using the tools in Learn@Seneca – we will use Padlet, Mentimeter and Edpuzzle for activities and assignments.

PDF Template Example of a course map [PDF]

Give Students a Tour

Now that you've created your course's structure and put the activities, outlines, content, and assessments where they belong, you'll want to show students where to find things. A nice way to do this is to create a screencast of you going through your course while narrating what you're doing. Students will be able to see exactly where to find things, and understand the unique organizational method that you've chosen for your course.

Much like how you'd explain the weighting of a quiz, or tell students what your late policy is, it also makes sense to tell them where to find things and how to navigate the course's structure.

Tools to use for screen casting:

- [PowerPoint](#)
- [QuickTime](#)
- [Loom](#)
- [Screencast-o-matic](#)
- any virtual conference meeting tool (record a meeting with just you)

Ask your librarian or educational technology specialist for recommendations on software to use and tutorials to get you started!

Key Takeaways

Strive to make courses easily navigable as possible. Three main principles to keep in mind are:

- Use descriptive names for content and provide metadata
- Create pathways through the course that make sense from the student's perspective
- Group like content together

Activity: Course Scavenger Hunt Revisited

Now that you've reviewed some of the principles of course design, take some time to implement a few suggestions that you think would be valuable for your course. Once you have made these changes, ask a different friend/partner/child to review your course, same as the first person did.

If you don't have anyone to ask, enter Student View and try your best to emulate a user entering the course for the first time.

They are looking for:

Basics:

- the course's schedule
- the date of the final exam (if applicable)
- the first assignment: what is it, when is it due, where can they complete it
- the instructor's email
- the location of the first week's material (if synchronous, where can they find the virtual classroom; if asynchronous, where are the learning materials)
- the topic taught in week five

Advanced:

- the weighting of all assignments
- the course's learning outcomes
- the course's late marks policy
- how can they submit their essays?
- are quizzes done synchronously as a class, or are they open for a longer period of time?

Was it easier the second time around? Were you able to address any challenges that the first reviewer had?

Additional Resources

- [How we create intuitive (Findable & Usable) online learning experiences?](#)
- [Online Course Design Best Practices Checklists [PDF]](#)

Orienting Students to the Learning Environment

Once we have our well-structured and organized course shell, we next move onto the question of introducing students to this learning environment. Our first communications with them and our initial introductions can help set the stage for subsequent interactions. We want to come off as human and supportive, and generate as much excitement as we can.

Reflection

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=50#h5p-2

The Goal: Making a First Impression

Similar to the previous section, we should start by asking, "What is the goal of this initial introduction?" Though each instructor may have slightly different goals, it is probably safe to broadly identify a few ways that we'd like to be thought of.

Select the "+" icons below for more details.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=50#h5p-3

How can we humanize our communication and start off positively?

As instructors, we want our students to engage with each other and us during our lessons. Whether they are synchronous or not, we always want to see students motivated by their own interest, sharing opinions, and exploring ideas. We are also the ones that set the tone for our course. The way we introduce the course and the way we initially communicate with students provide students with their first impression of us as instructors.

Activity: Evaluating First Words

What is your first communication to students? Is it a welcome message email? Try showing it to someone who you think could give you some honest feedback about the impression of you your message gives.

Do you seem...

- laidback?
- formal?
- demanding?
- casual?
- excited?
- bored?
- stuffy?
- strict?
- passionate?
- funny?
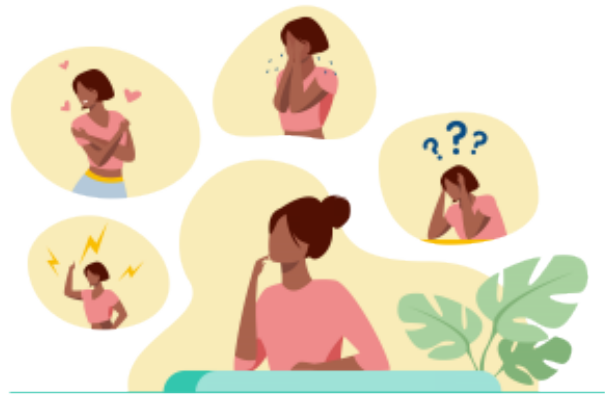
Do you think your message accurately introduces you in the way that you want to be seen? Is there a disconnect anywhere?

Source: Adaptation of "Woman expressing strong various feelings and emotions" by pch.vector from freepik

Leading by Example

> If we want to create a positive learning environment, we have to lead by example. Though there are many ways to encourage a sense of community, one particularly effective method is by self-disclosure. If you volunteer personal information, such as feelings, attitudes, opinions, interests, and experiences, then it is more likely that others (students) will reciprocate.[1]

Fostering a Community in the Classroom

The point of our initial message to students is to get them interested and excited for the course. To help them see, as we do, the reasons our subjects are so interesting and why they are worth learning. But, this is only the first step. We don't just send one email and end it there. We are trying to build a learning community. We want to avoid the sound of crickets when we ask a question. We want students to engage with the material and share their ideas with their classmates.

Activity: What goes into a Community?

> 🖳 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=50#h5p-4*

Engagement and open discourse in a classroom require a sense of community in the online space. Students who don't feel comfortable are unlikely to share their ideas. Fostering a sense of community is a great goal for faculty to have, but it takes time. Researchers who advocate for building a community of inquiry put forward a conceptual framework with three distinct aspects: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence.[2]
Select the "+" icons below for more details.

---

1. Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (1999). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education, 2*(2-3), 87-105.
2. Ibid.

Learn more about the Community of Inquiry Model.

This sense of community is not created overnight, but is facilitated throughout the entire semester. Designing activities that allow for cognitive presence, while creating a place for students to develop social relationships takes intention and effort. We want to show them that we are actively going to build a community throughout the semester, and that they are all encouraged to participate.

We want to lead by example, showing them that we are going to be members of this community, that we will support them, and finally, that we are excited about the course. The first week of the course is an opportunity to set the tone for the rest of the semester.

Building Pathways and Creating Spaces

In the last chapter, we discussed the importance of creating intuitive pathways through the course, and the structural areas of the course. In the same way, we can apply these concepts to our own communication with students.

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Instructor Information

An important pathway that students should know about is how they can reach you.

- What is your contact information?
- How would you like students to contact you?
- Do you have office hours? If so, how can students attend?
- Do you strive to answer emails in a certain time frame?

This information is usually found on a faculty contact information page. Ensure that it is easy to find in the course, and has all the information that a student would need in order to feel comfortable to contact you. A picture can help make you seem more approachable.

A Place to Ask Questions

Creating a designated place for students to ask general questions can help in a number of ways. First, it can limit emails to you as a bank of common questions is collected over the semester. This acts as a resource that students can check or one that you can direct students to. It also acts as a space for students to answer each other. Facilitating this type of interaction helps build a community of learners.

Additionally, it sends a message of support. Even if a student doesn't use the resource, it lets them know that you support them.

The easiest way to create this space is to dedicate a discussion board forum to asking questions. It is important that once this space is created it is monitored.

Going Beyond Text

Richard Mayer is credited with an oft-cited set of 12 principles for effective multimedia instruction.[3] Among the principles is the "personalization" principle, which states that students learn better when the language used is more casual and directed to the learner. The idea is that such language creates a stronger social bond than impersonal and formal language.

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Create a Welcome Video

Applying the personalization principle in a basic sense could involve evaluating your text-based welcome message and considering how to make the tone more casual and less formal. You probably don't speak overly formally, so ensuring that your text matches your natural speaking tone is something we can do to seem more human to our students.

But we don't have to stick to text. An introduction is a perfect place to substitute traditional text for more engaging video. Whether or not you show your face on the video, simply speaking in a conversational tone about the course and yourself (both as a person and an instructor) can be a great way to get your course started.

This sort of introduction also provides a launch point to ask your students to introduce themselves via a video instead of text.

Take Aim at the Syllabus

Consider your syllabus. It is very likely to be a text-based document that isn't riveting. Honestly, it is probably not fully read by the majority of your students. One idea is to take your syllabus online and create a more personable website for your courses. Dr. Pacansky-Brock has rethought the traditional syllabus and created an online version. Not only is this more aesthetically pleasing, but it can have an atmosphere that does not exist with a text-based document. Short videos, images, and additional information can be added to the syllabus.

Take a look at some of these examples and consider the extra value that these give to students when they first enter the course.

- Example 1: [Alex Venis' Liquid Syllabus](#)
- Example 2: [Michelle Pacansky-Brock's Liquid Syllabus](#)
- Example 3: [Fabiola Torres' Liquid Syllabus](#)

There is a lot more information on these sites than on a traditional syllabus. The tone is conversational, the instructors seem honest and forthcoming. Visually, liquid syllabi are aesthetically pleasing, and contain resources and answers to real questions (how to succeed, how the course operates) that students might wonder. In short, it can really set the tone for the semester and generate excitement for the course.

Learn more about [the liquid syllabus on Michelle's blog](#).

3. Mayer, R. E. Applying the science of learning: Evidence-based principles for the design of multimedia instruction. *American Psychologist 63.8*, 760-9.

Keep it Going

Creating a community requires intentionality and work. A community is not simply built because you had a really nice video introduction. A group of students doesn't magically become a community overnight and remain so. It takes sustained effort. Once we've set the tone with our own great introductions, we should set out what we expect from students throughout the semester.

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Manage Expectations

Set out clear expectations. Students should know what is expected of them, and what they need to succeed in the course. A great place to communicate this information is in a course overview or liquid syllabus.

Be explicit. Treat students courteously, and expect the same from them. The liquid syllabi examples above include guidelines for conduct from both the instructor and student. By defining the way in which you will act, alongside what you expect from students, you give everyone clarity about their role and responsibilities.

Lead by example. If you expect students to have well-written assignments, your instructions should be well written. If you expect students to participate, you should model that participation. You set the tone for the course, and students will feed off the energy and passion that you display. Model good student behaviour yourself.

[Best Practices and Expectations for Online Teaching from Penn State](#)
[Setting Expectations from University of North Texas](#)

Check in Often

You want to ensure that you are continually encouraging social interactions in the classroom. Beyond creating spaces and opportunities for students to interact with each other, you can reinforce your own presence as an instructor by checking in often, reminding students of the course's progress, alongside any supports that are available to them.

One idea is to send out a weekly email or announcement which includes a weekly to-do list and a reminder that they can contact you with further questions. This can help students stay on track with their work and remind them that they can reach out to you for assistance and support.

Use regular surveys for students to voice their opinions about the course's activities. We often ask our students for their views about the material we are teaching, but it can be useful to bring them onboard to the design aspects of the course.

- Do they like the activities?
- Would they prefer breakout rooms or class-wide discussions?
- Is there anything they would like to see added to the course?

These sorts of questions provide you with valuable data about the learning experience you are creating. In addition, when students see their opinions being put into practice it demonstrates to them that their views are valued.

Activity: Humanize your Communication

For this activity, you are encouraged to make one improvement to the way you introduce yourself to your students. Consider any of the three following options:

Option 1 – Revise Your Welcome Message

Take a look at your response to the first activity and initial reflection. Brainstorm ways to improve your welcome message to students. Consider the language and the information that you are communicating. Try to rewrite it to better capture the teaching personality that you want to share with students.

Option 2 – Create a Welcome Video

- Use your phone or webcam to record yourself introducing yourself and the course.
- Talk to your students about what they can expect.
- Keep it short (1-3 minutes).
- Feel free to add images as well if you'd like.

Option 3 – Create a Liquid Syllabus

Google Sites is a suggested platform, but you can explore other options as well. Reach out to an educational technology specialist at your institution for suggestions and tips. Refer to the examples in this chapter and create a liquid syllabus that fits your course and your teaching style. Be sure to include all the information that you want students to know, including any resources and supports that they might need.

Module 1 Conclusion

Conclusion

There are a lot of unconscious social norms that direct the conduct of an in-person classroom. People recognize a podium as a place for the instructor. They see chairs and tables and recognize them as places to sit down. Hands are raised to get attention. These unconscious rules help organize a classroom experience. The instructor makes eye contact, gesticulates, and uses body language to convey whether they are easygoing, strict, prone to tangents, or succinct. Over the semester, students get a good sense of who the instructor is, not only through their teaching, but through the human interactions that happen during each class.

Online learning has no such norms. The unspoken interactions are weaker. Does this mean that learning is more difficult? Not at all. Only that it takes place in a different environment, with different areas needing attention.

Students may not know where to find information, or how to get their questions answered. They can't easily tap their neighbour's shoulder, and say, "I'm lost. Can you help?" While most classrooms look the same, not all courses on an LMS do. As a result, more attention should be paid to the organizational structure of a course, and the ways in which an instructor interacts with the students. While these may be particular challenges in an online classroom, they are by no means insurmountable challenges.

Without these norms in place, instructors need to intentionally create a space that is intuitive to navigate and welcoming. Course items should be easily findable, and when found, it should be obvious what they are, when they are due, and how they fit into the larger course. Interactions between students and faculty should be positive and an effort made to communicate beyond text.

This module has covered a number of suggestions and ideas for you to consider in your own course. You might already be doing some; others will be new. Some might strike you as inappropriate, while others may be worthy of more exploration.

MODULE 2: ACCESSIBILITY, INCLUSION AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

Accessibility, Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning

Introduction

> 📄 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=66#oembed-1*

Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the 1:21 minute video Module 2: Introduction [Video].

When designing high-quality online courses, it is important that we pause and reflect on how our courses are meeting the needs of all students. The diversity reflected in our student cohorts combines diverse backgrounds, cultures, experiences and disabilities. When we design our courses and then revisit, we must check for accessibility compliance.

In this module, we will explore how to leverage our legal and personal goals regarding accessibility, our need to respect diversity and embrace inclusivity, and the need to truly design for all. We will also explore the guiding principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and how they can provide further insights into inclusion. Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) tips, tools and takeaways bring recognition about assumptions, emphasize empathy and allow all participants to be their whole selves in your course. Making open and safe communication a priority in your course can aid in engagement and cultivate connections.

We will learn to keep UDL and EDI in mind as we build new courses as well as incorporating them into existing courses.

The resources and learning activities included here intend to support the following learning outcomes:

- Describe the three principles of UDL.
- Explain how the UDL guidelines and corresponding "checkpoints" can impact teaching and learning.
- Suggest Multiple Means of Representation, Multiple Means of Engagement and Multiple Means of Action and Expression alternatives for a specific course.
- Evaluate courses according to Universal Design for Learning principles.
- Identify tools to evaluate course materials for accessibility.
- Incorporate course design strategies that meet AODA standards to facilitate accessibility.
- Identify resources and tools for teachers and students that support accessibility, diversity, inclusion and UDL.

Guiding Questions

As you read through this module, consider your own course and learning content, and reflect on these questions:

- Does your course consider the human-centred approach to communication, as well as behaviours that promote inclusivity and engagement?
- Is there an opportunity in your class to discuss valuing all cultures, religions, ages, genders, beliefs, expressions and skills in a safe environment to promote understanding?
- Have you taken a moment to self reflect and analyze, recognize and become conscious of your own unconscious bias?
- Is your course reflecting diversity and the principles of UDL and EDI in your content, lessons, and references.
- How do you plan on building respectful relationships with your students?
- How have you built a respectful relationship within the course to create a safe space for the student/ learners?
- Have you structured your content in an accessible and "bite size" format?
- Is your content structured in a logical order with visual print accessibility guidelines in mind?
- Do your tasks, assignments and projects incorporate Multiple Means of Action and Expression that provide an opportunity to demonstrate competency of learning from a diverse lens?

Deliverables

- Todd Rose "Myth of Average" video and questions
- Summary and application of UDL principles to your course
- UDL Guidelines Educator Worksheet
- "Plus One" application of UDL principles to your course
- Incorporating diversity, seeing students as individuals and choosing inclusive content for your course.
- Developing connections to learners while overcoming unconscious biases
- Using games and tools of engagement to create a safe space for open communication
- Applying design principles to your written and visual communication to meet accessibility standards.

Key Terms and Concepts

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)
- Multiple Means of Representation (MMR)
- Multiple Means of Engagement (MME)
- Multiple Means of Action and Expression (MMA)
- Scaffolding
- Authentic, formative and summative assessments
- Plus One
- Race, faith and intersecting identities
- Empathy
- Flexibility in the classroom
- Divergent thinking
- Equity and inclusion
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards and compliance
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- Accessible visual design techniques
- Accessibility
- Disability

Universal Design for Learning

This section will explore unique, diverse learners and the principles of UDL. It is our hope that the resources presented here will provide you with the guidance to examine a course you are currently teaching, and take some first steps into incorporating UDL into your teaching practice.

Let's start with an introduction to UDL. Universal Design for Learning is truly universal — it considers the potential needs of all learners when designing and delivering instruction. We will discuss what UDL is and why it is an important guideline for teachers to consider.

What Is Universal Design for Learning?

The concept of Universal Design for Learning originated in architectural studies when design considerations began to focus on physical access and the incorporation of assistive technologies and adaptations to the built environment (e.g., curb cuts).

One vital concept in universal design for physical space is the focus on adaptation. Focusing on adaptation allows access for everyone, including persons with disabilities, to use a space in an easier way. For example, a ramp will allow a teacher to enter a building with a cart full of materials, a person on crutches may use it, and someone with a wheelchair will have access as well.

Source: "*Accessibility ramp at Seneca College (Newnham Campus)*" by Sherri Parkins/*Seneca College, The Teaching & Learning Centre* , *CC BY-NC-SA*

> **Can you think of another adaptation in a building that provides access for everyone?**

UDL means that we consider the different ways we can provide "ramps" to our courses, the content, the delivery and the assessment of learning. UDL goes beyond universal design and utilizes what is learned from neural research to provide best-practice guidelines. When we use this approach, we also are adopting EDI principles to meet the unique and diverse needs of all learners!

Tip: UDL challenges us to consider instructional materials and activities that allow the learning goals to be achievable by individuals with wide differences in abilities.

Like building a structure and having it meet building codes to avoid costly renovations later, if we build educational materials with UDL and EDI in mind from the beginning, we can avoid the expense in time and effort needed renovating our courses to bring them "up to code." Besides, like with those ramps, everyone can benefit![1]

Explore

Often when we create content, we might believe that we meet the needs of the "average" student. In the following video, Todd Rose helps us to explore the "Myth of Average." As you watch the video, you will be presented with pop-up reflective prompts to consider.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=69#h5p-6*

1. McGuire, J. M., Scott, S. S., & Shaw, S. F. (2006). Universal design and its applications in educational environments. *Remedial and Special Education 27*(3), 166-175. https://doi.org/10.1177/07419325060270030501

Reflection

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=69#h5p-7

Center for Applied Special Technology

CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology), a nonprofit education research and development organization in Wakefield, Mass., has been developing and revising UDL guidelines for almost 40 years. CAST defines UDL as:

> a set of principles for curriculum development that gives 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.

UDL Guidelines

We will be exploring these principles more in this module. View the complete UDL Guidelines developed by CAST.

You can see that the guidelines each have checkpoints to provide more details and possible course adaptations.

Explore

Let's explore how UDL can support learners in courses. Watch this short video from Seneca College that explains CAST's principles of UDL in post-secondary education. Take note of how the speaker addresses not just diverse learners but also those who may need alternative access to materials because of a disability.

> 📄 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=69#oembed-1*

[Download transcript [PDF]](#) | Watch the ~4-minute video [Universal Design for Learning: Getting Started [Video]](#).

Three Principles of UDL

Last section, we started to explore what UDL is and its importance in how we design and deliver courses. In this section, we will examine in more depth the three principles of UDL: Multiple Means of Engagement, Multiple Means of Representation, and Multiple Means of Action and Expression.

Remember, one goal of UDL is to maximize learning for students with a wide range of experience, knowledge and skills by applying UDL principles to all aspects of instruction. These aspects include delivery methods, physical spaces, information resources, technology, personal interactions, assessments, etc.

After this section you will present a brief summary of the three principles of UDL. For each principle, you will suggest one possible application in your specific course content.

There are three principles that you are learning from the CAST's UDL graphic organizer, introduced last section: UDL Guidelines (CAST)

Explore

It can be helpful to understand why we are doing something in our course development from a student perspective. Let's check in with what students have to say:[1]

> ⊞ *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=72#oembed-1*

It is interesting how what the students were reflecting on is reflected in the three principles of UDL.

In the interactive element below, use the menu bar (≡) on the left or the arrows on the right to view the contents on all pages (3).

> ⊞ *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=72#h5p-8*

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1. AHEAD (Producer). (2015, March 20). *Student voices on teaching and learning* [Video]. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from https://youtu.be/uZOKvbgYqQQ

Application of UDL Principles to Your Course

With what you have learned thus far about UDL it is your turn to reflect and share. Summarize the three principles of UDL. For each principle, suggest one application in your specific course content. You can complete this activity in any way that you prefer — Word document, PDF, PPT, visual, audio, video, etc.

Reflection

We have also provided you with an online form below so that you can capture your reflections and export a copy of your work.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=72#h5p-9

Considering Current Teaching Practice

We have spent the past two sections exploring UDL. In this section, you will spend time looking at a course you currently teach through the lens of UDL.

Reflect

Perhaps you have seen this image by Craig Froehle in one of its many reiterations:
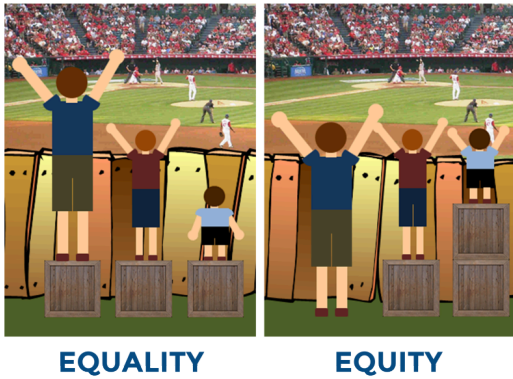
EQUALITY   **EQUITY**

Caption: Equality is represented by three spectators (tall, medium and short) watching baseball over a fence. Each spectator is standing on the same size box. The short spectator cannot see. Equity is represented by three spectators (tall, medium and short) watching baseball over a fence. The tall spectator is standing on the ground. The medium spectator is standing on one box. The short spectator is standing on two boxes. All spectators can see the baseball game.
Source: [Adaptation](#) of "[Equality](#)" by [Craig Froehle](#) on [Medium](#)

This image invites us to consider the idea that giving everyone the same thing does not make access equal. We need to provide the options so that students can utilize what provides access for them. Notice in the image that the solution is to provide more boxes but the options for providing equal access could have been a ramp up to the fence or a ladder. Replacing the fence with a see-through barrier might be an option that allows access to all. In today's educational environment, with its fast changing array of tools, the idea of providing everyone access and choice is incredible. If we can totally design our courses from the onset to eliminate barriers, that is the ideal. Let's explore your course to really view it through an UDL lens so we can see where some chances might mean better access to all.

Explore/Reflect on Your Own Work/Self Evaluation

Download and complete the Word document: [UDL Guidelines Educator Worksheet [DOC]](#)

Now that you have reflected on a current course or one that you are designing, let's continue.

"Plus One"

For the past three sections you have been exploring UDL and its implications at the post-secondary school level. In the last section, you took time to evaluate a course through a UDL lens. In this section, you, as a learner, will engage in some activities that will reflect the third principle of UDL: Action and Expression.

Have you noticed that if you learn new teaching pedagogy, your reaction is "Oh no! I need to redo my whole course!" In his book, *Reach Everyone, Teach Everyone* (2018), Thomas J. Tobin and Kirsten T. Behling introduce the idea of "Plus-One".

Explore

Watch the video (approximately 40 minutes): [Tips for Getting Your Colleagues to Adopt Universal Design for Learning [Video]](#) from 2:40 to 44:36 (transcript available).

Instead of thinking that we have to take a wrecking ball to our course, Tobin and Behling help us take a breath and realize that we can take a step at a time.

Now you will integrate UDL principles into your teaching and apply Tobin and Behling's idea of Plus-One. This is an opportunity to reflect on how you are embracing UDL principles into your course.

For example, you might apply some UDL principles to your syllabus/addendum. In the Orientation of the Virtual Space, Structuring the Online Course module, you were introduced to the idea of a liquid syllabus, an excellent platform for incorporating UDL.

Reflection

*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=72#h5p-10

Here are some resources that might help with this task.

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Analyze your Syllabus

Universal Design for Learning: A Rubric for Evaluating Your Course Syllabus
   UDL on Campus: Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education; UDL Syllabus
   Ryerson University: Using Universal Design in the University Classroom [PDF]
Alternative Ways to Represent Content

UDL On Campus: Media & Material
   Ensuring Access Through Collaboration & Technology. Postsecondary Examples of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
   Top 10 UDL Tips for Designing an Engaging Learning Environment [PDF]
Assessments

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Quick Notes [PDF]
   UDL on Campus; UDL And Assessment
   UDL Tips for Assessment [PDF]

UDL is for all learners!
Incorporate the principles of UDL into your online course design.

Key Takeaways: Terms & Concepts

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)
- Multiple Means of Representation
- Multiple Means of Engagement
- Multiple Means of Action and Expression
- Scaffolding
- Authentic, Formative and Summative Assessment
- Plus One

Summary & Application

Approaching course design using UDL principles means that we may avoid the need to "renovate" our courses because we have not considered both access for a broad, diverse group of students and accessibility for those students who require it due to a diagnosis/disability. Let's build UDL into our courses "from the ground up" rather than needing to provide alternative access to our students who require it. Remember, ramps are used by everyone!

The Principles of Inclusion & Diversity

A cross-cultural classroom caters to the needs of people with many cultures, languages and socioeconomic backgrounds. The diverse classroom model believes that culture aids people in understanding one another and helps us navigate our understanding of each other.

Everything we do is viewed through the lens of internalized norms and biases. Similarly, individuals behave and think in regular activities from the perspective of the culture they belong to. Thus, an individual can address cultural constraints through human-centred designs. What is human-centered design?

> ...it is based on a philosophy that empowers an individual or team to design products, services, systems, and experiences that address the core needs of those who experience a problem.
> – DC Design[1]

Source: "*Standing and sitting people taking group photo*" by *Joel Mott* on *Unsplash*

This section will examine our ways of communicating with people and facilitating them on a global scale. Techniques in inclusive communication will be addressed for a more empathetic virtual community.

As we go through each concept, we will better understand and be aware of inclusiveness while also learning how to practice and promote it. We will increase our knowledge and awareness of equity, diversity and inclusivity through recognizing our own unconscious biases. This exploration will establish an environment that welcomes various perspectives and supports expression in a safe space.

A commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is the responsibility of all educators.

The following practices will be used to guide our actions and decisions:

- Create a welcoming, supportive and inclusive atmosphere that encourages all students to interact.
- Encourage behaviours that promote cultural understanding, respect, acceptance and celebration of diverse cultures, beliefs and ideas.
- Develop skills that will help us succeed in a multicultural setting.

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1. Design, D.C. (2017, August 14).

What is human-centered design? DC Design. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from https://medium.com/dc-design/what-is-human-centered-design-6711c09e2779

In this chapter you'll explore:

- Principles of inclusion & diversity
- Inclusivity strategies in teaching
- Tools to utilize while exploring opportunities for personal reflection and growth
- Resources and tools for teachers and students that support diversity and inclusion

Caption: A terrazzo medallion created by Indigenous artist Joseph Sagaj at Seneca's Centre for Innovation, Technology and Entrepreneurship (CITE).
Source: "Terrazzo Medallion" by Joseph Sagaj from Seneca College, 2019, CC BY-NC-SA

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Diversity

Having a diverse culture means valuing individuals' right to identify as people of different races, colours, ages, genders, beliefs, ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, marital and family statuses, economic circumstances, ideas, expressions, experiences, skills and capabilities.Diversity describes the ability of individuals, groups and organizations to be different and yet similar. Organizational diversity depends on the representation of multiple perspectives within a group.

"Diversity is being asked to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance."
Vera Myers (https://www.vernamyers.com/)

Inclusion

The concept of inclusion involves actively trying to ensure that diverse people from different backgrounds, with distinct identities, are fully included in all aspects of the classroom, including leadership positions and decision-making. In addition, it refers to how diverse individuals are respected and welcomed in the classroom community.

Equity

As society continues to progress toward equality, a recognition of certain adjustments within a learning environment for particular individuals' needs can help level the playing field for their learning journey. This is referred to as equity.

Engagement

Here are some guidelines and principles for engaging learners and promoting inclusivity in the classroom to encourage engagement, encourage inclusivity and establish a positive learning environment:

- **Respect**: open-minded understanding among individuals and groups; we create a "safe space" for everyone to contribute without judgment
- **Purpose**: each classroom must build a community that promotes cooperation and respect
- **Cooperation**: in a classroom community, collective contribution enhances individual success
- **Freedom from discrimination**: overcome unconscious bias and build a safe community where everyone may work together, like in the examples included in this [video from Kim Scott and Trier Bryant](#) [Video].
- **Expression of ideas**: support diverse views sensitively and respectfully and raise awareness of diverse viewpoints and engagement through education.[2]

Cultural Dimensions Can Help Us Understand Cultures Better

Just as individuals have identities, so do nations and cultures. Cultural anthropologist Geert Hofstede created a list of cultural dimensions in the early 1980s. Here is more information on Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions:[3]
   Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Power Distance

It refers to how less powerful members of society both accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. In lower PD cultures, members of the society can openly question authority and the distribution of power, and see relationships between leaders and subordinates as more equal.
   Ask yourself: What visual markers of authority should I use? What taxonomies will my audience recognize and accept?

Individualism vs Collectivism

In individualistic societies, people believe in a strong right to privacy, limited use of state power, a strong free press, individual interests over group interests, and self-determination. At work, they value personal opinions, challenges, and material rewards more. In collectivistic societies, people believe that avoiding shame, saving

2. Lombardo, G. (2021, June 23). *A guide to cross-cultural design — By Senongo Akpem*. DeMagSign. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from https://medium.com/demagsign/ a-guide-to-cross-cultural-design-by-senongo-apkem-368c90de1b76
3. The Mind Tools Content Team. *Hofstede's cultural dimensions: Understanding different countries*. From MindTools.com. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_66.htm

face, and maintaining harmony within the group are the best ways to affect personal change. At work, they value training more and governments have tighter control of the press and the economy and prioritize consensus over personal freedoms.

Ask yourself: How do I show evidence of success in society? What motivates my users to make decisions?

Femininity versus Masculinity

(Note that these terms are based on traditional gender normativity). The "masculine" dimension defines a society that prefers assertiveness, achievement, heroism and toughness. Gender roles are strictly maintained, and there is little sympathy for those who are deemed weak or overly caring. "Feminine" societies prefer cooperation, modesty and quality of life. The vulnerable are cared for, and there is less competition for resources and rewards. Gender roles are not rigidly enforced.

Ask yourself: What voice and tone are appropriate for my audience? Are competition and comparison a core part of the user experience?

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance measures a society's tolerance for ambiguity and the unexpected. A high degree of UA means that people expect clarity in communication, and are more direct and active in getting their point across. Differences are seen as threats. In cultures with a low degree of UA, people are more accepting of differences and show less anxiety around new or unexpected things.

Ask yourself: Does my interface encourage browsing and wandering, or targeted search and drill-downs?

Long- versus Short-Term Orientation

LTO societies see more value in looking toward the future; members of these societies are pragmatic, appreciate adaptability and focus on gaining useful skills over time, saving for the future — patiently adapting to market and cultural changes. STO cultures see more value in looking to the past and present; people in these societies prefer problem-solving for immediate results, and see rules and traditions as their primary sources of information.

Ask yourself: Does my content prioritize short- or long-term engagement? How do my content and visual identity treat family?

Indulgence versus Restraint

An indulgent society allows its members relative freedom to enjoy life, participate in recreation and leisure, and pursue individual satisfaction. Restrained cultures control how their members satisfy their needs and desires; there are strict social, sexual and disciplinary rules. Money is saved, not spent.

Ask yourself: Is happiness part of your experience? Are vices hinted at, ignored or commented on openly?

Everyone knows what a shoe is, but we all have a different vision of this. In the end, what we determine to be a shoe is not the same as what someone else might think. Like students: as much as we may think we know the students, they all have a different story.

We must be mindful of the assumptions we make to avoid false categorizations and generalizations. Openness embodies diversity and inclusion. Be sure to cultivate an atmosphere that encourages new perspectives and approaches.

Respect, Compassion and Justice

Below is a list of points to consider for engagement:

1. Recognize that each person has distinct and specific needs in the classroom.
2. Respect each person's right to express and present themselves in terms of religion, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and physical and mental capability.
3. Encourage inclusiveness by modifying procedures, activities and surroundings as needed.
4. Focus on the individual's abilities without making assumptions or assigning labels.
5. Incorporate diversity throughout all means of communication.
6. Provide attention, respect and justice to everybody.

Image Tips

When creating material for diverse cultures, keep image selections in mind. Images of individuals in swimwear at the beach, for example, may not be suitable in all countries due to cultural, religious or geographic reasons.

Consider how a person is portrayed in a photograph. Although it may seem apparent, when selecting imagery for a certain culture, be sure that the visuals you choose correctly reflect people in that culture. Diversity should be displayed throughout your presentations so all feel welcome and can imagine themselves within the situation described.

Diversity and Inclusion: Eight Best Practices for Changing Culture

Here are a few highlights on inclusive practices from Sharon Florentine, CIO:[4]

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Establish a sense of belonging for everyone.

For each individual to bring their best self forward, a sense of belonging must first be established. Having a connection to an organization or group of people that makes you feel you can be yourself not only results in greater engagement and creativity in the workplace; it's a psychological need.
Empathetic leadership is key.

Diversity and inclusion are often treated as a single initiative. For real change to happen, every individual leader needs to buy into the value of belonging — both intellectually and emotionally. Part of this process requires tuning in to empathy; each person remembering a time when they were excluded, shamed, interrupted and so on, so they can apply those lessons outwardly. Leaders have to feel it within themselves; then they can identify the relationship with feeling excluded or making others feel excluded. That's a critical starting point.
Inclusion is ongoing — not one-off training.

It isn't enough to teach students and staff what it means to be inclusive. Like any form of behaviour change, inclusion requires individuals to identify key moments in which to build new habits or "micro behaviours" (daily actions that can be practiced and measured).
Maximize joy and connection, minimize fear.

People are wired to react with fear and distrust when their beliefs are challenged. Finding ways to frame challenges through a lens of possibility — and elevating the power of shared experiences and storytelling to do so — creates greater potential for positive change.
Forget "fit" and focus on helping individuals thrive.

The norms, power structures and inequities in society can easily become embedded in an organization. Creating a culture where every individual can contribute their full potential requires investigating the systems and processes in your class to uncover sore spots and blind spots and then finding ways to reimagine them."'Fit' can be dangerous, because it can exclude," Clark says. "You have to first be able to identify and bring to life your class values, mission and purpose, and define 'fit' so that it adheres to those. You have to define it differently."

4. Florentine, S. (2019, February 14). *Diversity and inclusion: 8 best practices for changing your culture*. CIO. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from https://www.cio.com/article/3262704/ diversity-and-inclusion-8-best-practices-for-changing-your-culture.html

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=78#h5p-11

Key Takeaways: Terms & Concepts

- Race, faith and intersecting identities
- Dialogue, restoration and reflection
- Understand identities and incorporate this into engaging content
- Define, speak in simple terms, say it more than one way, repeat
- Create opportunities for the type of meaningful engagement that drives impact in learning
- Ensure equal access for students/learners

Resources & Tools

Getting into college is, for disadvantaged students, only half the battle. Anthony Abraham Jack, assistant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, reveals how and why they struggle and explains what schools can do differently if these students are to thrive. He urges us to grapple with a simple fact: access is not inclusion, in the video, On Diversity: Access Ain't Inclusion[Video]

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=78#oembed-1

International students bring expectations of academic culture that are often not compatible with U.S. academic culture; watch Teaching International Students: Academic Integrity [Video].

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=78#oembed-2*

[Practicing Inclusivity – Tips, rituals, and prompts for leading a more inclusive team](#)

[Cards for Humanity](#): A practical tool for inclusivity: two random cards are dealt, a person and a trait. Your challenge: work out how you can meet their needs.

[Interfaith Calendar](#)

[Time Zone Calculator](#)

[Iowa State University has a page on student engagement techniques](#)

Here are some free stock resources if you need imagery:

- [Unsplash](#)
- [Pexels](#)
- [Rawpixel](#)
- [Pond5](#)
- [Iconfinder](#)
- [The Noun Project](#)
- [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- [Internet Archive](#)

References & Case Studies

- [How to promote academic integrity in remote learning](#)
- [Supporting International Students in the Online Environment](#)
- [Cross-Cultural Design](#)
- [Perceptions & Reflections](#)
- [A Guide to Cross-Cultural Design](#)

Empathy and Flexibility in the Classroom

Equity guarantees that everyone, regardless of their identity, has the chance to grow, contribute and develop in a classroom. Essentially, it is the fair treatment of all members of a community. It refers to a strategy for ensuring that everyone has equal access to opportunities. It acknowledges that there are advantages and barriers and that results in not everyone experiencing lessons and concepts the same way. Equity is a process that begins with **divergent thinking**. Recognizing the imbalance, evaluating, and then attempting to work with and resolve systematic thinking. It is the process of coming up with different ideas or solutions to a problem. It requires a commitment to necessary goals, resources, respect, continual action and evaluation of progress.

Source: "*Young woman with long blonde hair listening African man in blue shirt using laptops*" *by* *lookstudio* *on* *freepik*

While accommodations cater to specific student needs, inclusive teaching anticipates common challenges and incorporates additional flexibility and approaches that benefit all students, including students with disabilities, those who have significant home or professional responsibilities, English-language learners, and first-generation students.

Key Concepts:

- Divergent thinking: a term relating to brainstorming; being conscious of biases and developing creative ways to address pre-existing assumptions and to think differently about seemingly unrelated concepts
- Language (be concise)
- Be adaptable and flexible facilitation: be a facilitator; teachers should view themselves as a guide rather than an instructor
- Understanding: to empathize, to listen, to give the benefit of the doubt; remembering that students are human and have other obligations in addition to school

In this chapter you'll explore

- empathy and flexibility in the classroom
- methods of empathy and flexibility in your teaching practice
- multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement and multiple means of action and expression
- resources and tools for teachers and students that support empathy and flexibility in the classroom

What Is Empathy?

In its most basic form, empathy is the capacity to perceive and comprehend other people's emotions and perspectives in a situation. Empathy, at its most advanced level, allows you to use your understanding to enhance someone else's mood and help them through difficult situations. Empathy is sometimes mistaken with sympathy; however, the two are not equal.

Sympathy is a feeling of caring for another person and wanting them to be happier. Sympathy, unlike empathy, does not entail a shared point of view or feelings. To utilize empathy successfully, pay close attention to your student and look for verbal and nonverbal cues that will help you fully comprehend their position. Generating ideas through a collaborative divergent thinking session can help determine their needs which can then be used as a springboard to determine possible solutions. Then, put your own biases aside and acknowledge their concerns.

Source: "*Seeking human kindness*" by *Matt Collamer* on *Unsplash*

Key Concepts:

Consideration for various perspectives
Know your learners, build relationships
Empathy

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.
The three types of empathy are:

Cognitive Empathy

The capacity to comprehend what another person is thinking or experiencing is known as cognitive empathy. It does not have to entail the observer's emotional engagement. **Cognitive empathy** is a skill that is mainly analytical and intellectual, and emotionally neutral. It's the ability to be aware of the emotions of another person
Emotional Empathy

Emotional empathy is the capacity to share another person's feelings to better understand that person. It is the ability to engage with and share the emotions of another person.
Compassionate Empathy

The most active type of empathy is **compassionate empathy**. It entails caring for another person and sharing their emotions, plus taking actions to support other people.

Empathy is one of the five components of emotional intelligence.

"The notion of Emotional Intelligence consisting of five different components was first introduced by Daniel Goleman, a psychologist, and best-selling author" (Craig, 2021, as cited in Cherry, 2021).[1]

1. Craig, H. (2021, November 25). *The theories of emotional intelligence explained*. PositivePsychology.com. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from https://positivepsychology.com/emotional-intelligence-theories/

Select the "+" icons below to explore what Cherry (2018), defines as the **five components of emotional intelligence (EI)**:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=82#h5p-12

In the interactive element below, use the menu bar (≡) on the left or the arrows on the right to view the contents on all pages (3).

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=82#h5p-13

Define What You Say

Just because you're right, doesn't mean I am wrong — you just haven't seen life from my side — Empathy.

For example, take a look at the illustration on the right. What do you see? Do you see two faces, a vase or both? This illustrates a helpful reminder to consider others' points of view.

Every teacher can relate — repeating what was said, explaining more than once and explaining a concept in different ways, using different words. Not only does this help to clarify the intended meaning, but this type of transparency can ease anxieties and clarify information.
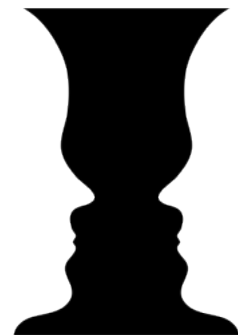
Created by Cass Reese
from Noun Project

Source: "Optical illusion" by Cass Reese from the Noun Project

Key Concepts:

- Provide choice
- Clear expectations & feedback
- Foster communication & collaboration
- Guidance, Support
- Feedback as a continual process

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=82#h5p-14*

Explore

Don't assume

In a clip from ACUE's "Embracing Diversity in Your Classroom" module, José Bowen, president of Goucher College, discusses how to avoid spokesperson pressure.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=82#oembed-1*

Time Zones

Working in an online environment, we must remember that some of our students are logging in from different time zones, so due dates needed a special consideration — time zone. Here's an example of a due date:

Due Week 4, September 24th @ 11:59 p.m. EDT/EST.

In the beginning of class, note the class timezone and explain that classes and due dates are for this time zone only. Mentioning this allows students to plan accordingly. In your course information section, a time zone converter should be included. This link is also in the tools section.

A to-do checklist for your course:

- Assignments, projects, quizzes, tests and exams have a due **date**
- Assignments, projects, quizzes, tests and exams have a due **time**

- Determine time in 24H or a.m./p.m.
- Assignments, projects, quizzes, tests and exams have a due **time zone**
- Your class time zone noted in your "About This Course" or "Intro" section of your course
- Time zone converter link is included in "About This Course" or "Intro" documentation of your course

Classroom Expectations

Developing inclusive pedagogical practices for the classroom is not an overnight process. It requires self-examination by faculty with regard to their own identities in relationship to their students. In addition, considering student-centred approaches that harness student experiences can deeply enrich the learning that may emerge.

– Classroom Diversity and Inclusive Pedagogy

Explore

Allow your students to come up with collaborative classroom expectations, watch this video: Diversity Expert Drive 1.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=82#oembed-2

Involving the people we're serving through design as participants in the process helps ensure that our solution addresses their life holistically. It makes sure we don't reduce people to discrete behaviors separated from the context of their lives, communities, aspirations, or value structures. This type of approach allows us to address root causes of the problems rather than symptoms, and, therefore, leads to better experiences & outcomes. People can often identify hidden opportunities and value through a co-creation process. Viewing participants as subject matter experts — involving them in the process of co-creation — we can start to see their needs differently and understand how our solutions fit into the bigger context of their lives.

– Participatory Design in Practice

Are you empathetic?

There are some signs that show that you tend to be an empathetic person:

- You are good at really listening to what others have to say.
- People often tell you about their problems.
- You are good at picking up on how other people are feeling.
- You often think about how other people feel.
- Other people come to you for advice.
- You often feel overwhelmed by tragic events.
- You try to help others who are suffering.
- You are good at telling when people aren't being honest.
- You sometimes feel drained or overwhelmed in social situations.
- You care deeply about other people.
- You find it difficult to set boundaries in your relationships with other people.

Having a great deal of empathy makes you concerned for the well-being and happiness of others. It also means, however, that you can sometimes get overwhelmed, burned out or even overstimulated from always thinking about other people's emotions.

Read more at VeryWell Mind: What Is Empathy?

Key Takeaways: Terms & Concepts

- Equity and inclusion
- Being present
- Range of options
- Reflect and allow time for reflection
- Engagement and interaction.

- Encourage critical thinking. Students should be active participants rather than passive recipients of information.
- Tech as a bonus — use breakout rooms
- Use the chat and have discussion boards

Resources & Case Studies

[Kellogg's commitment to Equity, a case study](#)

In the video, [Essentials for Online Teacher Communication \[Video\]](#), educator and researcher Julie Keane discusses the essentials of online teacher-student and teacher-parent communications.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=82#oembed-3*

High school dropout turned Harvard faculty talks about how a simple new way of thinking helps nurture individual potential in the video, [The Myth of Average \[Video\].](#)

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=82#oembed-4*

Tools

[Oblique Strategies](#) began as a card-based method for encouraging the study of lateral thinking as a means of resolving creative issues and questions. The concept of lateral thinking is to approach issues from an indirect, unique perspective. The Strategies were produced by Brian Eno in collaboration with Peter Schmidt, Eno's close friend and mentor.

For iPhone and Android, you can now download replica copies of the Oblique Strategies as an app. The words on the cards can be simple, but their use has the ability to take projects down unforeseen paths with many twists and turns. The general principles of [Oblique Strategies \[PDF\]](#) may be applied to nearly any scenario. Sometimes all we need is that extra little nudge to get the ball rolling.

[Creative Commons](#) (about licensing your work)
[Play with Arts & Culture](#) (Google Experiments)
[Time Zone Calculator](#)
[Interfaith Calendar](#): Why acknowledge holidays?

- To respect and recognize the identity of members in our community
- To anticipate student needs such as a different presentation date.
- To represent and celebrate

Tools for Engagement

- [Padlet](#)
- [Mentimeter](#)
- [Poll Everywhere](#)
- [Meister Task](#)
- [Dollar Street](#) is developed by Gapminder. Gapminder is an independent Swedish foundation with no political, religious or economic affiliations. They fight devastating misconceptions about global development with a fact-based worldview everyone can understand.

References

- [Teaching for Understanding](#)
- [Developing Skills to Understand People](#)
- [Types of Empathy](#)
- [Empathy at Work](#)
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act](#)
- Fuller, P., Murphy, M., and Chow, A. (2020). *The Leader's Guide to Unconscious Bias: How to Reframe Bias, Cultivate Connection, and Create High-performing Teams.*

AODA Standards and How to Apply Them to Your Course Design

Accessibility or "access" refers to equal access for everyone, regardless of ability or experience. It refers to how organizations recognize and respect each individual's unique traits and skills. It is all about supporting an equitable environment and making sure that everyone is represented and heard.

The Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) uses the same definition of "disability" as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which encompasses both visible and invisible disabilities. Disability, or impairment, affects a large number of Ontarians, and the number of persons with disabilities is growing. Disability now affects 15.5 percent of Ontario's population, and this percentage is expected to grow as the population ages.

Did you know?

> 1 in 7 people in Ontario has a disability. That's almost 2 million Ontarians. By 2036, that number will rise to 1 in 5 as people age.
>
> – Government of Ontario – How to make customer service accessible

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The AODA attempts to detect, eliminate and prevent barriers for individuals with disabilities. The AODA was signed into law on June 13, 2005. It applies to all levels of government in Ontario, organizations and private sector enterprises with one or more employees (full-time, part-time, seasonal or contract).

The AODA comprises standards that all organizations must fulfill and timeframes that are specific to the type and size of an organization. The AODA is divided into five sections, or standards:

- The Information and Communications Standards
- The Employment Standards
- The Transportation Standards
- The Design of Public Spaces Standards
- The Customer Service Standards

In addition, two new AODA standards are being developed:

- The Health Care Standards
- The Education Standards

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, *disability* means any physical disability, birth defect, disfigurement, injury or illness. Disabilities can include seen and unseen disabilities such as epilepsy, diabetes, blindness, hearing or speech impediment. Reliance on a service animal, appliance or device is also included in this category.

Disabilities also include mental impairment or disorder, developmental disabilities, dysfunction in understanding and learning. Disabilities that vary in severity include ailments such as arthritis, brain injury or Multiple Sclerosis (MS). These are examples that cause an individual to experience periods when the condition does not have an effect on a daily routine and other periods when it does. It is important to understand that information about a disability is personal and private and must be treated confidentially.

Source: "Hands reading braille notebook" by freepik on freepik

Source: "Girl sitting on a couch using a laptop" by Cliff Booth on Pexels

In this chapter you'll explore

- tools to evaluate course materials for accessibility
- design principles for making your course accessible and easy to understand.
  Incorporate course design strategies that meet AODA standards to facilitate accessibility
- resources and tools for teachers and students that support accessibility
- accessible strategies in teaching

Accessible Online Courses

Online course planning and programming that ignores the navigational needs of impaired users can create barriers that prevent them from fully participating in learning environments. Because of this, it is critical to approach the online course design with accessibility in mind to offer everyone equal access, the ability to navigate with ease and engage with the information provided in the course.

Source: "*Mix raced trainees working on computer in public library*" by *pch.vector* on *freepik*

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Make sure your framework is guided by these principles:[1]

Dignity

Provide service in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.

Independence

A person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.

Integration

Provide service in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless a different way is necessary to enable them to access goods, services or facilities.

Equal opportunity

Provide service to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an equal opportunity to access your goods, services or facilities as what is given to others.

Tips:

- Ensure accessibility of course content and materials by using accessible documents and websites.
- Use captioned videos.
- Select textbooks that offer e-book options.
- Encourage use of software that reads websites and documents (e.g., Read&Write Gold)

The old Chinese proverb shows the importance of the senses in the learning process. The five senses of hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell are the primary means we use to gain new knowledge. We rarely experience it with one sense alone. Our senses work together to give us a total picture of our experiences. People of all

1. Queen's Printer for Ontario (2021, August 10). How to make customer service accessible. ontario.ca. Retrieved December 17, 2021, from https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-customer-service-accessible

ages learn best when involved in meaningful experiences. Learning takes place when the mind is able to put together information from all the senses and make a connection with past learning. Using many senses to gain information helps learning to be more meaningful and useful.[2]

> "When I hear, I forget. When I see, I remember. When I do, I understand."
> — Xunzi (340-245 BC)
> Argued to be translated more like this:
> "Hearing is not as good as seeing, seeing is not as good as knowledge, knowing is not as good as acting, and true learning continues until it is put into action."

Accessibility components include:

- [Readability](#) — the ease with which a reader can recognize words, sentences, and paragraphs
  - [Readability checker](#)
- [Legibility](#) — an informal measure of how easy it is to distinguish one letter from another in a particular typeface
- Contrast
- Colour
- Language
- Font
- Application of learning through the senses

Website Accessibility

As of 1 January 2014, under the AODA, public sector organizations shall make new internet websites and web content on them conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 to Level A. This requirement will extend to Level AA on all websites by 1 January 2021.

> **AODA compliance means ensuring your site is accessible and usable by everyone, including people with disabilities, in line with Ontario's latest regulations and standards.**

Web accessibility requirements refer to the navigation, design, and coding considerations that help visitors using different types of web-enabled devices and visitors with disabilities use the website. The requirements of WCAG 2.0 provide criteria to assist in making websites perceivable, operable, understandable and robust

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2. Wortman, R. (1988). [Using all the senses to learn](#). *Parent Articles Enhance Parent Involvement in Language Learning*. Tucson: Communication Skill Builders.https://www.sd43.bc.ca/District/Departments/ LearningServices/SLP%20Resources/Language%20Development%20Disorders/ Using%20All%20the%20Senses%20to%20Learn.pdf

("POUR") for persons with various types of disabilities. These four principles are described in more detail below. When referring to the above paragraph in your own work, consider these requirements within your virtual space and in your written communication.

Select the "+" icons for more details.

📄 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=90#h5p-16

PowerPoint presentations with speaking notes and alternative text (alt-text) descriptions. Alt-text descriptions are brief written explanations of images that people include in presentations. These descriptions do not appear visually in a presentation. However, if a student reads a copy of the presentation with their screen reader, they can access any alt-text that the presenter has added to images. Writing these descriptions can help teachers plan lessons. While writing alt-text, teachers have the chance to think in advance about:

- what elements of an image do they want to draw students' attention to
- why that image is important to the lesson

Educators can also produce lesson resources that easily adapt to students' accommodation needs. For instance, materials created in Microsoft Word or another text-based program are easy to print in Braille or read with screen readers. Multiple means of representation help teachers plan and deliver lessons that more students can learn from.

WCAG

What is WCAG?

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is developed by W3C WAI (The World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative) with a goal of providing a single shared standard for web content accessibility. The WCAG documents explain how to make web content more accessible to people with visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning, and neurological disabilities.

Criteria

WCAG success criterion 1.4.3 states that visual presentation of text and images of text has a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1, except for the following:

- **Large Text:** Large-scale text and images of large-scale text have a contrast ratio of at least 3:1. WCAG defines large text as text that is 18pt and larger, or 14pt and larger *if* it is bold.
- **Incidental:** Text or images of text that are part of an inactive user interface component, that are pure decoration, that are not visible to anyone, or that are part of a picture that contains significant other visual content, have no contrast requirement.

- **Logotypes:** Text that is part of a logo or brand name has no minimum contrast requirement.

Tip: There are a number of [colour contrast checking tools](#) that can help you determine compliance.

WCAG 2.0 Level AA: Acceptable compliance is the minimum requirement.

Best Practices

Below are some best practices for structuring your course with accessibility in mind. Memory can only store so much, so breaks between bites or little challenges to recall info are helpful. Lectures should be between 10 and 30 minutes. This helps with information retention and reduces cognitive load.

Here is an example teaching framework that includes accessibility:

- Consider making an intro video of yourself talking about the course content for that week. A written introduction of the course material for each week is OK for in-person or synchronous classes.
- Be sure to make your presentation (pdf/PowerPoint/spark) available to all students.
- Follow a structure within your work.
- Minimize text when possible.
- Segment information into bite-sized lessons to control the flow of information. This is good for ADD and dyslexia.
- Worksheet design should follow the bite-sized flow of information. You can do this by "chunking" information into clear manageable pieces, to match with teaching chunks.
- Outros, conclusions, or recaps of what was learned at the end of lessons, reminders for what is due, and a look ahead at what will be happening in the next class are all useful.
- Weekly packages for each class will include links, discussions in class for the week, additional help resources (links/tutorials/books/etc.), links to the presentation of the week, and any additional resources needed for the practice of the lesson.

Types of Accessible Formats

Select a dialogue card below to turn it over for information about accessible formats. Use the arrows to view all four cards.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=90#h5p-17

Accessible Visual Design

Psychology plays a part in accessible course design. Students will retain only bits of the lesson in their memory.
Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.
Here's how you can make it a good and memorable experience:

Content

- The typical individual can only hold, on average, seven items in working memory, give or take. It's important to remember that short-term memory capacity varies depending on the person, past knowledge and context.
- To increase processing, and simple retention of knowledge, divide content into "chunks" of information. Save the most difficult tasks until the end of the lesson.

Retention

- Because the brain has a limited capacity, it's preferable to avoid unnecessary material that isn't directly related to the main purpose.
- Information overload will raise the possibility of a student quitting a task in progress.
- Increase working memory capacity by using both auditory and visual communication methods to convey information.
- Arrange the information in a logical manner.

Visual Design

- A great design triggers a favourable response in the student's mind by boosting confidence while improving usability.
- Use good design can help users figure out how to engage with a particular piece. (It must be a button if it looks like a button)
- Does it have any significance? The student will look for meaning.

Create Interest

- The gap between what students know and what they need to know might be the required motivation to get them to fill in the learning gaps.
- Attract student's attention with intriguing titles that pique their interest.
- Reinforce confidence and positivity by using phrases that contain words like "can" or "do."
- When possible, use symmetrical elements because they represent order, are visually appealing and the human brain looks for it.

Be Memorable

- Include positive notifications when a task is successfully completed.
- Celebrate when a student finishes a crucial task.
- Encourage your students to look for more information.
- To express a point of view, use narrative.

Culture and Design

It's useful to analyze cultural preferences across major visual design elements.
   Select the "+" icons below for more details.

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=90#h5p-18

Design Principles for Making your Course Accessible and Easy to Understand

   Design can sometimes contain a lot of visual beauty, which is why it's sometimes mistaken for style. However, design is focused on the underlying structure of communication — the concept, not only the aesthetic aspects. This is shown in visual form, which makes it universal. Important things to consider in your course design include:

Contrast

Be sure there is enough contrast between backgrounds and text. Use the contrast checker listed in the tools section to evaluate your contrast.

Source: Adaptation of "Designer concept illustration by stories" from freepik

Hierarchy

What do you want the student to see first? Then second? Yes, design directs the movement of the viewer's eye. Here is a fantastic example of hierarchy in use. Have a quick read.
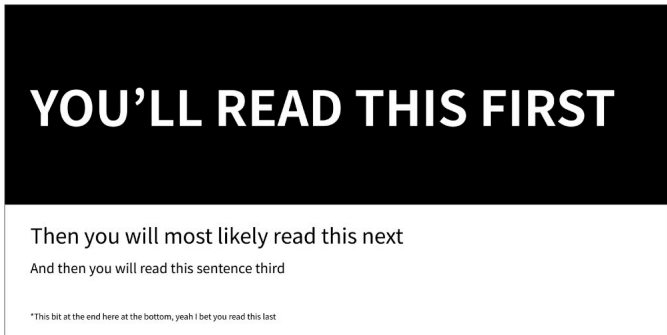
*Caption: Typographic hierarchy illustrated with four lines of text with each line decreasing in text size. The first line, with the largest text, reads, "You'll read this first"; the second line, with smaller text, reads, "Then you will most likely read this next"; the third line, with smaller text, reads, "And then you will read this sentence third"; the fourth line, with the smallest text, reads, "*This bit at the end here at the bottom, yeah I bet you read this last."*
Source: "[Typographic hierarchy](#)" by [Andrew Coyle](#) from [medium.com](#)

Type or Fonts

All text used needs to be readable and legible. According to [vistaprint](#) and [Print Peppermint](#), these are the top readable fonts for online:

Caption: The top readable fonts for online are — Georgia, Helvetica, Arial, PT Sans & PT Serif, Open sans, Quicksand, Verdana, Rooney, Karla, Roboto, Neue, Tisa, Montserrat, Ubuntu, Lato, Futura.

Movement

As stated above, the hierarchy controls where the viewer will look first, second, etc. Ways to direct the eye include contrast, colour and size. Consider the use of these elements appropriately to help direct the students' eyes to the important information. Remember to maintain a logical reading order for the main body.

Pattern or Repetition

Maintaining, for example, your assignment handouts in a consistent structure or formation, will eliminate guesswork when a student is looking for a particular section; for example, the references. Students will have more time to absorb and understand instructions provided.

Explore

Looking to improve your type? Here's a three minute video explaining how to use type to improve your design.

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Elements & Principles of Design

In this short video, you will learn what the elements and principles of design are and different ways to combine them. Remember, these are things to consider in your visual course design, but not all of them need to be applied at the same time. Happy designing!

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=90#oembed-2*

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Here are some design principles for accessible design in digital space:[3]

Media

- Use descriptive ALT tags for hyperlinks, icons, images, videos and other media types.
- Have subtitles and transcripts for videos. YouTube is a great tool to use for this. (See resources for alternatives.)
- Use images or illustrations for tricky subjects but keep the format similar and avoid surprising your user.
- Avoid unnecessary media that can cause distractions.

Text

3. Digital, S. (2019, February 28). *6 principles of accessible design*. UX Planet. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from https://uxplanet.org/6-principles-of-accessible-design-79beceafffb

- Write descriptive and clear page titles.
- Use periods in your abbreviations (C.I.A. instead of CIA).
- Black text on white background, or the reverse, is the best general practice.
- Write in the active voice (*Mike developed the website* not *The website was developed by Mike*).
- Break up large amounts of text into smaller paragraphs or bullet points when possible.
- Avoid making text smaller than 14–16px.

Navigation and Links

- Write descriptive text links that explain exactly what students are clicking on. Not just "click here."
- Underline your links.
- Make links a contrasting color to your standard text.
- Design for large clickable areas.
- Use breadcrumbs.

Colours

- Avoid bright or loud colours.
- Avoid colour combinations that are known to cause issues for the colourblind.

Assistive Technologies

- [Apple assistive touch](#)
- [Screen readers](#)
- [On-screen keyboard](#)
- [Voice recognition](#)
- [Eye tracking software](#)

Activity

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=90#h5p-19

At the date this book is published, the minimal requirement is WCAG Level AA.
When to use the contrast checker:

- if you are adding text on images
- is your text or background colours are not standard colours (for example, black and white, or cream and charcoal)

If you are not compliant:

- contrast checker does allow you to try new background and foreground colour combinations by clicking on the checkerboard of colours

Key Takeaways: Terms & Concepts

- AODA standards and compliance
- Accessible Visual Design Techniques
- Accessibility and Access
- **Disability**: See intro — the AODA uses the same definition of disability as the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#).
- **Accessibility**: Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services or environments for people who experience disabilities. Ontario has laws to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, including the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#), and [Ontario's Building Code](#).

Resources

- [10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design](#)
- **Speech to text** function for Google Chrome:

  1. Open Google (using Google Chrome) and search " chrome://flags".
  2. Search "live captions".
  3. Select "enable", Then click "Relaunch" at the bottom right (Chrome will exit and relaunch).
  4. Click the three dots menu for Chrome (upper right corner of browser),
  5. Click Settings.
  6. Advanced Menu on the left, then Accessibility.
  7. Turn on "Live Subtitles".

  You won't see anything happen when you talk, but if someone else is speaking, you will get subtitles. You can test this by going to any site that has someone else talking.
- [Creating Accessible PDFs](#)
- [Colour for accessibility](#) — how to design an accessible colour scheme
- [Tips on engagement](#) — training in accessible customer service

Tools

- [Accessibility Checklist](#)
- [Why is colour accessibility important? — Adobe's Colour Contrast Checker](#)

- [KeyCastr (Mac)](): KeyCastr is a keystroke visualizer, allowing you to easily display your keystrokes while recording screencasts. It is very useful when demonstrating complicated keyboard shortcuts.
- [Carnac (PC)](): A PC alternative to Mac's Key Castr. This tool is about displaying keyboard shortcuts to users
- [Read&Write Gold](): Some of the features of the program include:
  - the ability to use the text to speech feature to support reading different materials
  - highlighting the ability to extract for note-taking and summary making
  - word prediction that looks at English word algorithms to support writing in English
  - the Check-it tool provides an explanation when reviewing grammar. It is not just a click-and-fix option; it can aid in English language development.
- [Colour Contrast Checker]()
- [Another Colour Contrast Checker]()
- [RGD's Practical Handbook on Accessible Design [PDF]]()
- [Colour Contrast Checking Tools List]()
- [Check text readability]()
- [Funkify]() is an extension for Chrome that helps you experience the web and interfaces through the eyes of users with different abilities and disabilities.

References & Case Studies

- [Accessibility Canada]()
- [Kristy Viers brings awareness to how blind people use tech [Video]]()
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11]()
- [Clear Print Accessibility Guidelines [PDF]]()
- [Academic Integrity]()
- [Accessibility Canada's Resources]()
- [Accessible Customer Service]()
- [Accessible Formats]()
- [Principles of Design]()
- [Principles of Accessible Design]()
- [AODA Compliance & WCAG]()

Module 2 Conclusion

Conclusion

In this module we have learned to consider all students in our courses.

We as educators have chosen our path as leaders and must take responsibility for implementing not only lessons taught, but equity, inclusion and connection, because we leave a lifelong impact on our students. Teaching people empathy and respect for one another provides future opportunities and broader perspectives, which bring graduates to a global level of understanding, effective connection, better communication and will help drive progress. Diving into our own biases and vulnerabilities, while developing empathy and self awareness, can help us consciously move past our own subconscious biases.

Recently the phrase "Let's stop talking accessibility and start talking access" entered into teaching conversations. At first our reaction might be one of shock, but if we stop to consider this phrase carefully, we can see its power. When we focus on compliance in order to meet the accessibility needs of some students, our attention is narrow. When we broaden our perspective to *access for all,* our courses will embrace the diverse students we are teaching more successfully. Design your courses for access!

MODULE 3: ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

> 🖳 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=96#oembed-1*

Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the 1:41 minute video Module 3: Introduction [Video].

This module provides you with strategies for high-quality online assessment practices in post-secondary settings. These strategies reflect multidimensional approaches to authentic online assessment practices that incorporate principles of equity and inclusion.

This module presents practical, evidence-informed techniques for online assessment design, delivery, and learner feedback. These techniques encourage creative and effective use of digital tools that you can apply to your teaching contexts.

You will also develop an online assessment strategy that includes diagnostic, formative and summative assessments that promote reflection and help students meet achievement standards articulated by course learning outcomes.

This module has six sections. Completing each section requires approximately 15-20 minutes of your time.

1. Overview of High-Quality Online Assessments
2. Traditional Assessments in Virtual Environments
3. Culturally Responsive Assessments
4. Authentic Online Assessments
5. Evaluating Online Assessments
6. Developing a High-Quality Assessment Strategy

Each section asks you to review content, explore resources, and complete small reflection tasks.

The resources and learning activities included here are intended to support the following learning outcomes:

- Discuss the characteristics of online assessment that lead to student success.
- Adapt traditional modes of assessment to authentic modes in online environments.
- Reflect on alternative assessment practices in support of culturally responsive pedagogies.
- Develop an online assessment strategy that incorporates principles of equity, inclusion and belonging and fosters student success in real-world contexts.

Guiding Questions

- Do you design a variety of low-stakes assessments to support learning in an online environment?
- Do the assessments in your course allow students to develop real-world skills?
- When designing assessments, do you consider learner identities, interests, goals and learning preferences?
- For graded assessments, are students clear on expectations and achievement standards?
- Do you prioritize feedback that helps students work towards meeting learning goals?

Deliverable

Online assessment strategy

Key Terms and Concepts

- Diagnostic Assessment
- Formative Assessment
- Summative Assessment
- Culturally Responsive Assessment
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
- Equity-Deserving Groups
- Learner Variability
- Authentic Assessment
- Alternative Assessment

Recommended Resources

This module refers to strategies and tips adapted from the following resources:

1. Briefing Paper: [Using Formative Assessment to Improve Student Achievement](#) (2012)
2. Tip Sheet: [UDL Tips for Assessment](#) (2021)
3. Research Study Summary: [Teaching Strategies of Award-Winning Online Instructors](#) (2020)
4. Academic Paper: [Analyzing Assessment Practices for Indigenous Students](#) (2021)
5. Self-Directed Modules: [Understanding Indigenous Perspectives](#) (2012)
6. Blog Post: [Authentic Assessment Toolbox](#)
7. Animated Video: [Authentic Assessment](#) (2018)
8. Short Article (11-minute read): [Authentic Assessment](#) (2019)

Overview of High-Quality Online Assessments

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Reflection

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=98#h5p-20

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</table>

High-Quality Online Assessments

Assessment is a process that helps us gather information about learner performance.

The choices we make in assessment design guide the design and delivery of lessons and learning activities in face-to-face and online contexts.[1]

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

A well-planned assessment strategy is essential to learner success in virtual environments. This strategy includes a variety of assessments that are:

1. Authentic

Authentic assessments engage learners in real-world topics, increase learner motivation and add meaning and purpose to online tasks.

2. Culturally Responsive

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1. Elbow, P. (1993). Ranking, evaluating, and liking: Sorting out three forms of judgment. *College English*, 55(2), 187–206. https://doi.org/10.2307/378503

When we design **culturally responsive** assessments, we incorporate learners' backgrounds, identities and interests, and learning preferences into all elements of the task. In some cases, learners can be invited to co-construct assessment goals, content, instructions and rubrics. When learners see themselves represented in learning materials and content, and are invited to participate in assessment design, they may be more invested in – and aware of – their development and growth as learners.[2]

3. Aligned Strongly with Course Learning Goals

High-quality online assessments support purposeful and meaningful learning experiences when they align with the learning goals and activities of the course. This is called **constructive curriculum alignment**.

Constructive Curriculum Alignment
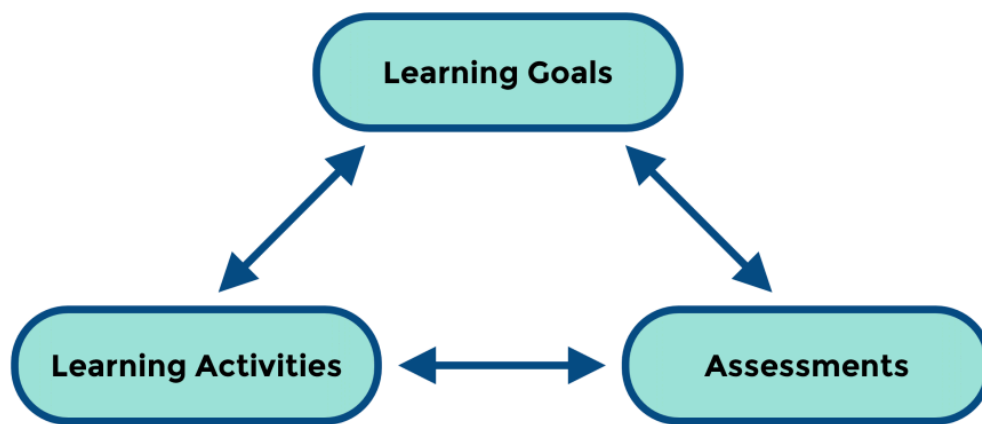
Caption: The Constructive Curriculum Alignment cycle involves Learning Goals, Assessments and Learning Activities. In this diagram, "Learning Goals" is at the top with double-headed arrows to "Assessments" at the bottom right and "Learning Activities" at the bottom left. Additionally, there is a double-headed arrow between "Learning Activities" and "Assessments." Source: "Constructive Curriculum Alignment" by Seneca College, The Teaching & Learning Centre, CC BY-NC-SA

Tip: When designing an assessment, make sure that the skills and knowledge you are measuring align with the learning goals of the course.

Through frequent and ongoing assessment, we not only see the progress of student learning, but we also see opportunities to reflect on and improve the quality of learning experiences for students.

2. Montenegro, E., & Jankowski, N. A. (2017). *Equity and assessment: Moving towards culturally responsive assessment [PDF]*. (Occasional Paper No. 29). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

Criteria for Effective Online Design

Kumar et al. (2019) analyzed data related to the online course design of eight award-winning online teachers in the United States. The goal was to shed light on what factors influenced these faculty in "exemplary online course design" (p. 161).[3] These award winners shared their attitudes, experiences and approaches to online course design. All of these elements refer to module design, which includes assessments.

The researchers determined the following criteria for effective online design:

- authenticity and relevance
- use of multimedia resources
- student creation of digital content (individual and collaborative)
- student reflection on learning
- clearly articulated purpose of activities, technologies and assessments

As you read through the online assessment strategies presented in this module, consider how each assessment meets these broader criteria for effective online design.

3. Kumar, S., Martin, F., Budhrani, K., & Ritzhaupt, A. (2019). Award-winning faculty online teaching practices: Elements of award-winning courses. *Online Learning, 23*(4), 160-180. https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v23i4.2077

Traditional Assessments in Virtual Environments

Traditional Assessments in Virtual Environments

Traditional assessments measure knowledge and understanding by guiding learners to:

- recall facts and concepts
- measure their own improvement over time
- comprehend and restate ideas
- articulate knowledge

Quizzes, reports, essays, multiple-choice questions and unit tests are a few examples of traditional assessments.

Traditional assessment methods are common in virtual learning environments such as learning management systems (LMSs) like Blackboard, D2L Brightspace and Moodle.
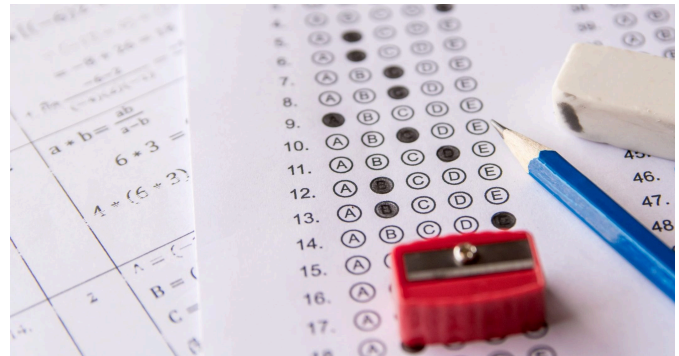
Source: "[Pencil, sharpener and eraser on multiple-choice answer sheet with answers bubbled](#)" by [NaMaKuKi](#) from [Adobe Stock free assets license](#)

Benefits

When accessed in an LMS, traditional assessments are fairly easy to assign, submit and grade. LMS companies are continually improving assessment tools to improve accessibility and functionality, and make student evaluation more user-friendly for post-secondary instructors.

Limitations

While traditional assessments can, in some cases, encourage students to apply new knowledge, they offer little opportunity for collaboration and strategic problem solving. They do little to teach us about who learners are, what their goals are, and how you as a teacher can help them meet their goals.

Traditional assessments can create **barriers to learning** when:

- their format and design are inaccessible
- their instructions are unclear
- their evaluation methods are unfair and not inclusive
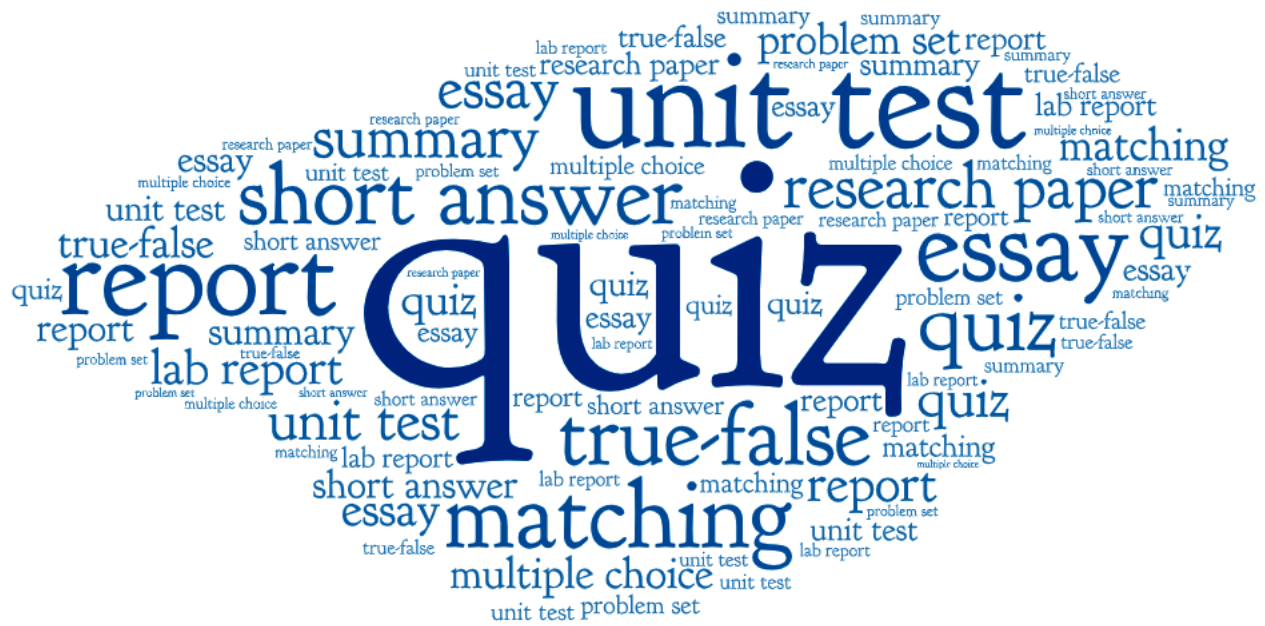
Caption: A word cloud of traditional assignment types: quiz, report, true-false, unit test, short answer, matching, multiple choice, essay, summary, lab report and problem set. Source: *"Traditional Assessment Word Cloud"* by *Seneca College, The Teaching & Learning Centre*, *CC BY-NC-SA*

Knowledge Checks: An Example of Online Traditional Assessment

A common example of online traditional assessments is a **knowledge check**, which is a quick and easy strategy for students to self-assess their understanding of content as they work their way through learning modules at their own pace. Knowledge checks are traditional examples of **formative assessment**, in which learners can gauge their in-process learning to ensure they can understand, remember and apply concepts and ideas in a low-stakes environment.

Knowledge checks guide us in our planning, helping us monitor learner participation and identify gaps for learners who are struggling.

Key Points of Knowledge Checks

Knowledge checks usually consist of two to four questions with no penalty for incorrect responses. Students who provide the incorrect response are prompted to try again. Sometimes each response will prompt an explanation to provide context and better support learning.

Here's an example of a knowledge check.

Tip: Creating online knowledge checks is straightforward. It takes just a few minutes for teachers to build them directly in the LMS. Alternatively, they can find free and easy digital tools such as quiz generators, then embed the quiz into the LMS.

Traditional Assignments Provide Structure

Traditional assignments provide structure for educators because they help us:

- assign grades
- conduct knowledge checks to see where learners are at
- figure out who was paying attention and who wasn't
- compare learners against standards
- compare learners against each other

In the slides below, use the arrows to read some of the reasons why teachers use traditional assessments in online environments.

Knowledge Check: Traditional or Not?

Let's review your understanding of traditional assessments with another knowledge check activity.

Here are some examples of assessments that are common in virtual learning environments. Each is assessing student knowledge of military service of Indigenous Peoples and Black Canadians.

Review each assessment below and indicate if it is a traditional assessment or a non-traditional assessment. For each traditional assessment, review the proposed alternative assessment. Use the arrows to navigate through all four assessments.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=102#h5p-23

Reflection

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=102#h5p-24

Traditional Assessments as Barriers to Learning

Earlier, we discussed how traditional assessment practices can create barriers to learning when their format and design are inaccessible, when instructions are unclear and when evaluation methods are unfair and not inclusive.

Students may struggle with traditional assessments when:

- time limits are not realistic
- the weighting of the assignment does not reflect the amount of work that goes into the completion of the task
- assessment topics are unrelated to the learning materials or course goals
- assessments are not authentic because they don't apply to the real world
- there are no opportunities for self-expression

Tips to Removing Barriers in Assessments[1]

- Use concise, plain language in assessment instructions.
- Provide instructions and rubrics ahead of time, and encourage questions.
- Expect application, not memorization.
- Make connections to real-world situations and complex problems.
- Follow [UDL principles in assessment design](#).

  ◦ Provide choice for students in topics and processes.
  ◦ Use multiple modes of representing information.
  ◦ Support learner variability by asking students to present information in a mode that suits their preferences (graphic, written, spoken, musical, etc.).
  ◦ Allow for revisions and consider "ungrading." Instead, provide constructive feedback in writing or in audio format for meaningful revisions.

Key Takeaways

    While designing online assessments such as multiple-choice tests and end-of-module knowledge checks, be mindful to reduce and remove barriers by lowering the stakes. For instance, consider removing time limits, and find opportunities for students to self-assess and reflect on their progress.

1. Cast, *UDL and Assessment*. UDL on Campus. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from http://udloncampus.cast.org/page/assessment_udl#l1970365

Culturally Responsive Assessments

> Assessment is subjugated by a Western worldview…much of the mainstream culture-infused, linguistic-laden practices of assessment disadvantage Indigenous students.
>   – Preston & Claypool[1]

Traditional assessments tend to reinforce a linear, hierarchical, objective-oriented Western world view, rewarding memorization of facts that align with colonial, white-supremacist histories while misrepresenting, overlooking or erasing the histories, genres and rhetorical approaches associated with Black people, Indigenous Peoples, and People of Colour (BIPOC).[2]

Source: "Group of people connection digital device concept" by Rawpixel.com from Adobe Stock free assets license

Our own biases and assumptions about learning are communicated directly and indirectly through our assessment design. While we might assume that we are clearly communicating instructions, deadlines and achievement standards to learners, we actually may be excluding, or "othering," students who are racialized, students from non-Western cultures, and/or students with language-proficiency challenges. As a result of these assumptions, learners may feel confused by unclear expectations, overwhelmed by the task and not set up for success.

Culturally Unresponsive Assessment Design

Here are some examples of assessments that are culturally unresponsive because they do not consider learners' identities, backgrounds and experiences.

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Example 1:

1. Preston, J. P., & Claypool, T. (2021). Analyzing assessment practices for Indigenous students. *Frontiers in Education 6,* 679972. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.679972
2. Inoue, A. B. (2015). *Antiracist writing assessment ecologies: Teaching and assessing writing for a socially just future*. The WAC Clearinghouse (online)/Parlor Press (print): Anderson, South Carolina. https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2015.0698

A math test with lengthy instructions that require students to interpret complex linguistic features.

Why is this assessment not inclusive?

In this test, students' language proficiency is being assessed, not their math skills, which will disadvantage students whose main language is not English.[3]

Example 2:
A timed online sociology quiz for a class of young adults where the responses depend on students' recognizing pop culture celebrities from the UK.

Why is this assessment not inclusive?

The design of this quiz indicates conscious or unconscious bias on the part of the designer, who made assumptions about the age of students without taking into account their cultural background, interests and access to technology.

Example 3:
An online quiz requires students to download the free trial of an interactive video polling tool. The tool requires heavy use of bandwidth. They will end up paying a small monthly fee for access if they forget to cancel the free trial.

Why is this assessment not inclusive?

This quiz presupposes that learners live in parts of the world with easy access to affordable internet. Since some apps require users to provide a credit card number for free trials, requiring students to purchase this app to complete a quiz is not only unresponsive to learner needs, but it potentially violates accessibility policies at the educational institution.

Example 4:
An online assignment that requires all students to watch a documentary featuring a traumatic historical event such as genocide. The task is assigned with little explanation or context, no trigger warnings and little opportunity for discussion on nuance and stories of triumph and success.

Why is this assessment not inclusive?

This assessment is potentially harmful to learners. It can cause long-term systemic harm if all learners are not encouraged to use a social justice or anti-colonial lens while analyzing the documentary. Students whose identity aligns with the victims could be retraumatized, without an opportunity to share stories of strength, joy and success. When learners are deprived of context and opportunities for critical analysis and discussion using an anti-racist lens, biases and assumptions could go unchecked over time, thus reinforcing existing racial biases and promoting inequitable, oppressive institutional systems.

3. Preston, J. P., & Claypool, T. (2021). Analyzing assessment practices for Indigenous students. *Frontiers in Education 6,* 679972. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.679972

> **Tip:** One of the most effective ways to remove barriers to traditional assessments is to design **culturally responsive assessment practices.** Assessments are culturally responsive when they:
>
> 1. make learning meaningful and help students think about their learning
> 2. foster cultural competence
> 3. promote socio-political consciousness[4]

In culturally responsive assessment, rote memorization is discouraged in favour of interactive and authentic opportunities to collaborate with others, encouraging students to contribute to the community through meaningful and intentional action.

Examples of culturally responsive online assessments could include petitions, social media campaigns, podcasts and charitable events, provided that they foster belongingness through community building and identity sharing.

> Integrating online assessment practices that prioritize human experience and individual learning can foster inclusive learning environments and encourage learners to create their own transformative learning experiences. Furthermore, equitable and inclusive assessment design can help to dismantle systemic inequities caused by racism, bias and discrimination.
> – Jessie Stommel[5]

4. Ladson Billings, G. (2018, February 23). Culturally Relevant Pedagogy by Gloria Ladson Billings. [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from https://youtu.be/4HR8NEPK7l0
5. Stommel, J. (2021, June 11). Ungrading: An introduction. JessieStommel.com. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from https://www.jessestommel.com/ungrading-an-introduction/

Integrating Inclusion and Belonging into Assessments
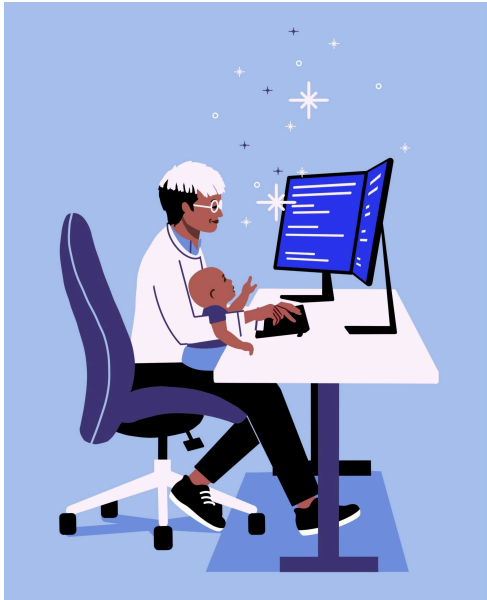
Source: "[Non-binary parent working from home at a computer desk with a newborn child in arms](#)" by [Sophie Alp](#) from [Adobe Stock free assets license](#)

Designing culturally inclusive learning experiences has the power to validate learner identities and empower learners to interact meaningfully with ways of understanding via transcultural and [translingual](#) lenses.

Students who see themselves represented in assessment design and delivery are more likely to feel valued and engaged in the learning experience.

For example, people represented in images, scenarios and examples in assessments will impact the extent to which a student feels as if they belong.

When designing assessments, seek out images that represent a variety of racial and ethnic identities, sexual orientations, gender identities and abilities.

Image 1   Image 2

Caption: Functionally, the two images convey the same message of a teacher assisting elementary-grade students with technology. The teacher is identical in both images; however, Image 2 is more inclusive in the diverse representation of students.
Source: [Adaptation](#) of "[Image 1: Elementary students learning on computers](#)" and "[Image 2: Teacher assisting students in computer lab](#)" by [Hero Images](#) from [Adobe Stock free assets license](#)

High-quality online assessment design is evidenced by tasks that respect and prioritize the identity of all learners, incorporating learner choice and encouraging students to participate in the construction of assessment design (i.e., selecting topics, selecting resources and submitting in modalities of their choice).

An assessment that responds to the cultures, interests, preferences and practical goals of students is more likely to lead to student success.

Learners feel connected to an assignment when they see themselves represented in it. This gives them the chance to reflect on their development as they go. For instance, students can be assessed on social justice topics through collaborative tasks suitable for a variety of disciplines.

Source: "[Asian women podcaster podcasting and recording online talk show at studio using headphones](#)" by [snowing12](#) from [Adobe Stock free assets license](#)

Examples include:

- creating and promoting letter-writing campaigns to world leaders on the rights of girls and women (Public Relations, Gender Studies)
- developing outreach strategies for community gardens (Sustainability, Social and Community Services)
- creating and publishing a podcast to celebrate the successes of business owners with disabilities in the local community (Business Marketing)

Assessments that Incorporate Indigenous World Views and Pedagogies

> All students deserve a quality education, one that benefits from the contributions of the original peoples on the land they now call home.
> – Jean-Paul Restoule[6]

Understanding Indigenous perspectives is essential to a high-quality post-secondary educational experience in Ontario. For one, "an Indigenous education is an environmental education. It behooves us to know Indigenous knowledge and educations in order to live well and live sustainability with our planet."[7]

Caption: "*A close-up view on the hands of two spiritual people, passing sacred objects during an outdoor meeting celebrating native culture and tradition*" by *Valmedia* from *Adobe Stock free assets license*

Non-Indigenous educators who are unfamiliar with Indigenous ways of knowing and relating to others should not feel discouraged from seeking opportunities to learn how to integrate Indigenous perspectives into their assessment practices. Not only would Indigenous students feel included and see themselves represented in Indigenous-inspired learning activities and assessments, but non-Indigenous students would develop cultural competence by exploring other world views and challenging their own biases and ideologies.

To develop assessments that are culturally relevant to Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous educators are encouraged to identify areas for further growth and opportunities for all students to engage with Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing.

For instance, build your understanding of Indigenous histories and perspectives by seeking out free and accessible educational resources such as the University of Toronto's Indigenous Education self-directed online modules. Consider how the common cultural and philosophical themes among multiple Indigenous world views might inform your practice.[8]

Keep in mind that there is no singular Indigenous perspective. Build relationships with Indigenous students, colleagues, advisors and community members. Deepen your understanding of the complex and diverse approaches to working within — and finding ways to work against — a colonized post-secondary educational system.

Here are some concepts to keep in mind while designing assessments that will help us deepen our understanding in Indigenous ways of knowing.[9]

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Holistic

Measuring knowledge should be a holistic endeavor that values reflection and oral discussion.
Relational

6. Restoule, J.P. (n.d.) *Indigenous Education: Modules*. University of Toronto OISE. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/abed101/modules/
7. Ibid
8. Ibid
9. Ibid

We are interconnected. Building strong relationships is essential to good learning and a good life.
Shared Knowledge

We co-construct new knowledge by sharing knowledge and respecting the knowledge of those who came before.
Storytelling

Our understanding of the world depends upon Indigenous perspectives.
Social and Ecological Justice

Principles of sustainability and human rights are inherently connected to the knowledge of Indigenous peoples and the oppression they experienced and continue to experience.

> From a holistic Indigenous standpoint, education is about gaining life skills; it is about communicative interactions, social relationships, self-discovery, and self-growth. In turn, assessment and self-assessment need to focus on the diversity of learning; the whole learning experience.
>   – Preston & Claypool[10]

Online Assessment Design Strategies That Support Indigenous Students

Designing online assessments that incorporate Indigenous perspectives, world views and pedagogies is a way of respecting the identities of Indigenous students, but it also supports all learners in engaging with Indigenous ways of learning in meaningful, more inclusive ways.

- Encourage storytelling, especially digital storytelling through video, podcasts, graphic arts, and conversation.
- Promote good relations through collaborative tasks that encourage community building and respect for individual differences.
- Design simulations and scenarios that promote deep discussion on the human experience as they relate to history, social justice and the environment.
- Encourage plurilingual and translingual opportunities through assessment.[11]
- Encourage private practice before public performance.[12]
- Invite emotional response through reflection (i.e., portfolios).
- Facilitate knowledge sharing circles.[13] Details will be provided later in the module.
- Promote ungrading, reflection and self-grading.[14] Details will be provided later in the module.

10. Preston, J. P., & Claypool, T. (2021). Analyzing assessment practices for Indigenous students. *Frontiers in Education 6,* 679972. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.679972
11. Chen, L., Karas, M., Shalizar, R., & Piccardo, E. (2022). From 'promising controversies' to negotiated practices: A research synthesis of plurilingual pedagogy in global contexts. *TESL Canada Journal, 38(2)*, 1-35.
12. Preston, J. P., & Claypool, T. (2021). Analyzing assessment practices for Indigenous students. *Frontiers in Education 6,* 679972. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.679972
13. Murphy, R. (2012). About sharing circles [PDF]. RavenSpeaks.ca. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from https://ravenspeaks.ca/teacher-resources/
14. Stommel, J. (2021, June 11). Ungrading: An introduction. JessieStommel.com. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from https://www.jessestommel.com/ungrading-an-introduction/

If you are unfamiliar with Indigenous perspectives on teaching and learning, find out if your institution offers curriculum development support with Indigenous advisors. Reach out and get to know your Indigenous colleagues. Share your willingness to self-educate, and commit to supporting decolonizing your curriculum by incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing into assessment design.

Be mindful that Indigenous students shouldn't have to be the only educators in a post-secondary space. We all are responsible for self-educating and should avoid traumatizing students by leaning on them to educate us, especially if they have not disclosed their identities to the group.

Source: "A man and woman writing on a whiteboard" by Lynne from Adobe Stock free assets license

> When educational curricula and pedagogy are imbued with Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, Indigenous student learning improves.
> – Preston & Claypool[15]

Moving towards Alternative Assessments

Consider how we might move away from traditional assessment design that favours Western perspectives.

We can integrate alternative assessments into our practice when we self-educate on students' backgrounds and cultures. We can build our own cultural competence first by learning about students — who they are, what they are passionate about, and what their goals are.

Then, we can seek out local and global initiatives that inspire students to share their ways of being, knowing and doing with each other and with us.

Activity: Culturally Relevant Assessment

You will be presented with two scenarios that apply a traditional assessment. Read through each traditional assessment and ask yourself:

1. Why is the assessment not culturally inclusive?
2. How can the assessment incorporate a culturally responsive alternative assessment?

15. Preston, J. P., & Claypool, T. (2021). Analyzing assessment practices for Indigenous students. *Frontiers in Education 6,* 679972. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.679972

Use the documentation tool below to record your answers.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=110#h5p-25

Once you have recorded your answers. Take a look at the suggested answers that include a culturally responsive example and its corresponding lesson planning considerations.

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Scenario 1: Suggested Answers

1. Why is the assessment not culturally inclusive?

   ◦ This assessment does not use a culturally responsive approach. First, the topic lacks relevance for many learners and does not connect with their personal experiences and give them opportunities to learn about each other's identities. There is potential for community building here, but comparing sports on a discussion forum is not likely to achieve this. In addition, many international students don't have access to — or experience with — Canada's most popular winter sports for financial reasons, cultural reasons or because they are differently abled. For some, sports such as skiing and hockey are financially inaccessible. A discussion forum about winter sports in Canada lacks meaning for many students, disconnecting them — "othering" — them.

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2. How can the assessment incorporate a culturally responsive alternative assessment?

   ◦ As a pre-activity, the students learn about traditional medicine wheels and how they represent Indigenous perspectives on health and wellness. The teacher then conducts an anonymous online poll about popular winter activities enjoyed by students. As a follow up, the teacher then facilitates opportunities on Zoom for students to share their outdoor experiences in the winter and how those experiences impact their relationship to the land and improve their health and wellness.

Planning Considerations

Students complete a unit on Indigenous perspectives on the [medicine wheel](#), focusing on the four aspects of self as it relates to land relations. Students also learn about the impact of colonialism on traditional practices such as sharing circles.[16]

Scenario 2: Suggested Answers

1. Why is the assessment not culturally inclusive?

   ◦ This approach could cause harm to all learners, especially if the documentary clips are pulled out of context and the entire documentary is not presented and discussed as a whole. For one, students who are Black are being subjected to retellings of traumatic historical moments of racism, without any context or purpose for learning this subject. The Black baseball players are portrayed as victims with an onus on them to be resilient within a racist system, when in fact it is the system that must change. Students are also forced to listen to racist language being used repeatedly. In addition, the instructor has not recognized their bias when selecting this material, nor have they indicated an opportunity to locate their identity as a person with power and privilege during these challenging discussions.

2. How can the assessment incorporate a culturally responsive alternative assessment?

   ◦ The teacher uses an anti-racist lens to guide students' learning experience. The teacher selects a recent video that features professional athletes from different professional sports leagues standing united to fight racism and injustice by sharing their personal experiences. Rather than victimize, a resource like this provides historical context while celebrating the strength of professional athletes within BIPOC communities. Some examples include a 2:02 minutes video [Hockey Diversity Alliance Separates from NHL Over Lack of Action [Video]](#)[17] and a 4:45 minutes video [Addressing and Overcoming Racism in Sport [Video]](#).[18] Each video addresses the need for systemic change through policy change, not because of the responsibilities of specific athletes. Students learn the context behind the video and are given prompts to help them analyze the socio-historical factors that contributed to systemic racism in this sport. They then identify a sport of their choice and are asked to find other videos that represent an anti-racist approach to positive change in specific sports. With a solution-focused mindset, students share ideas and reflect on their own identities in relation to power and privilege in sport.

16. Waters, L.B., Pitawanakwat, R., & Dachyshyn, D. (2022). Medicine wheel questions and activities. In Skoden. Pressbooks. https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/skoden/chapter/medicine-wheel/
17. CBC News. (2020, October 8.) [Hockey diversity alliance separates from NHL over lack of action](#). [Video]. Retrieved January 25, 2022, from https://youtu.be/JYKwxrVm0Jk
18. CBC News. (2021, July 18). [Addressing and overcoming racism in sport](#). [Video]. Retrieved January 25, 2022, from https://youtu.be/Ka_zsEGRe04

Planning Considerations

Prior to this assessment, students need to have opportunities to learn about and address systemic racism in sport through a lens of strength and power of members in the BIPOC communities. This approach balances stories of oppression with stories of strength and celebration of community and culture.

Key Takeaways

One way to remove online learning barriers is to design culturally responsive assessments. Creating non-traditional assessments that incorporate different worldviews can help to foster an intercultural and inclusive learning environment. For instance, create opportunities for students to participate in the planning and evaluation of online assessments related to social justice and the environment.

Authentic Online Assessments

Introductory Brainstorm Activity

Before we move into this section on authentic online assessments, please think about a course you teach and consider these questions:

- How does the course support learners in becoming industry ready?
- How does the course help students to become community-minded citizens?
- What real-world tasks are common in this industry and/or community?

Please respond to at least five questions below that relate to you. Then export this data and save the file. You will revisit these ideas at the end of this module.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=112#h5p-26*

From Traditional Assessment to Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment supports the belief that students need to perform meaningful tasks in the real world in order to become productive citizens. To help students become proficient in the real world, they should build competency in tasks by taking on "real-world challenges"[1] in collaborative, multidimensional ways.

Through authentic assessment, learners demonstrate achievement by applying their knowledge. Authentic assessment measures the application of knowledge rather than the content knowledge itself.

Learners also become more acutely aware of their own skill development and learn to clearly articulate their skills and how they might work to improve in certain skill areas.

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1. Mueller, J. (2018). *How is authentic assessment similar to/different from traditional assessment?* Authentic Assessment Toolbox. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from http://jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/whatisit.htm#similar

Authentic Assessment is Experiential

Learners become immersed in meaningful tasks that build relevant skills and help them meet their personal and professional goals. Learners can take ownership over their learning experience and develop an awareness of their skill development over time.

Examples of authentic assessments [2] include:

- public-facing presentations, videos, posters, podcasts, infographics
- systems mapping
- sharing circles
- proposals
- and more

Review Activity: Traditional vs. Authentic Assessment

Consider these contrasting approaches.

For the dialogue cards below, read the traditional assessment, and consider an alternative authentic assessment. Then, select the card to flip it over to view an option we've come up with. Use the arrows to view all six cards.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=112#h5p-27

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2. *Authentic assessments.* (2020). Seneca College The Teaching & Learning Centre. Retrieved on December 15, 2021, from https://employees.senecacollege.ca/spaces/39/the-teaching-learning-centre/articles/press-release/7602/authentic-assessment

Challenges to Authentic Assessment

Transforming from traditional to authentic modes of assessment may seem daunting and counterintuitive for some faculty. Here are some common concerns expressed by faculty.

Select each quote to review a response/counterargument. Use the arrows to view all four cards.

Tip: As you go through the types and examples of online assessment in this module, consider how each assessment meets these criteria for effective online design.

Four Types of Authentic Online Assessment

In this section, we will overview four types of student-centred online assessment. For each assessment type, review examples of techniques that help to improve the quality of our assessment design to improve student learning.

All four types of assessment should be frequent and ongoing throughout your course. However, when planning your assessment strategy, prioritize formative low-stakes assessment over high-stakes assessment to limit burnout for students and instructors alike. For graded assessments, ensure that the expected workload for students is reasonable for the weighting of the task.

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Prior Knowledge Assessment

Explanation: These are diagnostic and help us determine the needs of learners at the individual and group level. They show what students already know or can do. Teachers use this data to clarify learning goals and adapt lessons to meet learners where they are at. They are not graded and help us determine the needs of learners at the individual and group level.

These assessments can "activate" learners' prior knowledge, helping them connect new ideas to prior knowledge. Watch the 1:56 minute video to learn more about activating prior knowledge [Video].

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=112#oembed-1*

Online Examples Overviewed in this Module

- concept mapping
- online polling
- online collaboration
- discussion forums

Formative Assessment

Explanation: Formative assessments are low-stakes assessments, like quick "checks" to make sure students understand new concepts and can apply new skills. These assessments should be ongoing, frequent and engaging for learners.

Online Examples Overviewed in this Module

- one-minute responses
- exit tickets
- pair/small group task

Demonstration of Learning Assessment

Explanation: Students demonstrate learning by completing real-world tasks and solving real-world problems. They are often task-based and emphasize "doing." They often mimic the workplace and/or community contexts. Authentic assessments encourage critical thinking by emphasizing judgment, negotiation, analysis and innovation.

Authentic assessment is usually summative, meaning that learners complete a task to demonstrate the knowledge or skills acquired at the end of a module, unit or course.

Online Examples Overviewed in this Module

- infographics
- digital storytelling
- systems mapping
- virtual simulations

Reflection as Learning Assessment

Explanation: The teacher facilitates learner reflection by prompting learners to think about their own development over time (i.e., metacognition) and identify goals and strategies to employ next time they complete a new task.

Online Examples Overviewed in this Module

- sharing circles
- performance letters
- multimodal reflection

High-Quality Online Assessment Strategies

Here are some online assessment strategies that:

- encourage authentic learning experiences
- reduce barriers to learning
- support learner variability

Most of these strategies offer learners a choice of modalities to share their knowledge and demonstrate skill. Consider offering a choice of digital tools to present and submit work. Try to integrate authentic opportunities for learning while doing the assessment.

Tip: Be prepared to conduct a quick Google search on free and accessible digital tools that can facilitate the design and delivery of assessment activities and practices.

Review these strategies. Which ones are most intriguing to you? Visit the various links to explore further.
Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Prior Knowledge Assessment Strategies

In the interactive element below, use the menu bar (☰) on the left or the arrows on the right to view the contents on all pages (4).

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=112#h5p-30*

Formative Assessment Strategies

In the interactive element below, use the menu bar (≡) on the left or the arrows on the right to view the contents on all pages (3).

> An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=112#h5p-31*

Demonstration of Learning Assessment Strategies

In the interactive element below, use the menu bar (≡) on the left or the arrows on the right to view the contents on all pages (4).

> An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=112#h5p-32*

Reflection as Learning Assessment Strategies

In the interactive element below, use the menu bar (≡) on the left or the arrows on the right to view the contents on all pages (2).

> An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=112#h5p-33*

Reflection – Applying Your Knowledge

Now that you have reviewed some online authentic assessment ideas, return back to your brainstorming notes from the beginning of this section. Look at your five examples of industry and community tasks and identify an online authentic assessment idea that can support this industry/community task.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=112#h5p-34

Key Takeaways

Authentic online assessments encourage students to demonstrate their knowledge through real-world tasks. Ask yourself what skills are valued in the industry and communities in which students will live and work. Assignments such as public-facing collaborative projects using relevant digital tools will allow students to develop real-world skills and apply their knowledge and reflect on their learning. Make sure to use a variety of assessment techniques, with an emphasis on low-stakes formative assessments.

Evaluating Online Assessments

Assessment, Evaluation and Grading

What is the difference between assessment, evaluation and grading?
Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Assessment

Assessment is gathering information about how students are progressing through a learning experience. It involves a variety of methods to monitor student learning.

Evaluation

Evaluation is determining the quality of student work based on set criteria. It answers the question "To what extent has the student met the learning outcomes?" Defining criteria clearly helps teachers measure student progress in relation to the learning goals of the module, unit or course.

Grading

Grading is the assignment of a value for an evaluation of an assessment. They can be numeric (e.g., 70%), alphabetic (e.g., B+) or descriptive (e.g., Satisfactory).

A well-designed online assessment allows us to measure learning effectively, while also promoting learning with meaningful feedback and encouraging learners to reflect on their progress.
There are three steps to measuring learning.
Select the "+" icons below for more information.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=115#h5p-35

Rubrics

Rubrics, when designed effectively and presented clearly, can support learning and help students measure their own progress and set new learning goals for themselves. Rubrics are essential elements for any task-based authentic assessment.
Three popular types of rubrics are analytic, holistic and single-point.[1] No matter which rubric you select, ensure that it:

- articulates clear criteria for success

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1. Gonzalez, J. (2014, May 1). *Know your terms: holistic, analytic, and single-point rubrics*. Cult of Pedagogy. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/holistic-analytic-single-point-rubrics/

- is broad enough to allow for multimodality, accessibility and inclusivity
- complements feedback and comments from the assignment

Since we have been focusing on authentic assessment in this module, consider how to measure skills that support learners in industry readiness and community engagement. For instance, ask yourself what skills are valued by industry experts and community leaders.

> Here is a sample single-point rubric that aligns with successful demonstration of skills, knowledge and attitudes that lead to success in the workplace:[2]

2. Ibid

Criteria	Needs Improvement	Successful Completion	Feedback / Comments
Communication skills: States and explains positions clearly and concisely.		✓	
Collaboration: Makes a meaningful contribution to the team.	✓		Consider sharing your availability with teammates and decide on roles and responsibilities at an earlier stage of collaboration.
Critical Thinking: Demonstrates strong reasoning skills. Uses well-informed judgment to analyze and evaluate.		✓	
Digital Skills: Demonstrates effective use of digital tools.		✓	

Feedback

What is the purpose of feedback? Is it to explain a grade? Is it to provide further detail that a rubric can't capture?

Feedback is an opportunity to guide learners in their development. Feedback should be frequent, ongoing and immediate for it to make a positive impact on learning. In a virtual learning environment, feedback software allows for easy marginal comments and text-specific feedback.

Here are some tips for providing feedback in online environments:

- Provide rich and meaningful feedback that remains focused on the overall objective of the assignment. Establish a dialogue with learners, and use a friendly, conversational tone that encourages reflection and acknowledges the process of learning, rather than the product.
- Use the language found in the rubric so students will see connections between their performance and the criteria for success.
- Take a "feed forward" approach. Focus on what two or three things students can do to improve next time.
- Ask learners how they prefer to receive feedback (text, audio, audio/visual), and take advantage of suitable digital tools that make your feedback more accessible to learners.

Tip: Online feedback: Audio feedback applications are growing in popularity because of their ease of use and conversational approach.[3] Before committing to an app, make sure that it is free and accessible for all learners and is AODA compliant.

Peer Assessment

When designed carefully and delivered with clarity, peer assessment and feedback can be more reliable than grade-based assessments.[4]

The skill of giving effective feedback must be learned, modelled and practiced. Through peer assessment, learners develop the real-world skill of giving meaningful feedback. They also strengthen their critical reflection skills and deepen their awareness of core skills competencies developed through this assessment. By reviewing others' work with a critical lens, they are reflecting on their own progress at the same time.

3. Stuart, D. (2020, August 20). *How (and why) to leave audio feedback on student work this year, whether during in-person or distance learning*. Dave Stuart Jr. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from https://davestuartjr.com/how-and-why-to-leave-audio-feedback-on-student-work-distance-learning/
4. McGill Teaching and Learning Services. (2021, March). *Designing peer assessment assignments* [PDF]. University of McGill Teaching and Learning Services. Retrieved on December 15, 2021, from https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/instructors/assessment/peer

Digital Tools for Assessment in a Virtual Environment

Assessment tools previously used in in-person classrooms may not translate well to a virtual environment. However, there are many digital tools that have been developed and are frequently used. To help you start thinking about different types of tools you can use for online assessments, take a look at Cool Tools for Online Assessment[5] and Digital Tools.[6]

To help you curate your own list of digital tools that can be used to design and submit online assessments, download the fillable PDF Digital Tools for Assessment in a Virtual Environment [PDF].A table is provided for you; in each row, you will find an assessment strategy, along with the type(s) of authentic online assessment, and space for you to type in a digital tool example. Examples of digital tools have been provided for the first two assessment strategies (live polling and surveys/questionnaires); feel free to add more.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=115#h5p-36*

For each assessment strategy try to find a suitable digital tool. Research may be necessary. The best places to start are your Teaching and Learning Centres, your organization's library team, and, of course, Google.

Tip: Keep your completed fillable PDF Digital Tools for Assessment in a Virtual Environment [PDF] handy as a reference when designing your assessments.

Reflection

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=115#h5p-37*

5. Parkins, S. (2020, June). *Cool Tools for Online Assessment*. Seneca College. Retrieved January 25, 2022, from https://employees.senecacollege.ca/spaces/153/academic-newsletter/articles/june-2020/8909/cool-tools-for-online-assessment
6. Digital Tools. (2021). Humber College. Retrieved January 22, 2022, from https://humberonline.ca/tools/

Key Takeaways

A well-designed online assessment allows us to measure learning effectively, while also promoting learning with meaningful feedback and encouraging learners to reflect on their progress. Choose the most appropriate and accessible digital tool that allows you to evaluate students equitably. Make sure to articulate reasonable criteria and a rubric that describes achievement standards that support assessment objectives.

Developing a High-Quality Assessment Strategy

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how to apply the concepts from earlier in this module towards the development of a high-quality online assessment strategy. Such a strategy helps us ensure that all students have an equal chance to meet achievement standards articulated by course learning outcomes.

A high-quality online assessment strategy incorporates principles of equity and inclusion and fosters student success in real-world contexts. It also takes into account two other key elements of assessment design:

- specific and measurable course learning outcomes
- assessment criteria identified by performance standards and measured through rubrics
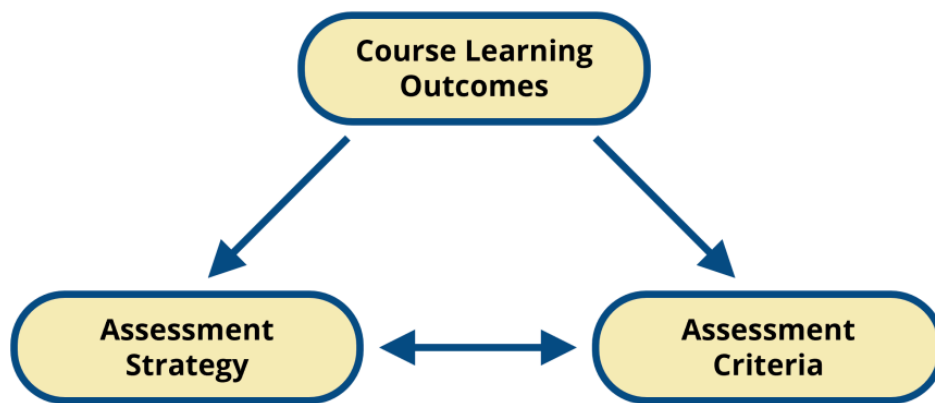
Caption: The Assessing Learning Outcomes process includes Course Learning Outcomes, Assessment Strategy and Assessment Criteria. "Course Learning Outcomes" is at the top with arrows leading down to "Assessment Strategy" on the bottom left and "Assessment Criteria" on the bottom right. There is a double-headed arrow between "Assessment Strategy" and "Assessment Criteria." Source: "Assessing Learning Outcomes" by Seneca College, The Teaching & Learning Centre, CC BY-NC-SA

The Cycle of Assessment: Process and Product

At the course level, an assessment strategy enables us to build a rich and meaningful assessment cycle that honours learning as a process. As students progress towards a final deliverable (where they will demonstrate their learning through summative assessment), students' skill development is supported through low-stakes formative assessments while they receive ongoing feedback and reflect on their progress as they go through the course.

Developing a High-Quality Assessment Strategy: Considerations

In addition to needing [clear learning outcomes and clear assessment criteria](#), a high-quality assessment strategy can be developed with the following considerations in mind[1]:

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Variety

Learning outcomes should be assessed multiple times and in a variety of ways.

Balance

Create a balance between graded and ungraded assessments. Weigh assessments according to the weighting of the aligned learning outcomes. Space out the assessment schedule to give students time to incorporate meaningful feedback and learn from mistakes.

Authenticity

Design meaningful, real-world tasks that help students develop skills to help them thrive in the workplace and become productive citizens.

Accessibility

Ensure that students with disabilities can meet learning outcomes with equal access to assessment materials, instructions and goals. Consider using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework for assessment design.

Inclusion and Belonging

Design assessments that are relevant to students' identities, interests and needs. Check your biases and assumptions about which assessments are most appropriate for students. Avoid designing for the "average" student and, instead, design for learner variability. Invite students to contribute to assessment design by setting their own learning goals and identifying ways you can support them through formative and summative assessments.

Cultural Responsiveness

Consider how to move away from colonial approaches to assessment design. Incorporate non-Western assessment and activity topics and methods such as Indigenous Sharing Circles and interdisciplinary collaborative assessments.

Multiple Modalities

Design assessments that represent information in multiple formats (e.g., visual, text, audio), and allow students to complete tasks using modalities of their choice (e.g., visual, text, audio).

Rubrics

Design rubrics that promote learning outcomes and clearly articulate performance standards and identify learner achievement for each criteria.

Feed "Forward"

1. [Assessment](https://employees.senecacollege.ca/spaces/39/the-teaching-learning-centre/assessment). (2020). Seneca College The Teaching & Learning Centre. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from https://employees.senecacollege.ca/spaces/39/the-teaching-learning-centre/assessment

Feedback is most meaningful when it is immediate, ongoing and conversational in tone. Remember that feedback helps advance learners towards a goal, so keep comments directed towards that goal and what learners can do to achieve that goal.

Learner Reflection

Integrate opportunities for reflection throughout an assessment cycle. For each formative and summative task, leave space for students to articulate to themselves and others how their skills are developing.

Reflection

Brainstorm an Assessment Strategy.

In the interactive element below, use the menu bar (☰) on the left or the arrows on the right to view the contents on all pages (2).

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=118#h5p-38

Key Takeaways

A high-quality assessment strategy improves student learning when you balance a variety of low-stakes formative assessments with summative assessments that are authentic, culturally inclusive and promote digital fluency. Assessments support learning most effectively when they reliably measure student achievement by aligning with course learning outcomes, allowing for self-assessment and providing meaningful feedback that allows students to reflect on their progress through the course.

Module 3 Conclusion

Conclusion

When we move away from traditional assessment design and incorporate authentic and inclusive practices in our assessment design, we realize that assessments in virtual learning environments are not very different from those in face-to-face environments. Thoughtfully designed authentic assessments help students learn in any environment.

Improving the quality of our online assessments requires us to be reflective educators who are able to strategically design any type of assessment (e.g., diagnostic, formative and summative) using appropriate digital tools that are accessible and engaging.

Designing non-traditional assignments can also lead to more culturally responsive approaches that allow learners to reflect on their own learning as they work towards meeting learning outcomes that help them thrive in industry and community.

Finally, designing a well-balanced and dynamic assessment strategy helps to clarify purpose and expectations for each task (graded or ungraded), allowing for ongoing feedback and critical reflection for learners and teachers alike.

MODULE 4: THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM AS A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Introduction

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=124#oembed-1*

Download transcript [PDF] | Watch the ~1-minute video Module 4: Introduction [Video].

When you meet students at a classroom on campus, many of the visual, emotional and practical components of the community are already built into the space. We know that we'll find books at the library, we know we'll hold seminars in specific rooms equipped for our needs, and we understand that we share the space physically with one another. For the most part, the tenets of our community get imparted without us doing a whole lot. But when we're teaching and learning online, a lot of these norms need to be intentionally articulated. Thinking critically about the ways in which you'll facilitate your course in a virtual space means you'll be able to establish a positive, communicative, and welcoming atmosphere from the get-go.

Learning Outcomes

The resources and learning activities included here are intended to support the following learning outcomes:

- Co-create guidelines and expectations for engagement.

- Select and implement tools and features to enhance student engagement and interaction.
- Engage students in both authentic individual-focused work and authentic community-based collaborative projects.
- Establish and maintain accessible and sustainable teacher presence in an online course.
- Create and maintain safe spaces for collaboration and expression.
- Establish a community comfortable with exchanging information and ideas, and participating in a social learning experience.

Guiding Questions

- Are you offering your learners an opportunity to co-create their learning experience?
- Are you identifying the shared values of your community in an empathetic way?
- Does your community facilitate your learners' own intrinsic motivations?
- Do the tools you use in your course serve the goals and objectives of the course?
- Do the tools make things more or less accessible for your learners?
- Will the tools increase expression (with other learners, with the content itself)?
- Does your course facilitate organic social interactions?
- How do you plan to establish your own presence as an instructor?
- Will the course create opportunities for authentic, cognitive convergence?

Deliverables

- Create a set of rules for your community using TRIZ
- Analyze a tool or piece of software while considering the unique needs of your course
- Reflect on the kind of social environment you wish to facilitate
- Reflect on your own past feelings of teaching presence
- Create your own Community of Inquiry Venn-diagram

Key Terms and Concepts

- Community of Inquiry
- Convergence
- Social Presence, Teaching Presence, Cognitive Presence
- Engagement
- Learning Management System (LMS)
- Communication
- Co-creation
- Community
- Facilitation

Guiding Principles and Netiquette

When we think of guiding principles for our courses, it's easy to immediately point at the learning goals and objectives — the metrics by which we gauge whether learners have succeeded in our course. But does the degree to which someone has "learned" have a bearing on their role in the community? Put another way, does the A+ learner belong more than the C- learner?
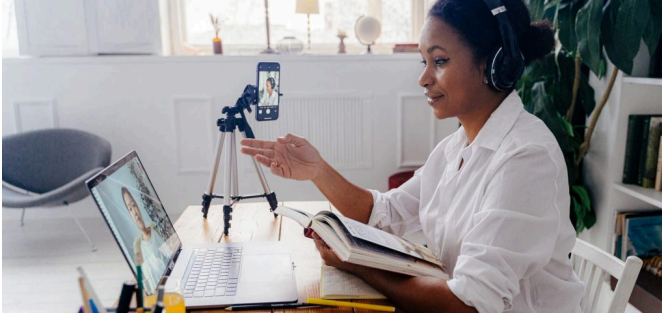
Source: "*Instructor talking to a student on laptop*" by *Anthony Shkraba* on *Pexels*

While there may be some standard, boilerplate behavioral guidelines for your course (where and how to ask what kinds of questions, general decorum, and other necessary information), it's also important to consider the more unique sensibilities of your space. Perhaps an underlying theme in your film studies course is food: it might be expected and commonplace for students to discuss and share pictures of their own favourite dishes and culinary experiences within the course. Such behaviour might be considered out of place in a statistics course, but it would be something that makes that particular film studies course more special and meaningful for its learners.

In *The Art of Community*, Charles Vogl speaks to the idea of the temple:

> a place where people with shared values enact their community's rituals (Vogl, 2016, p. 67)[1]

In essence, your course is the temple for your community. It is the place where members of your community gather to listen, speak, and learn from one another — where they communicate. Clearly articulating the activities that will take place in the course (the rituals of the temple) will help you to develop an understanding of what makes your course special and unique. It will help your learners to feel more comfortable in understanding the decorum of the space.

Below you'll find four short lists: three with general considerations about netiquette (things that would likely apply to any course), and a fourth with some thought provoking questions about specificity (what makes your course unique).

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

How are we communicating with each other?

- Where are we communicating? Is it better to ask questions via email or in the discussion boards? Is there a "hallway space" for learners that isn't supervised by the instructor?
- What does our communication look and sound like when we're speaking? What about when we're not speaking? How are we addressing each other when we do so? In what language?
- How do we deal with disagreements or conflicts should they arise?

Where and when are we expected to complete tasks and engage with material?

- Are we utilizing spaces and tools that take us outside the confines of the LMS? To what end?
- What flexibility can we expect regarding things like assessment, attendance or participation?

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1. Vogl, C. H. (2016). *The art of community: Seven principles for belonging*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

- How does the course account for time and space? Are there opportunities for synchronous meetings? Is there a "preferred" time zone that the instructor uses?

What institutional information needs to be made explicit?

- Do learners have access to specialty software? How would they go about obtaining it?
- What resources are available to learners that they might not already be aware of?
- Are there preordained regulations regarding professionalization (dress code, diction)?

What makes this course special or unique?

- What is it about this course that will enrich the lives of learners?
- Why will the connections and relationships built here be meaningful?
- Where will learners be able to put into action what they take from this course?

Tip: Remember that these things can change over time; they aren't necessarily set in stone. The guiding principles and shared values are things that can be renegotiated and re-communicated as the community evolves.

An Invitation for Creation

A shared understanding of who we are, what we do, and where we do it is an awesome way to decrease ambiguity and improve course legibility. But what really transforms your course into a community will be the ways in which your learners come together. Inviting your learners to identify, negotiate, and fashion things like guidelines, values, and protocol creates an opportunity for everyone to actively take control of their shared relationship with the space (and the learning therein) as "the invitation becomes evidence of their belonging" (Vogl, 2016, p. 47).[2] Soliciting feedback and welcoming expression as part of this process immediately alters the nature of authority: rather than a supervisor merely administering and managing the completion of tasks, instructors become learners alongside students in a communal space.

De(con)structing Spaces

Sometimes it can be tricky to identify (and agree upon) a set of rules and principles. Common values like respect for one another, or baselines like academic integrity, are easy to agree upon — but every course is going to be a little different. There needs to be a shared and articulated consistency that influences how we feel about our community. What does *respect* look like, for example? How does the concept inform things like land acknowledgments, pronoun use or conversation amongst learners? Being able to come to terms as a group about what we value as a community gives us something to inform our actions and decision making. One way of going about finding what you do want is figuring out what you don't want.

2. Ibid.

A great way to go about giving a voice to protocol is by making use of **TRIZ**, a Russian acronym that translates to **"theory of inventive problem solving."** It's a method of framing thoughts and ideas that demystifies the coordination of values and regulations by allowing people to grapple with sensitive topics, or ideas generally considered to be above criticism, by (un)dressing them in a carefree, lighthearted, and honest manner. Put more casually, TRIZ is an opportunity to bust out the hammers and break down walls between you and the things you want to get at (or at least identify).

Reflection

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=126#h5p-39

Chances are you've thought of a few "winners," things that learners or members of your community would have a laugh over. TRIZ is an especially powerful tool when explored with a group, as it gives everyone an opportunity to express themselves and collaborate with one another. Engaging learners in such an activity invites them into the course not just as participants, but as co-creators with a meaningful sense of agency. Keep in mind that actions speak louder than words, and while being able to establish a protocol for communication is great, it is the group's adherence to these ideas that will give them meaning. Especially so as the instructor: if your behaviour is not emblematic of these values, learners might feel let down, and demotivated.

In Self-Determination Theory, individuals that are externally motivated might feel more alienated, whereas those that are intrinsically motivated are more likely to feel enjoyment (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 72).[3] Inviting learners to help co-create and negotiate values generates a shared understanding of ritual. That integration paves the way for belonging, which helps to create meaning amongst members of the community (even if in just a small way). Regardless of *why* someone is *specifically* motivated within the course (they are personally excited about the subject matter, they are merely curious and filling out a timetable, or this is something that they absolutely need to satisfy a degree requirement, for example), cultivating and identifying shared values and guidelines means everyone will feel better and understand the space more clearly as a result.

3. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68–78. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.55.1.68

Key Takeaways

Through the identification and establishing of shared values, you will be able to achieve a meaningful and authentic learning experience.

Co-creating the experience with your learners will help to ensure they feel comfortable about their participation, and excited to be a part of it.

Transforming your course into a community will result in better communication amongst you and your learners.

One way of finding solutions to challenging problems is by demystifying the subject — making things easier to talk about leads to more fruitful interactions.

Harnessing Technology for Engagement & Communication

When you're creating an online course, you'll undoubtedly utilize tools in some form or another. Be it a piece of software, a website, something integrated into the Learning Management System (LMS), or even the LMS itself. Generally speaking, tools are things that we can use to perform specific functions. But in the context of online learning, tools are also things that help facilitate communication and engagement.

Caption: An instructor using BigBlueButton in a HyFlex classroom to promote student engagement by playing a virtual game of pictionary.
Source: "*An instructor in a HyFlex classroom promoting student engagement*" by *Seneca College, The Teaching & Learning Centre*, Oct 2019, *CC BY-NC-SA*

Tool Dreamin'

Tools can often be the most exciting part of course design and functionality: they're slick, pretty, colourful, and they can help you pull off a lot of fancy stuff. Picking the right tool for the right job means you aren't overwhelming learners and that, above all else, your chosen tool is servicing the goals and outcomes of your course. Photoshop is a powerful tool, but might not be especially useful in getting students to engage with the material or each other. Tools that will help with this are likely to fashion new spaces for conversation, collect lots of inputs, allow learners to express themselves, and present new lenses through which they can work through content and material.

Making sure a specific tool fits your course's wants and needs can sometimes prove tricky. You might want to make use of a formal assessment rubric [PDF] to compare tools, or evaluate one tool in particular. In some cases your institution (like Seneca) might already maintain and keep tabs on a list of pre-approved tools. Selecting tools from such a list will ensure that you have at least some level of institutional support, and that it ought to work within your LMS.

Explore

Below you'll find a small presentation showcasing a few tools we think you might find to be useful.

In the interactive element below, use the menu bar (☰) on the left or the arrows on the right to view the contents on all pages (6).

Tip: If you're partial to rolling up your sleeves and digging around on your own, visit the eCampus resource list, part of their Ontario Extend program.

Measure Twice, Cut Once

After deciding on what tools you'd like to take advantage of, you'll want to plan some time to experiment with them yourself and figure out some of the nuances or challenges associated with their use.

Unlike factors such as cost, accessibility, and data privacy, it's sometimes hard to gauge just how well a tool will lend itself to the course material (or the LMS). Something might seem like a dream on paper, but a nightmare to deploy in the way you had envisioned. If you find yourself wondering whether or not the tool adds or takes away from the learning experience, ask yourself:

- Does this tool serve the goals and objectives of the course?
- Does this tool make things more or less accessible for my learners?
- Will the tool increase expression (with other learners, with the content itself)?

Remember that tools exist to serve the ends of our learning community, not the other way around. If they don't make our lives easier, or offer new opportunities, you might want to rethink that tool's inclusion. You'll have to experiment and play around a little to find what fits, but by keeping your learning goals and outcomes front of mind, you should be able to select the right tools for the right jobs in your course to enrich your learners.

Activity: All Together Now!

Consider what we've learned so far with TRIZ regarding communication and community. By identifying what we don't want, we learn what we do want. And by learning what we want, we can identify what we need. With the presumed ethos of your would-be course in mind, think of a tool that will help serve those ideas and evaluate it with some of the aforementioned methods.

If you're thinking about a tool from the showcase above, you can ask yourself the three bulleted questions previously outlined (will the tool serve us, will the tool improve ease and accessibility, will the tool increase expression). If you're thinking about a different tool, try to size it up using [Western University's eLearning Tool rubric[PDF]](). You can even mix and match approaches, or make use of TRIZ again (how can I make sure this tool makes my course worse?)

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=129#h5p-41*

Looking Back and Moving Forward

Hopefully by now you have a firm understanding of the ways in which you can turn your course into more of a community. Through the action of co-creation and communication, you'll be able to intrinsically motivate your learners and help fashion a space that encourages meaningful relationships and, of course, learning! As well, you know what to look for in tools that will help you establish and facilitate that action and atmosphere.

The next section of this module deals with the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, et al., 1999).[1] We'll be exploring the ways in which different forms of presence converge to produce a valuable learning experience. We will take what we've learned about communication and community, and apply it to other forms of interaction that will occur within your course.

Key Takeaways

Tools are meant to work in service of your course's goals and outcomes, not the other way around.

You should look to select tools that improve accessibility, or improve the course's ability to facilitate itself as a learning community.

Part of tool selection is about curation and experimentation — taking the time to understand the idiosyncrasies of your chosen software.

1. Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (1999). [Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education](). *The Internet and Higher Education, 2*(2-3), 87–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/s1096-7516(00)00016-6

Just because a tool looks slick, doesn't mean it'll work well or necessarily meet the needs of your course.

The Virtual Classroom as a Learning Community

By now you've likely realized the extent of planning that goes into a well-crafted online course. The ways in which form and function combine alongside time and space lays the groundwork for accommodating a profound and meaningful learning experience. One way of examining this convergence is by employing the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison et al., 1999).[1] Put forth in the early 2000s, the framework provides a foundation through which to establish an atmosphere of curated support. While much has changed and evolved in the last 20 years when it comes to how we learn and interact online, the model still serves as an excellent tool to guide our thinking.

In this module, we're going to explore the three elements of the Community of Inquiry (social presence, teaching presence and cognitive presence), how they relate to online learning and how they work together to create an authentic and consequential learning experience.

Social Presence

As defined by the article's authors, social presence refers to community members' ability "to project their personal characteristics into the community, thereby presenting themselves … as "real people"" (Garrison, et al., 1999, p. 89).[2] While, hopefully, all the learners in your course will be "real people," established social presence is what allows those real humans to represent themselves honestly and authentically. Co-creating communication guidelines and the utilization of engagement-oriented tools (things we covered in the previous chapter) work in service of this form of presence. By inviting learners to work together in shaping the course itself, your community is set up from the get-go as a safe space that welcomes a multiplicity of identities and methods of expression. How the socialization gets actualized and expressed will likely be as unique as your course!
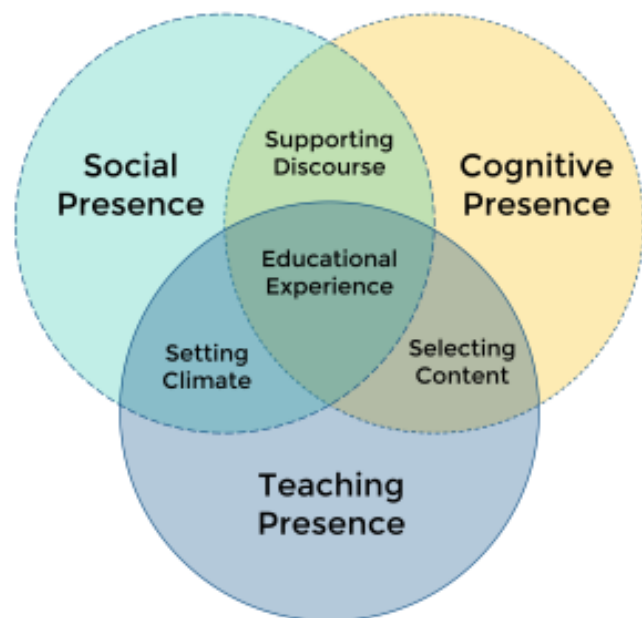
Caption: Community of Inquiry is displayed as a Venn diagram with three circles: "Social Presence", "Cognitive Presence", and "Teaching Presence". At the intersection of the three circles is "Educational Experience." At the intersection of "Social "Presence" and "Cognitive Presence" is "Supporting Discourse." At the intersection of "Cognitive Presence" and "Teaching Presence" is "Selecting Content." Finally, at the intersection of "Social Presence" and "Teaching Presence" is "Setting Climate."
Source: *Adaptation* of *Community of Inquiry* presented as a Venn diagram. Adapted from *Garrison, Anderson, Archer 1999*

1. Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (1999). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education, 2*(2-3), 87–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/s1096-7516(00)00016-6
2. Ibid

Explore

Below you'll find a presentation with a few different suggestions for ways you can shape new kinds of spaces to better serve the things that make your course special.

In the interactive element below, use the menu bar (≡) on the left or the arrows on the right to view the contents on all pages (3).

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=132#h5p-42

Activity: Spacing Out

Think about what kind of social environment you wish to cultivate. Will it be a long, sustained conversation? Or something shorter that will see people driving through and dropping off? Will the conversations be woven into the fabric of the course later? Or will they be short and discrete? Figuring out the qualities of the conversation in advance will allow you to more easily select the necessary software/tools with which to fashion the space and guide your learners. If you're having trouble, consider the showcase found in the Tool Dreamin' section.

Even if you work to fashion a space that isn't specifically geared toward the learning goals and course material, providing learners with multiple means to talk, emote, and express themselves will do much to generate social presence within your community. Keep in mind, however, that even if you've collaboratively created guidelines for respectful communication, things can sometimes get messy. Your management or guidance of these additional spaces is important. Establishing social presence isn't a "set it and forget it" activity. It's a form of cultivation that requires your engagement. Where you set things up and guide learners, what you draw attention to, how you facilitate meaning: your own presence is essential in creating a unique learning experience.

Teaching Presence

With possible tools and spatial configurations in mind, you might be already considering the ways in which general socialization and your instructor presence will intertwine. Even a well-designed course with a fine-tuned sense of additional emotive space can falter without the presence of an instructor. It's always important to remember that no matter how much planning and pre-work you put into your course, without having you there to grease the wheels and facilitate the experience, your learners will likely feel disheartened and maybe even a little lost. Apart from the more conventional practice of how to best structure an online course, *teaching presence* refers to the process of supporting and enhancing your community's pursuit and exploration of the course's learning goals (Garrison, 1999, p. 90).[3] All of which is simply to say that even after charting a course, every ship needs a captain.

Let's say you've set up discussion boards for your course, and you've populated them with thought provoking and stimulating conversation starters. You've set them all up to be time-released in accordance with the syllabus schedule. You've even found funny, cute little GIFs that reference jokes that you've shared with your learners. If you're not present on the boards to guide and nudge the conversation as it evolves, that conversation might not be serving the goals of the course. Without your intervention, gross misunderstandings of core concepts might get perpetuated, or polite disagreements might flourish into full-blown hateful arguments. Being present will not only afford you the opportunity to get ahead of the decision curve when it comes to moderation of these social spaces, but it will also provide you with moments in which to reaffirm understanding and help course correct wayward learners. Whether it's a question regarding course material, or confusion about scheduling and tool usage, as a leader of your community you'll be responsible for directing and channeling the energy of these interactions.

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

If you find yourself faced with a crisis of intervention, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this an experience that adds meaning for my learners, or enriches their experience?
- Does this interaction adhere to the shared values that we identified for our community?
- Would my involvement help or hinder the learning process?
- Am I adding clarity or introducing confusion with my instruction/feedback?
- Could I utilize this moment as a vehicle to introduce new knowledge or insights?
- Will this further facilitate the convergence of presence?

When things get a little murky, you can always reflect on the shared values that you've identified with your learners. If your actions as a leader and moderator of the learning experience deviate too wildly from the tenets you've curated for your community, learners might not feel comfortable conversing in the space you've provided. Being able to start a new dialog or even reassess an old one might become necessary as the course evolves and takes on new shapes.

Remember that not all problems will be bobbing along on the surface — brightly lit up with alarm bells sounding. The very qualities that make online courses accessible and powerful are the very things that could present as challenges to learners (self-directed learning free of traditional physical or temporal restraints). Even if your LMS is not equipped with robust tracking, spotting and reaching out to learners that appear to be struggling (or not participating at all) is a great way to establish presence in a more direct manner. In a more visible way, regularly utilizing announcements and mass-email features is a great way to maintain an ongoing discourse with your community and invite comments or questions as you progress through the course.

3. Ibid

Activity: Message in a Bottle

Try to think of an instance when you had to make a judgement call in a course. It could be a time when you added to a discussion or had to moderate one that was going off the rails. Maybe you overstepped in your feedback or were wracked over the best way to guide one of your learners. Maybe everything was going swimmingly and you've since worked to nudge and massage things so as to further replicate that atmosphere. Use the reflection prompt below, describe what happened, how it made you feel, and how you best approached the solution. No matter how unique the circumstance, that question of presence is likely something that other teachers have experienced (or will).

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/qualitycoursesv2a/?p=132#h5p-43

Cognitive Presence

Within the Community of Inquiry framework, cognitive presence refers to our learner's ability "to construct meaning through sustained communication" (Garrison, 1999, p. 89).[4] While it might seem like a bit of a no-brainer, this notion cuts to the core of the collaborative ethos we've been exploring in this module and the previous one. Positioning the material and facilitating surrounding conversation in a supportive way is what will allow your course to become something more than a collection of facts and tasks.

In her book *Designing Culture*, Anne Balsamo preaches the imperative need to think about digital technologies not simply as a pipeline through which to pump content or material, but instead

> explore the ways in which these technologies are implicated in the reconfiguration of knowledge production across domains of human culture.[5]

Your course serving as a site of community and learning ought to occur naturally because of your intentional decisions in constructing the learning environment. The creation and maintenance of spaces in which to authentically express oneself within the co-created course values and communication guidelines — these

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4. Ibid
5. Balsamo, A. (2011). *Designing culture: The technological imagination at work*. Duke University Press.

conscious qualities of design enable meaning-making to occur within your community. Put another way, when you intentionally create a space that allows each member to express themselves and feel a sense of ownership over that space, they are more involved members of that space.

So far, we've discussed a few different ways in that the design of your course will facilitate the convergence of presence. Making new spaces (possibly using software or tools) allows new and different types of conversation to take place that might have been otherwise inaccessible. Additionally, we explored the ways in which establishing instructor presence can keep students engaged and encourage the development of new insights and ideas.

One way of having learners articulate their cognition is with authentic forms of assessment. Authentic assessment will ask learners to take relevant course content and explore, assess and create with it, rather than merely understand or recall information. In revised versions of Bloom's Taxonomy, we see a scaffolding that begins with information acquisition and ends with active performance. By crafting assessment strategies with this trajectory in mind, learners will be able to develop their understanding of the subject matter while creating inherently meaningful (and unique) relationships between the material and each other.

It's important to remember that these more demanding, authentic forms of assessments are at the top rungs because learners build their way up to them. How can you create without first gathering your materials? Moreover, the nature of your assessments will likely be somewhat informed by the constraints of the course itself.

Select a topic below, marked with an arrowhead, to reveal more information.

Here are a few things to keep in mind before you let your imagination run wild:

- How many students are likely to enroll in your course?
- Will you have marking support and, if so, for how many hours?
- Are learners going to have developed enough capacity to produce media (videos, podcasts, graphics)?
- Has the course already integrated formal group work?

Activity: Aesthetic Synthesis

At the outset of this module, the Community of Inquiry is presented as a Venn diagram. This is because, in order to put forward a meaningful educational experience, we are required to craft a space in which all the forms of presence converge in a finely tuned balancing act. Without instructor presence, your community might quickly fall astray. Without the social presence, your learners will have difficulty in generating meaningful connections and finding a sense of community. And without cognitive presence, your learners might struggle in demonstrating what they learned. All three principles work together in harmony — two out of three simply doesn't cut it. In the final activity of this module, we ask that you sit down and map out what the Community of Inquiry looks like in your course. You can have at it with a pen and paper, fire up Photoshop, or try out a specialized diagramming tool like LucidChart. Taking what you've learned so far, visually explore the ways in which your unique learning community can be designed.

Tip: If you need an example to get you going, take a look at [Joop van Schie's concept map of the Community of Inquiry framework [PDF]](#) itself. Additionally, if you're struggling with identifying what these things look like with your course, remember to try out [TRIZ](#) — identify what you *don't* want and go from there.

Key Takeaways

Cultivating a community of inquiry successfully will require the convergence of all three forms of presence (social, cognitive, teaching). Your role as the instructor should be thought of as a leader and as a facilitator, rather than as someone that schedules and administers tasks. Think of yourself as a guide on the side, rather than a sage on the stage.

Strong communication serves as the foundation on which learners can authentically create meaning.

Module 4 Conclusion

Conclusion

    We all want to make excellent courses — courses that are clear, cohesive and legible — experiences that our learners will find inspirational. We want to build things that will challenge our learners in pursuit of the best versions of themselves. Even if you embrace the elements and qualities explored here you might still fall short of your expectations, and that's okay. Every obstacle or stumbling block is something to be reconsidered and iterated on. These challenges might present in the first week or years later, even after you think you've sanded down all the sharp corners and rough edges. More than the production of "the ultimate courseware," the virtues of authenticity and communication will serve you endlessly as you craft new and meaningful communities. So long as you remember to start from a place of empathy, honesty and passion, you'll always find your way forward.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Thank you for selecting our course as part of your online/hybrid journey to building equitable, student-centred virtual environments that encourage and support students in working confidently, through engaged participation and collaboration, in a variety of active learning opportunities.

This resource has provided a lot of suggestions and ideas for your teaching practice. Reviewing your courses can be overwhelming, especially if you've come away with a lengthy list of ideas and fixes.

Module 2 on UDL introduced the "Plus One" idea: a strategy to tackle change iteratively, one step at a time. We think this philosophy can be applied to all aspects of course building, whether it's UDL, an assessment strategy, designing your course shell or building a community. Take it one step at a time.

We hope that as you implement changes in your online teaching, you return to this resource, again and again to seek more ideas and find more areas to improve. We hope it continues to provide value past the first reading!

We Welcome Your Feedback

We would greatly appreciate you taking five to eight minutes to complete the following survey. All responses anonymous and confidential, and will be used solely for course development purposes.

For questions regarding this resource, please contact teaching@senecacollege.ca

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- Adaptation of Community of Inquiry presented as a Venn diagram. Adapted from Garrison, Anderson, Archer 1999

Videos and Transcripts

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