

UnDerLying (UDL) Features of Blackboard Ultra

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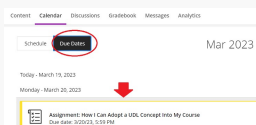
It's Time for New Things: UnDerLying (UDL) Features of Blackboard Ultra

by Sherri Parkins, Learning Strategist in Accessibility Services and Faculty Development Advisor in the Teaching & Learning Centre

Have you captured the excitement for new things as we transition into all things Spring? Perhaps it's flowers bravely peeking out from under the muck or relishing in the extra daylight hours we are privy to! Another new thing is the launch of Blackboard Ultra in Learn@Seneca starting in May. Unlike the meteorological impacts that provide a brighter outlook, changes like Blackboard Ultra can be hard. Let's focus on some positive features in Blackboard Ultra and we'll see if U.D.L. ([Universal Design for Learning](#)) can offer some guidance as to why these features are great!

Calendar; Due Date

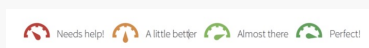
In the UDL framework, under Action and Expression, there is an emphasis on supporting [Executive Functions](#). Check out the Calendar; Due Dates in your Blackboard Ultra course.



It's a great tool for students to be aware of in their courses. Unlike the old calendar in Blackboard Original, it's always displayed in a Blackboard Ultra course. When you add an assignment, test, or quiz, it automatically updates the calendar!

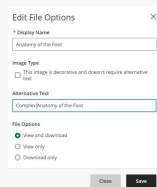
Ramp versus Renovate!

Have you noticed the Blackboard Ally indicators that display beside your course content? These tell you how accessible the content is.



Students may use the Blackboard Ally tool to download alternative formats for files including audio format. This option supports UDL's [Multiple Means of Representation](#).

If you click to explore what Blackboard Ally is suggesting needs improvement on specific content in your course, "contains images that are missing a description" is a frequent response. In Blackboard Ultra, when you are attaching a picture, it asks you for both a display name and also Alternative Text, otherwise known as "Alt Tags," as part of the process.



You might wonder, "Why is this information even necessary?" Alt text can help the viewer understand the purpose of the image in the content it is being used. For students who have vision loss, this information is vital! With the steps to provide them built in, as you add images, there is no more going back to add them later! No renovations needed!

Assessments and Extra Time

What else happens this time of year? Yep! Final Assessments! Do you find yourself going through your class lists and accommodation letters to see who gets extra time? UDL guides us to consider adding extra time for **all** our students. If you feel a test would take 30 minutes, consider adding 100% extra time so that all students are able to demonstrate their competency without the additional stress of time ticking away. Some colleges, such as [Mohawk](#), have incorporated this approach into their courses. Obviously, if there is an industry standard for responding in an academic test situation within a specific time period, it is valid that students practice that skill while in our courses.

For students who have the accommodation of extra time, here is some Ultra good news! In Blackboard Ultra, once you set up an accommodation for a student, it is in effect over the entire duration of the course! Students with Accommodations will have a purple flag next to their names:



Have a look at the [Setting Up Accommodations](#) article for information on how to set up Accommodations in Blackboard Ultra.

With a look at these UnDerLying features and some UDL guidelines highlighted, we hope you are keen to Spring into Blackboard Ultra!

Citations and Resources

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act: Universal Design for Learning](#)

[Accessibility & Universal Design: Universal Design for Learning Blackboard](#) (n.d.). Accessibility & Universal Design: Universal Design for Learning. Blackboard. Retrieved March 17, 2023, from <https://www.blackboard.com/en-apac/teaching-learning/accessibility-universal-design>

[Blackboard Ally for Seneca Students](#)

[Blackboard Ally Upload Site](#) for any document to be converted to an alternative format

[CAST Universal Design for Learning Website](#)

[Practical Applications of UDL Worksheet](#)

Photo by [Biegun Wschodni](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Save the date: Teaching & Learning Day Spring 2023

Teaching & Learning Day Spring 2023 is happening on Tuesday, May 2 at Newnham Campus. The theme of our event is "Pathway to Curriculum Integration." Join us for a day of reflection and discussion about integrating Truth & Reconciliation (TRC), Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), and Sustainability into your curriculum. Our keynote speaker in the morning is Kevin Lamoureux (University of Winnipeg). Afterwards, engage with expert panelists who will speak about their knowledge and experience in the areas of Truth & Reconciliation (TRC), Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), and Sustainability.

Register now [in MyPD](#).



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tags : blackboard, blackboard-ultra, learn@seneca, lms, spark-plugin, teaching, teaching-and-learning, teaching-and-learning-centre, udl, universal-design-for-learning