

Coming Soon! Updates to UDL

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Whenever I see a sign that says “Coming Soon,” it piques my curiosity and I always take notice! So, what’s “Coming Soon” to Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?!

Since UDL’s inception in 2008, there have been three previous updates to the UDL principles and guidelines. These changes are always positive as change indicates that UDL is responding to research and practitioners’ feedback.

For the past three years, UDL has been undergoing its most recent revision and will be released in July 2024. In the spirit of inclusivity, the upgrade will be based on research and feedback from an [Advisory Board](#), a [UDL Guidelines Collaborative](#), and a [Young Adult Advisory Board](#). Input has been gleaned from all levels of education from primary through Higher Ed.

The process to generate these updates has been quite extensive and is meant to address barriers to learning due to biases and systems of oppression. There will be more intentional emphasis on interdependence and collective learning. In other words, recognizing we are all part of a learning community. The new updates will see the language change from “teacher-ese” to learner-focused language. In addition, reference to “expert” in the current version is being scrutinized for its hierarchical viewpoint. Care has been taken to move from a framework that practitioners “do to” or “give to” learners to embrace the cocreation of learning. If in the past you felt that the word “checkpoints” meant that UDL was a type of check list (been there, done that), you’ll find the new version has removed that term favoring the word “prompts.” In this way, UDL provides a framework to continually assess how we are continually assessing how we are teaching.

A few highlights for me are:

Proposed Updates for Multiple Means of Engagement

The current iteration does not have strong enough ties to identity as part of learner variability. Previously, Engagement focused on the “why” of learning but had not considered “who” is learning. Perhaps you can recall someone saying, “You’ll never _____” that made us feel that we didn’t belong. For underrepresented groups, this oppression continues. “Belonging” is a powerful word! Being intentional about creating learning experiences that emphasize belonging can have a huge impact.

There has been the addition of a prompt for designing Multiple Means of Engagement that states: “Nurture joy and play.” When was the last time learning brought you joy? Although not always easy, learning should capture joy in the process. The word “play” had me puzzled and lead to some interesting conversations with colleagues... is “play” the right word for higher education? I am still mulling over that one!

Proposed Updates for Multiple Means of Representation

With UDL’s priority to emphasize identity, we will want to continue our work to ensure that our learners see themselves reflected in our learning experiences. Seneca’s Curriculum Integration Project focuses on three priority areas: Truth & Reconciliation (TRC) and MMIWG2S, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), and Sustainability. These areas provide opportunities for us to stop and take notice: Are the diverse identities and cultures represented not only in the content that we share through images, etc., but also in the activities that we incorporate into our courses?

Proposed Updates for Multiple Means of Action and Expression

This is one area that I believe we, in higher education, are endeavoring to move from “traditional” assessment, otherwise known as “westernized” assessment, to embracing the different forms of “knowing” that can be expressed. Authentic assessment helps us explore these different ways! [CAST’s UDL Tips for Assessment](#) provides some thoughts around authentic assessment.

Stay tuned for more information as CAST releases the new version of UDL principles and guidelines this summer! CAST’s [Summary of Proposed Updates for UDL Guidelines 3.0](#) is excellent. Head to [Feedback on Full Draft of Proposed Updates for UDL Guidelines 3.0](#) by **April 15** if you wish to add to the conversation!

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