

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

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by Susan Price, the Teaching & Learning Centre

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Most people are familiar with the concept of universal design when talking about features in buildings. Things like ramps and levered door handles make life easier for everyone, not just people with disabilities. This concept of designing for as many people as possible, without the need for adaptations, was expanded to education and learning in the 1990s by David H. Rose from the Harvard Graduate School of Education in collaboration with the Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST), and has more recently gained momentum in the post-secondary setting.

Grounded in cognitive neuroscience research, CAST describes Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as an educational framework that is based on the assumption that learner variability is the rule, not the exception. Working from that assumption, UDL supports design 'for the margins,' improving learning for everyone in between. Following UDL principles and guidelines helps to minimize or remove barriers and maximize learning, providing everyone with an equal opportunity to learn.

UDL is based on three principles:

1. Multiple means of representation – using a variety of ways to present information and content
2. Multiple means of action and expression – allowing students to use different ways to demonstrate their learning
3. Multiple means of engagement – using a range of approaches/activities to support interest and motivate learning

Interested in specific strategies and examples? Check out CAST's excellent resources at [UDL in Higher Education](#). For even more information about UDL and Inclusive Teaching Practices (and all things teaching and learning!), visit [The Teaching & Learning Centre](#) website and the space.

View the [Winter 2017 issue of the Academic Newsletter](#).

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