

TIPS on Designing for Inclusivity Online¹

1. Ensure your course materials are accessible

For online teaching, many teachers have already created course materials in various forms, e.g. videos, audios, images, PowerPoint presentations. You are recommended to double check if they are accessible to students who are using different devices/browsers in different locations with different degrees of access to Internet. Moodle is recommended whilst Google docs and Facebook might not be accessible to students in Mainland China. It is also good practice to provide transcripts for videos as students with limited Internet bandwidth can read transcripts. In addition, a clear organisation of your course materials will also enhance accessibility.

2. Set expectations for respecting and valuing diversity

Setting expectations for respecting and valuing diverse viewpoints at the beginning of your course will help students develop inclusive behaviours. For example, you can provide a *Netiquette* guideline² for your online discussion forum or synchronous sessions. Examples of such a guideline include: stay on topic, disagree respectfully, and avoid offensive language during discussion or in chat. Some universities recommend inserting a diversity statement in your syllabus. See examples from Yale: <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/DiversityStatements>

3. Be a role model for inclusivity

There are several ways that you can be a role model for inclusivity. Consider including references and readings from a wide range of sources in your course materials, e.g. references from the global south or marginalised groups. It is also important that you use inclusive language when communicating with students. For example, try to use more inclusive terminologies such as 'people with disabilities' rather than 'the handicapped' and 'chairperson' rather than 'chairman'. Statements that reinforce simple generalisation should also be avoided even if they are not always negative, e.g. 'All Asians are hard-working.'

4. Connect your course materials to students' diverse experiences and background knowledge

The online environment can sometimes make students feel disconnected. Consider incorporating opportunities in your course for students to share and reflect on their own experiences and background knowledge in relation to the subject matter. This could be achieved through setting prompting questions in the discussion forum, inviting students to speak in synchronous sessions, or designing learning activities that ask students to share experiences. However, it is important not to call upon any student as if he or she is a representative of a particular culture or nation. Individuals' opinions should be respected.

5. Foster social presence and encourage peer support

When students receive support from their teachers and peers, they are more likely to feel included and develop a sense of community. Consider establishing online teacher consultation hours for students to ask questions about assignments. It is suggested that you make a clear statement about the hours and how students can make use of them (e.g. how to sign up). Another powerful way is to encourage peer support by, for example, asking students to post something in the discussion forum to introduce themselves at the beginning of the semester and giving responses to their peers' posts.

¹ The tips are compiled based on a synthesis of Association of College and University Educators (2020). *10 Inclusive Teaching Practices* (<http://acue.org/inclusive-teaching-practices-toolkit/>) and Ohio State University (2020). *Universal Design for More Inclusive Pedagogy Checklist* (<http://ucat.osu.edu/wordpress/assets/UDL-self-assessment-handout.pdf>).

² A sample netiquette guideline can be found here: https://acue.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2B_Online_PG_Netiquette.pdf