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Frederic Fovet, Royal Roads University, Canada

This chapter serves as an introduction to the volume. It situates universal design for learning (UDL) historically as a framework and examines how it has come to be explored and embraced by higher education. The chapter first reviews the literature on implementation and use of UDL in post-secondary education, and does so in a way that will avoid all other authors in the volume having to revisit the same basic sources. The second section of the chapter uses the phenomenological data amassed by the author in terms of lived experience as a UDL consultant interacting with various post-secondary institutions—both domestically and internationally—to identify key areas that are likely to become crucial in the coming years. Explicit connections are made to chapters that appear further in the volume and develop some of the themes raised in this introductory chapter. The third and final section of chapter examines the global landscape and discusses differences that may exist in relation to UDL implementation between Global North and Global South.

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Thomas J. O’Shaughnessy, University of Limerick, Ireland

Legislation and policy are shaping the development of all facets of Irish education. Underlining many of these developments are issues embedded in inclusive practice and rights-based approaches to education. This chapter discusses the implications of these approaches with an emphasis on higher education (HE). The chapter explores accessible practice and current trends around creating accessible educational material as part of an overarching Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach in higher education. The chapter
utilises a phenomenological approach that focuses on an accessibility practitioner’s perspective on the development of a community of practice (CoP) and how it led to the adoption of more inclusive UDL-based approaches. The chapter additionally investigates the design of a new postgraduate lecture on UDL constructed using an accessibility driven lens. The chapter demonstrates the benefits of accessible practice, not just for students with disabilities but to support and engage all learners and educators across the university.

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Deanna Fidelak, MacEwan University, Canada
Kimberley van Tol, MacEwan University, Canada

This chapter explores how instructional faculty can implement practical universal design for learning (UDL) strategies to reduce the amount of accommodation requests by students in post-secondary education. The authors will discuss the most common barriers post-secondary students report experiencing at MacEwan University and the accommodations typically recommended to help remove these barriers. Examples and descriptions of successful implementation of UDL practices to address these barriers are included. The chapter also highlights how the forced move to online learning, due to the COVID-19 health crisis, taught faculty members about the importance and benefits of UDL in undergraduate studies.

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David R. Jones, Fresno Pacific University, USA

The graduate classroom combines multiple literacies. Compounded literacies in the classroom tangle meaning, forming a metaphorical staircase, disabling students. Faculty mistakenly perceive students’ difficulties as the distinctiveness of graduate education: rigorousness. However, rigor only occurs after accessing content. Attempts to make courses accessible may mistranslate into a heaping up of resources or artifacts. Instead, one artifact requires multiple representations. The following demonstration explores the literacies compounded in two artifacts that recur throughout graduate classrooms: digital slides and syllabi. Transforming these artifacts signals an allegiance to the universal design for learning that students perceive at the inauguration of the course. Furthermore, translating these artifacts facilitates more effective course participation and deeper learning. However, attempts to universalize classroom access must account for student perspective. In this chapter, feedback from course evaluations leads the discussion about revisions and future development needs.

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Deanna Fidelak, MacEwan University, Canada
Kristin Rodier, Athabasca University, Canada

In early 2020, there was a faculty development workshop at MacEwan University on how to design philosophy writing assignments with fewer barriers commonly experienced by students with disabilities. This chapter streamlines the workshop and surveys barriers common to philosophy assignment guidelines: length, jargon, single-format, and a “don’ts” section. The authors contextualize these characteristics within
the values, norms, and practices of academic philosophy. They present a case study of transforming Rodier’s introductory philosophy guidelines before and after a UDL consult with Fidelak. They demonstrate the reasoning behind the transformation, including specific UDL applications and incorporating techniques from academic strategy instruction that address the hidden curriculum. In addition, they outline changes to in-class teaching that support students in completing assignments.

Section 3

Introducing UDL to New Contexts

Chapter 6
Transforming the World Language Classroom Through Instructor Self-Assessment and Reflection

Wade Edwards, Longwood University, USA
Sally S. Scott, Association on Higher Education and Disability, USA

Second language learning is an essential part of many post-secondary education programs and curricula. While world language instructors typically embrace the importance of teaching diverse learners, including students with disabilities, they are often unfamiliar with universal design as a means of proactively developing inclusive college instruction. This chapter describes the development of a series of self-assessment tools designed to assist instructors in anticipating common barriers to language learning and reflecting on ways to provide more inclusive instruction. Case studies from the authors’ experiences are provided to illustrate use of the tools.

Chapter 7
Embracing New Ways of Learning and Teaching: Sustaining Student Engagement in the Learning and Teaching of Practice Skills

Simone McCaughren, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

This chapter discusses novel approaches to learning and teaching practice skills for social work students. It documents the potential of advances in digital technology for assisting learning and teaching students in line with UDL principles. It looks at a novel approach to teaching practice skills in the discipline of social work and its use for inter-professional education. Key principles of universal design for learning will be explored in the context of some early-stage empirical research undertaken with students in redesigning a module in skills learning. Some attention will also be given to how advances in digital technology can assist a more enhanced, inclusive, and collaborative learning environment for students.

Chapter 8
Implementing Universal Design for Learning in Social Work Education: A Strengths Perspective

Tracy A. Smith-Carrier, King’s University College, Western University, Canada
Ami Goulden, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, Canada
Rose C. B. Singh, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

Universal design for learning (UDL) is an educational framework that incorporates accessibility in curricular design and implementation to promote an inclusive student learning environment. Moving away from one-off, individualistic student accommodations, UDL aims to promote a holistic learning model that is student-centred, collaborative, and inclusive of all learners. Despite the inclusive and accessible nature of UDL, this framework has not been readily incorporated into social work education.
to date. In this chapter, the authors consider how UDL aligns with a strengths perspective in social work education and outline reflections on their experiences adopting UDL in the social work classroom (both on-campus and online, and in graduate and undergraduate courses), including attention to areas of relative ease and difficulty in embedding UDL components. To conclude, the authors discuss future directions for social work educators.

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Suzanne Ehrlich, University of North Florida, USA
Michelle Bartlett, North Carolina State University, USA

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Catherine M. Deegan, Technological University Dublin, Ireland

Diversity in Irish higher education has increased in recent years. Participation by learners with disabilities, part-time learners, culturally diverse learners, and mature learners have all increased to significant levels. Research methods and skills have proven to be challenging topics to both teach and learn at an undergraduate level. In order to shift to a more inclusive, learner-centred, and less didactic teaching approach, a research methods for business module was reviewed and revised using a students-as-partners approach. This was completed as part of a digital badge for universal design for teaching and learning that the author recently completed. From the outset, engaging with the students as partners in the process, informing them about the UDL framework, and engaging with them on the principles of multiple modes of action, expression and engagement resulted in a significantly more holistic and inclusive approach across the module, as well as positive learning outcomes for the students themselves.

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Elizabeth Anne Morch, Camosun College, Canada
Frederic Fovet, Royal Roads University, Canada

While the principles of universal design in learning (UDL) are increasingly considered and incorporated into course content, many courses remain evaluated in a traditional manner through examination and written research papers. A greater understanding of the diverse needs of students is reflected in alternative delivery options. The use of technology to build relationships, increase access, and deliver content in multiple formats has proven effective. The challenge is how to apply the principles of UDL to assessment and evaluation in a manner that engages students in learning, is manageable for faculty workloads, and meets institutional requirements.
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Brenda M. Jones, North Island College, Canada

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Jennifer Van Aswegen, Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences, Ireland

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Ken Jeffery, Royal Roads University, Canada

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Jennifer Schneider, The Community College of Philadelphia, USA

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Chapter 16
When Intentional Design Creates Inclusion: Uncovering UDL Principles in a Pre-Tertiary Course for First Nations Students in Australia

Lisa Hall, Monash University, Australia

This chapter focuses on the applicability of universal design for learning principles for First Nations students. It looks at a pre-tertiary course designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Australia that has been very successful at supporting students not only to transition successfully into higher education, but also to decolonize their understanding of themselves as learners and rewrite their own educational narrative about what is possible for them. Following a description of the history and context of the course design and development, the chapter examines the philosophies and practices of the course through the lenses of the three key principles of UDL: multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of action and expression. While there are clear limitations regarding the extent to which the UDL principles can be overlaid upon an existing course, the comparison does show that intentional design that subconsciously shares these principles can help students to overcome structural learning barriers and create inclusion.

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Tracy Galvin, Queen’s University Belfast, UK
Marco Geron, Queen’s University Belfast, UK

This case study highlights a number of approaches to building a UDL community of practice (CoP) within a higher education institution. The traditional method of building a CoP was followed to develop staff knowledge and awareness across the university on UDL principles. This was underpinned by the creation of membership of shared interests, working groups, developing policy and staff guidance, and providing training and development for staff. A second more personalized approach known as ‘Plus One’ was also utilized to embed UDL principles to a new aerospace engineering module. The areas to focus on, known as pinch points, related to the historical expertise of the academic that are often repeated each
term. In this case study, it was decided to focus on clear communication, choice, flexibility, accessibility, and inclusive assessment. The results showcase a positive appreciation from learners by having choice incorporated into their learning and assessment. It reduced the academic workload in terms of learner queries by having clearer consistent communication channels put in place.

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  Valérie Van Hees, Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education, Belgium
  Anke Schoonhoven, Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education, Belgium

Diverse learners are increasingly present in Flemish higher education (Belgium) and represent a significant percentage of the student body. Universal design for learning (UDL) offers a convenient framework to design inclusive classes and services that embrace the needs of diverse learners. This chapter presents the inspirational case study of Odisee University of Applied Sciences, a Flemish higher education institution that increasingly implements universal design principles in its educational policy and practices. The value of implemented measures in the domain of curriculum development, teaching and learning, and assessment will be discussed and analyzed through the UDL lens, as well as focus points and directions to take.

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  Diana J. LaRocco, Goodwin University, USA
  Lisa L. Fanelli, University of Saint Joseph, USA

As the diversity of students continues to increase in institutions of higher education, so does the need for faculty to provide equitable learning experiences for all students. Clinical practice experiences are an integral component of healthcare education programs’ curricula. Credentialed practitioners in the clinical settings become extensions of didactic faculty and serve a crucial role in building students’ competency
in practical skills and translating didactic learning to clinical reasoning. In this chapter, the authors describe how to leverage the universal design for learning (UDL) framework as a tool for designing clinical experiences in ways that address student diversity and the continuum of student variability in motivation, knowledge, resourcefulness, and self-direction. Steps in a UDL-aligned design thinking cycle will be presented and applied to analyze three clinical educator-student vignettes. Within each, examples of common barriers to learning will be identified and UDL-based solutions will be proposed.

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Frederic Fovet, Royal Roads University, Canada

Faculties of education should be at the forefront of universal design for learning (UDL) implementation since their focus systematically includes effective, student-centered, inclusive pedagogy. This is unfortunately not the case. The chapter reviews some of the tension which is often observed around the lack of accessible and inclusive practices in graduate education within faculties of education. The chapter then explores and analyzes the data collected by the author in relation to the implementation of UDL in graduate courses in a faculty of education on a Canadian campus. The last section of the chapter takes a wider perspective and examines some of the opportunities and challenges, which are encountered in the implementation of UDL in graduate education more generally, and offers hands-on solutions. It is hoped the chapter will act as a road map for wider UDL implementation within graduate and post-graduate courses and debunk some of the myths that are perpetuated in this regard.

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Valérie Van Hees, Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education, Belgium
Dominique Montagnese, Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education, Belgium

It has already become clear from the many cases in this book that universal design for learning (UDL) offers a convenient framework to design inclusive classes that embrace the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The opportunity to embed a more inclusive approach to education is challenging, but it is one that needs to be taken. This chapter will provide an overview of the European landscape on the social dimension in higher education and address the barriers that have emerged with the implementation of the UDL framework. Calls to action to improve the institutional and system capacity on the topic of inclusion and UDL will be pointed out. These recommendations will be illustrated with concrete actions from the Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO), a national body in Belgium supporting policy makers and universities to implement equity and inclusion measures in policy and practice.
Universal design for learning (UDL) must continue to address questions of classroom quality but also push beyond the classroom to look at other parts of the system that when designed for one size fits all or even one size fits some prevent talented students from entering and persisting in higher education. This chapter examines affordability, quality, and belonging to illustrate how much student variability there is in each of these issues and highlight a range of responses that could become part of a more flexible and universally designed higher education.