

UNIVERSAL DESIGN IN EDUCATION

Universal Design (UD) as defined by [The Center for Universal Design](#) at North Carolina State University is “the design of products and environments which are useable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design”.

Universal Design in Education (UDE) applies to educational products (such as curriculum, academic programs, computers, websites, software, textbooks, lab equipment) and environments (such as campus facilities, classrooms, learning resource centers, online and distance learning courses).

Principles of Universal Design for Instruction

Equitable Use: The design does not disadvantage or stigmatize any group of users.

Flexibility in Use: The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

Simple, Intuitive Use: Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

Perceptible Information: The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

Tolerance for Error: The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Low Physical Effort: The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.

Size and Space for Approach & Use: Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

A Community of Learners: The instructional environment promotes interaction and communication among students and between students and faculty.

Instructional Climate: Instruction is designed to be welcoming and inclusive. High expectations are espoused for all students.

While courses, technology, and student services are typically designed for the average student, UDE promotes the consideration of students with a broad range of characteristics which include gender, culture, age, stature, disability, and learning style.

Teaching must move beyond traditional presentation styles and incorporate strategies that are more diverse, flexible, and accessible in order to be universally effective.

In order for UDE to uphold essential components of course information, the following guidelines may be considered:

- **Class Climate:** Adopt practices that reflect high values with respect to both diversity and inclusiveness.

- **Physical Access, Usability, and Safety:** Assure that activities, materials, and equipment are physically accessible to and usable by all students and that all potential student characteristics are addressed in safety considerations.
- **Delivery Methods:** Use multiple, accessible instructional methods.
- **Information Resources:** Assure that course materials, notes, and other information resources are flexible and accessible to all students.
- **Interaction:** Encourage effective interactions between students and between students and the instructor and assure that communication methods are accessible to all participants.
- **Feedback:** Provide specific feedback on a regular basis.
- **Assessment:** Regularly assess student progress using multiple, accessible methods and tools and adjust instruction accordingly.

For more information on UDE publications, video and Web resources, visit:

- [Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology](#)
- [Association on Higher Education and Disability](#)