Magna 20 Minute Mentor

Supplemental Materials

How Can I Make My Exams More Accessible?

Presented by:

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MAGNA

A Protocol for Thinking about Accessibility in Your Courses

with questions to prompt reflection

1. **Identify the purpose and goals of what you are planning**

   › Why are you planning this course or activity or assignment or . . . ?

   › How does it relate to what you've done previously or to what is coming afterward?

   › What do you want your students to know or be able to do or value at the end of the course/activity/assignment?

   › What do you want your students to retain from your course three years after it is over?

2. **Examine your assumptions**

   › What do your students need to know or be able to do in order to do this successfully— to acquire information, to engage, and/or to demonstrate their learning as asked?

   › What are you assuming your students will know or be able to do in order to be successful?

   › Where do your assumptions come from?

   › Are your assumptions valid?

   › What barriers might your assumptions pose for students?

3. **Consider what is essential**

   › What elements are essential to what you are planning? That is, which elements, if left out or changed, would mean that students could not meet your goals?

   › Are there elements of what you are planning that are essential to your academic discipline or profession?

   › Why, in academic terms, are they so important? (Note that "tradition" and "habit" are not valid responses!)

4. **Make more accessible choices for non-essentials** using what you've learned from the online seminar and from the resources provided

5. **Design or arrange accommodations for essential elements that present barriers for students with disabilities**

MAGNA Publications 20 Minute Mentor:
"How can I make my exams more accessible?"

Slide 1: MAGNA Publications Presents "How can I make my exams more accessible?"

Slide 2: Presenter: Elizabeth G. Harrison, Ph.D. Director, Ryan C. Harris Learning Teaching Center's Office of Learning Resources and Associate Director, Ryan C. Harris Learning Teaching Center, University of Dayton eharrison1@udayton.edu

Slide 3: We students in order to:
- See what they have learned, for instructor planning
- Give feedback, formative (for improvement) and summative (for administrative purposes)

Slide 4: We need to provide equitable opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned
- Learners differ
- Wider variety of students today

Slide 5: In designing an exam, consider:
- What do you want students to demonstrate?
- What is essential in relation to the goals of the course?
- What assumptions are you making?

Slide 6: Math exam instructions: to Show all work to receive full credit for a problem.
The slide shows the first page of a worksheet printed on paper. It has four problems on it, each taking 2-4 lines of print in a very small font. There is about an inch and a half of space after each problem in which students can show their work and the answer. Beside the image is the list of three questions: Purpose? What's essential? Assumptions?

Slide 7: New design

The same worksheet is on the left. To the right is the first page of the redesigned worksheet. This new version has only two problems on the page, in much larger font and with much more space in which to work the problems.

Slide 8: Three areas of concern in exams (in terms of equitable opportunity)
- Format
- Language
- Testing time
Can you eliminate non-essential barriers from the exam?

Slide 9: Format
- Leave plenty of space
- Use large, readable fonts
- Ensure good contrast

- Consider mediums other than written exams

Slide 10: Language
- Make exam language clear and direct
- Give clear directions
- Use simple words and syntax—unless testing on vocabulary and syntax
- Avoid idioms and culture-specific examples

Slide 11: Testing time
- Is testing under pressure of time essential to your course/discipline?
- Consider taking "time" out of the exam
- Construct shorter exams (and give more often)

Slide 12: Remember:
We all make assumptions when we design for our teaching. If we examine our assumptions in the context of our goals, we can provide more equitable opportunity for our students to demonstrate their learning.

Slide 13: We'd like to know what you think!

Our evaluation form is located here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EHmentor4

Resources Related to Universal Design

Most of the following websites, books, and articles are general treatments of universal design or disability. Perhaps the most useful piece for consideration of accessibility and exams is:

Shinn, Erin and Ofeish, Nicole (2012). Cognitive Diversity and the Design of Classroom Tests. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability,* 25(3), 232-255. Available online at http://ahead.org/publications/jped/vol_25 .

Web sites

Center for Applied Special Technology http://cast.org
> CAST has been working in the field for many years, and their website offers everything from definitions and explanations of Universal Design for Learning to guidelines and tools for curriculum development.

University of Connecticut Center on Postsecondary Education and Disability
http://www.cped.uconn.edu/
> UConn's Center coined the term Universal Design for Instruction when they began to explore this area. Their website houses many specific tools for faculty under the Facultyware link.

DO-IT Center http://www.washington.edu/doit
> The DO-IT project began as a FIPSE-funded program and has grown to house a vast array of resources related to disability at postsecondary institutions. If you want checklists for what to do for specific disabilities, this may be the site for you.

Flinders University
http://www.flinders.edu.au/teaching/quality/teaching-methods/inclusive-teaching/inclusive-teaching_home.cfm
> Inclusive teaching resources at an Australian university.

San Francisco State University Center for Teaching and Faculty Development
http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/udl.htm
> Look at SFSU's take on Universal Design for Learning.

Society for Disability Studies http://www.disstudies.org/
> Web site for the Disability Studies professional association in the US that can provide an understanding of the socially constructed nature of the concept of "disability."

Universal Design Education http://www.udeducation.org/
> This site focuses on the roots of the concept of universal design in the physical, built environment.

University of Guelph www.tss.uoguelph.ca/uid
> Universal Instructional Design at a Canadian university.

University of Oregon Teaching Effectiveness Program
http://tep.uoregon.edu/resources/universaldesign/intro.html
> And a look at Universal Design in College Instruction at another US university.

Books and articles

Bowe, F. (2000). *Universal Design in Education: Teaching Nontraditional Students*. Westport, CN, Bergin & Garvey.

Christophersen, Jon (2002). *Universal Design: 17 Ways of Thinking and Teaching*. Norway, Husbanken.

Clapton, J & Fitzgerald, J (2003). New Renaissance Magazine on-line, The History of Disability: A History of 'Otherness'. http://www.ru.org/artother.html

Coombs, Norman (2010). *Making Online Teaching Accessible: Inclusive Course Design for Students with Disabilities*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Curriculum Transformation and Disability (CTAD): *Implementing Universal Design in Higher Education.* http://www.education.umn.edu/crdeul/books-ctad.html

Lazzaro, Joseph (1993). *Adaptive Technologies for Learning and Work Environments*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Rose, David H. & Anne Meyer (2002). *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning* . Alexandria, Virginia, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Wiggins, Grant & McTighe, Jay. (2005). *Understanding by Design* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, Virginia, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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