10 Ways to Maximize Accessibility through Course Design

1. If you use outside videos, be sure to find captioned versions (Hint: Most YouTube videos have captioning that can easily be turned on). If you create video lectures, contact the Instructional Technology department for help with captioning.

2. If you use audio media like podcasts, provide a written transcript posted in Moodle.

3. Provide clear expectations, due dates, and assignment instructions in writing. If you need to make changes to your syllabus or course calendar, send these to students (or post in Moodle) in writing as well.

4. Do not use image-based PDF documents (they are not accessible for students who use a screen reader).

5. When creating exams, consider students who may receive extended time and/or take exams in an alternate location.

6. If you create exams or quizzes in Moodle, create a print version in case you have students who need to view a printed version (Moodle exams do not print well, especially when they are set up to show one question per page!)

7. Post PowerPoint and any other lecture materials in your Moodle class, ideally before class begins.

8. When creating assignments that involve presentations or group work, consider students with vision or hearing impairments, and those on the Autism spectrum who may have difficulty with these kinds of assignments. Consider providing options for the assessment.

9. Provide a clearly defined attendance and late assignment policy in your syllabus.

10. Post material used in class on Moodle. This could include handouts, movies, video clips, audio clips, etc.

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Accessibility in the Classroom

1. Try to make a habit of facing your class when speaking. Hearing impaired students may have a hard time understanding you if you speak while facing a white board or elsewhere.

2. If a student is using an interpreter, speak directly to the student - not to the interpreter.

3. Avoid using subtle hints such as, "wouldn't it be funny if this ended up on the exam next week?" Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may not understand these cues. Be direct!

4. Sometimes, students with ASD may over participate in class. When this happens, take the student aside and give them a participation limit per class. Then offer an alternate way for the student to ask additional questions or share thoughts. For example, "You can raise your hand three times per class. Write down any additional questions or comments and email them to me after class." ASD students respond well to concrete instructions.

5. If a student disrupts class, it may be because he or she cannot sit still for an entire lecture. Offer the student an option such as leaving class up to three times to visit the water fountain. This may help ASD or ADHD students who need to fidget. Offering the option to doodle can work as well, just remember that this doesn't mean that they are not paying attention!

6. While we understand that some professors prefer to keep laptops out of the classroom, keep in mind that some students need laptops to record lectures or take notes. If you only allow students with disabilities to use laptops, you will breech their confidentiality. The best option is to allow all students to use laptops.

7. Be consistent in your communication methods. ASD students in particular will look in the place they expect information to be. If you post information a different way than your usual method, they may miss it. Using Moodle to post important information is a great way to ensure that all students have access to it.

8. Be aware that many students have "invisible" disabilities. They may need accommodations even though they don't look like they should!

9. Remember that you do not need to provide accommodations to students unless you receive an official accommodation email from the PACE Center. But designing and teaching courses with disabilities in mind helps ALL students learn better.

10. Be careful not to be overly accommodating! Remember that students are still responsible for their learning. Accommodations are designed to provide equal access to course content, but these students should not receive special treatment. They are still held to the same grading standards as all other students.

For questions, concerns, or more accommodation tips, contact the PACE Center's Disability Support Team!

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