

Inclusive Syllabus Design

What is this resource? A syllabus checklist can be utilized as a tool for course review using the lens of diversity and inclusion. The listed items are highly recommended for inclusion in course syllabi and/or courses, as best practices and in support of diversity and inclusion to the benefit of all students. Many of the items are also elements of UDL Universal Design for Learning, which is advocated by the OSA, Office of Student Accessibility.

How do I use it? This resource can be a self-reflective tool and/or a conversation starter with colleagues. Curriculum review committees may wish to use this checklist, and/or add school specific items to it per their five-year plans for diversity and inclusion, when updating a single course or all courses in a program.

Faculty-Student Support	
Diversity Statement	Including a diversity statement on your syllabus can set the tone for your classroom environment. It shows students that you value and respect differences in cultural and intellectual exchange , and are aware of current campus conversations surrounding diversity. <i>Frequency:</i> Statements can be periodically made to address racial issues or to stand in alliance during events of racial injustice.
Communication in the Syllabus	Encourage students to contact instructors outside of class. Specify best channels of contact, and best time frames of office hours.
Technology	Offer direction on how the students in need of course-required technology can obtain the necessary technology, and any training available for the technology.
Discussion Etiquette	Provide a statement of language and terms that are expected / or not expected to be used by the students. Provide a statement of behavioral expectations for online/ and on ground classroom discussions.

Representative Content	
Current Events	Include real-world events, both local and global, when supporting course objectives and in support of weekly topics.
Perspective and Voices	Throughout course content, include traditionally un- or under represented perspectives and voices woven throughout the course content, not as an add-on, or separate action. Move away from canonized texts and materials and incorporate diverse authors
Instructor Neutrality	Provide instructor-created content that demonstrates neutral attention to topics and issues, regardless of personal beliefs, and without revealing one's bias, or appearing to push an agenda.

Content Format	
Multi-modality Content	Include content in multiple formats when possible, such as video, visiting scholars, international guests, experiential work, etc, as well as the traditional tools necessary to support student learning objectives.
Diverse Images	Provide content containing images, slides, videos, articles with images, which describes and captions, and reflects the diversity of its students at Pepperdine.
Accessibility	Using Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, linked content follows recommended best practices for access: captioned videos, etc. For assistance contact OSA Office of Student Accessibility.
OERs	When appropriate, include free and open licensed course content to replace or supplement the for-purchase content, such as an e textbook. For more information, visit Pepperdine Library Guides.

Assignments / Assessments	
Clear Objectives and lesson agenda	While it may seem obvious, learning objectives should be clearly visible for each class, and at the beginning of every class. Students will find it easier to follow your logical sequence, if they know your main ideas, especially for non-native speakers.
Differentiated Instruction	Using applied learning, active learning activities, engage students in a differentiated approach that can connect multiple learning styles. Provide a wide range of teaching methodology, in which students will process information in a range of cognitive channels. Use multiple skill areas to access diverse content areas. Differentiated classrooms respond to varying needs in student readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Provide the student to take initiative in learning by giving them choices. Students can become more empowered in their learning when they have more control of their learning outcomes.
Formative Assessments	Provide for students with multiple opportunities for low-stake opportunities, in order to provide meaningful formative assessment, and to improve their performance <i>before evaluative assessments</i> .
Alternative Assessments	AAC&U's list of high-impact educational practices include the following alternative assessments: first year seminars and seminar experiences with faculty mentors, variety of curricular and co curricular options for students, study abroad or internships & practicum, ePortfolios for experiential study-work progress, service and community learning, capstone courses and projects, student research.
Summative Assessment Alternative vs. Traditional	Describe the diverse modes of expression through a variety of assessment types. Examples: portfolios, team-based learning, group projects, case-based or problem-based learning, multi modal presentations, in addition to traditional assessment types. (multiple choice, essay, paper, etc.)
Descriptions	Refer and make clear to learners: assignment descriptions and include what the course learning objectives are, and what the particular task supports. Include your steps to complete the assignment and grading rubric.

References

Universal Design for Learning 3.0. (July 2024). UDL. <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

Diverse learning pathways are instructional strategies that provide **multiple ways for students to access content, engage with materials, and demonstrate learning**, supporting equity and inclusion. Examples include:

1. **Multimodal content delivery:** Video, audio, text, infographics, and interactive media.
2. **Flexible assessments:** Options like essays, presentations, portfolios, or recorded explanations.
3. **Self-paced modules:** Allowing learners to move through material at their own speed.
4. **Collaborative vs. independent work:** Group discussions or solo inquiry.
5. **Scaffolded choice boards or learning menus:** Students select tasks aligned with their strengths and goals.