

UDL Reporting Criteria: Your Trusted Companion for UDL Research and Implementation

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Abstract

The UDL Reporting Criteria (UDL RC) present a set of clear guidelines for reporting on UDL implementation. The UDL RC can be useful for researchers, practitioners and journal editors who seek to enhance the clarity of the UDL research base. This paper describes the development of the UDL RC and how they are intended to be applied to the design and reporting of UDL. The UDL RC are available at <https://udl-irn.org/udl-reporting-criteria>.

Keywords

UDL Research, Dissemination, Implementation

INTRODUCTION

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework that can be used to reduce barriers and address learner variability in the classroom. Because UDL can be applied in various permutations and combinations, the UDL research base describes a range of applications to instructional practices, educational environments, and products. In the past decade, researchers have noted the need to more clearly describe how UDL is implemented, in order to build the knowledge base of how UDL can be applied effectively (Edyburn 2010; Rao, Ok, & Bryant, 2014).

In 2017-2018, the UDL-IRN Research Committee developed the UDL Reporting Criteria (UDL RC). These criteria, posted on the UDL-IRN website, (udl-irn.org/udl-reporting-criteria) provide guidelines for researchers and practitioners who are designing and reporting on UDL implementation.

BACKGROUND

In March 2017, during a pre-conference session of the UDL-IRN Annual Summit in Orlando Florida, a working group of the UDL-IRN Research Committee convened to discuss issues around the operationalization and application of UDL. The workgroup identified the need for criteria to

establish a UDL claim. That is, to say that a practice or intervention is using UDL, it is useful to report some basic information on how UDL is applied and what components of UDL are being used. This need aligned with the recommendation for more detailed reporting on how UDL is being used by researchers and practitioners (Rao, Ok, & Bryant, 2014; Ok, Rao, Bryant, & McDougall, 2016). Criteria for reporting on UDL application can further the field not only by establishing guidelines to describe how UDL is used but also to guide design of UDL-based practices and interventions (e.g., to ensure that essential elements of UDL usage are included from the outset).

The workgroup agreed on this central purpose for their efforts:

- To develop reporting criteria that can be used when making a UDL claim relevant for design, implementation, and reporting of how UDL is applied
- To provide varied groups of stakeholders involved in UDL research and development (e.g., researchers and practitioners) a format for reporting on how they applied UDL when designing and implementing UDL-based interventions and practices.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPORTING CRITERIA

The workgroup met regularly in 2017-2018 to discuss the development of the reporting criteria and to establish what these criteria should include. We considered the following reporting standards developed for various related purposes in the fields of health and education. Booth (2006) describes the Standards for Reporting Literature Searches (STARLITE) for health technology assessments and for the conduct of systematic reviews in this field. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) standards, developed in 2009, are a minimum set of standards for reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses in all fields. In the field of education, several sets of quality indicators guide the development and reporting for research [e.g., Council for Exceptional Children

(CEC), 2014; What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), 2014; Gersten et al., 2005, Horner et al., 2005].

Workgroup members agreed that the UDL Reporting Criteria (RC) should:

1. Define the essential elements of UDL application (for example, how UDL was taken into consideration during the planning or design phase, which guidelines/checkpoints are being applied).
2. Provide a guideline for describing essential elements of a UDL-based application, one that is not intended to be prescriptive or to standardize how UDL is used
3. Support clear reporting of key components in relation to UDL

The workgroup concurred that the Reporting Criteria were not “quality indicators” and are not used to evaluate the way UDL is used or to evaluate the quality of a study.

GUIDING TENETS

The intention of the three guiding tenets is for reporting criteria that is:

1. Simple: To ensure that the criteria are usable, they are limited to three main categories, with 2-3 criteria within each section.
2. Essential: The RCs focus on essential aspects that can/should be present when making a UDL claim. The criteria are worded to capture whether essential elements of the UDL construct (reducing barriers, designing proactively, applying the guidelines/checkpoints) are present. By keeping the RC focused on these essential elements, we can ensure the criteria are not restrictive or prescriptive, allowing researchers and practitioners to apply the UDL framework in varied and flexible ways relevant to their specific practices and interventions.
3. Non-evaluative: The RC are for marking Yes/No (whether an element is present or not) in order to provide a snapshot of the basic elements that are reported. People using the RCs to evaluate studies may want to focus on additional aspects related to quality or use of UDL (e.g., whether practices are student-centered, how UDL is used in inclusive environments, how UDL is used for students with a particular disability, how expert learning is addressed). These evaluations go beyond basic reporting of essential UDL elements present. Reviewers can use the Notes column to capture additional information of interest when assessing the presence of basic elements.

DOWNLOAD THE UDL REPORTING CRITERIA

The full text of the UDL RC is available at UDL-IRN website at <https://udl-irn.org/udl-reporting-criteria>. The RC have three main categories, with 2-3 criteria in each category as follows (download full text for expanded definitions of categories and criteria):

1. Learner Variability and Environment

- (a) Participant Information
- (b) Setting

2. Proactive and Intentional Design

- (a) Addressing Barriers and/or Increasing Access
- (b) Designing to Address Variability
- (c) Application of UDL Guidelines and Checkpoints

3. Implementation and Outcomes

- (a) Description of Implementation of Practice/Intervention
- (b) Outcomes/Findings in Relation to UDL
- (c) Implications

CONCLUSION

Since their publication in April 2018, researchers and practitioners have started to use the UDL RC to design studies and report on how UDL is implemented. Research teams have also applied the UDL RC to existing studies to examine how the existing research base addresses criteria. As independent groups use the UDL RC, we hope to foster ongoing discussion about the criteria and to continue refining this initial version of the UDL RC through additional discussion, feedback, and commentary from the field.

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