Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a research-based framework that can be used to anticipate human variability and to reduce learning barriers in the design of any environment. The UDL Guidelines are a tool for applying UDL to practice.

Knowledge Statements

The UDL Knowledge Statements (KS) were developed as part of the UDL credential initiative by Learning Designed. Together with the UDL Guidelines, these KS can be used to reflect on how the design of any learning experience anticipates variability and reduces barriers.
“Clear learning goals are the foundation of any effective curriculum.”

UDL Theory and Practice (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon 2014)
UDL Knowledge Statement: Goals

The goal is presented so learners can perceive and understand it.

Reflect: In your design, how is the goal presented so learners can perceive and understand it?

The goals of any learning experience should be presented so all learners can perceive and understand it.

Once the goal is presented so it can be perceived and understood, then learners, designers, curricular developers, and more can make more intentional choices about flexible pathways available to progress and achieve the goal.
“When the means is embedded in the goal, some learners may be inadvertently excluded from working toward those goals or not offered an appropriate level of challenge.”

UDL Theory and Practice (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon 2014)
UDL Knowledge Statement: Goals

The goal is separate from means, where possible.

Reflect: In your design, how is the goal separate from the means?

There are often many goals in a learning experience, for example, goals may be content, skills, social-emotional, or behaviors.

When the goals are disaggregated from the means to achieve them, educators can effectively plan flexible assessments, methods, materials, and learning environments. Learners can envision different pathways to success.
“From a UDL perspective, affective goals such as developing enthusiasm for learning and an ability to self-regulate are equally important.”

UDL Theory and Practice (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon 2014)
The goal is presented to highlight relevance.

Reflect: In your design, how is the goal presented to highlight relevance?

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“Key characteristics of an expert learner include high motivation and engagement, extensive knowledge and ability to build new knowledge, and fluent use of varied strategies. We have also seen great variability among experts.”

UDL Theory and Practice (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon 2014)
UDL Knowledge Statement: Goals

The **goal promotes expert learning by encouraging challenging ways of thinking and doing.**

Reflect: In your design, **how does the goal promote expert learning by encouraging challenging ways of thinking and doing?**

The ultimate vision of UDL is to develop expert learners who are purposeful and motivated, resourceful and knowledgeable, and strategic and goal directed in their learning and in any environment. Does the goal promote learners to think like experts in the discipline or domain? Goals should be crafted in ways that open the opportunity for challenge and rigor.
“In education, assessments have many different names and purposes. In general, assessment refers to the process of gathering information about a learner’s performance to make educational decisions.”

UDL Theory and Practice (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon 2014)
UDL Knowledge Statement: Assessment

There are opportunities for flexible assessment options.

Reflect: In your design, how are there opportunities for flexible assessment options?

Quality assessments align with the learning goal and make the criteria for success clear. In UDL environments, there are flexible options for how learners can show progress and mastery toward the intended goal. There is mastery-oriented feedback along the way. Flexible assessment options tightly align with the intended learning goal or objective.
“Because learners vary in the ways they become and stay motivated to learn, comprehend information, and strategically approach tasks, the UDL framework emphasizes the need to employ many kinds of teaching methods.”

UDL Theory and Practice (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon 2014)
UDL Knowledge Statement: Methods and Materials

Flexible methods are available for learners.

Reflect: In your design, how are there flexible methods available for learners? How do the flexible methods align with the intended goal?

With a clear learning goal in mind, UDL methods are intentional, flexible, accessible, and can be adjusted as a learner needs to make progress toward the goal.
“Materials encompass the media used to present learning content and the tools and media used by learners while learning and to demonstrate knowledge.”

UDL Theory and Practice (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon 2014)
UDL Knowledge Statement: Methods and Materials

Flexible materials are available for learners.

Reflect: In your design, how are there options for flexible materials? How do the flexible materials align with the intended goals?

UDL materials are varied, flexible, and provide different pathways to success. Selection of materials is not about aligning the “right one” to a learner, but is instead about having flexible options available and can be accessed and used as needed in the learning context.