Tip sheet - Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Classroom

The [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) clarify the obligations of education and training providers and seek to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students. The Disability Standards for Education 2005 (the Standards) were developed under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and came into effect in August 2005 (Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, n.d). Unlike the [online learning and teaching environment](#), accessibility and inclusivity in the classroom requires consideration of the suitability of the physical classroom space in promoting accessibility and inclusivity for students.

Learning and Teaching

According to the [Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training](#), classrooms are composed of students with diverse abilities, cultures, learning approaches and academic needs (ADCET, n.d). When teaching plans are structured to facilitate teaching for diverse student cohorts, then an inclusive teaching and learning environment is created.

One of the ways this can be achieved is to apply the [7 principles of Universal Design](#) in the classroom. According to the National Disability Authority, "Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability" (NDA, n.d).

This tip sheet presents some strategies to create an [inclusive and accessible](#) classroom environment based on the 7 principles of Universal Design in Education.

How do I apply the 7 principles of Universal Design in Education?

The following are some tips on applying the 7 principles of Universal Design in Education.

1. Create an equitable educational experience in the classroom.

   - Teaching is clear and relevant to all students. For example, provide clear examples to illustrate complex ideas.
   - Teaching content is available in a variety of formats such as print and online media. Ensure that this content is accessible to students with sufficient time for students to access materials and resources before class.
   - Assessment is conducted by utilizing flexible options. For example, if a student has an access plan, ensure that the student has sufficient time to complete assessments.

2. Provide flexible materials and instructional approaches.

   - Students have options in relation to how they access teaching materials. For example, formal lectures are supplemented with online materials.
   - Teaching materials are designed to accommodate the learning needs of a wide range of users.
   - Adapt teaching materials to suit all learning paces. For example, pause after key points during lectures.

3. Design materials that are simple and intuitive to use.

   - Teaching materials should be presented in a logical sequence according to importance. For example, build on concepts from simple ideas to more complex content.
   - Instruction is presented in a predictable manner and format.
   - Feedback is sufficient and provided in a timely manner.

4. Convey information in a perceptible format

- Provide information in multiple formats such as visual and auditory.
- Ensure that information is provided in a clear and legible format.
- Information provided is compatible with assistive technology.

5. Tolerate errors

- Teaching approach anticipates a variety of skills and abilities.
- Provide advance notice about important tutorials and lectures.
- Encourage students to seek assistance for proof-reading documents.

6. Eliminate unnecessary physical effort

- Ensure that non-essential physical effort is removed. For example, remove barriers such as chairs from all access points.
- Provide rest breaks for long teaching sessions.
- Minimise repetitive actions. For example, ensure that students do not need to change groups frequently throughout the classroom session.

7. Ensure physical accessibility for all

- Instruction is equally available to people with a range of physical characteristics and communication needs.
- Ensure that the learning environment has adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistance.

References

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