

Using varied approaches to teaching and learning activities can help students of diverse backgrounds and identities to contribute in valuable ways, including those students who encounter barriers to succeeding with more-conventional approaches. Many such activities also allow students to share, build on, and extend their existing knowledge, experiences, values, and perspectives.

Mohawk College has developed a helpful list of elements of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and examples of how such principles might be implemented. These are useful to think about as strategies and techniques that promote inclusive teaching and learning, and I'll also share some examples from my own teaching practice.

They've identified three key elements:

Firstly: Providing opportunities for *multiple means of engagement* in the learning process – for example, offering chances to collaborate with others, as well as to reflect on ideas and on what one has learned.

One way that I've used this approach in teaching students in a professional healthcare program is by incorporating structured debates as one of my graded activities, where students need to collaborate with teammates to research both 'pro' and 'con' positions on an issue, and prepare to collectively present whichever 'side' they're asked to -- finding out which position they'll be taking only a few minutes before the debate begins. Within the teams themselves, students all need to contribute, but are able to work together to find research strategies and debate roles that work for each member of the team. Following each debate, the team members and the rest of the class collectively reflect on and discuss what they found most effective and persuasive, and what challenges they encountered in preparing for the debate. I also stress to learners that advocating for oneself, for others, and for safe and humane policies and practices is a key skill for healthcare workers in the world today.

The second principle highlighted here is: Making use of *multiple means of representation* – including integrating interactive learning activities, and using multimedia resources.

In a science course, I've included a visit to an on-campus lab, where students circulate through learning stations featuring relevant objects are arranged with the help of the lab supervisor. Students are provided with a booklet of questions that they need to respond

to in writing, based on applying their course-derived knowledge and critical thinking and reasoning skills to the material at each station. The hands-on dimension of this activity, and the option to work independently or collaborate with peers, appeals to many students who may find effectively deriving information from traditional textbooks and lectures challenging or not relevant, and serves as an important bridge to understanding how course learning can be applied to the 'real world'.

The third element highlighted by Mohawk's learning specialists is: Allowing for *multiple means of action and expression* by learners. This might look like providing students with options as to how they communicate information and knowledge, or incorporating skills practice into one's assignments and activities.

One type of assignment I've used in courses in a variety of disciplines in the social sciences and humanities is an arts-based project. Students are asked to choose a topic that is relevant to the course – depending on the subject matter, this has ranged from a current sociocultural issue, the work of a particular theorist, or their own personal values in relation to a key course theme. In a creative medium of their choice, students need to craft a project that expresses key aspects of their topic, and this is accompanied by a written statement that explores the ideas in the work, draws connections to course content and materials, and involves finding and presenting supporting research. For in-person courses, students take turns briefly presenting their work to the class on the last day. It's remarkable to see many students who were quiet or reserved throughout the course come to life with their expression through drawing, painting, poetry, storytelling, dance, music, or other creative forms, where they can demonstrate skills and aspects of themselves that often get overlooked by conventional academic assignments.

These are only a few examples of ways that these principles can be implemented to enliven the teaching and learning experience while also making it more accessible and inclusive to a wide range of students.