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USW Universal Design for Learning

For lectures, workshops, seminars, and other synchronous learning activities.

“UDL is a framework to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and challenging for all. When environments are intentionally designed to reduce barriers, all learners can engage in rigorous, meaningful learning.” (CAST, 2021)

These UDL guides have been adapted by the CELT team and Disability Service to outline how the principles of universal design for learning (UDL) can be applied in different teaching and learning situations in order to help make learning accessible to as many students as possible.

There are 3 guides, this guide focuses on synchronous learning activities such as lectures, workshops and seminars. The other two guides cover text based resources, and asynchronous learning.

The guides do not set out how to design the learning activities/resources themselves. You should still refer to DEAL and other USW guidance and policies for more information about requirements for teaching, learning and assessment.

All university employees have legal responsibilities around different areas of accessibility and inclusion. The following information is provided for guidance only. More detailed information and guides for inclusive practice can be found on the following sites:

* CAST – [Learn more about the UDL framework.](https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl)
* CELT - [Inclusive practice webpage](https://celt.southwales.ac.uk/developing/inclusive-practice/).
* CELT - [Accessibility and technology webpage](https://celt.southwales.ac.uk/tel/inclusive-tech/).
* [Disability Service – Inclusive practice guidance for staff](https://universityofsouthwales.sharepoint.com/sites/Student_Services/SitePages/en-GB/disability-support.aspx) (internal only).
* [Disability Service website](https://disability.southwales.ac.uk/).
* [USW DEAL site](https://universityofsouthwales.sharepoint.com/sites/USWDEAL/SitePages/en-GB/Learning-Teaching-and-Quality.aspx).
* [UK Accessibility Regulations](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps#:~:text=The%20accessibility%20regulations%20came%20into,accessibility%20statement%20on%20your%20website.).
* [DEAL and the UK Accessibility Regulations](https://southwales.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=f84957f5-c688-4f33-90e4-ac0200ec9e6f) [video 6m52s].
* [USW Strategic Equality Plan](https://hr.southwales.ac.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/strategic-equality-plan/).
* [USW Module/Course Baseline Expectations](https://universityofsouthwales.sharepoint.com/sites/USWDEAL/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FUSWDEAL%2FShared%20Documents%2FVirtual%5FLearning%5FEnvironment%5FCourse%5FOrganisation%5F%5FModules2020%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FUSWDEAL%2FShared%20Documents).

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# Planning synchronous learning activities:

* Maximise consistency where you can, use a similar structure and environment for each session. Minimise change, provide advance notice, and clear information to allow for preparation for necessary changes to routine or non-standard activities.
* Minimise or avoid using any of the following elements within learning activities where they are not necessary to learning outcomes, or if they are required then provide advance notice:
  + physical effort,
  + loud noise,
  + flashing/flickering lights,
  + strong smells,
  + large amounts of social interaction,
  + food or drink.
* Consider providing or incorporating concept-mapping or other visual cues of your main points in addition to textual and verbal information.
* For face-to-face sessions, prepare backups in case of technological failure.
* Ensure all slides/handouts/other texts meet accessibility requirements (see UDL guide for text based resources).

## Additional considerations when planning **online** synchronous learning activities

* Minimise background noise.
* Ensure any on camera presenters are working from a well-lit space and can face the camera.
* Identify any students with additional support requirements for the session and plan accordingly (see [guidance for supporting deaf or hearing impaired students online](https://universityofsouthwales.sharepoint.com/sites/Student_Services/SitePages/en-GB/supporting-deaf-or-hearing-impaired-students-online.aspx)).
* Plan appropriately for the [requirements of DEAL](https://universityofsouthwales.sharepoint.com/sites/USWDEAL/SitePages/en-GB/Learning-Teaching-and-Quality.aspx).

# What to make available ahead of time:

* Slides, lecture notes, and handouts (see [VLE Baseline Expectations](https://universityofsouthwales.sharepoint.com/sites/USWDEAL/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FUSWDEAL%2FShared%20Documents%2FVirtual%5FLearning%5FEnvironment%5FCourse%5FOrganisation%5F%5FModules2020%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FUSWDEAL%2FShared%20Documents)).
* A glossary of unfamiliar or new terms - this can be provided within slides/notes, a separate document, or a link to an online source.
* Written instructions for any activities that may be happening - lab work, group activities, etc.
* Guidance/instructions on how to use the tool(s) being used to facilitate any online learning and teaching. These should be, where possible, electronic files as this will enable alternatives (such as braille, text-to-speech, etc) to be created more quickly.
  + [Student guide to Collaborate](https://its.southwales.ac.uk/unilearn/collaborate/).
  + [Student guide to Teams](https://universityofsouthwales.sharepoint.com/sites/O365CL/SitePages/en-GB/get-started-with-microsoft-teams.aspx).
* Alternative formats should be available as needed. The university has two services that can create these on demand for students and staff as needed. The Disability Service can advise on any items for which these apps cannot provide the necessary alternatives.
  + [Sensus Access](https://disability.southwales.ac.uk/assistive-technology/sensus-access/): automatically convert documents into a range of alternative media including audio books and digital braille.
  + [Blackboard Ally](https://celt.southwales.ac.uk/tel/blackboard/blackboard-ally/): will check with accessibility of your content within Blackboard modules/courses, and allows students to download course material in alternative formats.

# Setting up your synchronous learning activities:

* If possible, consider altering the layout of the room to work for your session (facing the speaker for presentations, separate tables for group work, etc). If any students have identified individual support needs (ie notetaker, BSL interpreter, wheelchair user, solo working etc) you may need to adjust room layouts accordingly. Disability Service can advise further if needed.
* Where appropriate, provide printed handouts, readings, slides, etc.
* Prepare for session to be recorded. Check microphone and camera are working and if working from home/online then reduce background noise as much as possible (e.g. pause washing machine).
* During online sessions, ensure that all materials and links e.g. slides, links to online activities and polls are uploaded prior to the session.
* Set up any additional online spaces that are required for translators/interpreters and liaise with them as needed (see [guidance for supporting deaf or hearing impaired students online](https://universityofsouthwales.sharepoint.com/sites/Student_Services/SitePages/en-GB/supporting-deaf-or-hearing-impaired-students-online.aspx)).

# What to do at the start of an activity:

* Inform students that session is being recorded and any measures they can take if they would prefer not to be recorded (see [Panopto and GDPR guidance](https://celt.southwales.ac.uk/tel/panopto/)).
* Give an explicit structure for sessions and activities, and refer to this as you proceed.
* Set out conventions for behaviour at the outset - raising hands, debate, pronoun usage, talking, noise levels, politeness, when asking questions is appropriate, etc. Remember to set out behaviours you want to encourage as well as those that are discouraged.
* Introduce additional support staff or other tools/technologies being used in parallel. I.e., introduce translators/note takers to usualise their presence. This introduction does not have to identify which student(s) are being supported.
* If facilitating learning and teaching online good practice for online behaviour should also be considered, this could include checking session participants can hear each other using a poll, check any additional student support i.e., interpreters/notetakers are present and can hear. See: [online communication etiquette guide](https://universityofsouthwales.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/USWDEAL/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B0FD5140E-6EC8-455A-AAD1-236A5E382E4B%7D&file=Online%20Communication%20Etiquette_final.docx).

# Things to consider during synchronous learning activities:

* Face learners when speaking and use microphones where they are available.
* Ensure that any information presented on screen is either described (if it is an image), read out, or explained in some way.
* Leave slides/screen views in place long enough for all viewers to understand what is being shown.
* Write out any unfamiliar words or acronyms that come up on the screen/whiteboard/paper.
* Make reading aloud and any other spoken contributions voluntary.
* If participants are speaking (to the whole group or within small groups) try to ensure they do so one at a time and can be seen by others.
* Check understanding at regular intervals to ensure communication and presentation methods are working. (Useful videos: [checking understanding online](https://southwales.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Sessions/List.aspx#folderID=%221f6cdc34-66bd-443e-a729-acca00c1e2fa%22)).
* Take mini-breaks or change activity types regularly.
* Avoid using gendered descriptions of people to call upon them (the person in the red top, rather than the lady/woman/man/girl/boy in the red top).

## Additional considerations for **online** synchronous sessions:

If facilitating learning and teaching online the following elements should be considered **in addition** to those above:

* Presenters and participants should take reasonable steps to minimise background noise during a session.
* Presenters and participants should be mindful to ensure that they are well lit, face the camera and do not cover their mouths when speaking.
* Advise participants to turn off their cameras and microphones when they are not speaking – this will help to ensure that those speaking can be clearly seen and heard (to support lip reading etc). **Please note:** that students are not required to turn cameras on at any time but if it is needed for any lip-readers/interpreters then there needs to be a discussion about why it would be helpful.
* Ensure any questions/comments posted in chat are read out when being answered.
* Try to ensure synchronous session length does not exceed DEAL recommendations when possible.

# What to do after your synchronous learning activities:

* Make sure recording is uploaded to Panopto, captioned and available to view.
  + [Uploading/managing recordings in Panopto](https://southwales.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=03481f28-f21d-4183-8f2d-ac0d00d9b4b0).
  + [Uploading Collaborate recordings to Panopto](https://southwales.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=03481f28-f21d-4183-8f2d-ac0d00d9b4b0).
* Add any unfamiliar or difficult words/acronyms that came up in the session to the online resources - upload a text file, add a Blackboard item, add to central glossary, append to slides.
* If any objects have been created during the session (e.g., thought maps, models, plans) make sure they are recorded in some way. For text-based objects it is best if the text can be typed up (as well as or instead of photographing it) to ensure greatest accessibility. Physical objects can be photographed or filmed and a description provided.

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