



Universal Design for Learning:  
Creating Accessible Learning Environments

## Universal Design for Learning: Creating Accessible Learning Environments

A collaborative project between GPRC Student Services and the GPRC Educational Technologies Centre.

Writers: Anna Gillis and Bernie Matlock

Editor: Jean Nordin

Revised 2015 by Anna Gillis and Jocelyn Smith

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*Creating Connections to knowledge, experience, and community one life at a time<sup>1</sup>*

## **What is UDL?**

Briefly, Universal Design for Learning, or UDL, is a framework that can reshape education by ensuring that course concepts educationally accommodates the greatest variety of individuals, regardless of learning style, physical or sensory abilities. UDL principles make education more inclusive and effective by removing the barriers from the learning process.

There are three key principles of UDL:

1. Multiple means of **representation**,
2. Multiple means of **expression**
3. Multiple means of **engagement**<sup>2</sup>

GPRC has adopted the [eCampusAlberta Essential Quality Standards](#) (EQS) for online curriculum creation. Each EQS is intended to support GPRC's commitment to high standards of learning excellence. UDL is an *important* EQS as it contributes to the efficiency and effectiveness of a learner's educational experience.<sup>3</sup>

## **What you can do:**

Apply UDL key principles to your face-to-face and online courses.

1. Provide multiple means of representation – provide various ways of acquiring information and knowledge.
  - Provide multiple examples
  - Highlight critical features
  - Provide multiple media and formats
  - Support background context (Recognition Learning)

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<sup>1</sup> [GPRC Mission Statement.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Rose, D., Meyer, A., & Hitchcock, C. (2005). *The universally designed classroom: Accessible curriculum and digital technologies*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on eCampus and the Essential Quality Standards, see <http://www.ecampusalberta.ca/>

2. Provide multiple means of expression - offer learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know.
  - Provide flexible models of skilled performance.
  - Provide opportunities to practice with supports.
  - Provide ongoing, relevant feedback.
  - Offer flexible opportunities for demonstrating skill.
  
3. Provide multiple means of engagement - tap into learners' interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn.
  - Offer choices of learning context.
  - Offer choices of content and tools.
  - Offer adjustable levels of challenge.
  - Offer multiple ways to be successful.<sup>4</sup>

### **The UDL Classroom Environment:**

*Grande Prairie Regional College provides accessible facilities and a supportive learning environment within the limits of available resources and with due regard to the rights of other members of the College community.<sup>5</sup>*

### **Support Services:**

- Educational Aid
- Tutor
- Academic Strategist
- Readers/Scribes
- Interpreter Services
- Exam Accommodations
- Note-takers
- Alternate Format Materials
- Assistive Technology (Training provided)
- Kurzweil (Screen Reader and Writing Tool) Mac/PC version
- Read & Write Gold – PC/Mac version
- Inspiration (Visual Mapping Tool)
- Livescribe Pen
- iPods/iPads

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<sup>4</sup> Rose, D. & Meyer, A. (2006). *A practical reader in universal design for learning*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

<sup>5</sup> [GPRC Students with Disabilities Policy](#).

- JAWS (Screen Reader)
- Zoomtext (Magnifying Software)
- Dragon Naturally Speaking (Voice Recognition Software) Mac/PC Version
- Inspiration (Mind mapping software)
- Word Q/Speak Q (Word prediction/Voice Recognition)
- Digital Recorders (DNS compatible)
- Classmate Reader (Auditory/Visual Feedback)
- Amigo Portable CCTV (closed circuit television)
- Enhanced Vision Transformer and Pebble (Vision Tool)

### **Accessible Facilities**

Grande Prairie Regional College is accessible to students with physical disabilities and is continuously working towards removing any barriers. A map of each campus can be found on the pages following. Elevators and rescue areas are clearly marked for your reference.

The following is a list of some of the accessibility features at each campus:

### **GRANDE PRAIRIE CAMPUS**

#### **Doors**

- ✓ There are several automated entrance doors, including exterior main entrances and Library & Media Services.

#### **Elevators**

- ✓ There are three elevators for student use, as well as, an elevator located within Library and Media Services. Elevators are identified on the map attached.

#### **Rescue Areas**

- ✓ In case of a Fire, students with physical disabilities are asked to wait for help at one of the Rescue Areas (identified on the attached map) **Do Not Take the Elevator.**
- ✓ **Rescue areas** are located on the **second floor** by the **K wing** and **L wing** elevator's and also by **room H201**. The **third floor** rescue area is located by **room E316** and on the **fourth floor**, the rescue area is located by the C wing Elevator. If you are on the **main level** or able to safely exit the building, take the nearest exit and meet at the **Muster point** in Parking lot A, B, C and/or F.

### **Accessible Parking**

- ✓ There are several designated parking stalls located near the main entrances of the College, including Lots A, B, C, F, G and H.
- ✓ Parking Passes can be purchased at the Cashier's office and/or online through the GPRC website at [www.gprc.ab.ca](http://www.gprc.ab.ca). Parking passes are available to purchase starting in July of each year and are on a first-come-first-serve basis.
- ✓ Parking is free from May-August.

### **Student Residence**

- ✓ There are 2-3 person units available that are wheelchair accessible.
- ✓ Students can contact Student Housing for information and/or details on residence availability at (780) 539-2802.
- ✓ It is important for students with accessibility needs to apply for residence early.

### **Washroom Facilities**

- ✓ There are accessible washrooms available in several locations throughout the college.

## **FAIRVIEW CAMPUS**

### **Doors**

- ✓ There are several automated exterior doors, MacDonald Administration Centre, Keddie Trades Instructional Building, Jones Animal Sciences Building, Lancaster Plant Sciences Building, Lancaster Library and Residence.

### **Elevators**

- ✓ There is one elevator located in the Fitness Centre in the Heart of the Peace Complex.

### **Accessible Parking**

- ✓ There are several designated parking stalls near the main entrances of the College in several designated locations.

### **Student Residence**

- ✓ There is one apartment on campus that is fully accessible.
- ✓ Students can contact Student Housing for information and/or details on residence availability at 1 (888) 999-7882, ext. 6652.
- ✓ It is important for students with accessibility needs to apply for residence early.

### **Washroom Facilities**

- ✓ There are accessible washrooms available in several locations throughout the college including the MacDonald Administration Centre, Lancaster Library, Keddie Trades Instructional Building, as well as, the Fitness Centre and Swimming Pool in the Heart of the Peace Complex.

### **Heart of the Peace Complex**

- ✓ The Fitness Centre and Swimming Pool and Theatre are all fully accessible.

For additional information and support, contact the [Accessibility Coordinator](#) in Student Services.

### **The UDL Online Environment:**

Providing multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement are key to learner success in any learning environment. In addition, there are three key online learning characteristics: simplicity, interactivity, and accessibility.

#### **1. Simplicity**

- Remember e-mail – e-mail as a primary form of communication is effective, efficient, and uncomplicated.
- Beware of techies – do not include technology tools that are complicated and unnecessary.
- Modularize – Do not use multiple layers of links. Keep content simply organized.

#### **2. Interactivity**

- Engage students by ensuring there is meaningful two-way communication between participants in the learning experience. There are four types of interaction:
  1. Student-to-student
  2. Student-to-instructor
  3. Student-to-content
  4. Student-to-management/feedback

### 3. Accessible

- Online courses are only accessible if learners with disabilities are able to obtain the course content and able to communicate with the instructor and student colleagues. The following are ways in which designers can ensure that their course is accessible:
  1. Make the course design a team project.
  2. Online courses should be designed for universal access.
  3. Provide redundant communication modes (audio and visual content).
  4. Understand the challenges of students with disabilities
  5. Have a system to deal with specific learning challenges.
  6. Understand adaptive technologies.<sup>6</sup>

GPRC's [Educational Technologies Centre](#) can assist in ensuring that your online course is universally designed. Instructors are encouraged to ensure that they communicate with their students to identify any need for specialized supports. Moodle has an Accessibility Block. The Educational Technologies Centre can assist you in adding this block and providing an Accessibility information support page.

Advising and guiding on funding and availability of technologies and supports for students with disabilities is provided by the [Accessibility Supports and Disability Services](#).

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<sup>6</sup> Kinash, K. & Paszuk, A. (2007). *Accessible education for blind learners: Kindergarten through postsecondary*. Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing.

## Recommended Resources:

### Books:

Burgstahler, S. & Cory, R. (2008). *Universal design in higher education: From principles to practice*. Boston: Harvard Education Press.

Rose, D. & Meyer, A. (2006). *A practical reader in universal design for learning*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

Rose, D., Meyer, A., & Hitchcock, C. (2005). *The universally designed classroom: Accessible curriculum and digital technologies*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

### Documents:

Government of Alberta (2010). *Duty to accommodate students with disabilities in post-secondary educational institutions*. Government of Alberta. Retrieved February 22, 2012 from [http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/Bull\\_Duty\\_to\\_accom\\_students.pdf](http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/Bull_Duty_to_accom_students.pdf).

Norquest College (2008). *Accessibility to E-Learning for Persons with Disabilities: Strategies, Guidelines, and Standards*. *eCampusAlberta*. Retrieved July 28, 2015 from <http://www.ecampusalberta.ca/members/member-resources/professional-development-resources#accessibility>

### Websites:

- Accessibility checkers. The following tools can be used to determine how accessible a web page is: WAVE – <http://wave.webaim.org>, W3C – <http://validator.w3.org>, ATRC – <http://achecker.ca/checker/index.php>.
- Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST). CAST provides a plethora of information and resources that improve access to the curriculum by students with disabilities: <http://www.cast.org>.
- Microsoft Accessibility. Explanation of the accessibility features included in Microsoft products: <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/education/default.aspx>.
- Online Accessibility. This website offers tutorials on designing accessible websites and software: <http://www.umich.edu/~webaccs/home.html>.
- PASS IT (Pedagogy and Student Services for Institutional Transformation). PASS IT offers information on how to make postsecondary student services, courses, and classrooms, accessible to students with disabilities: <http://cehd.umn.edu/passit/about.html>