



Making Your Course More Accessible

Recommendations from the Accessibility Interests Working Group

When you make anything more accessible, it helps everyone.

While the University of Toronto has a robust Accessibility Services office, unfortunately not all students are able to register for their services, and individual access plans can be limited. The Accessibility Interests Working Group partnered with the MISC survey committee to determine access barriers to students' educational experience. Based on the results, and the Universal Design for Learning framework, we have compiled a list of recommendations for changes at the individual level. We understand that not all curriculums are compatible with all our recommendations, but implementing even a few of these suggestions can make a big difference for many students.


Content



- Try to cater to a wide variety of learning styles. Different students absorb information better through different mediums. For example, if assigning an article on a subject, attempt to find a podcast on a similar topic, or an instructional video.
- Define terms that not everyone may know, keeping in mind students for whom English is a second language.
- Do your best to represent a variety of perspectives in the content.

Materials



- Make sure any text content is available in digital form or print form, whether a text book, article or handout.
- Try to have slide decks posted as early as possible.
- Recruit volunteer note takers, regardless of if they have been specifically requested.
- If possible, provide lecture recordings. In Bissell, many rooms already have this capacity.
- When posting on Quercus, use the "Check Accessibility" button to verify the accessibility of any content you are uploading. The button looks like this: 

Assessments



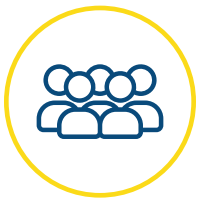
- Allow assignments to be submitted physically or digitally.
- Provide assignment descriptions and due dates as early as possible.
- If possible, allow students to express themselves in a variety of ways. This could mean writing a series of blog posts or video blogs as an alternative to a paper, or it could mean allowing students to include illustrations as part of their paper content.
- Consider allowing a limited extension policy. For example, allow students to extend assignments for a maximum of one week, spread across all their assignments for the semester.

Classroom Space



- Provide breaks, ideally every hour. Breaks should be long enough to allow students to take medication, have a snack, or use the restroom, including those who may have to use a different restroom than the one on the classroom's floor.
- Try to keep aisles and space for movement clear of obstacles such as backpacks.
- Try to limit the amount of movement around the classroom. If students need to work in groups, try assigning the groups a place to sit at the beginning of class, before students have positioned themselves.

Group work



- If possible, allow time for in-class collaboration.
- Encourage groups to consider varying access needs without requiring students to self disclose. For example, some students may have difficulty being physically present in meetings but can use voice or video conferencing to participate. Some students may find it difficult to participate and take notes at the same time. Encourage students to consider these possibilities before assuming their group members are not making a full effort.

On behalf the iSchool students, thank you for creating a more inclusive environment for learning. If you have any questions regarding the these recommendations, or how to design a more accessible classroom, please feel free to reach out to us.

