Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association

HEDSA

A proactive approach to teaching & interacting with students with disabilities

ENCOURAGE

ENVISION

ENABLE

A proactive approach

- Universal design and universal design for learning:

  - Recognize the provision of specific accommodations and additional support (including assistive devices)

- Proactive approach = flexibility

- UDL principles:
  - Provide multiple means of representation
  - Provide multiple means of action and expression
  - Provide multiple means of engagement

"Plus one" approach

- Not to become experts on matters of disabilities
- Start small:
  - Where do students usually "get stuck" with the course?
    - Students keep asking the same questions about a specific assignment on an annual basis
  - Find one more alternative interaction of information
    - Upload a video or audio explanation on the LMS to pre-empt the problem
  - Beginning 1st and 2nd semester extend a friendly invitation to students to encourage disclosure of their disability via email or in person
  - Helps to plan for your specific cohort instead of special accommodations to be made afterwards

Alternatives for course content

- Avail paper-based textbook chapters or handouts in different formats
  - Electronic format (PDF), Word / html on LMS
    - Allows for adaption into audio format
  - Use verbal / audio descriptions when images used on PowerPoint or when writing equations on the board
    - Allows for all students to be included when descriptive words are used instead of "here" and "there"
  - Provide multiple alternatives for essential course information
    - Key information explained in short video, including closed captions / short audio with downloadable transcript / infographic / audio
    - Diverse group included – English Second Language students, textual challenges, hard of hearing
  - Relationship with DU for course specifics
    - Tutors for specific modules, human support for certain professions / practicals
    - Conversion of diagrams / graphs

Use of assistive technology / human support in class room

- Invite students to switch on assistive technology at beginning of class
  - Models lecturers acceptance of diverse needs of students
  - Include digital recorders for example
  - Creates inclusive culture and less pressure on LMS

- Make use of cooperative learning strategies with impromptu text
  - Reading buddy
  - Text should be available electronically beforehand for preparation
  - One more alternative provides for autonomy and less dependency

Assessments and Assignments

- Aim of assessment
  - Not simply to judge outcome of learning
  - Provides for supportive and positive mechanism to improve learning
  - Students demonstrate what they know
- Use different methods of assessment or examination procedures
  - Ensuring students are given same opportunities to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes
  - Provide more than one option of assessment
  - Less modifications for reasonable accommodation
    - Essay / oral assessment
    - Video- / textual assignment
    - PowerPoint / paragraph answers
    - Role-play

- Inflexible assessments

  - Scaffold the assignment
    - Provide clear steps for content and structure
    - Benefits all students

  - DU collaboration for reasonable accommodation / modification options

  - Overarching concern must be flexibility without compromising demonstration of learning outcome

Practical guidelines for classroom

- Interacting with an inaccessible environment disables a person
- Allowing different options and ways of use will reduce the experience of disability
- **Deaf / hard of hearing students**
    - Clear view to lecturer and sign language interpreter / lip-speaker
    - If lip-reading sit in front to follow lecturer's mouth, limit movement, engage with eye contact
    - Allow more time for group discussions and encourage talking one at a time
    - Repeat other students' comments or any question asked
    - Instructional material available in text form

- **Visual impairments**
  - Sit at same place and should share spaces with other students
  - Say student's name when talking to them or asking them question
  - When other students raise hands identify them by name – allows VI student to get to know classmates
  - Verbalise when writing on board demonstrating something
  - Verbalise when stranger / visitor enters classroom or if it was rearranged
  - Takes twice as long to complete assignment using Braille
  - Be flexible with deadlines – student remains responsible to submit on time
  - Assignment organisation more important than layout and mechanics
  - Replace practical work with theory / human support / group work
  - Consider audio commentary for practical reports

- **Mobility impairments**
  - Loose desk in inaccessible auditoriums to accommodate wheelchairs
  - Note student might be late for class due difficulty with movement around campus
  - Schedule accessible venues
  - Don't push or touch a wheelchair – personal space. Ask first
  - One-to-one conversation bend down to have leveled eye contact

Practical guidelines for classroom

- **Learning difficulties**
  o Receives and processes information via auditory, spatial / visual means
  o Retainment and expression of knowledge differ between students with learning difficulties
  o Start by reviewing previous main topics of previous class
  o Provide clear overview, hand-out with highlighted main arguments, key concepts and new / difficult vocabulary
  o Clarify new language and provide examples
  o Allow time to read hand-out
  o Avoid patterned backgrounds on slides with clear fonts
  o Avoid dense text – use paragraphs, headings, sub-headings, bullets
  o Provide references to electronic copies when available – student might use text-to-speech software to listen to info
  o Use variety of means to present info – video, flow-chart, diagrams to reduce note-taking
  o Break info down, if task details are long
  o Provide instructions in written form and assignment deadlines well in advance

- **Psychosocial conditions**
    - Relationship should be characterised by respect for their rights to dignity, confidentiality and equity
    - Learning processes might be affected – dealing with anxiety, apathy, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, fatigue, irritability, panic attacks, lack of concentration, disorganisation
    - May vary from day-to-day
    - Flexible delivery of teaching material via email / LMS when unavoidably absent from class
    - Consider requests for extensions on assignments with reasons provided
    - Do not attempt to counsel the student
    - Provide verbal and written instructions with reminders of due dates of assignments and exams

Adopt a mindful approach

- Make contact with student with disabilities in your cohort

- If unsure how to provide equal access – ask the student / the DU

Opportunities revealed during COVID

- **Usual challenge:**
  - Confronted with inaccessible environment
  - But also with attitudinal barriers:
    - Learning experience greatly influenced by negative views and attitudes
    - Therefor need to develop reparatory strategies to compensate and balance the effects of their shortfall in order to achieve success
    - Navigating the barriers
    - Have been denied certain adaptations and ways of learning

- **Students' resilience:**
  - Personally interacted with their lecturers
  - Capacity to make choices and decisions
  - No need to deal with attitudinal barriers as a result of their disability
  - Negotiating their own access

Thank You!