Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a learning framework for curriculum and course development rooted in three areas: multiple means of representation of information, multiple means of student action and expression, and multiple means of student engagement. The CAST organization shares in-depth resources and strategies for creating an inclusive classroom and learning environment that can have profound impacts on learning for all of your students.

**UDL Strategies to Support Neurodivergent Learners**

Although UDL strategies will benefit all your students, some areas may help Neurodivergent learners in a greater way to build success in your course. Neurodivergent learners showcase diverse minds that process information in many ways. Our classroom benefits from having students who display a wide variety of strengths and perspectives in their learning. It also means we want to create an environment that supports the learning needs of all. Not all students may disclose being neurodivergent with you, as their instructor, or with the SSD office on campus, which makes proactive design crucial.

Tufts University shares how to develop a “plus-one” approach to integrating UDL into your courses. Instead of thinking of the many ways you want to make changes and feeling stuck being overwhelmed with the numerous changes you may consider, try to add just one new approach to something you are already doing to give you more options for communicating and engaging with your content.

For example: Do you share in your syllabus how points are broken down or grades are weighted in the course? Instead of only typing the numbers, consider adding a graphic or chart that shows how each area of assessment in your course comes together to make up their final grades. By adding one additional strategy, you've already doubled the ways in which students can understand and engage with important information they need for the course.

Below are some considerations on how to support neurodiverse learners in your course.

- **Utilize multiple ways to communicate information**. If you give a reminder in class about a paper due in two weeks, send an email or post an announcement in Canvas as well. If you
give verbal directions in class, have a slide that shares the same steps that students can
refer back to while their working.

- **Consider various options for assignment formats** (when applicable). If you are asking
students to share a self-reflection on their work in the class through midterms, could students
either write that reflection OR record a short video? Could they possibly create some
drawings and annotate their successes and areas for improvement for the second half of the
semester? Use the “plus-one” approach to consider one other option for students to show you
what they know when the format of the assessment is not tied to your learning outcomes or
specific skill/task.

- **Share timely feedback ahead of add/withdraw deadlines**. This can help all students
know their current progress in the course and avoid extra stress later in the semester if a
change in registration is needed.

- **Use multiple structured assignments to scaffold large assessments**. Scaffolding or
chunking your large assessments into smaller deliverables gives an opportunity to offer
feedback sooner and help students stay on track for completion.

- **Avoid large run-on sections of text on Canvas pages and assignments**. A lot of text
on a page may be overwhelming to navigate and make meaning of the content. Chunk texts
into small amounts, use bullet lists to share groups of information or add a horizontal line on
the page in Canvas to start a new section.

- **Offer content in a variety of ways**. Use the “plus-one” approach where the content in
another format is available to support student learning (e.g. share a video that goes along
with a textbook chapter or a podcast that focuses on the discussion topic for the day to help
them prepare their written notes). Use alternative text (alt text) or written explanations for
images and captions/transcripts for video and audio files to create an accessible learning
environment for all students.

- **Use active learning engagement strategies**. Diversifying the way students connect and
interact with materials by creating opportunities for “learning by
doing”. Review additional active learning strategies to incorporate into your teaching.

- **Consider offering a short break during class**. The “Pomodoro Technique” has a person
work in intervals with short breaks in between. This can help learners better manage their
expectations to focus while also giving them a break to switch between topics or activities.

Wondering more about UDL or what course design changes you may want to consider? Contact
CETL (cetl@uwec.edu) to talk about strategies you may be considering in your course.

**Deeper Learning**


- How to ADHD - Video, “What is a Pomodoro and How Can it Help with ADHD?” (2021, 3:15
  min)
• Think UDL Podcast, “Neurodivergent Workforce Win-Win” (2023, 68 minutes)

• Think UDL Podcast, “Supporting Neurodiverse Learners” (2022, 66 minutes)

• Tufts University, “Using Universal Design for Empowering Neurodiversity in the Classroom” (2020)

• UDL On Campus, “UDL Examples – Examples in Higher Education”