# 15 Things you Should Know about Accessibility
In Higher Education

Supporting Documentation to the Webinar on Accessibility

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1. According to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005), or AODA, University Educators have a duty to design educational material and learning activities in an accessible format; and Universities have a duty to provide Educators with appropriate training.

2. Educators' duty toward accessibility is an opportunity to reflect on one's values, beliefs and teaching practices; and to do the right thing (being responsible citizens).

3. There are differences between diversity, inclusion and accessibility:
    a. Diversity is about individual characteristics that make a student unique;
    b. Inclusion is the action of considering diversity in student-educator interactions and in teaching practices;
    c. Accessibility aims at the removal of barriers to learning for students with disabilities and at supporting students in reaching their full potential.

4. About 10% of students on North American campuses have a disability (Vukovic, 2012), and this number is growing with more and more students being diagnosed with mental health issues, learning disabilities and Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); and as they received proper support to succeed in high school, they are moving up to higher education.

5. 72% of students registered to Access Service have a non-visible disability. Professors are less likely to accommodate or support students when they can't see the disability (scepticism) (Burgstahler & Doe, 2006).

6. Limited support from professors, limited availability of accessible material and limited scope in variety of teaching methods means a significantly decreased chance of success for students.

7. Proactively designing courses and accessible material to meet a variety of learnings needs serves all students and limits the time and hardship of professors in trying to accommodate students' needs one by one (e.g. aim at universal design rather than accommodating/offering only adapted measures).

8. The concept of "the average learner" is a myth: Diversity is the norm, not the exception (Todd Rose, Variability Matters, 2012).

9. Access to same opportunities (equity) rather than sameness (equality) is sought after (see picture next on page).
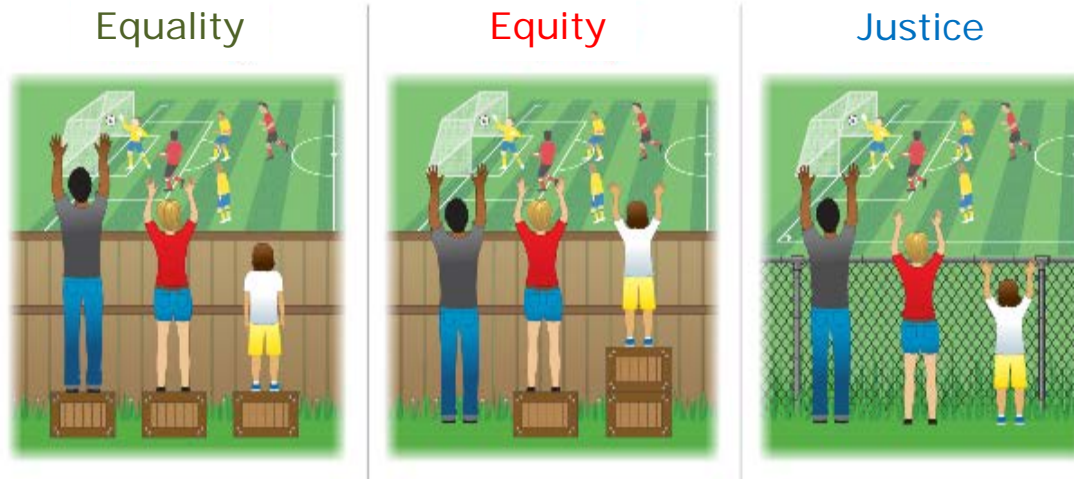
| Equality | Equity | Justice |

10. Best practices in education, reflective practices and welcoming and open attitudes toward students impact inclusion, and student success.

11. Proactive instructors, acting as facilitators and guides to learning, while offering varied, engaging, relevant and challenging learning activities, are a great resource to students.

12. Inclusive Teaching Practices are not about lowering academic standards and high expectations, but rather about being flexible in how students can demonstrate their understanding of content.

13. All MS Word, MS Power Point, Adobe PDF and video material should be checked for accessibility issues, and such issues fixed before being sent or posted for students to use. For example:

    a. Written documents: Tag levels of text, use templates, add alternative text on pictures, tag tables, beware of formatting issues, use accessibility checker;

    b. PowerPoint presentation: check for background/content contrasts, font size and style, and animation styles; use alternative text on images; verify content reading order; and use accessibility checker;

    c. Video clips: add close-captions to the video or post a transcript beside that video on the course site.

    d. There are accessibility challenges with learning technologies like Virtual Campus, video-conferencing, e-voting and lecture capture for students who are blind or not able to use a mouse. The main challenges faced are related to navigation, screen readers unable to read posts in chats or documents, and video captioning requirements.

        i. There are a number of short term solutions available until these technologies are upgraded, like sending educational material by email, allow group work in class, meet with students to answer their questions or hire a support person to help the student use these technologies.

14. There are many other strategies available to increase accessibility, for example:

    a. Put notice in syllabus and open dialogue on accessibility in first class (e.g. inquire about specific learning needs);

    b. Share lesson outline before class to allow, for example, students with learning disabilities to prepare for note taking;

    c. State learning outcomes and session outline at onset;

    d. Regularly move in the room to reach audience;

e. Use a microphone; speak facing the audience;

f. Communicate messages in multiple formats;

g. Repeat questions and summarize answers from learners for everyone to ear;

h. Contextualize, summarize and reframe content (e.g. use transition slides, rap-up before switching topics, introduce and situate theme within course);

i. Describe images and graphics;

j. Use contrasts and colours to highlight key ideas (words)

k. Use low key animation in PPT;

l. Ask for feedback and adjust (e.g. look for non-verbal cues).

15. There are many resources available on the [uOttawa Accessibility Hub](#) (under 'Inclusive teaching'). For example:

d. Introduction to Inclusive Teaching Practices

e. Council of Ontario University guides

f. S.A.S.S. guide on academic accommodations

g. Online training modules (MS Word, PowerPoint, videos, web)

h. Accessibility workshops are also available through the Teaching and Learning Support Service (TLSS) and the Human Rights Office (from the right end side menu, in the 'training' section).

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