

Guidelines for Accessibility

University and college campuses today have students with a range of abilities, and from a variety of socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. The University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) is no exception. With such diversity in enrolment, it is important for UFV's educators to develop courses that are accessible to all learners. Accessibility in education is even more pertinent now with the passage of the Accessible British Columbia Act in June 2021. The Act provides a framework to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. As of September 1, 2023, post-secondary institutions are required to comply with this legislation. Under the Accessible British Columbia Act, UFV has developed an [Accessibility Plan](#) which will be reviewed and updated regularly. Instructors can play their part by identifying and actively removing barriers for diverse learners and improving the accessibility of their courses. When UFV instructors design learning experiences with accessibility in mind, they diversify their teaching strategies and develop flexible learning environments. This makes learners feel a strong sense of belongingness and representation and elevates the overall quality of teaching and learning. This document outlines some practical steps that instructors can take to make their courses more accessible.

Note: Accessibility for academic purposes is a right and not a discretion. Instructors should make every effort to comply with accommodations granted by UFV's [Centre for Accessibility Services](#) (CAS). Where such accommodations conflict with academic integrity standards, the matter should be referred to CAS.

Step 1: Content Organization and Navigation

- Organize online course content into concise yet descriptive headings and subheadings to break content down into chunks for students. This helps students gauge information on a page or document and search for relevant information.
- Follow a clear hierarchical heading structure to support logical navigation of pages or documents containing course content (e.g., H1 for title of page, H2 for main sections of content, H3 for subsections of content, etc.).
- Identify headings by [adding heading styles](#) (H1, H2, H3 and so on) rather than simply through manual font and colour changes of text.

Step 2: Universal Design Elements

- Present content through multiple mediums – text and visuals, audio and visuals, or text and audio – to meet the needs of students with a variety of perceptual preferences.
- [Provide alt text and/or image descriptions](#) for Images, tables and charts.
- Provide captions for audio and video material and [enable automated captions](#) and/or [live transcription for virtual class meetings](#).
- Present graphic organizers and templates to students to support them in the processing of information.
- Give students a choice in final assessments/mode of expression so that they can demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways that complement their strengths.
- Keep students engaged in the course by sharing content that captures their interest. Ask students what they want to learn about or provide options for assignments that can increase student motivation.
- Select course readings that are representative of your students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and that can be understood by students who have different levels of ability or

background knowledge. Provide abbreviated summaries or have students develop these comprehension notes together in class.

Step 3: Language and Terminology

- Communicate in simple and direct language with your students.
- Expand on and explain abbreviations/acronyms.
- Refrain from using metaphors and jargon. They may not be commonly understood by all students, especially those whose first language is not English or who do not belong to Western cultures.
- Provide a glossary of specific terminology to facilitate recall of meaning.

Step 4: Participation and Feedback

- Provide students with a variety of options to communicate with you and each other, that is, through email, virtual office hours, discussion forums, chat in Zoom meetings, surveys, reactions during a virtual classroom, etc.
- Invite and encourage candid feedback (exit slips, reflections, verbal), and demonstrate by making changes to your instructional strategies that this feedback is valued.

Step 5: Sharing Course Materials

- Upload digital files of materials which will be used during class (PowerPoint slides, handouts, activity sheets, etc.) in advance to give students the opportunity to download and review them before class. This also allows students to convert or modify the files into an alternative format based on their learning needs.
- If uploading in advance is not possible for any reason, ensure that materials are shared after class meetings as they can be effective study and review tools for many students.
- Share meeting transcripts and chat history with participants after virtual class meetings to allow them to make note of and review the comments made by their classmates as well as the resources shared. Note that these transcripts are only to be viewed by students registered in the course.

Step 6: Colour

- Maintain high colour contrast between foreground and background when presenting information for better readability. A contrast ratio of 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text is recommended by the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](#).
- [Use contrast checkers](#) to ensure that the colour contrast is sufficient.
- Refrain from communicating information solely through colour (e.g., emphasizing key terms by putting them in a different coloured font, using different coloured lines in graphs to represent different trends). Instead combine colour with other mediums to represent information (e.g., key terms may be put in a different coloured font as well as underlined to be emphasized. Solid or dotted lines which are also of different colours may be used in graphs)

Example:

[Accessibility](#) is about removing barriers and increasing inclusion and independence for everyone. (not recommended).

[Accessibility](#) is about removing barriers and increasing inclusion and independence for everyone.
(recommended)

Step 7: Links

- When linking to other resources or documents from your course, [write hyperlinked titles that are concise yet descriptive](#). Hyperlinks should identify the content being linked to rather than include the entire URL of the resource.

Step 8: File Formats

- Ensure that course content and uploaded documents are accessible in their format. Web-based content may be developed in HTML format for better accessibility.
- Consider providing files and documents in .docx format as much as possible as these are easiest to navigate, modify or remediate into an accessible version.
- When PDF files are unavoidable and need to be uploaded, be prepared to provide the document or information it contains in an alternative, more accessible format as some students may request it due to barriers to accessibility.