

Assessment Design: Perspectives and Examples Informed by Universal Design for Learning



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SECTION ONE

Reassessing Assessments

Most broadly, understanding a student's learning means that we must account for the ways that they have constructed their reality according to their educational context. This workbook is dedicated to assessment – the conventional and the alternative – and it is our hope that before you start to choose the assessment methods for your course, you will start by considering that assessment is not just a measure of what students know; it has the capacity to shape a student's attitude, goal setting, and engagement (Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2005). Typically, we often understand assessment from the standpoint of the instructor: How can we find out if a student is learning what we want them to learn? What are the best ways to assess student's content knowledge and learning transfer? When and how often should assessments take place?

Traditionally, assessments in post-secondary contexts have been primarily exam-based or essay-based. Exams have the specific purpose of gauging the automaticity of recall, or in other words, how quickly and accurately a student can answer questions set by the instructor. Exams offer an efficient means of representing and measuring knowledge conveyed in a course. However, timed exams can simplify learning content into a superficial, rote manner that may not be meaningful or generalizable. That is, students may remember information for the exam, but may not be able to remember it afterwards or apply it in problem-solving. Similarly, essays are used to assess how readily students can compile information, take a perspective, argue for a point of view, and in doing so, synthesize content in a more meaningful fashion. Essays have the advantage of drawing in student voice which thus makes learning more meaningful, but given the technical approach to writing, essays run the risk of superficiality if students feel compelled to overly focus on mechanics and “what the instructor wants” over synthesis and interpretation.

There is no single assessment type, method, or paradigm that works best for all cases. Assessments have strengths and weaknesses, which can live as a set of trade-offs as we see in the examples with essays and exams. Depending on what you settle upon in your courses, your evaluation methods have the potential to support memorization, synthesis, analysis, deep engagement, skill building, or unanswered (and unanswerable) questions. We can look at assessments as evidence that a student's understanding is matching up with the instructors, or better yet, we present to you an alternative: let us look at assessment as a process – as a series of check-ins on the ever-expanding base of knowledge and inquiry as students move through our courses.

Individual and Institutional Approach

Evaluation of learning and learners is bound up intricately with the teaching philosophy and practices of the instructor and the institute in which we teach.

But what happens when your teaching philosophy runs up against the constraints and expectations of the institute or the professional accreditation body? For instance, what if your school or profession adopts exam-based accreditation yet you do not believe that simply passing the exam means a student has all the competencies required for the job? What does it mean for you and for your students?

In this case, you may feel that you are restricted or unable to design different types of assessments due to accreditation, licensing, and certification requirements of a program. But even when your students are required to write a multiple-choice exam to receive their professional certificate, it doesn't mean that you have to replicate the same test for the student by designing a similar mock exam. Instead, you can reconceptualize assessment design to better align the assessments with student learning outcomes.

UDL is critical in the reconceptualization process because assessments can create barriers that prevent some students from accurately demonstrating what they have learned. As we incorporate UDL approaches in our assessments, we are not constrained by a single assessment method. Instead, we attempt to make our courses more accessible, inclusive, and engaging for all learners. This is a step toward thinking strategically about how we want our students to learn and how we might develop different opportunities for students to engage and display competencies. While you may be limited to the requirements of the accrediting body, you can apply a wide range of assessments to measure student achievement to ensure success in passing their licensing, accreditation, or certification exam. In short, accreditation may be the destination, but you can take students on a route that has a variety of checkpoints that enriches their experiences and also ensure their success.

Here are some questions you can ask and reflect to connect personal and institutional assessment approach:

- What is important to you about the student experience of your course?
- What kinds of experiences and activities do you seek to construct for learners?
- What kind of voice are students interested in having in shaping assessments?
- How do your assessment strategies compare with institutional mandates?
- And how can you reconceptualize existing assessments to ensure student engagement and success?

UDL-Informed Assessment

A UDL approach to assessment asks that we reconsider the purpose and function of assessment. It asks us to think ahead and proactively plan how the assessment is inclusive of multiple means of engagement, representation, and demonstration of learning. UDL also asks us to consider potential barriers in assessment. Barriers can take a number of forms, oriented around ability, skill set, timing, pacing, and medium. According to [UDL on Campus](#), assessments in courses are meant to determine how well students are meeting goal. Measurable outcomes from assessment should align with course goals. When they don't, we run the risk of creating barriers. Greater transparency to the learning process means that it is easier to align assessments with activities and content. In UDL framework, assessment can be tied to goal setting and engagement as much as it is tied to checking whether the student's understanding "matches" the instructor's. With UDL framework, we can ask some new questions:

- Can we assess prior knowledge as students come into the course?
- Can we assess how meaningful the course is likely to be to students?
- Can we support students in assessing their own or their peers' engagement?
- Can we offer assessments in different formats and at different challenge levels?
- Can students choose an assessment format that may translate to better learning and reflection over time?
- How can assessment focus on both process and outcome?
- Are there grading alternatives, e.g., ungraded assessments or holistic rubrics?

Recall the concept of *jaggedness* (Rose, 2016) – the variation in knowledge, learning, skills, interests, and abilities in all learners – and how important it is to develop a lens that accounts for that jaggedness in order to plan and design proactively. It asks us to take into account the differing ways that students come to the learning setting, the ways they construct understanding, and the way that they can most accurately and meaningfully demonstrate the ways that they have learned the content. It's important to be mindful that Universal Design for Learning is a framework that focuses on developing **expert learners** – learners who are able to reflect on their learning, set goals, persist in the face of difficulty, acknowledge the role of flexibility in using learning strategies, and to understand the aspects of their jaggedness and how it is best met in a learning environment. In supporting expert learners, assessments can be designed so that there is a clear rationale, a sense of how the assessment is tied to the learning goals, and how meaningful it is in terms of the course, the program learning outcomes, even skill and career goals.

You may also review the [UDL guidelines](#) for a quick refresher. Now that we are familiar with how UDL framework may inform assessment design, the next question we can ask is, where do we start? In the next section, we will introduce five key factors for consideration when designing assessment and provide some UDL-informed examples.

SECTION TWO

Key Factors for Assessment Design

Assessment design can be daunting. Sometimes we hear from students that they doubt the relevance and usefulness of their work, or they simply have a hard time completing all the assignments required for the course. In these cases, learners may experience barriers that they don't even recognize as barriers, internalizing them or blaming the course, the instructor, or themselves. Learners can find that they are not relying upon their strengths or are not given the chance to show their best work. At other times, we, as instructors, underestimate the power of meaningful feedback or overlook the time and effort we need to craft that feedback. These problems can create a vicious circle where you and your students are both feel stuck and frustrated.

If you have experienced any of these challenges, it may mean that you have opportunities to reexamine your assessment design through a UDL lens. You can approach these challenges by investigating and empathizing with the student experience, soliciting feedback from students, creating safe conversational spaces to identify the problems, and adopting appropriate strategies to engage your students and support expert learning. Don't forget that supporting yourself is also important as you empathize and investigate assessment challenges. When in doubt, find a supportive colleague or group who likewise are interested in trying new things so you can move your assessment decision-making forward!

Before you start (re)designing your assignments and assessments, here are the five key factors for your consideration:

- Learning outcomes and objectives
- High-stake and low-stake assessments
- Workload for you and your students
- Feedback and rubrics
- Delivery mode

Learning Outcomes and Objectives

The best place to start creating an overall assessment strategy is to carefully examine your learning outcomes and objectives. From a UDL perspective, students need to know why they are being assessed and what might be the skills or abilities they are working on through the assessments so they can prioritize their goals and adjust learning strategies accordingly. As an instructor, explaining how your assessments are tied to learning outcomes and objectives can be critical to engage your students and support goal setting.

While sometimes learning outcomes and learning objectives are used interchangeably, it is important to understand that they are different.

- A learning outcome describes the overall purpose or goal from participation in an educational activity. Learning outcome is a reflection of the desired state.
- Learning objectives are used to organize specific topics or individual learning activities to achieve the overall learning outcome.

Here are some examples from UCLA Health Course Planning Tip (2016):

Learning Outcomes	Learning Objectives
Demonstrate knowledge of evidence-based treatment for hypertensive patients by passing post-test with score of $\geq 80\%$.	List 5 side effects of anti-hypertensive agents.
Correctly identify required actions to manage patients in hypertensive crisis by analyzing a case study.	Discuss risks associated with untreated hypertension.
Utilize an evidence-based protocol.	State normal range for blood pressure.

In practice, you may use course-level learning outcomes to guide the design of the overall assessment plan and use learning objectives to create the specific assessments for each module or topic. Ultimately, your assessment plan should be aligned with the learning outcomes and objectives, and reflect the specific knowledge, skills, or abilities identified in the course outcomes. Even before you offer choices or consider engagement, examine whether you have a sound rationale whereby course activities, content, and assessments are in line.

Keep in mind that simply listing the type of assessments in your syllabus is not sufficient to engage students. It is crucial to communicate with students the relevance of these assessments and how they might benefit from doing them. To take it a step further, consider offering choice of assessments, with that choice being grounded in the meaningfulness of assessments. What would enrich the learning experience? What would help students feel they have consolidated knowledge or feel a solid sense of their skill set?

Low-Stake and High-Stake Assessments

Low-stake assessments are also referred to as formative assessments, which usually have low or no point value in a learner's grade. These assessments may include journal posts, discussions, and knowledge checks. Research shows that formative assessments motivate students to learn and make them aware of the areas they need to work on, thus contributing to the process and outcome of learning (Weurlander et al, 2012).

High-stake assessments are also referred to as summative assessments, which means that they are often used to decide the final score or grade on a learner's academic record. They are used to evaluate student learning by comparing with certain standards or benchmark. These assessments could include a mid-term or final exam, modular quizzes, standardized tests, a final project, or a final paper.

A good assessment plan should balance low-stake and high-stake assessments. While high-stake assessment is necessary in many educational contexts, we encourage frequent and varied formative assessments in which choice of modality, topic, or pacing can help cultivate expert learners from a UDL perspective.

Workload for You and Your Students

Through course evaluation, we sometimes hear from students that there is too much reading, too many assignments, or too many tests or exams in a course. As an instructor, sometimes we are also concerned that the workload can suddenly become overwhelming during mid-term or toward the end of the term. Worse, we sometimes hear that assessments make so sense or don't seem to be connected with the course content in any meaningful way. When this happens, it can be important to acknowledge that these feelings around workload can have a lot to do with how we design our assessment plans.

The first step to address this issue is to start thinking how long it will take for a student to complete each activity in your course, and what are the maximum hours we expect them to spend on the course. Be sure to check in with students frequently on workload and meaningfulness of assessments. How long is the work typically taking? What pieces of the content are meaningful, challenging, or easy? Do students want more challenges and what kind of challenge are they seeking? A straightforward way to assessing workload is to create a table that lists the time needed for all activities such as reading articles, composing a discussion post, and prepping for exams. Work on this table together with students to map out workload, expectation, and to leave space for collaboration and designing multiple routes to assessment. We highly recommend introducing students to the [Workload Estimator designed by Wake Forest University](#) and creating a workload plan together.

While you are working with students on workload calculations and checking in on the meaningfulness of assessments, be sure to consider your own workload. Often, instructors balk at the idea of UDL because it seems like even more work when instructors often feel overloaded already.

Feedback and Rubrics

A key to successful assessment is giving students a clear understanding of what the expectations are for their work and providing meaningful feedback that facilitate the learning process. Other than verbal and written feedback, rubrics can serve as a baseline of what is expected in learning and can be an efficient tool to provide timely, detailed, and consistent feedback.

Rubrics can generally be divided into holistic rubrics and analytical rubrics.

- Holistic rubrics usually list one general criterion and is used to assess students' overall achievement.
- Analytic rubrics include multiple criteria and allows you to assess students' achievements based on the criteria predefined in the table.

You may refer to [the two examples from Queens University](#).

Rubrics can be useful for all kinds of assignments such as written assignments, oral presentations, teamwork, peer review, and self-assessment. If you are new to rubrics, you may start by creating one or two rubrics per term, or ask your colleagues if they have rubrics that you can use or modify.

You may also consider creating rubrics WITH your students. If students are offered choices around assessment, it makes sense to offer choices around rubric style. What are the key points? What will constitute a good presentation, or effective group work? When students co-create the rubric, they are, in essence, setting up a meaningful goal for themselves. Student input into rubrics means that instead of guessing what the instructor wants, or hoping for an A, students will have developed the goal that they can work towards and can turn their attention to effective learning instead of guessing, fearing, or hoping that they are on the right track.

Delivery Mode

As we know, delivery mode is generally divided into three main categories: face-to-face, blended, and fully online. These delivery modes tend to create an impression of preferred assessment methods or boundaries when we think about assessment design. For example, students tend to be required to complete more online assessments and discussion forums in an online course than in a face-to-face course.

While it is important to consider how delivery mode informs assessment strategies, we also need to be mindful about how it limits our perspectives on assessment design. For example, some instructors may feel that, in an online course, they can only resort to online quizzes, discussion forums, and essays.

But the truth is that online courses can also adopt a variety of assessment methods such as authentic assessments. With some scaffolding, students could still engage in activities or assignments that are authentic and experiential. For instance, in an online leadership course, students can be asked to interview someone they admire and make connections with people in the real world. Alternatively, students can also be given opportunities to volunteer in local organizations or communities and reflect on their experiences through online discussions. Similarly, face-to-face courses can also benefit from using a variety of assessment methods that offer students more choices or allow them to be more creative.

We will discuss different assessment methods in the next section so you can determine what may be the best for your course.

Assessment Methods and Examples

Quizzes and Exams

Quizzes and exams can be formative or summative depending on the design and are considered necessary in many educational contexts. Common question types include multiple choice, true or false, matching, and short answers. Quizzes help learners practice existing knowledge and can be effective in recalling what they have learned. Other than mid or final exams, instructors can also design pre-tests or knowledge checks where learners can assess what they already know and don't know. Applying UDL approach in quizzes and exams can provide a supportive environment for all learners.

Here is a UDL-informed example:

Tracy designed some quizzes and exams as a part of the assessment plan for her Organizational Behavior course. Considering that her course is fully online and students are joining from different time zones, here are the things she does to engage students while ensuring access:

- She distributes some low-stake quizzes with automatic feedback during the term to check students' understanding of some basic concepts.
- She designs and releases a mini sample exam before the final exam so students can familiarize themselves with the question types, flow, and format of the test.
- Her exam and quizzes are typically open for three days so students from different time zones have sufficient time to coordinate their schedules.
- She has removed time limit for each attempt and therefore allows her students to complete their quizzes without worrying about internet disconnection or computer issues.
- She allows multiple attempts and even encourage students to redo the exam if they need to, as she intends to use quizzes and exams to reinforce students' learning.
- In some cases, Tracy allows her students to opt out the final exam if they come up with an initiative or an assignment that is significant and meaningful for themselves.

Written Assignments

Written assignments are commonly used to assess learners' ability to understand a topic in a text-based format. To be effective in this area, instructors need to be clear on what they are assessing and if written assessment is the most suitable format. From a UDL perspective, if you are assessing the students' ability to understand the topic, you could allow the learner to demonstrate their learning in other formats such as in a video, podcast, or PowerPoint presentation. If you are assessing the students' quality of writing, you may allow students to choose their topic of interest. As an instructor, you can add flexibility in the assessment choices once you identify the purpose of the assessment. As learners work towards the same learning goal, it is important that educators offer opportunities and methods for learning to be demonstrated in a variety of ways.

Here is a UDL informed example:

Trang is teaching Academic Writing this term. Students are required to write preparatory papers and learn to summarize and analyze resources applicable for an undergraduate academic environment.

- Trang assesses the learners by their ability to write and the quality of their writing. She offers learners the flexibility to pick their topic of interest, but she wants to emphasize the importance of citation in their writing.
- In the previous offering of this course, she recognized that the learners were often confused about the requirements of their written assignment, so she decides to include a detailed rubric that focuses on academic writing, grammar, and citation.
- She also includes three examples of successful written assignments and makes time to discuss why they were successful.
- Trang also allows several options for her students to choose how they would like to demonstrate their writing, limited in formats such as blogs, e-portfolios, or in a traditional essay format.
- She also uses scaffolding exercises to help lower-level students improve on their essay structure and offer one-on-one editing during her office hours.
- Finally, Trang requires the learners to submit two written assignments. The first assignment is for the learners to understand their errors and revise them. The second assignment is used as the final paper. Her goal is for her students to read her initial comments in the first assignment, understand their errors, make use of them, make changes, and improve their quality of their work.

Presentations

Presentations are common in many classes. They have the capacity to assess the way a learner's thoughts are organized, to examine how readily a learner can synthesize feedback, connect with audience questions, and demonstrate presentation abilities in a real-time sense. A key in designing presentations is that they are designed – you should be sure that you have a clear rationale on why a presentation is a suitable assessment. What purpose will it serve? What ends will it meet? Is presentation the best method of demonstrating knowledge of particular concepts? Can you work with students to develop different types of presentations that are meaningful in the context of the course? Importantly, are the skills the learner is relying upon for a presentation the same ones that are explicit and supported through instruction?

Here is a UDL-informed example:

Wangari teaches Interpersonal Communication and designs the course so that students can complete a presentation at the end of the course.

- Wangari offers three choices for the presentation: present in person, by video, or lead the class through a simulation.
- She designs the presentation assignment so that students can offer an alternative that is meaningful for them.
- In the presentation, the students bring in their own voice to discuss how this presentation meets their goals for the course and beyond.
- Students have the choice to work in small groups or alone. They are given guidance on how the presentation should be different in either case.
- Wangari offers regular drop-ins for trial runs leading up to the final presentation so that students can feel that they are on the right track instead of a high-stake final assessment.
- Wangari works with students to develop certain aspects of the marking rubric; she is explicit about her rationale for grading on some aspects of the presentation.
- Throughout the course, Wangari has created a system of peer feedback. Presenters have the option of addressing peer feedback for bonus grades.

Simulations (Role Play)

Simulation as an assessment is recognized an immersive, experiential learning opportunity (Caniglia, 2019). In a comprehensive simulation, learners may find themselves in an environment taking on a multitude of roles in situations that are designed to challenge learners to apply their knowledge in practical and authentic ways in order to solve problems, respond to incoming information, and work with others toward common goals, among other defined learning outcomes. But simulations do not need to be complex. They can be as simple as a role play conversation between two people.

A well-designed simulation from a UDL perspective takes advantage of a complex environment to highlight the flexibility available to learners in the roles they occupy. Following UDL guidelines, a simulation design welcomes multiple means of expression, action, and engagement. The more comprehensive a simulation, the more opportunity educators have to make space for those means (Hall, Meyer, Rose, p. 11).

Here is a UDL-informed example:

Dave and Wei are instructors in the Emergency Management training program, and a substantial portion of time is dedicated to the simulation of an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). This simulation involves a coordinated community response to a given emergency such as an earthquake, flood, or fire.

- In preparation for the simulation, Dave and Wei ask students to select the roles they would like to play in the EOC based on interests and suitability in conjunction with the needs of the team.
- In conjunction with the operations of an EOC, Dave and Wei make space for multiple formats for communication, including writing reports, creating information displays, chairing meetings, giving press releases, and debriefing colleagues.
- Assessment is mostly formative, with Dave and Wei circulating the EOC to offer challenges, suggest recommendations, offer mini ‘what if’ scenarios and pose questions for further consideration, all the while moving the simulation forward through a series of “injects”.
- Dave and Wei offer feedback to individuals based on their actions and in larger group settings when they see something worthy of everyone’s attention. Throughout the simulation, Dave and Wei encourage learners to seek out feedback on their actions.
- Dave and Wei ask learners to consider their experiences both individually through a short reflective writing exercise and collectively in teams and then together with a final group debriefing session.

Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessments are designed to resemble a task, project, or activity that learners may perform in the real world. Authentic assessments ask students to demonstrate their understanding in a more meaningful application, which fosters students' higher order thinking and skills such as communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

Authentic assessments are learner-centered as they focus on student's interests by encouraging them to play a more active role in their learning as it is more meaningful and relevant to their lives. From a UDL perspective, authentic assessments provide learners the opportunity to demonstrate skills or competencies that they can apply in their future jobs in different ways. For example, instead of describing different career options, an instructor may ask learners to investigate career options for themselves. As part of their assignment, students are encouraged to reach out to professionals in their field and get expert advice on career development. This assignment will help foster legitimate peripheral participation as they encourage the learner to engage with experts in an authentic and meaningful way.

Here is a UDL-informed example:

Pierre teaches Multiculturalism and Social Justice. He has created a community engagement assignment in which students are required to engage in social activities and reflect on community decision-making process.

- Prior to this community engagement assignment, Pierre asks students to rewrite the outcomes of this activity and set up achievable goals, including how to measure their own success in community engagement.
- He then provided rubrics for this assignment and shared with students.
- Pierre gives students the choice to identify the organization they want to engage with based on their interests and future career development.
- Pierre offers an online workshop on how to contact different organizations and provides general information to some organizations.
- Since students are required to reflect on their experience, Pierre offers some sample work from previous cohort and suggested that video presentation and/or written work are both acceptable.
- For students who want to take on challenges, Pierre offers bonus credit if a student decides to engage with multiple organizations and compare the similarities and differences of the decision-making process.

Multimedia Assessment

With the wide access of smart devices, making videos, audio, and graphics have become much easier for students. Multimedia assignments have become more common in recent years as it provides options and sparks creativity in students' work. Multimedia assessment could include recording the process of completing a task, recording a video or audio on a given topic, designing a poster or infographics, or even creating an animated video for storytelling.

Adopting multimedia assessment help develop students' computer and digital literacy. Students could also have the opportunity to practice as many times as they need before submitting their final work. Because they are in a digital format, these assignments are easier to showcase as a part of a student's portfolio.

Here is a UDL-informed example:

Fei teaches an online course on Governance and Accountability. She has designed a public hearing simulation in which students need to write legal arguments on an issue assigned to them from police misconduct scenarios, but the ultimate goal is to have students debate as if they are in court. Since students are taking this course from different time zones and some are working professionals, Fei has implemented the following design changes to ensure students are supported and engaged:

- She decides not to force the entire class to attend synchronous online sessions for this assignment. Instead, she asks students to form groups and each group is required to submit a video recording to present their debate.
- She includes a quick polling on students' access to smart devices in order to determine whether students can complete this assignment via multimedia.
- She provides some tips and resources for video recording, and asks students to support each other and address potential technical issues collaboratively.
- With permission, she provided some video examples for public hearing.
- She explains to her students that they can be creative in the way they record and edit but she expects the video to be around 10 mins per group.
- She provides rubrics for evaluation, so students can assess their debate based on the criteria before submitting their final videos.

E-Portfolio Assessment

Similar to Multimedia Assessment mentioned earlier, e-portfolio provides students the freedom to curate and create multiple elements they find meaningful during their learning journey. They have the freedom to choose what elements to highlight and what to submit for assessment.

E-portfolios can become especially valuable if the ultimate goal is to complement student growth in career prep or professional development beyond the duration of their studies. A well-developed e-portfolio conveys the student's skill sets and professional aspiration. It can also help develop a student's digital identity which is often required by employers nowadays.

Here is a UDL-informed example

Franco is teaching a 3-day course on Conflict Resolution. He has taught the course a number of times. While the course seems to function effectively, he would like to see students engage in a way that helps them understand communication and conflict resolution as a practice, in which students are constantly improving their skills by observing, sharing, and collaborating. He decides that e-portfolios could help.

- Franco introduces the e-portfolio platform before the class begins so students have time to access the tool and become familiar with the basics. He also shares a few professional e-portfolios from industry experts to illustrate the usefulness and relevance.
- To get started, he asks students to post a photo that represents a recent conflict and write down the conflict story before the first class. As the course progresses, he sends students reflective questions and asks them to reflect on those questions based on their stories.
- Franco communicates that he expects the e-portfolio to expand, not just to compile answers for reflective questions, but as a way to research, synthesize, converse, and reflect upon the concepts that are important to them.
- He explains that students must include a few elements from the course to meet the minimal requirements, and then they can be creative on adding content such as video, audio, case studies, and useful resources. Students can also be creative on the design of their e-portfolios.
- He includes a rubric that explains how students' e-portfolios will be evaluated.
- He leaves half an hour a day for students to ask questions and receive formative feedback on their e-portfolios.

Collaborative Assessment

Collaborative assessment is an approach to assessment where there are features of reciprocal feedback and reflection between instructor and student and among the students themselves. That reciprocity can take the form of verbal feedback, co-constructing rubrics, retaking tests/exams, practice evaluations, or group grading. Note that collaborative assessment does not necessarily imply a grading component (although it can). In fact, many instructors engage in feedback with and between students, but the difference with collaborative assessment is that it is an aspect of the design of the course so that reciprocal feedback and its structure is proactive and planned with a clear rationale. Collaborative assessment can be planned:

- At the beginning of the course to decide on how to evaluate learning
- In planning self, peer, and instructor feedback schedules
- In deciding on deadline flexibility and how grades will be assigned
- When integrating feedback in subsequent iterations of the evaluation process

Here is a UDL-informed example

Shauna has created a new lab for paramedics to learn safety protocols around cardiac arrest.

- She introduces the lab with explicit mapping of the learning outcomes. She explains to students that the goal of the lab is to reach a level of proficiency where students feel comfortable, confident, and flexible in their knowledge.
- She solicits feedback from the students on those learning outcomes and whether they are familiar with any similar labs.
- Students elaborate on the learning outcomes, and with Shauna's assistance, revise the wording to take account of student knowledge and experience.
- Together, Shauna and her students review the lab description and assign responsibilities for providing feedback. Some aspects of the lab can be reviewed via peer assessment; other areas of feedback will be delivered by the instructor.
- Students work in groups to describe what feedback should look like. With Shauna's guidance, they construct a rubric for reviewing the lab activity. This rubric runs in parallel with the checklist of tasks that comprise the lab.
- Students determine the levels of criticality for the lab procedure. That is, some aspects of the protocol have little to no room for error and need to be identified as such; other areas may be more flexible in how the students approach the task.
- They agree on five scaffolds or stages in reaching the final assessment. They can try each stage as many times as they would like and pace themselves as they would like.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment involves the review of a learner's work by a fellow learner or group of learners. Peer assessment can be difficult to implement and even counter-intuitive because it restructures some of the power balance in a classroom and recognizes the authority of knowledge and expertise exists among students in addition to the instructor (Fenwick and Parsons, p. 254). However, reviewing the work of others demands critical thinking, observation skills, application of effective communication and is itself a significant structured learning activity. Using peer assessment adds a critical piece to a larger evaluation strategy and helps learners become less detached from the design of the course and more involved in its pedagogy (Wride, M., 2017).

In addition, it offers a number of advantages that fit into a UDL framework:

- Recognizing that learner variability contributes to a wider perspective on learning and draws on a richer collective background.
- Learners are given more responsibility to monitor and reflect their own learning as well as that of their peers.

Here is a UDL-informed example

Ron is teaching Research Method this term, and students are assessed at different stages along the writing process, from the proposal stage to the final report. One of the assignments in this course is for students to review each other's work and provide feedback.

- Ron explains to the students that the goal of the peer review process is to help them to become better at academic writing. Instead of being told that their writings may not meet the given style (e.g. APA, MLA), students must learn the standards by assessing the accuracy of their peer's work.
- Giving good feedback is a skill itself, so Ron provides an example that demonstrates how to provide feedback to ensure a useful result.
- Ron reassures students that they do not need to assign a grade to their peer's work but simply to provide feedback, primarily in the form of suggestions for improvement. The emphasis is on feedback and formative assessment rather than a grade.
- Ron provides a rubric that students can use to provide feedback and invites students to revise the rubric based on their understanding of the assignment.
- Ron also offers choice on how to conduct their review. Students can provide written feedback, or record a video in which they go through their peer's work, or schedule a synchronous meeting to provide feedback directly. Therefore, peers can agree with each other what format works best.

Reflection on Assessment Methods

Reflect on one of the assessment methods you currently use or used in the past, what might be some of the barriers for you and your students? How might you better support your students from a UDL perspective? You may use the table below to jot down your thoughts or you can discuss with your colleagues.

Assessment Method	Pick an assessment method you want to work on
Context	Describe the context of the assessment: Who are the learners? What skills, abilities, or competencies the assessment addresses? What are your goals?
Barriers	List some barriers or issues you or your students had: What are some of the explicit and implicit barriers? What made it difficult during the process? What didn't work well?
Solutions	Write down a few things you can change or improve: What can be kept? What can be fixed using UDL principles? What needs to be removed?

SECTION FOUR

Adopting UDL-Informed Assessment Plan

Adopting a UDL-informed assessment plan doesn't mean that you have to redesign everything you have already planned. In fact, with minor adjustments, many of our existing assessment methods would align well with the UDL framework. In this section, we will provide a sample assessment plan and the description for each assignment adapted from the course syllabus on Multiculturalism, Conflict and Social Justice by Essya Nabbali.

A Sample Assessment Plan

	Weight	Deadline
Self-Introduction	3%	Week 1
Learning Outcomes Summary	3%	Week 2
Opening Quiz	4%	Week 3
Community-Engaged Learning	10%	Week 12
Self-Evaluation (10%)		
Self-Evaluation 1: Goal Setting	2%	Week 2
Self-Evaluation 2: Mid-term	3%	Week 8
Self-Evaluation 3: Final	5%	Week 14
Critical Analysis and Presentation (20%)		
Critical Analysis	10%	Week 8
Peer-Reviewed Presentation	10%	Week 13
Reflective Writing (25%)		
Reflective Writing 1	5%	Week 1
Reflective Writing 2	5%	Week 4
Reflective Writing 3	5%	Week 6
Reflective Writing 4	5%	Week 10
Reflective Writing 5	5%	Week 11
Discussion Facilitation & Participation (25%)		
Group Discussion Facilitation	15%	Weeks 3 to 13
Group Discussion Participation	10%	Weeks 3 to 14

Self-Introduction (3%)

To help mobilize a community, you are invited to introduce yourself within the first week of the class. You may choose to introduce yourself via audio, video, or written format. Guidelines for the introduction are specified in **Week 1**.

Learning Outcomes Summary (3%)

In your own language, summarize and rewrite the course learning outcomes listed in the syllabus in **Week 2**. You may relate course learning outcomes to the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed for your future jobs or dreams. You can be creative on how you present your summary!

Opening Quiz (4%)

Take a short online quiz in **Week 3** to demonstrate your understanding of the course expectations, including APA formatting, as well as key concepts presented in a short instructional video and the assigned readings of Week 2. You may take this quiz as many times as you need and the goal for you is to develop a solid understanding of the basics.

Self-Evaluation (10%)

There will be opportunities for you to set your learning goals and reflect on them iteratively throughout the semester. Specifically, you will set goals in **Week 2**, reflect and adjust your goals in **Week 8**, and then do a final self-evaluation in **Week 14**. Sample templates, rubrics, and guidelines for each self-evaluation are provided in the course.

Community-Engaged Learning (10%)

Through this course, you will familiarize yourself with community decision-making processes. This may be realized in a great number of ways, but for the purposes of this course, you are required to **engage with a local city council meeting**. You can decide where and when but a written reflection is required to complete this assessment. Here are some of the steps:

1. *Plan ahead.* City Councils meet at particular junctions of the year; they hold regular meetings, public hearings, special meetings, and other in-camera (closed) meetings. Some City Councils meet bi-weekly, others meet monthly. Planning ahead will ensure that you can coordinate your schedule accordingly.
2. *Notify the instructor of your plan.* Once arrangements are made to attend a City Council meeting, you are required to notify the instructor by email of your plan, including the City Council and expected date of engagement. Please be advised that your assessment will not be graded if notification of plan was not received prior to beginning your work.
3. *Reflect on your experience.* You will write a reflection with approximately 400-500 words in length, excluding references if any. The reflection should include
 - a. a summary of your involvement,
 - b. the impact or impressions of the involvement, and
 - c. connections you made between the involvement and course content.

Note: those who are not able to attend City Council meetings may have an alternative upon consultation with the instructor. Templates and rubrics for this assignment are provided in the course. This assignment is due **Week 12**.

Critical Analysis and Presentation (20%)

In this assignment, you will consider an issue or topic given by the instructor. You will analyze the issue critically by providing key facts to stakeholders who may not have the time to do research on the matter. More importantly, you will identify critical considerations (i.e., potential limitations, outcomes) along with recommendations to help shape/direct “steps forward” (i.e., possible actions, solutions) on the issue or topic.

1. *Critical Analysis (10%)*. A workshop will be held in Week 8 to familiarize you with critical analysis. Following the workshop, you are expected to analyze and answer a series of questions based on the given topic. Guidelines and rubrics are provided in **Week 8**.

2. *Peer-Reviewed Presentation (10%)*. Well-prepared presentation help convince your stakeholders. In **Week 13**, you are required to do a 5-minute presentation based on your analysis. PPT is required. In addition, your peers will be given a few criteria to provide non-grading feedback for your presentation. Guidelines and rubrics are provided in the course.

Reflective Writing (25%)

Throughout the course, you will prepare a total of 5 reflective writings to accompany course readings. Reflective writings should not be summaries of the reading. Rather, your writings should be considering the significance of the reading and the module’s theme. Some guiding questions are provided for each reflective writing. Additional guidelines and details are specified in **Weeks 1, 4, 6, 10, and 11**. Reflective writings are expected to be 500-750 words in length, excluding title page and references cited. Rubrics for reflective writing is provided in the course.

Discussion Facilitation and Participation (25%)

During Week 1, you are asked to identify 2-3 articles that you are interested in facilitating through a sign-up sheet. During the semester, you will be assigned to lead one of the weekly discussions and actively participate in the weekly discussions.

1. *Group Discussion Facilitation (15%)*. You will be assigned an article and will prepare a maximum 2-page summary handout, which is expected to be posted to the discussion board at the beginning of the week, along with 2 questions for discussion. The goal of the handout is to provide an overview of the article, not necessarily to engage with every detail. You will also moderate the discussion board for that week and are expected to reply/comment on a minimum of 5 responses from your peers. Rubrics and guidelines are available.

2. *Group Discussion Participation (10%)*. Beginning Week 3, you are expected to post, at least, 3 responses to the discussion questions. You may reflect on any of the discussion questions or reply to another post. Rubrics and guidelines are available in respective weekly activities.

Reviewing the Sample Assessment Plan with UDL Principles

Generally speaking, the assessment plan and description above allows frequent and varied formative assessment, with some assessment at slightly higher stake. The assessment plan is well-distributed throughout the semester so both students and the instructor have the time to allocate their time properly.

The description helps engage the students by explaining “why”: the relevance and potential skills students will acquire through the assignments. In addition, many of the assignments have rubrics and guidelines which support student self-assessment and reflection. In some of the assignments, students have the option to choose their preferred means of representation. The instructor also provides multiple means to represent content such as journal articles, videos, and online workshops to ensure students’ success.

What is also valuable in this assessment plan is that students are able to construct their knowledge and express their learning in different formats and at various occasions. The assessment plan also guides higher order thinking such as goal setting, planning, and progress monitoring, which is an essential part of cultivating expert learner.

However, an assessment plan like this still have room for improvement. Take look at the sample assessment plan again and compare it with the [UDL guidelines](#), what areas can be further improved in your opinion?

The Plus One Assessment Approach

If you are considering making changes to your assessment plan yet time and resources are limited, we would recommend the plus one approach by Jennifer Pusateri, meaning adding one thing at a time. The table below illustrates the plus one approach per semester:

	Last Semester	This Semester	Next Semester
Assessment Plan	1. Test	1. Test 2. Project	1. Test 2. Project 3. Presentation

Alternatively, you can always reach out to the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Innovation for support and design.

Your Next Steps

Now that you have learned different types of UDL-informed assessment and reviewed a sample assessment plan, what changes are you considering in your own course or program and how you might implement them? You may get started by listing a few things in the box below or initiating a conversation with your colleagues.

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