

Actions to Improve Online Learning for Students with Disabilities

The Faculty Senate Accessibility Committee has compiled some suggestions that could be implemented easily by faculty and alleviate some of the problems that students with disabilities are having in the online environment. The Academic Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate endorses this list of actions as best practices. The Undergraduate Student Government is supportive of these actions as well.

1. Make your course organization and technology consistent with other UA classes.

- Organize the course in Brightspace by either
 - using a standardized course template for Brightspace developed by the University's instructional design team or
 - organizing information in a similar manner and describing the structure well to the students in order to reduce the variation among classes.
- Use best practices in online learning to organize content and enhance communication by
 - introducing students to the class and explicitly describe how to navigate the course;
 - staying in touch with their students being available for questions providing multiple ways to contact them; and
 - structuring a course in order to make each week's module consistent.
- Set up the calendar in Brightspace for the students and encourage them to set up notifications. The calendar will notify students when assignments are due and can notify students where they should be for hybrid courses.
- Limit the number of interfaces or programs that the student must use. If possible, Faculty should use Brightspace and Microsoft Teams only. If they must use other technology, they should provide
 - explicit directions,
 - one-on-one support when needed, and
 - a grace period for mistakes.

2. Provide feedback to students about their progress in the course and information about how to get assistance.

- Use the gradebook in Brightspace and keep it up to date, so students know when they need to ask for help.
- Provide the accessibility statement in their course where it can be found easily by the student (e.g. in syllabi). Students will be informed in writing where to go if they need help.

3. Provide appropriate captioning and transcription accommodations.

- For videos:
 - Choose third-party videos that already have captions wherever possible.
 - Use MS teams for live sessions to enable the built-in captioning.
 - Use Panopto to store and stream pre-recorded lectures with captions. Panopto can record lectures as well.
 - If a student in your class has an accommodation, you may request captioning of video course material from the Office of Accessibility with at least 2 weeks advance notice.
- Working with the accessibility observer (Brightspace role)
 - Faculty will receive an addendum in the letter of accommodation to notify if this role is needed. The accessibility observer is used for caption or transcription accommodations, so course materials can be captioned or transcribed in time for class. A response time from the faculty of less than three business days is necessary.

4. Provide appropriate attendance accommodations.

- Be as flexible as possible in the online environment.

Faculty are encouraged to take Design and Development Services' course, *Best Practices for Teaching Online*, which is available on Brightspace. Faculty can work through the three modules at their own pace. <https://brightspace.uakron.edu/d2l/le/discovery/view/course/4437327>