

How to Create Inclusive & Accessible Syllabi and Moodle Pages

Guidance from Marni Jones, Dean and Director of Access and Disability Services
and SOAR: Strategies, Organization, and Achievement Resources

It is important to ensure that your syllabi and Moodle pages are easily navigable, ADA compliant, and appropriately accessible to all types of learners, including students with disabilities. Adopt the following guidance to maximize access, clarity, and inclusion for your diverse population of students. Use the checklist on the last page to verify that you've covered all your bases!

PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION

- **ORGANIZATION:** Use clear, consistent, uncluttered layouts. (The “[Ready for Teaching](#)” Moodle page was designed to serve as an example.) White spaces can help with information processing.
- **EXPECTATIONS:** Convey course expectations succinctly and create separate sections or documents to provide additional details.

USE OF COLOR: Limit your text color to black, blue, or gray and the emphasis color to red. If presenting information using colored charts and graphs, it's best to use primary colors (red, yellow, and blue) as these colors are discernable even by those who are colorblind.

- **DELINEATIONS:** Employ headings and bulleted lists to break up text and enhance focus.

USE TEXT BOXES AND TABLES to present key dates and information. (In Moodle, choose “insert chart”)

GRADING RUBRIC	
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Final Paper	25%
Homework	12.5%
Participation	12.5%

EXAM AND DUE DATES

Every Wednesday — Upload Homework to Moodle*

September 29 — Exam 1

November 1 — Submit topic for Final Paper*

November 22 — Exam 2

November 25 — Bibliography for Final Paper due*

December 14 — Final Paper due*

**All assigned work is due by 11:59 pm*

- **FONTS AND EMPHASIS:** How you present information can impact students' abilities to easily read and process it, as demonstrated in this preferable first example:

I will be asking questions about the readings at the start of each class.

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- For emphasis, use bold font, rather than italics.
- Choose a font with no serifs (embellishments on the letters) which can be difficult for students with dyslexia and others to read.
- Good font choices include Calibri, Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, and Helvetica.

- **HYPERLINKS**

Use descriptive wording for hyperlinked* text, rather than linking the word “here.”

[Here](#) is a link to my Course Participation Grading Rubric.

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* A hyperlink is a link to webpage or a web-based document. To insert a hyperlink: Copy the web address from the bar at the top of the page (*using Ctrl/Cmnd + C*), then highlight the phrase to be hyperlinked. Right click the phrase and select “Link.” Then paste the web address into the address field (*using Ctrl/Cmnd + V*).

PRESENTATION OF PRE-RECORDED CLASSES

Many professors have reported students’ appreciation for being able to access certain lessons that have been pre-recorded by their professors that they can watch when the time is best for them. Caption or transcribe video and audio recordings whenever possible (and when required as an accommodation). Here is the [ADS guidance regarding recording, captioning, and transcribing lessons](#).

When posting links to pre-recorded classes, make sure to include the following:

- Title that represents the topic(s) covered
- Clear depiction of action steps necessary (e.g., WATCH, DOWNLOAD, SUBMIT)
- Dates by when actions must be taken
- Indications of anything “Supplemental / Optional”

HEY MR. BLUE SKY: THE COLORS OF THE ATMOSPHERE – 9/27

- **WATCH:** *Why the Sky is Blue* (before class on 10/1)
- **SUBMIT:** Reactions to *Why the Sky is Blue* (by 8 AM on 10/8)
- **CONSIDER:** Optional movie: *The Rainbow Connection*

COMMUNICATE YOUR POLICY REGARDING LAPTOP USE FOR NOTE-TAKING

You may have one or more students for whom the ability to take notes by hand is impaired and who therefore may have the accommodation of being able to use a laptop for note-taking. If you wish to limit the use of laptops to only these students, include a statement similar to the following:

If you wish to take notes using a laptop, you must first come see me to discuss this request. It is not permissible to use a laptop in my classroom for any purpose other than note-taking. Access to the internet must be disabled before the start of class, and any abuse of this requirement will result in denial of the authorization to use a laptop for note taking.

OR, more succinctly:

Laptop use for note-taking is by permission only.

In this way, laptop use is limited, but prevents shaming, impeding, or calling attention to students with disabilities who require this accommodation.

COMMUNICATE YOUR POLICY FOR RECORDING CLASS

You may have one or more students with disabilities who have an accommodation to record class. Consent is not necessary if a student wishes to avail him or herself of this accommodation, but to ensure compliance with the PA Wiretap Law, professors must notify all students that the class may be recorded. This can be taken care of easily by preemptively including the following brief statement in your syllabus:

This class may be recorded for accommodation purposes.

STATEMENTS OF ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Dickinson faculty are required to include in each syllabus a statement expressing a commitment to honoring reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, but faculty may also wish to make an additional statement, given that many students (in addition to those with disabilities) may experience barriers in remote learning environments. Here are two ways to communicate your inclusive policies and practices:

INCLUDE AN ACCOMMODATION SYLLABUS STATEMENT

Dickinson faculty must include in each syllabus the following statement, and it is further recommended that professors read it aloud. This encouraging approach best promotes the timely use of any needed accommodations. The current statement can always be found at the [ADS Syllabus Statement](#) page.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities (AY 2022-23)

Dickinson values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded equitable access to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment – that would hinder your access to learning or demonstrating knowledge in this class, please contact Access and Disability Services (ADS). They will confidentially explain the accommodation request process and the type of documentation that Dean and Director Marni Jones will need to determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to www.dickinson.edu/ADS, email access@dickinson.edu, call (717)245-1734, or go to the ADS office in Room 005 of Old West, Lower Level (aka "the OWLL").

If you've already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please follow the guidance at www.dickinson.edu/AccessPlan for disclosing the accommodations for which you are eligible and scheduling a meeting with me as soon as possible so that we can discuss your accommodations and finalize your Access Plan. If you will be using any test-taking accommodations in this class, be sure to enter all test dates into your Access Plan in advance of our meeting.

(rev. FA22)

PDF ATTACHMENTS

You may wish to upload PDF documents to your Moodle site, including text excerpts or assigned articles. When possible, upload original PDFs (rather than scanned copies.) It's important that students are able to copy and paste important information and use a screen reader to hear the text read aloud.

You can check to see if your PDF is in an accessible format by attempting to copy or highlight a section of text. If you cannot, you can make the PDF accessible by following this [Guidance for Making PDFs Accessible Using Adobe](#).

ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST

(Recapping all information presented here)

- Layout is clear, consistent, and uncluttered
- Course expectations are presented succinctly (details about assignments, presentations, etc. are in separate sections or documents)
- Font colors are limited to black, blue, or gray with red only used for headings or emphasis
- Other means of emphasis are bold or underline (not italics)
- If using charts or graphs, the contrasting colors are primary colors (red, yellow, or blue)
- Sections are separated by meaningful headings
- “List tools” (bullet points, numbered lists, checkboxes, etc.) are employed to break up text
- Font is either Calibri, Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, or Helvetica
- Hyperlinks are descriptive
- Lesson titles represent the topic(s) covered
- Action steps with due dates are clear and prominent
- Optional/supplemental materials are identified as such
- Accommodating Students with Disabilities* statement is included (and will be read aloud)
- All uploaded PDFs are confirmed to be accessible (i.e., can be read aloud by a screen reader)

QUESTIONS?

Please don't hesitate to contact Marni Jones at jonesmar@dickinson.edu

Additional faculty guidance can be found at www.dickinson.edu/ADS-faculty.