

Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Online: Next Steps

In our newsletter series, we explored fundamentals of inclusive and equitable online teaching; ways to support all learners; means to make learning relevant and meaningful; designing for all learners; and creating online communities. We've shared many examples of strategies and practices for how you may create and foster inclusive and equitable learning environments online. You've learned much information, but what's next? What are **your** next steps for incorporating inclusive and equitable teaching practices into your online courses?

To help with your next steps, we wrap up our Summer newsletter series with a brief video featuring 5 steps to begin to make your online courses and online teaching inclusive, equitable, accessible, and welcoming - **starting today!** These 5 ways relate to the principles, topics, and questions that we have addressed in our newsletter series:

- **Know Your Learners and Support Their Success**
 - Who are your students? What are their interests and learning needs?
- **Make Learning Relevant and Meaningful via Culturally Responsive Teaching**
 - How to connect content to students' identities, cultures, communities, and real world issues?
- **Design for All Learners via Accessible and Universal Design**
 - How to design for variability in learners?
- **Foster Sense of Belonging and Community**
 - How to cultivate belonging and a sense of community?
- **Promote Pedagogies of Care**
 - How to support students during uncertain and stressful times, such as during pandemic?

Through the 5 steps described in the video, you can begin **the ongoing process** for inclusive and equitable teaching online - **right now!**



[Click here to view the video, "Five Steps for Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Online"](#)

Check out [Stearns Center Digital Learning YouTube Channel](#) for more videos about online teaching & learning

Five Steps for Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Online

To get started, here are five steps to begin creating an inclusive & equitable online learning environment that meets the needs of Mason's diverse students. These practices involve making small changes in your online course design, and also becoming more mindful and aware of your online teaching practices. These changes can have a significant impact in making your students feel welcomed and included in your course, and involved in their learning! These changes also reflect "["must-have" elements for online course quality](#)". If you want to discuss additional ways for inclusive teaching online, please contact Stearns Center Digital Learning at stearns@gmu.edu.

Step 1

Know Your Learners and Support Their Success

Start by using students' preferred names and inclusive language.

- Use students' preferred names with correct pronunciation and spelling as well as their preferred pronouns. Distributing a student profile survey at the beginning of the semester will allow you to collect this information.
- Use inclusive language such as we/our/us to foster a sense of belonging and learning community.

For more examples of practices, see our [Planning Worksheets for Getting Started](#) and for [Supporting Your Students](#).

Step 2

Make Learning Relevant and Meaningful

Show diversity in your course content.

- Include representation of diversity in course content. Most mainstream academic textbooks and curricula are tailored to the dominant cultural group.
- Include content, images, and media that reflect diverse identities, especially reflecting the identities of your students.

For more examples of practices, see our [Planning Worksheet for Making Learning Relevant and Meaningful](#).

Step 3

Design for All Learners

Present content in multiple ways that are each designed in an accessible manner.

- Explain concepts through a combination of text, video, audio, and images.
- Provide captions for all videos and audio clips posted in your course. Learn how to create accessible instructional content using [Assistive Technology Initiative's CARES guide](#).
- Use [Blackboard Ally](#) to check the accessibility of all posted documents and images. For help with accessibility and Blackboard Ally, contact the [Assistive Technology Initiative](#) (ATI); email: ati@gmu.edu.

For more examples of practices, see our [Planning Worksheet for Designing for All Learners](#).

Step 4

Foster Sense of Belonging and Community

Communicate early and often.

- Before the course begins, send a Welcome Email to your students, introducing yourself, and letting them know the expectations for the course.
- Respond to student messages (ideally within 24 hours).
- Post and email weekly announcements that provide an overview and summary of course content, activities and information for your students. When in doubt, **communicate, communicate, communicate!** Frequent communication allows you to know your students and to build community.

For more examples of practices, see our [Planning Worksheet for Creating Online Community](#).

Step 5

Promote Pedagogies of Care

Be present in your course.

- Of all the possible relationships within a course, the one between you and your students is the most important! Students want to see that you are right there with them throughout their learning experience.
- Make students aware that you are a frequent and regular presence in the online course. Instructor presence starts with authenticity. Don't be afraid to share a little bit about yourself with students.

For more examples of practices, see our [Planning Worksheet for Creating Online Community](#).

Learn More about Inclusive & Equitable Teaching!

- Stearns Center, George Mason University. [Creating Inclusive Classrooms](#).
- Hogan, K. and Sathy, V. (2020). [8 Ways to Be More Inclusive in Your Zoom Teaching](#). The Chronicle of Higher Education (7 April 2020).
- Sathy, V. and Hogan, K. (2019). [How to Make Your Teaching More Inclusive: Advice Guide](#). The Chronicle of Higher Education (22 July 2019).

Contact Us!

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