

# Design assessments to enable students to demonstrate their understanding

A suggestion for implementing the strategy  
'Design considerations in secondary settings'  
from the Guide: [Universal Design for Learning](#)

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## **Includes:**

- Align design to UDL
- Support success
- Design assessments with students
- Utilise the flexibility built into NCEA
- Reflection questions
- Useful resources

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From

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Date

08 July 2026

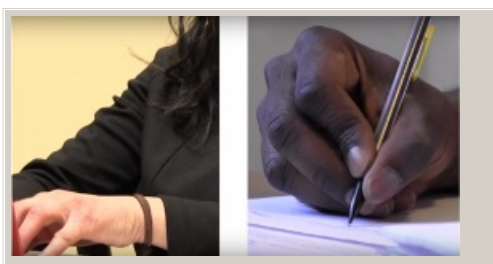
Link

[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/universal-design-for-learning/design-assessments-to-enable-students-to-demonstrate-their-understanding](http://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/universal-design-for-learning/design-assessments-to-enable-students-to-demonstrate-their-understanding)

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## Align design to UDL

This video outlines potential barriers or challenges students may face that are unrelated to what is being assessed.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/AzRsQPqGIPw>

Closed Captions

**Source:**

[CAST – Centre of Special Technologies \(US\)](#)

<http://udloncampus.cast.org/home#.V7-DxZN96Rs>

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## Support success

Discuss with students what support they need to demonstrate their understanding in assessments.

Consider:

- ✓ possible barriers hidden in the physical environment, for example, unfamiliar layout of room, lighting, temperature
- ✓ possible barriers hidden in the resources and materials, for example, cluttered presentation, hard-to read diagrams, unclear layout, hard-copy only
- ✓ approaches to managing time allocations, such as calendar tools and visual timers
- ✓ approaches to managing anxiety
- ✓ approaches to maintaining concentration
- ✓ negotiating breaks
- ✓ use of digital technologies such as text-to-speech and predictive text
- ✓ pre-teaching specific assessment/exam skills such as how to approach multiple choice questions
- ✓ identify whether [SAC](#) application needs to be made for NCEA.

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## Design assessments with students

Wayne Rangiruna describes the impact of student-teacher collaboration in assessment design.



Video hosted on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/181553621>

[View transcript](#)

Source:

Te Kotahitanga (NZ)

<http://tekotahitanga.tki.org.nz/Videos/Teacher-stories/Wayne-s-story>

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# Utilise the flexibility built into NCEA

NCEA is flexible.

Design assessments to suit the nature of the learning being assessed, as well as the varied characteristics and experiences of the students.

Avoid one-size-fits-all approaches as they will create unnecessary barriers for some students.

Consider:

- multiple forms of assessment, for example, demonstration, video, audio, poster, written, multiple choice
- active reflection – students spend time, individually and together, considering how they can demonstrate their learning
- what supports are needed to enable all students to have equal access, for example, screen reader, reader writer, more time
- student needs when giving feedback, for example, comments on Google Docs, face-to-face, videoing and analysing assessment tasks together – this could include: dance, drama, music, speeches.
- available exemplars with explanation and examples of what achieved, merit, and excellence looks like, for example, annotate NZQA assessments so they are meaningful for your students.

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## Reflection questions

Consider the following questions in your own context.

How do I evaluate the knowledge and skills that are directly related to learning goals and expectations?

How do I ensure assessments are accessible, flexible, ongoing, and used to inform teaching and learning?

Do I provide multiple means for students to express their thinking? How could I strengthen this?

Can I co-construct more assessments with students whenever possible?

Are all students offered the tools and approaches they need to be successful (text to speech, Reader and/or Writer, digital version, additional time)?

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## Useful resources



### Top 10 UDL tips for assessment

A assessment resource published by CAST, the Center of Assistive Technologies. It provides suggestions and questions on how can you use the UDL framework to design and reflect on assessments. This resource can be downloaded as a PDF.

[Visit website](#)



### Know students better: 15 tools for formative assessments

Read time: 21 min

A selection of digital formative assessment tools that can be used for free. Tony Gear has written about 15. Most of these tools work with any web browser, so they can be used on laptops, iPads, Chromebooks, tablets, and smartphones.

Publisher: Learning in Hand

[Visit website](#)

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