

Identify barriers and supports

A suggestion for implementing the strategy

'Design considerations in NCEA assessments'

from the Guide: [Universal Design for Learning](#)

Includes:

Barriers that create unproductive struggle

What gets in the way for ākonga?

Identify and minimise barriers in your subject

Recognising barriers in our learning design

Useful resources

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From

Guide: [Universal Design for Learning](#)

Strategy: [Design considerations in NCEA assessments](#)

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Date

19 June 2026

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inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/universal-design-for-learning/identify-barriers-and-supports

Barriers that create unproductive struggle

Nicole Tucker-Smith
identifying and
minimising barriers
that cause
unproductive struggle
for learners.






Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/NxjS2bQsz-M>

Closed Captions

What gets in the way for ākonga?

Common barriers across learning areas

A UDL approach intentionally anticipates, identifies and addresses barriers up front to ensure learning environments are equitable and free from discrimination and bias.

Engagement: Supporting motivation, interest, identity and self regulation. 	
What barriers to engagement might ākonga experience in the design of my lesson? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teacher makes all the decisions about what we study.• There is no opportunity to connect my language, culture, identity and experience to the learning.• The teacher just talks about boys and girls, I don't fit.• It's so noisy in here I can't think.• I'm scared to ask for help.• This doesn't relate to my life, when will I ever need to know this.	Supporting Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask students about their interests, strengths and needs. Use this to guide lesson design.• Connect learning to culture and identify• Create opportunities for students to use their first language• Offer headphones and provide flexibility on where students can work.• Offer multiple ways for students to seek support.• Make authentic links to why the learning is valuable.
Representation: Supporting access to information, creating flexible content and building understanding. 	
What barriers to accessing and understanding information might ākonga experience in the way I communicate and present information (instructions, content and materials)? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can't hear the video and there are no captions.• The teacher is using a whole bunch of words I don't understand.• I can't relate to any of the examples or stories the teacher provides to support my understanding.• Often instructions for assignments or assessment require heaps of reading.	Supporting Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select videos with accurate captions, turned on.• Provide multiple opportunities to support new vocab and concept building.• Model using glossaries in multiple media.• Ensure analogies and stories are relevant and connect to students' experiences and their cultures, languages and identities.• Present instructions succinctly using text, image and video.
Action and expression: Supporting access to learning materials, personal organisation, expressing thinking and learning. 	
What barriers to participating and demonstrating learning might ākonga experience in the design of my lesson? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I feel held back by having to read when I understand the concepts.• The teachers can't read my writing• What I'm supposed to be doing.• How do I get started?• All the resources are online and we have no wifi at home.• We are given options for how to present our learning but no support on how to make the best choice to demonstrate my strengths and knowledge.• Am on the right track with this assessment?	Supporting Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Model the effective use of digital tools e.g. text-to-speech, online research, illustrated glossaries.• Provide access to keyboards.• Provide sentence starters, graphic organisers, planners• Ensure students have equitable access to the tools they need to be successful.• Discuss with students the pros and cons of presentation options, and how to make the best choice.• Ask students what check-in options will be useful, provide a range of options e.g. check point template.

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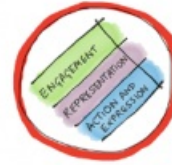
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Identify and minimise barriers in your subject

Identifying common barriers in your subject area?



A UDL approach intentionally anticipates, identifies and addresses barriers up front to ensure learning environments are equitable and free from discrimination and bias.

Engagement Supporting motivation, interest, identity and self regulation. 	
What barriers to engagement might ākongā experience in the design of my lesson? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in topic • 	Supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option for learners to identify own topic •
Representation Supporting access to information, creating flexible content and building understanding. 	
What barriers to accessing and understanding information might ākongā experience in the way I communicate and present information (instructions, content and materials)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text heavy content 	Supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model and offer text-to-speech options •
Action and expression Supporting access to learning materials, personal organisation, expressing thinking and learning. 	
What barriers to participating and demonstrating learning might ākongā experience in the design of my lesson? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of term quiz online • 	Supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate a variety of assessment formats •

Source:

[Universal Design for Learning: Theory and practice](http://udltheorypractice.cast.org/reading?3&loc=intro.xml_11969952)

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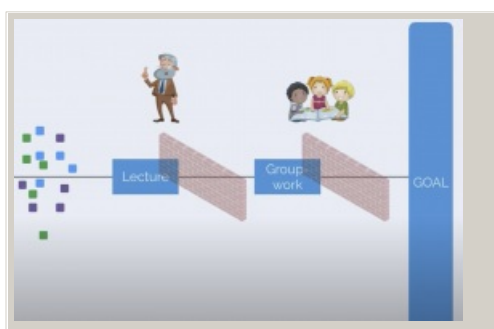
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Recognising barriers in our learning design

A key focus of UDL is identifying barriers to learning hidden in the learning environments.



Video hosted on Youtube http://youtu.be/_-bA63EGTw8

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Useful resources



Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Read time: 3 min

UDL explained from a NZ perspective. The Thinking Cycle and supporting tools for planning and teaching are included.

[Visit website](#)



Planning with Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Read time: 3 min

A series of downloadable templates that help you to use UDL when you plan your teaching and assessments.

Publisher: Ministry of Education NZ

[Visit website](#)

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