

Handbook for the Universal Design of Classes

1. Introduction

(1) Purpose

The Rikkyo Declaration of Human Collaboration, issued in 2005, states that we should look to those who lead difficult lives or are made vulnerable in society, particularly by illness, disability, or disasters, and aim to realize a society where people can live together without harming each other. This is positioned at the root of Rikkyo University's founding principles. Since then, the Students with Disabilities Support Office has been established, and efforts toward realizing an inclusive society continue to develop and deepen, together with the understanding and cooperation of students, faculty, and staff throughout the university. In addition, the Rikkyo University Declaration of Human Dignity, issued in April 2021, states that the university aspires to be a place for free learning and education which brings out each person's fullest capability, respecting the character, human rights, and human dignity of every individual. With Rikkyo University's basic philosophy serving as the foundation, this handbook has been compiled to share and further develop the many innovations and efforts that students, faculty, and staff have made in their classes to achieve results.

(2) Relationship with the Rikkyo University Support Policy for Students with Disabilities

In the previously announced Rikkyo University Support Policy for Students with Disabilities, the basic concept of the proposed "universal design of classes" has already been clarified. In other words, Rikkyo University aims to be an open university in which all students are respected as irreplaceable individuals, with everyone respecting each other's personality and individuality without being separated by the presence or absence of disabilities. Rikkyo University provides students with disabilities reasonable accommodation so that they can receive the same level of education as other students, and supports them so that they can lead an independent university life with a view to independent life in society after graduation. Support for students with disabilities at Rikkyo University is a two-way activity in which those who provide support and those who receive support are connected, learning from and supporting each other. We will improve the educational capabilities of the university as a whole and foster the ability of students and faculty and staff to coexist with each other through support for students. However, only a handful of students apply for assistance and seek reasonable accommodation as students with disabilities, suggesting that potential recipients may have some difficulties in their daily classes. Furthermore, much of the know-how that has been cultivated through the support of students with disabilities can be used to make learning easier for

students without. In this way, in order for all students to fully develop their education in accordance with their abilities and characteristics, it is necessary to implement universal design in all classes, going beyond simply providing reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities.

(3) What is universal design?

The “Guidelines for the Promotion of Barrier-free Universal Design” presented by the Japan Cabinet Office indicate the need to address all physical, social, institutional, and psychological barriers (“barrier-free”) and create designs that are easy for everyone to use (“universal design”) together in order to realize independence for each and every citizen and an inclusive society. The fact that universities are open to individuals regardless of whether they are sick or have a disability, and are designed to be accessible and valuable in order to help each individual become independent, is in line with Rikkyo University’s founding principles, our earlier declaration, and our support policy. Based on this recognition, it is our mission to ensure all students have equal access to academic information and to enhance liberal arts education by making sure students can interact with each other, stimulating intellectual curiosity and creativity. In order to fulfill this mission, the concept of universal design of classes, syllabus designs, practical examples of universal design in classes, and activities supporting universal design initiatives are described in detail below. This handbook is the result of the continuous efforts that students, faculty, and staff have made throughout classes, and so are “riches” that we already possess. It is written with specifics in mind and succinctly stated so that it can be widely shared, made available to everyone, and serve the basis for further efforts.

It is our hope that this handbook will help improve the quality of the classes enjoyed by our students and provided by our faculty and staff, and contribute to the independent learning of everyone connected to the university, including students with disabilities.

2. Structure of this handbook

This handbook consists of the following sections:

- Concept behind universal design of classes
- Design for syllabus descriptions
- Practical examples of universal design in classes
- Activities supporting universal design

Study for university-wide curriculum, each college and graduate school, etc., is extensive and features a diverse range of academic learning methods. Therefore, it is important to consider the “three important viewpoints” shown on the following section when promoting the universal design of classes.

3. Concept behind universal design of classes

University classes are attended by students with different personalities and characteristics, which include age, gender, culture, disabilities, and illnesses. Universal design for classes is based on the concept of designing lesson formats and information that are easy for anyone to understand and use, based on the preliminary assumption that this diverse range of students will participate in class. R. Mace et al. summarized the concept of universal design into the following seven principles:

- (1) Equitable Use
- (2) Flexibility in Use
- (3) Simple and Intuitive Use
- (4) Perceptible Information
- (5) Tolerance for Error
- (6) Low Physical Effort
- (7) Size and Space for Approach and Use

Based on these principles, the following three points are particularly important when considering universal design in classes.

- 1) Access to information when it is needed (accessibility)
- 2) Can be easily used by anyone (usability)
- 3) Content can be understood by anyone by means of language and expression (literacy)

The universal design of classes is conducted in the environment surrounding students, and there are two aspects of the environment: the physical environment and the human environment. For example, “using microphones to ensure adequate volume regardless of an individual student’s seating position or level of hearing” and “adjusting the font size in documents to 12 pt or more to make it easier for students with amblyopia or dyslexia, and being careful to ensure there is sufficient space between lines” are universal designs for the physical environment. On the other hand, “trying not to speak too fast” and “making sure to read aloud what is written” are universal designs for the human environment. In other words, everyone and everything in the classroom is the “environment” and so is the subject of consideration for universal design.

4. Design for syllabus descriptions

The Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) says, “For all students, the information in the syllabus is important for selecting and taking classes. It is therefore useful for all students if detailed information regarding the class is included in the syllabus.” The following information is recommended for inclusion in the syllabus: This includes content that is difficult to reflect in our current syllabus format. It is advisable to inform all students about details that are difficult to reflect in the syllabus in advance through the course guidebook and R Guide.

Items marked with “☆” are items that should be listed in the syllabus.

(1) Information regarding the teaching format

- ☆ Lectures, seminars, experiments, practical training, fieldwork, etc.
- ☆ Course capacity (number of students, etc.), target students (academic year, etc.), lottery registration and special registration periods (if applicable)
- ☆ Degree of participation by students taking the course (if there are discussions, presentations, debates, etc.)
 - Degree to which writing on the board and slides are used (including quantity and frequency)
 - Class environment (barrier-free situation, fixed/free seating, whether it is necessary to move during class, etc.)

(2) Information regarding course materials

- Utilization of textbooks and reference books
- Utilization of materials (media, availability and method of distribution, language used, etc.)
- Content of handouts (text, photos, illustrations, mathematical formulae, diagrams, maps, etc.)
- Utilization of ICT equipment (names of hardware and software, information, etc.)
- Utilization of audiovisual course materials (audio teaching materials, video teaching materials, etc.)

(3) Information regarding grading and evaluations

- ☆ Nature of the class (achievement goals, evaluation criteria, etc.)
 - * For achievement goals, use verbs to describe observable behaviors that you want students to be able to do by the end of the course, such as “Students can XX.”
 - * For the evaluation criteria, specify the conditions and standards under which evaluation will occur.
By clearly stating goals and criteria, students can understand how best to direct their efforts.
 - * In light of the nature of the class, if students are required to attend more than a certain number of classes or submit assignments, please make sure to include that information in the syllabus in addition to stating it in class.
Example: Students with four or more absences will not receive a grade, students who do not submit a mid-term report will not receive a grade, final report will not be graded if less than 2/3 of reaction papers have been submitted, etc.
- ☆ Evaluation methods (whether there are quizzes, submittals, mid-term and final exams, reports, etc., their formats, their weight in grading)

(4) Other

- ☆ In order to prevent a mismatch between the needs of the students and the content of the classes, prerequisite courses and abilities should be listed.

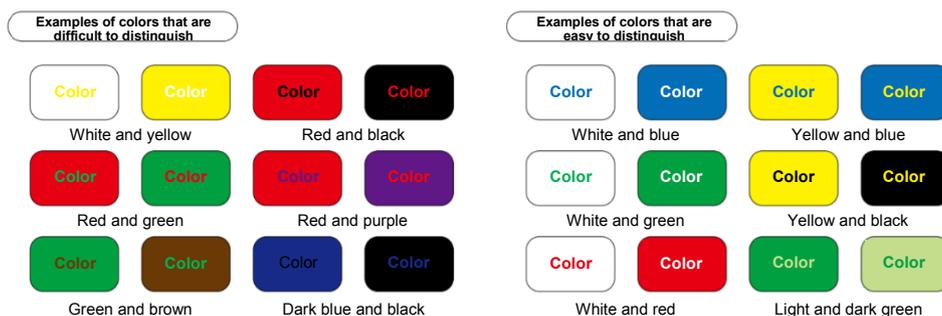
Example: “Requires a high-school level of knowledge of Japanese history,” “Having taken XX is recommended.”

5. Practical examples of universal design in classes

(1) Common items

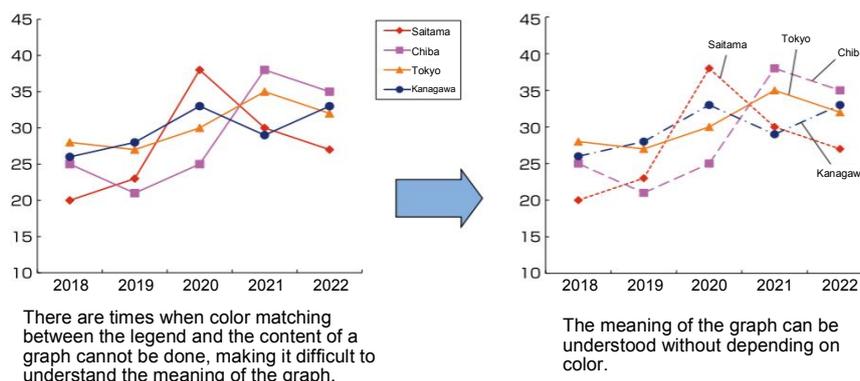
1) Class materials

- (1) Prepare digital data for students who use text-to-speech software or who read by enlarging text.
- (2) Upload to a class support system (such as Canvas LMS) before class.
- (3) Describe the main points and purpose of the class.
- (4) Describe important information regarding grading and evaluations, such as assignments and exams.
- (5) Use Universal Design (UD) fonts.
- (6) Adjust the font size (12 pt or larger is recommended for A4-size documents).
- (7) Ensure there is sufficient space between lines (at least 20 pt between lines (32 lines)).
- (8) Avoid using bold (be especially careful with small font sizes).
- (9) Use underscores where emphasis of text is required.
- (10) Be aware of text and background color combinations.



Source: Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Color Universal Design Guidelines (March 2011, Bureau of Social Welfare and Public Health, Tokyo Metropolitan Government)

- (11) For graphs, etc., lines of different colors can take on different characteristics (such as becoming dotted lines), or labels/numbers can be applied which explain contents without relying on color.



Source: Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Color Universal Design Guidelines (Bureau of Social Welfare and Public Health, Tokyo Metropolitan Government)

2) Course materials

- (1) When selecting video materials, prepare those with subtitles and audio guides.
- (2) When viewing laboratory equipment or actual objects, explain their shapes and features in words and, if possible, provide opportunities to touch them.

3) Presenting assignments

Unify the method for presenting students with various assignments, such as reaction papers, reports, and in-class tests. When communicating assignments to students, using different kinds of media, such as a classroom support system (e.g., Canvas LMS) and spirit mail can cause confusion and human error. It is better to decide on a single medium for announcing assignments. As for the act of presenting assignments itself, inform students using a method that can be checked later (handouts or posting notices).

- ⇒ Reference) One method is to make an announcement such as "All reaction papers and report assignments can be found in Canvas LMS."
- ⇒ Reference) Email is useful as a way to contact students, but students with disabilities who are not good at organizing and managing their inboxes, which contains a variety of information, report that they often overlook or forget things.

4) Reaction papers and quizzes

Consider a variety of methods for submitting reaction papers and quizzes, including data submission.

⇒ Reference) According to teachers who made it possible to submit reaction papers and quizzes by email, “The content of reaction papers has become richer and the number of questions has increased. As a result, the students’ understanding has deepened.”

5) Report assignments

- (1) Allow more time for assignments.
- (2) Do not give instructions or precautions for assignments verbally, instead providing them in handouts and through class support systems (such as Canvas LMS) so that they can be checked at any time.
- (3) Explain the intent of the assignment and the points that will be evaluated in an easy-to-understand manner.
- (4) Give examples of preferred writing and formatting.

6) Tests

When creating questions, set a time slightly higher than the time the examinee is expected to take to answer. If the evaluation is about getting as many answers as possible within a limited time (processing speed), inform the students beforehand.

7) Other

- (1) Inform students in advance regarding the seating method for lectures (free, numerical order, etc.). Instructions should also be given to students who have physical conditions or difficulties that require special consideration, such as needing to sit in the aisle or near the door.
- (2) Clearly state the procedure for when a student needs to leave class due to their physical condition (such as leaving after obtaining permission, allowing students who have special considerations to leave without permission, etc.). Depending on the progress and the content of the class, it is possible to give instructions such as “do not leave class for the next 15 minutes and work on your assignment.”
- (3) Use the same level of respect for all students (such as XX (name)-san to everyone’s name). In addition, do not designate students by gender, such as “that male student there,” but by methods such as “the student in blue clothes.”
- (4) As a general rule, lists of names to be distributed or posted to students should be distributed/posted without their genders listed.
- (5) Grouping by gender should be avoided.

(2) Lectures

- 1) Make appropriate use of microphones, taking into account the size of the classroom and the number of students.
- 2) Speak clearly and slowly, facing the class, so that students can see the movements of your mouth.
- 3) Avoid using words such as “this,” “that,” “here,” and “there.”
- 4) When writing on the board, read aloud what you wrote.
- 5) Make sure you specify your goals for the day’s class.
- 6) At the end of class, explain the main points of the day’s class.
- 7) When switching topics, indicate this beforehand and read important information aloud.
- 8) When working with abstract concepts, try to give specific examples.
- 9) When giving an assignment, clearly tell students when it is due, what exactly is due, and how much effort they should put into it.

(3) Seminars

- 1) The purpose and theme of group work and what is to be discussed should be clearly indicated (and made visible).
- 2) Clarify the rules of group work (don’t talk at the same time, speak slowly, raise your hand and then talk, don’t reject others, etc.).
- 3) Devise a method for gathering and sharing opinions expressed in group work.
- 4) Consider using online tools such as Zoom, Meet, and UD Talk*.
* Speech recognition app
⇒ Reference) It has been reported that even students with interpersonal anxiety can often participate in class by turning off cameras/microphones, and chat can be used to encourage participation.

(4) Experiments and practical training

- 1) Display the purpose and procedure of experiments so that they can be visually confirmed one after another (or distribute an “experiment manual” or “practical training manual”).
- 2) When presenting a model or observing a phenomenon, add as many verbal explanations as possible.
- 3) Provide perspective by presenting a specific flow and plan for the training.

(5) Use of online classes

Online classes have made all students and faculty aware of new possibilities regarding university teaching. It is estimated that for certain students, taking online classes is helpful. For students who find it difficult to participate and engage in in-person classes, the option of taking online classes may be an alternative to universal design.

6. Activities supporting universal design

(1) FD/SD activities

In the past, Faculty Development (FD) and Staff Development (SD) activities were being systematically promoted in Center for the University-wide Curriculum, all colleges, graduate schools, and related departments. FD and SD activities are essential for promoting the universal design of classes. The Students with Disabilities Support Office has accumulated ideas and examples of pioneering efforts toward universal design of classes. In response to requests from faculty and staff, we will develop activities to support FD and SD activities.

(2) Roles of AAs and LAs

Through the efforts of the university's Academic Advisors (AA), students are able to gain perspective on their studies, lives, and career paths, and live a fulfilling campus life. With the support of the library's Learning Advisors (LA), students are also supported in developing greater literacy through assistance with report assignments and thesis development. These efforts are expected to improve qualitatively to become more and more detailed as the universal design of classes advances. The Students with Disabilities Support Office will also cooperate with AAs and LAs so that their roles can be fulfilled to the utmost.

- * AA system: A system in which a person in charge (full-time faculty) is assigned to each student to provide advice, guidance, and information concerning overall study at the university
- * LA service: A service in which advice is provided by graduate students (mainly doctoral students) on how to study and create reports and academic papers using the library.

(3) Role of the Students with Disabilities Support Office

The Students with Disabilities Support Office has been promoting reasonable accommodation and environmental adjustments for students with academic difficulties with the great support of Center for the University-wide Curriculum, all colleges, graduate schools and related departments. However, it is said that the number of students who apply for accommodations are 1/3 to 1/5 of those with difficulties who are eligible. In order to allow all students, not just potential support recipients but also those without disabilities, to learn according to their abilities and characteristics, and so that students can fully demonstrate the fruits of their learning in society, we will play the required roles in efforts toward universal design of classes.

Contact Information

○General support for students with disabilities:

Students with Disabilities Support Office

Email: sien@rikkyo.ac.jp

Ikebukuro campus: 03-3985-4818

Niiza campus: 048-471-7072

○Matters relating to classes or exams:

Academic Affairs Office

Ikebukuro campus: 03-3985-2220

Niiza campus: 048-471-6942

* The name of the class system support tool has been replaced with the one currently in use. (December 2023)