



# Student Empowerment

## The Role of the Students' Union in UDL

**Advocacy  
Awareness**

**Feedback and  
Evaluation**

**Awareness and  
Education**

**Representation  
of Diverse  
Learning Needs**

**Collaboration  
and Partnership**

**Modelling UDL  
Principles**





# Student Empowerment

## Modelling UDL Principles

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Students' Union  
Constitution**

**ATU Sligo  
Students' Union  
Elections**

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**Underpinning Genuine Student Partnerships;  
Starting the conversation of engagement,  
representation and action.**

**Maureen Haran, PhD(c), SFHEA, Higher Education UDL Centre of Excellence  
Dr. Shelley Brady, Hcert TLA, MSc, BCBA-D, PhD**

**Equitable  
Learning**

**Student  
Empowerment**

**Sustainability**



**Climbing the UDL Ladder:  
Building a Culture of Inclusion  
In Higher Education**

## Our **burning** questions

What did we need to learn?  
Why did we need to learn it?  
How are we going to approach it?  
What was the response?  
What does it tell us?  
Where do we go from here?



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## Equitable Learning



### EQUITY OF ACCESS

### INTRODUCTION

Education has the power to transform lives, lift people out of poverty and break

Equity of access to higher education is a fundamental principle of Irish education policy and a priority for the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Higher Education Authority. People should have equity of access to education independent of their socioeconomic background, ethnicity, gender, geographical location, disability or other circumstances.

**“Equity in education means ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to achieve their potential and that any social or economic constraints that might prevent a student from having equal opportunities are mitigated.” (HEA, 2022)**



## Equitable Learning

### Applying Access in the Curriculum

**Key principles and strategies associated with equitable learning:**

1. Inclusive Practices
2. Access to Resources and Technology
3. Culturally Responsive Teaching
4. Collaboration and Community Partnerships
5. Data-Informed Decision Making
6. Professional Development
7. Elimination of Bias

**“Decolonising curriculum in academia requires meaningful recognition of alternative perspectives embedded in analysis of power relations, including those of race, class and gender.” (Begum & Saini, 2019 p.200)**





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## FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPOWERMENT



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Consider varied perspectives

Negotiate with others

Think independently

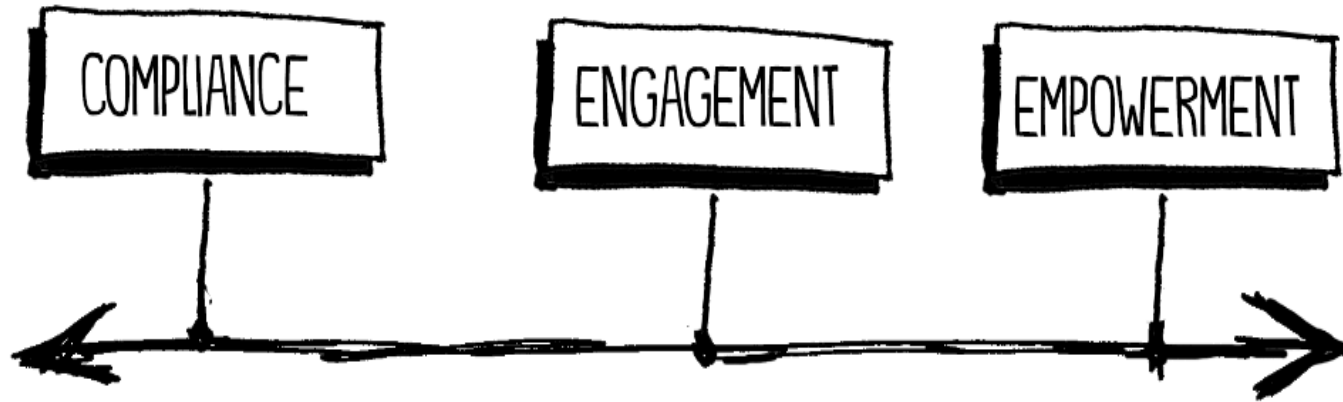
Make their own decisions

Act on knowledge

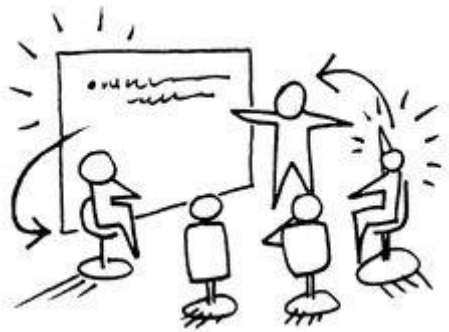


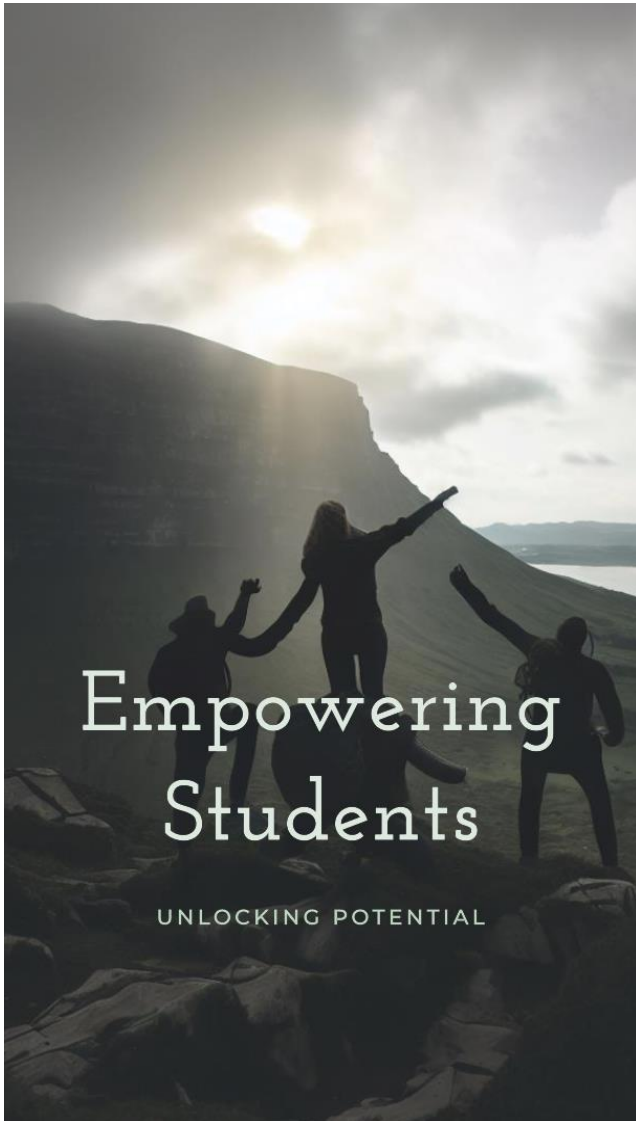
SELF  
IDENTITY





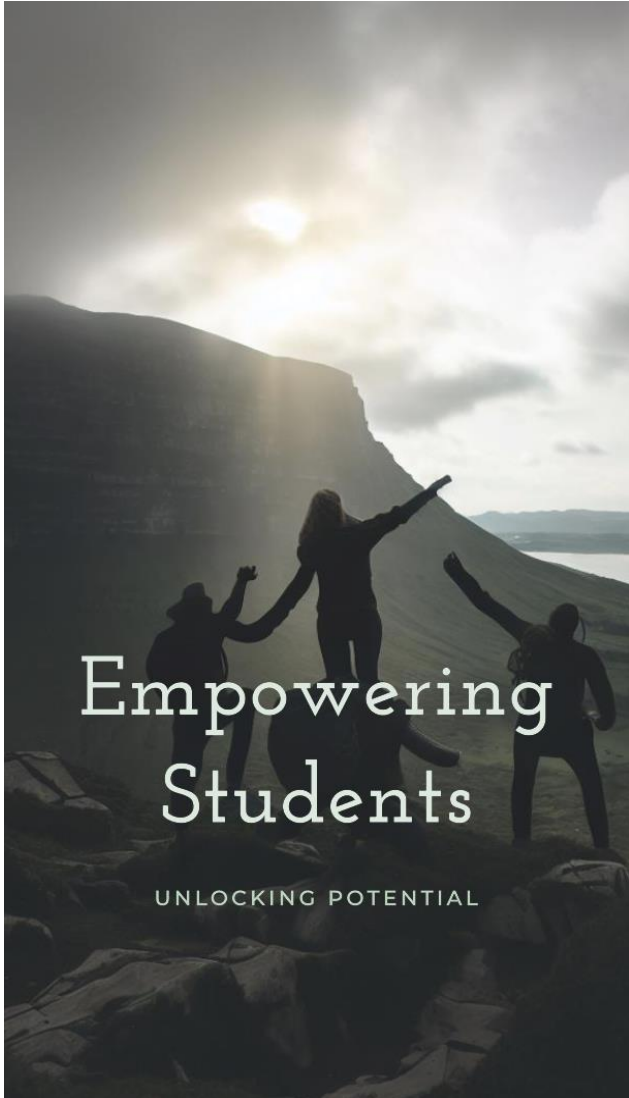
## STUDENT AGENCY





- Equitable power use by teachers
- Positive teacher-student relationships
- Sense of community in the classroom





- Better grades
- Fewer behavioural incidents
- Increased extra-curricular participation
- Higher educational aspirations

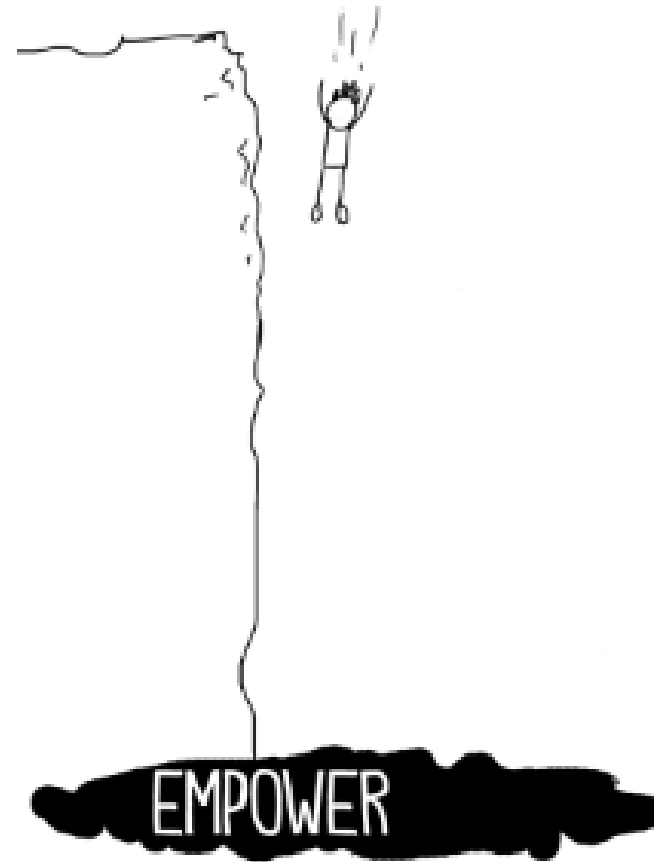




Advancing economic, social and environmental sustainability through education, innovation, and engagement, producing graduates who are innovative, confident and capable of leading the development of the region and beyond.



This  
Isn't  
Easy





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**Daire Martin**  
**SU President**



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## Student Empowerment

### What if you could:

- \* Take ownership of your learning process
- \* Make decisions about your education
- \* Develop the confidence and agency to advocate for yourself



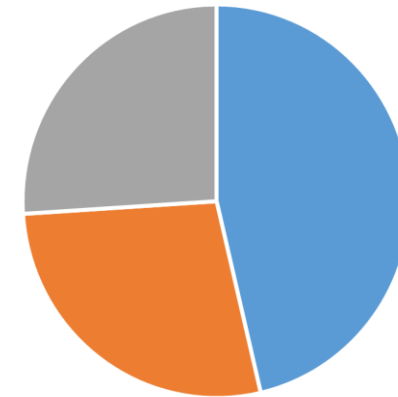
Section 1

**Win an ATU Hoodie!**  
**Complete the following brief survey!**  
**(Approx. 3-5 minutes to complete)**



The following is a voluntary survey. Those who **submit a response by the 15th of May 2023** will be entered into the draw.

Responses Across Campus



■ Sligo ■ Galway/Mayo ■ Letterkenny

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71% ON CAMPUS  
29% ONLINE



**81% Undergraduate**  
**16% Postgraduate**  
**4% Apprentices**



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## EQUITABLE LEARNING

81 % HAD  
NEVER HEARD  
OF EQUITABLE  
LEARNING

**“Yes, distributing support and academic resources on the basis of need as opposed to blanket equality”**

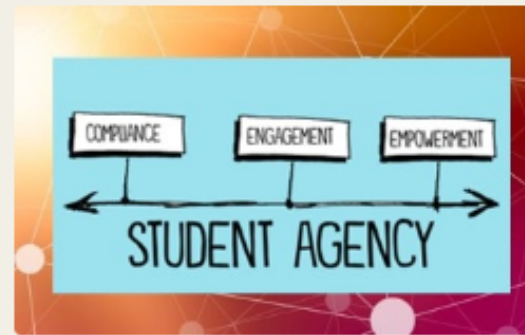
**“Yes; giving everyone resources a student needs that provide a fair chance for the same learning experience”**



5

**Student empowerment:** means giving students the power to make decisions and take action in their education. This includes things like learning, teaching, and being leaders in the classroom. When students feel empowered, they have the confidence and ability to take charge of their own education and make positive changes in their education. Empowerment happens when students are given the authority and support to take action and make a difference.\*

Please indicate the areas in the options below where you feel empowered in your student learning experience. Do you feel empowered in these areas?  
(Select all statements that apply to you.)



- Academically (I feel that I can make decisions and am part of actions in the classroom.)
- Physically (I feel that I can meet the physical demands of my course and that the campus is accessible to me)
- Socially (I engage in University social activities or I have a college peer group that I connect with socially.)
- Well being/ Mental Health ( I feel that I can balance how I care for my well being/ mental health and my studies.)
- Culturally (I feel students from diverse cultural backgrounds—particularly recently arrived immigrant or refugee students and their families—feel welcomed, accepted, safe, and valued)

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**Culturally** I feel students from diverse cultural backgrounds—particularly recently arrived immigrant or refugee students and their families—feel welcomed, accepted, safe, and valued **65%**

**Academically** I feel that I can make decisions and am part of actions in the classroom **77%**

**Well-being/ Mental Health** I feel that I can balance how I care for my well-being/mental health and my studies **60%**

**Physically** I feel that I can meet the physical demands of my course and that the campus is accessible to me **70%**

**Socially** I engage in University social activities or I have a college peer group that I connect with socially **58%**



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"Online it's difficult to engage with other students on my course and geographically the campus and other facilities are not available to me."

"Online courses should have online exams, going to Sligo and Dublin travelling 3 hours each exam is a barrier. It is inconvenient and takes from the online experience."

## Socially

51%  
.06%

"While I appreciate the benefits of online education, I find the pace to be at times overwhelming and would prefer more opportunities for interaction with my peers."

"No one has cameras on in online learning lectures. We don't get to see who we're learning with. Don't feel like we're building a student relationship."

"While there is good support for and between online student groups, we do still miss out on certain events that aren't streamed."



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"Barriers to inclusion for students from diverse backgrounds, not due to prejudice, but due to lack of consideration for people from other cultures, backgrounds etc. and how they may be adversely affected by assuming a norm of an 'Irish' white male background"

## Culturally

.01%

"Food in the canteen does not meet cultural needs."

"I hope in the future an exam hall could be made available in the midlands, a shorter trip to Athlone or Mullingar would be beneficial"

## Physically

.02%

"Lifts are often broken, canteen is hard to navigate, the library is difficult to navigate, wheelchair bathrooms are usually closed and certain areas are just overall inaccessible to physically disabled students including areas where social and sports societies meet."



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"For my course a lot of assignments and performance tend to pile up sometimes and makes it difficult to balance at times."

## Academically

11%

"Academically, I feel that students that fall short in certain areas should have the ability to choose what to submit so that it suits them rather than the final submissions/exams only suiting some while others have a hard time passing."



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"It would be helpful to have more counselling appointments available. It seems there is always a backlog for appointments. Or even if there were trained Mental Health First Aiders or Ambassadors."

## Mental Health Wellbeing

15%

"Balancing my studies and mental health is a barrier for me personally it ends up leaving me less confident in my ability which in turn causes lower grades than my ability."

"The high cost of living is the main barrier to having good mental health."

"I feel that my mental health is being drained as I go to school weekdays, work weekends, and help manage a farm when I can. I don't get much time to rest. I feel that if I go through a difficult period that I'm not comfortable missing classes or missing days of school for mental health as I wouldn't be able to catch up afterwards."







## Sustainability



## NTUTORR UDL Student Champions



[Transitions Reform](#)

[Teaching & Learning](#)

[Access](#)

[Apprenticeship](#)

[National Framework for Doctoral Education](#)

[National RPL Project](#)

[NTUTORR](#)

### Student Champions for Promoting Digital Skills, Education for Sustainability, Leadership & Employability Programme

The NTUTORR national project is an innovative collaboration across the Technological Higher Education sector to transform the student experience.

As part of this project, we are recruiting 100 Student Champions to learn and develop skills in one of the key priority areas in addition to developing leadership, collaboration and communication. This is a fixed term NTUTORR Student Champion role for the period June 2023 – May 2024. Each Student Champion will receive an award valued at €3,000.\*

The role of the NTUTORR student champion is to develop student engagement and empowerment in their local university/institute. Student Champions will engage with the development of an initiative under one of the NTUTORR thematic areas:

- Academic Integrity
- Digital Transformation in Teaching and Learning
- Education for Sustainability
- Employability
- Equality Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)





## UDL Student Digital Badge



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### Academic Writing Badge

Home Dashboard

Courses > Academic Writing

**About This Programme**

Earn a digital badge

Getting The Most Out Of Your Badge

News & Questions

**Welcome to**

This programme is designed to be a key topic in academic writing relevant for you. Students. Each unit contains content to achieve completion.

**Please Note: all Modules. See the section 'Getting The Most Out of Your Badge'.**

**About This Programme**

**About this programme:**

- This is a self-directed, interactive course designed to develop academic writing skills at 3rd level.
- Flexible approach: choose relevant individual units or complete the whole programme to earn an Academic Writing digital badge.
- The programme is divided into 7 units. Each unit contains: course content, examples, activities, quizzes & links to useful resources.

**How to complete the programme:**

Click on the Unit you wish to study.

Each unit contains:

- Learning outcomes:** what you will know or be able to do after completing the Unit;
- Unit Content:** click on this to begin the course; **Top tip: click Hide Blocks at the top of the page to widen the screen for easier reading.**
- Unit Quiz:** click on this to complete the end of unit quiz.

**Important: you must fully complete the Unit Content & achieve a pass rate of 80% in the Unit Quiz in order to be registered as having completed the Unit successfully and to be awarded your digital badge.**

**This programme was developed by the Academic Writing Centre and Instructional Design as part of the iNote project.**

**About This Programme**

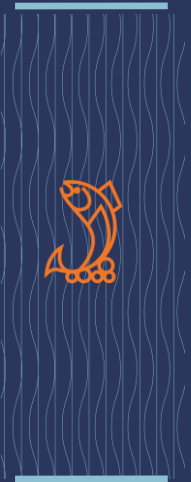
**Unit 1: Introduction to Academic Writing**

**Unit 5: Critical Analysis & Critical Writing**





## Sustainable Impact




It's ok to get it  
wrong...educate  
into creative  
capacities.

“Seeing our students  
for the hope that  
they are.” (Sir Ken  
Robinson, 2006)



## ‘UX within the HE Classroom’

### Exploring the Student Voice within UDL Work Introduction and Context

 Frederic Fovet

2018, The AHEAD Journal

 87 Views  12 Pages  2 Files ▾

 Higher Education, Critical Pedagogy, Student Voice, UDL

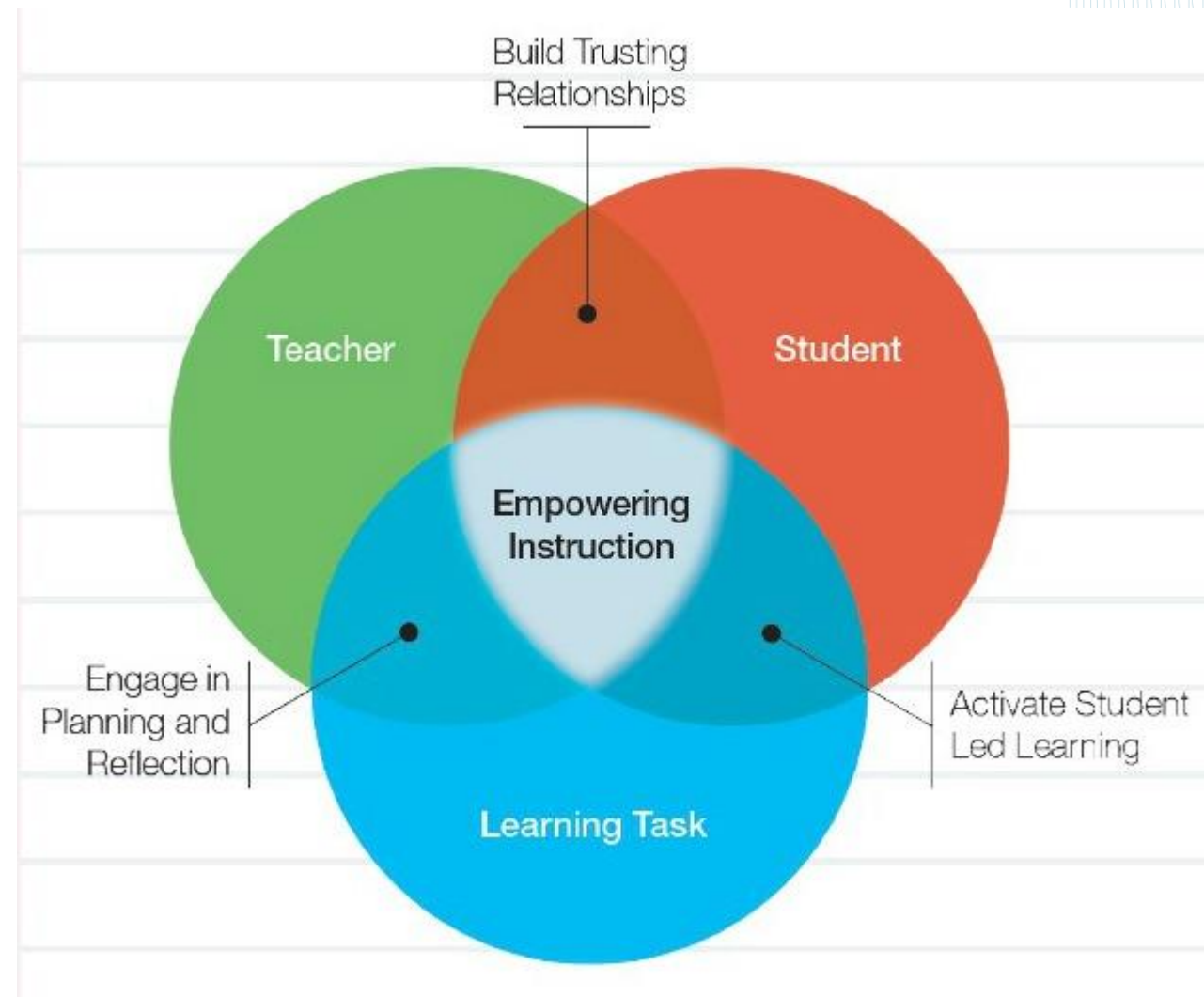
Show more ▾

One of the reasons that makes Universal Design for Learning (UDL) particularly appealing to the post-secondary sector is the fact that it is entirely focused on the design reflection of the instructor, and does not require diagnostic information about individual students (Gradel & Edson, 2009). Unlike differentiation which normally ...read more

**Exploring the Student Voice within UDL Work**, *Frederic Fovet, University of Prince Edward Island*

<https://ahead.ie/journal/Exploring-the-Student-Voice-within-Universal-Design-for-Learning-Work>

## Our role.....



## Thank You!

For more information, you may contact [Maureen.haran@atu.ie](mailto:Maureen.haran@atu.ie) in the ATU - UDL Centre of Excellence or [Shelley.brady@atu.ie](mailto:Shelley.brady@atu.ie) in the Disability Support Service.

## QUESTIONS ?



## Resources

Begum, N. and Saini, R. (2019a) 'Decolonising the curriculum', *Political Studies Review*, 17(2), pp. 196–201. doi:10.1177/1478929918808459.

Department of Education and Skills (2022). National Plan for Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028. <https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/national-access-plan-2022-2028>

Duhon-Haynes, G. (1996) "'Student Empowerment: Definition, Implications for Implementation', *Paper presented at the Third World Symposium Grambling, Louisiana*, p. 8.

Fovet, F. (2018) Exploring the Student Voice within UDL Work Introduction and Context. *The AHEAD Journal*, 8.

*Technological Higher Education Association - N-TUTORR National Project (2023) THEA*. Available at: <https://www.thea.ie/ntutorr/> (Accessed: 27 May 2023).

Robinson, S.K. (2006) *Do schools kill creativity?*, *Sir Ken Robinson: Do schools kill creativity? | TED Talk*. Available at: [https://www.ted.com/talks/sir\\_ken\\_robinson\\_do\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity/c](https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_do_schools_kill_creativity/c) (Accessed: 27 May 2023).

