

# Chapter 8

## Strategies for Planning, Developing, and Implementing a Heuristic for Inclusive Instructional Design for Higher Education Settings

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter presents a case study of the development process of a framework used to leverage inclusive course design and provide a tool that can be used by colleges and universities looking to create a heuristic or set of guiding questions related to accessibility, equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. The chapter introduces the authors' collaborative, integrated process for defining, planning, developing, and implementing the Western Washington University Teaching and Learning Cooperative Heuristic for Inclusive Instructional Design. As instructional design support specialists in the online learning unit and the teaching and learning center, the authors created the Heuristic as a guide for centering inclusive design practices for all modalities, providing instructional designers and faculty with prompts for various stages of the design process. The Heuristic is by no means an exhaustive collection of questions; it undergoes regular edits as the field expands, as contributors provide feedback, and as knowledge develops in the field.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-9072-3.ch008

## INTRODUCTION

Amid the challenges of providing support for emergency remote teaching during the summer of 2020, and through increased conversations and awareness centered on equity, accessibility, anti-racism, and emerging student needs, the instructional designers of Western Washington University (WWU) collaborated to identify gaps in instructional design models and consider how to integrate a holistic, inclusive approach into our support services. We found ourselves promoting principles we had not fully considered in our own disciplines—and discovering that they were as fraught with inequities as any other. Subsequently, as members of the WWU Teaching and Learning Cooperative, we engaged in conversations with faculty participating in various professional development workshops. As a result, we identified gaps and challenges with instructional design models and considered how they addressed issues of equity, inclusion, and accessibility. These discussions provided valuable topics for reflecting on and improving the course design conversation.

In an effort to provide a more systematic method to think through the development process of inclusive course design of online, hybrid, and in-person courses, we developed the *Heuristic for Inclusive Instructional Design* (Heuristic). This model uses question prompts to facilitate critical thinking around accessibility, equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism and helps designers and faculty create courses that value and welcome a more fully considered spectrum of perspectives and identities.

In this chapter, we summarize the development and implementation of the Heuristic in three main sections. First, in “Planning to Create the Heuristic,” we review relevant literature and present our reflections and conversations surrounding existing models and frameworks for instructional design. Next, in “Designing and Drafting the Heuristic,” we present the structure of the Heuristic and present our strategies for asking questions throughout course design. Finally, in “Strategies for Implementing the Heuristic,” we discuss how we use the Heuristic with faculty in professional development and consultation, including targeted contexts for its use. We conclude this chapter with a discussion of our next steps and possible considerations for future use.

### Author Positionality Statement

We would like to acknowledge our own positionality related to accessibility and justice. We are individuals with various unearned privileges, intersectionalities, abilities, and identities that affect and inform our work. We are still learning and are likely to have missed something. We view the *Heuristic for Inclusive Instructional Design* as a work in progress and are committed to an open and iterative process of improvement.

## PLANNING TO CREATE THE HEURISTIC

This section of the chapter comprises two parts: The first part includes a literature review of instructional design practices and inclusive instructional design models and an assessment of those models within equity-focused frameworks. We analyzed the gaps in scholarship with regard to supporting inclusive course design, especially as it pertains to accessibility, equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. The second part describes how we used reflective dialog and brainstorming to create initial drafts of and questions for the Heuristic.

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