Visual Accessibility tips

The purpose of this visual accessibility checklist is to provide a rundown of best practices for faculty and staff to consider applying in their teaching and learning materials, as well as workshops or events. This focuses particularly on visual accessibility for Deaf persons.

This resource was created in partnership with Nigel Howard, adjunct professor at the Department of Linguistics and member of the Language Sciences Institute.

"In terms of our university landscape, I think we have so many opportunities across departments and faculties to be a much more visually welcoming environment so that Deaf students can see themselves represented in the academic life and the culture of UBC," says Howard.

American Sign Language
Professional interpreting services are meant for everyone in the classroom including the spoken language, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf persons. With the different linguistic communities present, interpreters bridge that gap and make the conversation equally accessible to all participants.

- Hire a professional American Sign Language interpreter:
    - Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre
    - Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters
    - Westcoast Association of Visual Language Interpreters
- Lighting is key to ensuring the interpreter can be seen clearly

Assignments
On equal access and accommodation, professors are encouraged to move beyond the traditional format of written assignments and consider multi-modalities. Some examples include:
- Videos
- ASL, which has an academic register and standards for visual presentations that could be equal to a written paper.

For ASL, Howard shares "If students are learning a language, they should be able to do their assignment in that language, just as they would in a spoken language assignment. It's about shifting perceptions and recognizing that we're a linguistic minority."

Video materials
There is a wide variety of learning methods and skill levels when it comes to sign languages. Not all Deaf people have sign language abilities. While some might be fluent, there are other learners with Cochlear implants or who became Hard of Hearing later in life. With that said, having different entryways to "reading" the material is encouraged.

- Make sure that the video you're providing has captioning – if closed-captioning, it may be inaccessible – captions support all learners, not just Deaf learners.
- Consider incorporating Picture-in-Picture (PiP) to your video.
- UBC Student Services Centre for Accessibility can provide support if you need assistance making your video material more accessible. This includes:
    - Transcription for your non-captioned video
    - Provide an American Sign Language interpretation of that video

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Websites and promotional materials

According to Howard, websites are the first step for making UBC more welcoming to prospective Deaf and Hard of Hearing students by ensuring their culture is represented.

- If an interpreter is available, include it in your advertisements such as the landing page and promotional materials.
- Answer the question "Is this image promoting access?"
- Some examples of access-focused web pages include: BC Centre for Disease Control and Gallaudet University

Other resources

BC's Post-Secondary Communication Access Services (PCAS) is a province-wide service for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. PCAS provides information on how-to access interpreting, speech-to-speech services, note-taking, assistive technology and more.

Provincial Medical Sign Language Interpreting is responsible for the delivery of sign language interpreting and intervenor services in health care. It is available 24/7 for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community of BC.

provide your feedback.