

Guideline Universal Design

Sheet 5: Studyable Study Material



What?

Studyable study material supports the education, learning and study process of a diversity of students with different strengths, needs and requirements. Consider for example a good structure, being attentive to language, spelling and didactics, but also taking into account diversity and sustainability.

Why and for whom? ³

The design, structure and content of a syllabus is not only important from an aesthetic point of view. Giving attention to these elements increases the accessibility of a document and contributes to the structure within texts. Reading and studying is a mental process that requires a lot of effort for some students. The advice below supports and facilitates this process.

Tips & Tricks ^{1, 2, 3, 4}

Structure

- Branding** | Use a consistent style for the structure of the course. Choose an institution-wide course template that takes the following advice into account.
- Table of contents** | Provide the course with a table of contents that offers an overview of what is being discussed (tip: use formatting styles in Word).
- Structural elements** | Structure your course material in various ways: provide an introduction with advanced organizer, select short paragraphs, use structure indicators such as connections, referral and signal words, use intermediate titles, put keywords in bold, use icons, etc.

- ❑ **Accessibility guidelines** | Take the guidelines regarding accessible documents into account (also check out Sheet 12: PDF and Word).
- ❑ **Screenreaders** | Ensure that materials are legible for screen readers, e.g. use of Alt text, OCR function for PDFs, etc. (see also sheet 12: PDF and Word).

Language and spelling

- ❑ **Accessible language** | Use short sentences, avoid solemn or archaic language.
- ❑ **Glossary** | Add a glossary.
- ❑ **Neutral language** | Use neutral language and focus on diversity (e.g. gender neutral).
- ❑ **Active language** | Use active formulations and put verbs in the same form.

Advice: Paste your text in the online tool '[de schrijfassistent](#)' of de Standaard and get immediate feedback and tips about the following aspects: spelling, -dt and co., standard language, repetition, passive writing, writing tone, noun style, language tips and pronunciation (for Dutch texts).

Didactics

- ❑ **Additional study material** | If additional study material, e.g. a textbook, is required, take the following into account, among other things: alignment with the student's learning objectives and initial competences, proportionality with the study load, language and the structure within the textbook.
- ❑ **Learning objectives** | At the start of a course subject, clearly state which learning objectives are being discussed, what the student should know in concrete terms and how this will be evaluated (refer to the ECTS sheet for this).
- ❑ **Structure** | Provide a structure in which the student can implement new knowledge, for example an introductory schedule, an introductory text or a mind map.
- ❑ **Prior knowledge** | Activate prior knowledge with examples, a case or an introductory question.
- ❑ **Illustrations** | Provide applications and illustrations, especially with difficult or crucial passages where misconceptions often arise.

- ❑ **Main and side issues** | Emphasize which are the main and the side issues by using keywords in the sidenotes, structure markings, a synthesis at the end of a chapter, etc.
- ❑ **Study instructions** | Give study instructions such as: underline key words, search for words that you do not know, make a mind map, ... and vary them.
- ❑ **Synthesis** | Provide a synthesis of the subject matter. This can be done in various ways, for example by means of a summary, a mind map or a schedule.
- ❑ **Connections** | Make connections between parts of the course.
- ❑ **Self-assessment** | Provide a self-test.
- ❑ **References** | It is best to refer to sources / reference material and to quote from other documents via e.g. a fixed method, for example the APA method.

Diversity and sustainability

- ❑ **Diversity** | Reflect the diversity of society via examples, images, etc. in the course and link to the environment of a diversity of students.
- ❑ **Purchase price** | Keep study material accessible with regard to the purchase price.
- ❑ **Digital availability** | When selecting text books, take digital availability into account.
- ❑ **Concise** | Keep your course materials concise and print recto verso.
- ❑ **Page reference** | Avoid (empty) intermediate pages with intermediate titles. The student needs a well-structured table of contents and correct page reference.

Know more?

- ❑ Check out this [database with common language issues, errors and doubt cases](#) and a [database with answers to questions about language and spelling](#), or consult the [Groene Boekje online](#) (Dutch).
- ❑ Find more [concrete examples and tips and tricks in the blended learning module, the manual and the quicksheets about studyable study material](#) by the department of educational development and internationalization of Artevelde University of Applied Sciences Ghent (Dutch).

In practice

“The student council has just submitted a proposal to oblige colleagues to make all the teaching material available in advance. They had written an advisory report about it. This is also included with us in the performance review of the teacher.”

“There are often obstacles that can be easily solved. For example, if there are answers to exercises in the course, the teacher can put a cleaned up course online without the solutions. Sometimes you need a little help for the solution.”

“We have given teachers a workshop on study tips and about how they can integrate them into their course. This is how we guide teachers. Colleagues come to us with their courses and then we also give feedback. We also allow teachers to get started with courses from others. Is it clear? Do you understand the structure? It was often easy to adjust things here to improve the course.”

“We have made a sheet with tips: very basic things such as the font or certain settings. We are actually the most happy with that.”

References

- ¹ Dienst studieadvies & onderwijsontwikkeling en internationalisering Arteveldehogeschool Gent. (2016). Studeerbaar studiemateriaal. Geraadpleegd op 17/01/2019 via <https://www.studeerbaarstudiemateriaal.be>
- ¹ Valcke, M. (2007). *Onderwijskunde als ontwerpwetenschap*. Academia Press.
- ³ Steunpunt Inclusief Hoger Onderwijs (2017). Universeel ontwerp [onuitgegeven intern document]. Gent: Steunpunt Inclusief Hoger Onderwijs
- ⁴ Dolmage, J. (2015). Universal design: Places to start. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 35(2).