


## Chapter 8

# Addressing Implicit Bias in Asynchronous Courses Through the Lens of UDL

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this chapter is to provide strategies to address implicit bias when developing an asynchronous online course. Addressing implicit bias is an essential element of UDL and trauma-informed ADDIE. There are opportunities to address implicit bias throughout the pre-planning, planning, writing, and development phases. It is important that team members collaborate and remain learner-centered during the course development process. Implementing UDL is the responsibility of everyone who is a part of the course development process.*

Asynchronous courses are often developed using metrics that represent who would be the average user of the course. This user persona is usually determined by Net Promoter Scores (NPS) metrics and user feedback. This, in turn, influences the course planning, writing approach and content inclusion, and the development process. Course planning and development through the lens of the average user is often the most efficient way to create an asynchronous course promptly. However,

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it is not always the most inclusive approach, which may harm the overall output and learner experience.

In addition to metrics, other inputs are often not considered, which can impact how the course is designed and developed. The course development team may include a curriculum designer (CD), instructional designer (ID), and developer. These team members are often creating courses based on their worldviews. They often develop courses based on their perception of what a learner wants and their own experiences and knowledge. This approach may unknowingly introduce implicit bias during the course development process because of these limited viewpoints.

The American Psychological Association (n.d.) defines implicit bias as “a negative attitude, of which one is not consciously aware, against a specific social group” (para. 1). Implicit bias can sometimes be referred to as unconscious bias because that bias is often unconscious and the person holding these biases may not be aware of them. Introducing implicit biases from course contributors can create material that does not meet the needs of all audience members or reflect their varied experiences. Awareness and reduction of implicit bias during course development are essential. Unfortunately, using metrics and relying on the experiences and knowledge of the course development team does not address the learning needs of many individuals who do not fit in the box of “the average learner.”

## **CREATING LEARNING THAT IS INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE FOR ALL USERS**

When thinking about learner outliers, the focus is often on individuals with disabilities. First, this ends up creating a limited viewpoint “abled” versus “disabled” mindset that is harmful to all learners because it does not recognize that learning differences occur on a spectrum; differences are not a yes/no binary. Second, those with disabilities are not the only population that is considered to be beyond the “average user.” For example, development teams may choose to only include audio options in some instances, based on financial budgets, time, or assumptions of learner needs, while leaving other courses to be text-focused only.

Audio options are essential for those with visual limitations, but they may also benefit learners who learn more fully with two sources of input: auditory and visual. Without the second input source, these learners may not be able to comprehend the content as quickly or thoroughly as what is deemed the “average user.” Additionally, with the shortening attention spans and multitasking nature of learners, some learners may be unable to dedicate their full attention to a visual-only learning experience. An audio option can allow them to learn while completing other tasks or taking a break from screen focus. Again, without that secondary input option, these learners

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