

SQT Training

2026

2026 Annual Quality Report (SQT Training)

CASE STUDIES RELATED to

Academic Year September 2024 –

August 2025

CASE STUDY 1

Title: Strengthening Assessment Completion through Universal Design for Learning

Theme: Quality Enhancement in Assessment Design

Keywords: UDL; Assessment Design

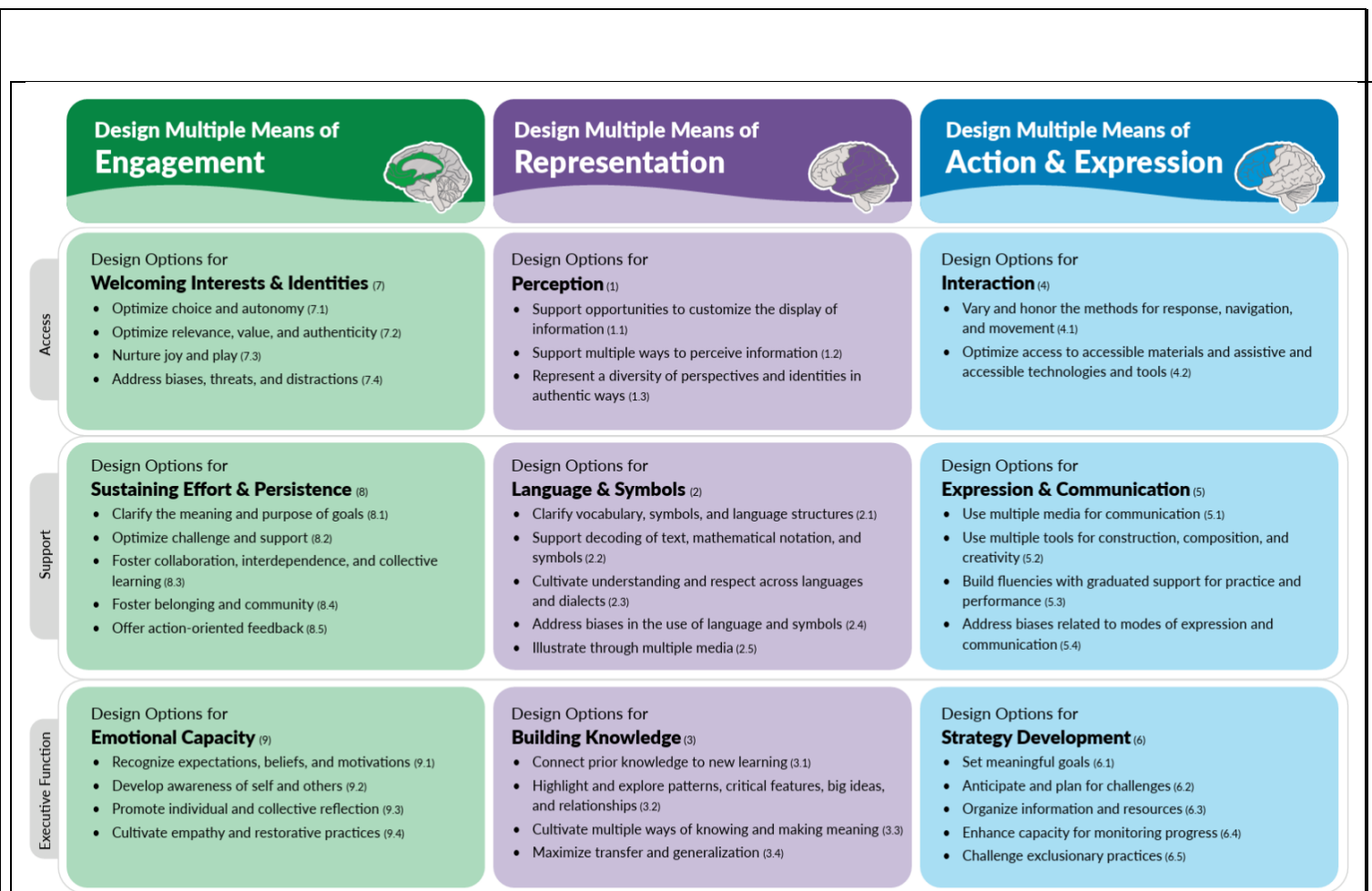
Introduction

A review of assessment outcomes on the **Certificate in Process Validation for Medical Device Manufacturing** micro-credential programme identified an issue where some learners ran out of time when completing written assignments.

While learners demonstrated appropriate subject knowledge and competence, analysis indicated that challenges related primarily to task initiation, pacing and uncertainty regarding expectations rather than academic ability. This prompted a structured review of assessment design as part of ongoing quality enhancement activity.

This review took place within a broader institutional commitment to Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Completion of the *The Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching and Learning (AHEAD & UCD Access & Lifelong Learning)* is mandatory for all SQT Tutors, ensuring a shared baseline understanding of inclusive teaching and assessment practice. In addition, UDL principles are embedded within institutional policy and reinforced through the Tutor Community of Practice.

The UDL badge training directly informed the reflective exercise that led to the enhancements described below.

Figure 1: UDL Cast Framework¹

Identified Challenge

Analysis of learner feedback and teaching observations highlighted several contributing factors:

- Perfectionism-driven delay, particularly in risk identification tasks
- Difficulty initiating complex assessment components
- Lack of structured pacing supports across the semester
- Accumulation of workload toward final deadlines

The challenge was not to modify standards, but to redesign assessment supports in a way that maintained academic integrity while strengthening learner capacity to manage workload and expectations.

Interventions Implemented

Using the UDL framework, particularly Guideline 6 (Executive Functions), the programme team introduced four targeted enhancements as follows:

1. Clarifying Expectations to Address Hidden Barriers

Learners were asked early in the assignment phase to identify anticipated difficulties. A consistent concern related to how to determine whether “100% of risks” had been identified in the risk assessment task. Clarifying that academic expectations differ from real-world industry standards reduced anxiety and supported earlier task initiation. This intervention addressed planning and strategy development, a key executive function skill.

2. Visual Scaffolding for Complex Assessment Components

Two sections, Design Qualification (DQ) and Preliminary Hazard Analysis (PHA) were identified as difficult to begin. Structured infographics were introduced to visually organise the required steps and clarify sequencing. These tools reduced cognitive load and improved clarity without altering assessment standards.

3. Introducing Interim Milestones

Data showed that learners who ultimately ran out of time had fallen behind well before the final submission date.

Assignments were restructured into staged components with interim deadlines. These milestones were:

- Communicated during teaching sessions
- Embedded in course materials
- Uploaded to the Moodle VLE
- Supported by reminder emails

This approach strengthened goal-setting and progress monitoring.

4. Aligning Delivery Structure with Assessment Progression

The course timetable was revised to distribute contact sessions more evenly requiring staged completion prior to later teaching sessions. This reduced workload compression and improved pacing.

¹ CAST (2024). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 3.0 [graphic organizer]. Lynnfield, MA: Author.

Impact and Ongoing Enhancement

Although full longitudinal data is still being gathered, early qualitative feedback indicates:

- Improved clarity regarding expectations
- Reduced learner anxiety
- Earlier engagement with assessment tasks
- Improved pacing across the semester

Future programme iterations will compare submission timing and completion rates with previous cohorts to assess measurable impact.

Conclusion

This case study illustrates how institution-wide commitment to Universal Design for Learning can translate into targeted, programme-level quality enhancement.

Mandatory completion of the *Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching and Learning*, alignment with institutional UDL policy and reinforcement through the Tutor Community of Practice created the conditions for reflective, research-informed improvement.

By focusing on executive function supports rather than content modification, the programme maintained academic standards while removing unnecessary barriers to success.

The initiative demonstrates how structured use of the CAST UDL framework can support proactive inclusive design, strengthen assessment completion rates, and embed continuous quality enhancement within teaching, learning and assessment practice.