

VECAP Position Paper on Universal Design for Career Assessment and Vocational Evaluation

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Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) endorse the incorporation of universal design for learning (UDL) tenets, principles, and practices in career assessment and vocational evaluation. VECAP advocates for the application of universal design principles in vocational evaluation and career assessment to expand and enhance best practices and to seek social justice for consumers and participants.

Universal design for learning (UDL) is defined by the [Center for Applied Special Technology \(CAST\)](#) (Rose & Meyer, 2002) as an approach that embodies the principles of universal design and applies them to instruction and assessment. This requires that all assessments “be designed from the beginning to be accessible and valid with respect to the widest possible range” of individuals (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 2005). A UDL approach encourages the use of multiple techniques and tools that are accessible and appropriate for individuals from varied backgrounds, learner styles, and abilities—and eliminates barriers to full engagement, learning and discovery in vocational evaluation and career assessment. Three UDL tenets guide effective practices that advance fairness and equity (Rose & Meyer, 2002):

1. ***Provide multiple means of representation to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge*** (e.g., instructions for work performances and methods, such as work samples, standardized inventories, situational assessments are available in a variety of formats).
2. ***Provide multiple means of expression, to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know*** (e.g., individuals may use hands-on performances, oral, written, graphic, video, or computer-generated communication as well as American Sign Language).
3. ***Provide multiple means of engagement, to tap into learner’s interests, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation*** (e.g., individuals may watch, listen, use their hands and bodies as well as digital platforms in the assessment process and shall help guide the process by selecting areas of interest or curiosity).

By following these tenets, UDL facilitates access to and participation by all who wish to engage in vocational evaluation and career assessment services. Engagement indicates that they will help guide, plan, and participate fully.

Vocational evaluation and career assessment processes that include universal design and UDL support equity and inclusive practices and improve individual success. Integrating an array of techniques, a variety of tools, and multiple representations of material in digital formats represents a universally designed approach. Applying UDL principles to assessment enables practitioners to offer processes that are flexible, accessible and appropriate. Research of brain-based learning CAST, 2006; Rose & Meyer, 2000, 2003) multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999),

varied learning style preferences, and diverse learner approaches supports the need to reach out to assessment participants using UDL approaches. As a result, subsequent career planning and programming can be individualized and customized to gain maximum benefit for participants.

Previously, VECAP endorsed the definition of vocational evaluation and assessment as articulated by The Interdisciplinary Council on Vocational Evaluation and Assessment (Smith, Lombard, Neubert, Leconte, Rothenbacher, & Sitlington, 1994), which follows. Integration of UDL in evaluation and assessment processes is compatible with and guided by this definition.

Vocational evaluation and assessment is a professional discipline which utilizes a systematic appraisal process to identify an individual's vocational potential. Consumers range from school-aged youth to older adults who are making career decisions or vocational transitions. The vocational evaluation and assessment professional provides services to measure, observe, and document an individual's interests, values, temperaments, work-related behaviors, aptitudes, skills, physical capacities, learning style and training needs. The foundation of vocational evaluation and assessment is that all human assessment should be holistic and humanistic. A holistic approach encompasses issues of diversity, all relevant attributes of the individual, his/her existing or potential environments (ecologies), and the interactions between the individual and the environments. A humanistic approach to vocational evaluation and assessment requires consumer involvement, and processes that are designed and implemented to benefit the individual served, with an emphasis on individual capabilities rather than disability. Further, the environment should fit the individual rather than the individual adjusting to fit the vocational environment (1994, p.1)

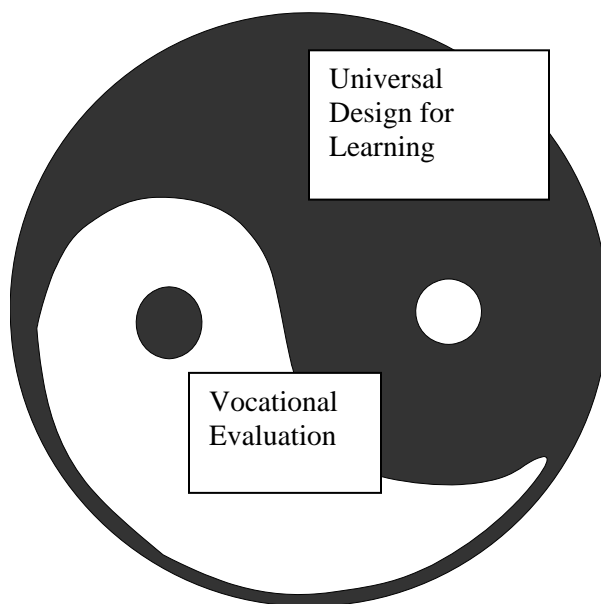
Efforts to provide holistic and humanistic assessment services require the integration of UDL from the onset of any assessment process. By doing so, professionals facilitate a third principle of career assessment and vocational evaluation (Smith, et al, 1994)—that services foster human growth (i.e., enhanced maturity, improved self-esteem, advanced self-determination, and enhanced personal responsibility) and career development.

Benefits of Including UDL in Career Assessment and Vocational Evaluation Practices

Benefits of UDL will be realized by participants in services as well as by professionals. Including UDL in vocational evaluation and career assessment can

- Provide common language and definitions regarding universal design as applied to career assessment practices that might also extend to education, training, and/or employment endeavors.
- Promote the necessity of universally-designed assessment practices that value inclusion and diversity.
- Encourage the creation of quality assurance in practice and outcome that embraces the principles of universal design for instruction, learning, and performance.
- Promote education and advocacy for vocational evaluation and career assessment as practices that use opportunities for multiple opportunities to express, explore, and demonstrate career preferences, needs, strengths, capabilities, and goals.

- Allow participants opportunities to demonstrate optimal learning, discovery, and performance preferences and needs during assessment processes.
- Offer opportunities to try out various methods and techniques of representation, expression, and engagement to determine which are most effective.
- Equip individuals with knowledge about themselves—how they learn, what works to support learning, and how to engage in life-long learning.
- Reduce barriers to achieving desired education, training, and employment.



Guiding Principles for Including UDL in Career Assessment and Vocational Evaluation

To provide equity and fairness, career assessment and vocational evaluation processes that integrate universal design for learning and assessment are aligned with the following principles. Vocational evaluation and career assessment should be

- designed to be useful and accessible for all. Programs use accessible web-based assessments, digital media, and other mechanisms to assess, including dexterity tests, work samples, and community-based methods.
- fashioned to accommodate a wide range of abilities and offer a choice of methods and techniques. Practitioners use a variety of instructional methods and assessment approaches delivered within a variety of settings.
- created to be straightforward and predictable. Practitioners utilize actual artifacts and samples that illustrate expectations. Consumers are encouraged to follow their own style of learning and performing while satisfying criteria for success.
- communicated effectively regardless of the individual's sensory abilities. Multiple representations are provided that include digital materials, models, and hands-on demonstrations.
- designed to anticipate variation in student learning—and if repeated enough—performance. Approaches include structured directions, work sampling, community-

based assessment in finite steps, adjustable spans of time, and use a multiple formats (e.g., text to speech, captioning) and a variety of methods to achieve results.

- designed to minimize physical effort for maximum learning. Technologies such as word processors, hand-held computers, audio and video players, or IPODS are readily available for use.
- designed for appropriate reach and approach. UDL should reduce the need for modifications, accommodations and assistive technologies (AT), although they are considered throughout the process and can be applied if interaction between the person and environments require that.
- customized to promote interaction and a participation in a community of learners with the participant being the primary learner. Practitioners continuously ask questions and provide feedback—ask what works and what does not, co-plan individualized evaluation plans, daily activities and co-develop recommendations.
- designed to be welcoming and inclusive. Practitioners begin by explaining what will happen, communicate in a medium comfortable to the individual, and provide safe environments.
- designed to provide results that are communicated in multiple ways that can be accessed and understood by the individual and others who need to be informed.
- designed to include recommendations in results about future universally-designed learning, assessment, and employment that will promote success in educational, career, vocational, and employment endeavors.

Career assessment and vocational evaluation must be tailored to accommodate and meet anyone's needs. To provide anything less than universally-designed assessment and evaluation processes undermines equity, fairness, and success for individuals who seek to realize dreams and achieve educational, vocational, and employment success

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