



**D & I QUICK TIPS**  
USEFUL REFERENCES IN THE  
PROMOTION OF DIVERSITY &  
INCLUSION  
**EQUITY ONLINE**

Inequities  
are  
virtual,  
too.

# Equity in an Online Environment

## OVERVIEW

Many forms of remote teaching, learning, and working have become prevalent in the past few years. 2020 has seen a shift to virtual spaces as the dominant setting for educational environments. This shift has revealed striking discrepancies in access and functionality for many people across the world. When computers and the internet become necessities in this way, it intensifies obstacles for individuals and families who already find it difficult to afford or navigate digital settings.

Impediments to success exist in the form of varying risk factors, including but not limited to: difficulties managing work, school, and family-life balance; limited financial resources (e.g., households with only one computer and conflicting schedules); basic needs insecurities; vulnerable mental and physical well-being; and fatigue. The result is an [achievement gap](#) between privileged and vulnerable students. For staff and other individuals, these risk factors can result in [poor mental health](#), or loss of employment and other livelihoods.

## EQUITY ONLINE SHOULD CENTER ON ACCESS AND CULTURE

Vulnerable social groups, underserved individuals of color, English learners, and disabled individuals tend to be the populations most affected by barriers to online success. To mitigate their challenges, it is important that institutions encourage an equity-minded approach to remote work. This begins with incorporating systems that level the field for all students, staff, and faculty.

- Use accessibility tools and Universal Design for Learning practices to develop courses and websites that are easier for all individuals to navigate. A user-friendly system benefits all teachers and learners, and not just those who have accommodations.
- Actively address at each level of online service common challenges for underrepresented groups: microaggressions, structural racism, limited access to resources, feelings of invisibility, and poor cultural representation. When students, staff, and faculty work together to diminish biases and promote justice, the online environment becomes a setting in which all members of a campus or community may thrive.

## Equity-Minded Practices for Remote Environments

### Tips for Students

#### ADVOCACY

##### Advocate for self and others.

- Explore volunteer options within the greater online community, such as working with others who don't have the same access (e.g., [Be My Eyes](#))
- Practice advocacy through [email and letter writing](#) to promote change within a cause or issue that you support.
- Use [social media](#) to share your stories and spread awareness on issues that you are passionate about.

#### DIALOGUE

##### Create an open dialogue with peers and classmates to ensure everyone is comfortable communicating and sharing.

- Engage in practices that prevent [video-classism](#) within your virtual spaces. Re-evaluate any questions, comments, or assumptions that place judgment on your classmates' home lives.
- Approach sensitive conversations with empathy, [emotional literacy](#) (self-awareness), and consequential thinking (discernment) to allow clear communication around differences.

#### CONSIDERATION

##### Redirect biased thoughts and behaviors.

- Be aware of your own [implicit biases](#); explore the concept of [microaggressions](#); become aware of ways that you may perpetuate stereotypes.
- Challenge yourself and others to identify underlying beliefs and misconceptions behind [insensitive speech](#).
- Practice mindfulness when engaging in group work. For example, avoid tokenizing teammates based on their racial or cultural group.

# Equity in an Online Environment

## Tips for Faculty

### ACCESSIBILITY

#### **Incorporate accessibility tools with your online material.**

- Try the accessibility checker for your text in Brightspace. Also incorporate Accessibility templates ([Microsoft](#) – [Adobe](#))
- ‘Alt tagging’ images: Ensure that all images you share have alternative text, so that any person using a screen reader is able to know what the images on the page represent.
- Always include closed captioning for videos. Most platforms have an auto-captioning function.

### UNIVERSAL DESIGN

#### **Practice Universal Design for Learning.**

- Provide multiple means of Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression.
- Design assignments based on multiple modalities of learning. Create several assignments with the option of varying mediums, such as research papers, oral performance(s), artwork, and collaborative work.
- Explore a student-centered [course design](#).

### CULTURAL HUMILITY

#### **Implement Culturally Responsive Teaching with Equity-Mindedness.**

- PowerPoint presentations, books, and images, etc. should be culturally relevant and racially salient.
- Establish community norms, encourage sharing perspectives, and incorporate collaborative learning within your course. Humanize the online experience with video, voice, and empathetic interaction.
- Embrace discourse around race, gender, sexuality, religion, and other concepts. Be sure to address microaggressions.
- Be intentional about [inclusion](#): Implement high standards for student learning and achievement with the collective body in mind. Direct your students to assistive learning materials and programming, and explore [open educational resources](#) (OER) that are relevant to your courses.

## Tips for Staff & Administration

### WEBSITE

#### **Examine your department website for inclusivity, accessibility, and representation.**

- Ensure your webpage content and images reflect a range of racial/ethnic identities and experiences. Communicate program details and institutional policies in clear and approachable ways. Counter the common presentation of “whiteness” as the norm.
- Conduct a [Web Scan for Equity](#).

### COMMUNITY

#### **Find ways to engage the greater community and advocate for others.**

- Connect with students to learn ways to offer mentorship and sponsorship to aid in their success outside of the classroom (e.g., connecting with relevant resources or supporting student-led organizations)
- [Engage the L.A. community](#). Discover new vendors, donors, volunteer organizations, and coalitions whose services may augment the offerings of your department.

### VIRTUAL OFFICE

#### **Evaluate your virtual office environment.**

- Consider what shift hours work best for your team members while at home. Is it feasible for some team members to work weekends or off-hours if needs be?
- Individuals vary in management of external stressors (i.e., home life, Zoom fatigue, COVID-19 disruptions, emotional tax of racial trauma and injustice, etc.). Explore measures that support employees' mental and physical health needs. How has your office utilized the [community check-in](#) data?
- How has your office dealt with furloughed team members – in terms of moral support, advocacy, and redistribution of work?

# **Equity Online: Terms to Know**

**Accessible Technologies** - (typically web) technologies designed for people with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. This is often used interchangeably with assistive technologies, but it is not the same. Accessible technology has been designed to be accessed by all users.

**Accessibility** - The degree to which a service, device, environment, or product is available to and usable by people from a variety of backgrounds, abilities and learning styles.

**Accommodation** - modifications or adjustments made to a work or learning environment that enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of the job or academic program.

**Achievement gap** - describes a significant difference in academic outcomes or educational attainment between diverse groups of students. Intrinsic factors may include race, income and/or gender.

**Proactive Design** - is a process of making content accessible from the beginning for all users.

**Reactive Design** - is a process of making accommodations on an as-needed basis.

LMU Information & Technology Services - Brightspace Course: Diversity & Inclusion + Tech = Engaging Students Online. Contact workshop instructor Michelle Yeung for access: [Michelle.Yeung@lmu.edu](mailto:Michelle.Yeung@lmu.edu)



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