Using Universal Design to Reduce Barriers for Remote Learners with Disabilities

Questions to consider
1. Identify a task? What are students meant to demonstrate by completing the task?
2. What are the barriers students with disabilities are likely to face when completing the task?
3. What are all the other possibilities for demonstrating that skill or understanding ?
4. What are the implications of those possibilities? How might they support all students?

Universal Design: Notes Assistance

1. Identify a task. What are students meant to demonstrate by completing the task?

   Example: The need to take notes as a means to engage with the content of a class lecture, reading or discussion.

2. What are the barriers students with disabilities are likely to face when completing this task?

   -Various processing disorders, attention related symptoms or management of symptoms related to a chronic or mental health condition can all impact a student's ability to listen, decipher, organize and write down key understandings at the same rate as a lecture is given.
   -New formats used in remote learning may prevent students from being able to access the content.
   -Lack of breaks in between content or visuals can prevent students from being able to absorb the information and ask pertinent questions.

3. What are all of the other possibilities for demonstrating that skill or understanding?

   - Create videos of your lectures to allow students to review them more than once.
   - Break up your lecture into shorter 5- 10 minute videos to encourage think breaks.
   - Consider using Otter when holding synchronous meetings as this will produce notes of your lecture that can then be shared with the class: https://otter.ai/login
   - Create options for engaging with the key concepts from requiring small group discussions vis google hangouts or pairing students (as part of participation) to discuss the concepts and relay their thoughts via Moodle.
   - Offer (or require) individual check-ins particularly during the first weeks of class to review understandings and get a sense of particular barriers they may be facing.

4. What are the implications for those alternatives? How might they support all students?

    - Making lectures available online can support students without disabilities who are unfamiliar with remote learning, have difficulties with internet connections and/or are managing personal issues.
   - By creating shorter videos, or allowing them to be viewed later, students can hone their note taking skills.
   - Focusing more on student engagement with rather than delivery of content, can simultaneously create more opportunities for students to stay engaged with the class and each other.
   - Securing other content to act as a support can be a valuable tool for future classes and tutors.