

Virtual Learning Platform

Guideline for Developing a GESI Responsive eLearning Platform

Content Development

Available course materials and content are fairly inclusive (address gender and special needs), however, in the process of transferring or compiling content for the VLP including identifying additional resources, it will be important for developers to consider the following:

1. All content should take into consideration the social, linguistic, ability and cultural context diversity of learners. *See examples below.*
2. Differentiation approaches should be adopted according to the needs of vulnerable groups including: females and those with special education needs. Examples cited should be sensitive to gender and ability differences. *See examples below*
3. Content should have contextually relevant examples (Ghanaian) to support learning and appreciation of content.
4. TLMs /resources/ reference materials must be geared at meeting the unique social, cultural and linguistic diversity of learners. *See examples below*

Accessibility of the Learning Platform

- a. Login – Features for login must be easily accessible to users with varied forms of abilities
- b. Navigation features must be less complicated (user friendly for all users)
- c. Images and illustrations displayed on the site should be reflective of all personalities in society (gender, persons with all abilities etc)
- d. Easy access and application to learning activities, ie videos, audios, debates etc
- e. What level of adoptive or assistive learning technologies can be available? Eg, text-to-speech features, sign language interpretation etc. This is bearing in mind cost and affordability. Software like JAWS may be expensive but are there free software or apps that can serve this purpose?
- f. Microsite features should allow for page/ text enlargement for easy access to partially blind users.
- g. User instructions should be as clear and concise as possible.
- h. Use formatting tools in text editor, such as heads and subheads, to enable screen readers. This is a tool to help blind and partially sighted students read
- i. Pictures, graphs, and formulas need alternate text descriptions (again, for screen readers).
- j. Videos should be captioned or a written transcript provided

List of GESI Material for Upload on the relevant platforms

- National GESI Strategic Framework
- Summarized version of the GESI Framework
- PowerPoint Presentation with audio on the GESI Framework
- CoE GESI Action Plan Template
- NCTE Sexual Harassment Policy

Examples/ Prompters for GESI Responsive eLearning Content Development

It is important to note that all materials developed or adapted for teaching and learning on virtual platforms should be GESI responsive.

One step towards achieving GESI responsiveness in learning content, is to try answering the following questions?

- *How does GESI apply and intersect with the subject content, be it social studies, math, language arts, science, etc.?*
- *Are there any possible barriers/biases to learning/participating in this subject content?*
- *Does the content/materials support student's interaction and consider different learners?*
- *Does the content/material contain gender stereotypes? If so, what techniques can be used to address them?*

See below some examples for addressing GESI issues in eLearning content development:

- 1. Language/Linguistics:** Use language that does not reinforce negative gender stereotypes. Strive to use both gender pronouns (s/he; he or she; his or hers) when citing examples and ensure all types of individuals are represented in examples with respect and dignity. This includes persons with different levels of abilities.

Example 1: Instead of *“When everyone contributes his ideas, the discussion will be a success”*.

It may read: *“When everyone contributes his or her ideas, the discussion will be a success”*.

Example 2: Instead of *“Judge a man by the work of his hands”*.

It may read: *“Judge a person by the work of their hands”*.

Example 3: Instead of: *“To talk is womanly and to work is manly”*.

It may read: *“Both men and women should walk their talk”*.

- 2. Social Background and Orientation:** Content must reflect the diversity of ALL learners and should not reinforce false gender assumptions or stereotypes:

For example: *“Girls are bad at maths and science”. “Girls are shy and timid”. “Persons with disability are aggressive”. “Girls are good in English and Home Economics”. “Science is a boys' field”*.

Content and activities should consider differences in the learning needs of learners based on their different social backgrounds and learning styles. It will therefore be important to use examples that makes mention of minority groups and not just dominant groups, i.e. consider examples making references to the accomplishments of persons with different abilities, persons of different ethnicity and religion, and persons from poor background.

- 3. GESI Responsive TLMs/TLRs:** Materials and resources should be designed to promote gender equality and social inclusion.

In the design or selection of *illustrations, photos and other visual materials*, please ask yourself the following questions;

- *Are there equal number of males and females represented in the picture/illustrations?*
- *Are there images depicting both men and women actively engaged in the various fields and not just watching or assisting?*
- *Are boys/men and girls/women depicted doing a variety of tasks and non-traditional gender norms in the illustrations (for example, they show boy cleaning or caregiving and girls driving a truck or working as a doctor?)*
- *Are there any incidents of gender stereotyping or discrimination? If there are, material should be replaced or used as a basis for engendering a discussion.*

**Please use formatting tools in text editor, such as heads and subheads, to enable screen readers. This is a tool to help blind and partially sighted students read.*

In the *drafting or selection of text*, please ask yourself the following;

- Are both pronouns of boys and girls mentioned in the text? What is the percentage for each gender?
- Does the text include GESI sensitive words and phrases such as “*firefighter*” instead of “*fireman,*” or “*flight attendant*” rather than “*air hostess*”?
- Does the text provide empowering examples, stories and roles that represent both girls and boys? For example, feature boys as the heroes and girls as helpless or needing to be rescued. Content developers can bring in discussion questions that ask learners to reflect on a time they helped someone and a time they were helped.
- Does the text provide relevant and real-life examples?
- Are there any elements of bias in the text that favour one gender over the other?

The idea is to ensure that visuals and text do challenge traditional gender roles and status quo, allowing for both girls and boys to feel encouraged and challenged to be the best they can.

- 4. Diversity of Learners.** Developers are encouraged to use interactive tools that solicits the knowledge and critical reflection of all learners about issues that are relevant to their lives. Statements such as “*Girls have low self-esteem*” or “*Persons with disability are lazy*” or “*Men cannot take care of others not even themselves*” should be reversed into positive impacts instead. The pedagogy should enable all pupils in the class to be full members of the class, to respect each other, to learn, to achieve fulfil their potential.

5. Ask effective questions. Effective differentiated questions generate critical thinking and help students to make meaning of an experience, develop emotional intelligence or apply what they've learned to the real world. Below are some responsive questioning techniques:

- **Open-ended questions.** To draw out thoughts and ideas. For example, any variation of “Why? What? When? Where? Who? and How?”
- **Observation questions.** To help learners to perceive the world more deeply. For example, “What do you see/hear?”; “What effects have you noticed in people/environment?”; “What information do you trust?”; “What do you see that concerns you?”
- **Analysis questions:** To ask further questions that help students think deeper; make connections or more clearly articulate their thoughts. For example, “What do you think are the causes of...?”; “What is the relationship between X and Y?”; “What are the main economic/cultural/political/social structures that affect this situation?”; “What is the meaning of this in your community?”; “How does this impact men and women differently?”

Source: Creative Action Institute.