Describing the Peralta Equity Rubric

If you teach college courses in any format—face-to-face, hybrid or online—you probably have heard about or worked on improving course quality, course accessibility, or both. But what about course equity? At its core, *equity* is defined as "freedom from bias" (Equity, n.d.). In the Distance Education context, Peralta uses the term equity to mean "**freedom from biases, assumptions and institutional barriers that negatively impact online learners' motivations, opportunities, or accomplishments**." The table below outlines the research-based equity issues that a) affect online learners and b) form the basis of Peralta's Equity Rubric (download the rubric from http://web.peralta.edu/de/equity).

Peralta Equity Rubric Criteria	Rationale for the Rubric Criteria	How You Can Start Addressing This Equity Issue
E1: Technology	Covid-19 amplified existing technology access issues. We cannot assume that all college students a) have access to the device(s) and Internet connectivity they need to successfully complete college courses and b) know how to use each technology properly.	List each technology required to complete an online course successfully; suggest alternatives for students with technology impediments or challenges; clarify how using each technology supports learning; and provide clear pathways for students to get assistance.
E2: Student Resources and Support	Common assumptions state that students know where to go for help, and will do so when they need it. Finding the right resources and services is even harder when campuses are closed. Further, many colleges are still working toward offering services, resources, and support at a distance.	Highlight how online services support student wellness and success, such as a) general assistance, b) online academic support, c) technology help, d) health and well-being resources, e) resources for students with disabilities. Ask students to access relevant resources or services as a part of coursework.
E3: Universal Design for Learning	One pedagogical assumption is that all learners can follow the same pathway to succeed in a given course. That pathway may involve asking all students to review all course content in just one format, or to show what they have learned in the same way.	Align course content and activities with the three core Universal Design for Learning principles—multiple means of a) representation, b) action & expression, and c) engagement (see cast.org for more details).
E4: Diversity and Inclusion	It is also possible to assume that students automatically know or believe that all instructors value diverse ideas and perspectives.	Create a diversity and inclusion statement for your course syllabus. Demonstrate that diverse identities, backgrounds and cultures are valued by asking students to analyze a) course content from multiple perspectives or b) how diversity fosters better learning.

E5: Images and Representation	Teachers may select textbooks and create lecture presentations without considering image and representation bias. In other words, images and media can portray different groups of people unequally—e.g., according to gender, ethnicity, age, or some other factor. That same media can also promote stereotypes or inaccuracies about your students.	Find images and media that represent the diversity of the students at your institution. Encourage students to analyze how specific groups are represented in images and media related to course topics.
E6: Human Bias	Teachers facilitate numerous interactions with and among students throughout a course. However, different biases like unconscious bias and human interaction bias can emerge, lowering students' willingness to participate in class activities or to complete the class at all.	Start identifying potential human biases that may impact online students' motivation and persistence, both in the course and in the discipline. Then begin crafting strategies for managing those biases and even asking students to discuss their impact.
E7: Content Meaning	Each student faces unique challenges in connecting their own lives and futures to course content in textbooks, lectures, test bank questions, and more. Course materials also may unknowingly exhibit a cultural bias by using descriptions, examples, and other language that represent only one (dominant) cultural background.	Create activities that require students to connect the course topics and course materials to different backgrounds, cultures and identities—their own and those of others.
E8: Connection and Belonging	Another potential assumption is that students know or believe that the instructor a) cares about their success and b) wants them to participate. In actuality, online learners often feel alienated or alone, and some have experienced discouraging or negative online learning environments.	Craft both text and video messages that communicate you care about each student's participation and success in your classes. Create course activities that go beyond simple requirements like "reply to two people" and deepen connections among your students. Encourage students to connect to your institution and, if applicable, your discipline.

References

Equity [Def. 1a]. (n.d.). *Merriam-Webster Online*. In Merriam-Webster. Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/equity