

## **Procedures and Guidelines on Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

### **May 15th, 2019**

The purpose of these procedures and guidelines is to support the implementation of the policy on *Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*, as approved by the Senate. In the event of a discrepancy between the policy and these guidelines, the policy will apply.

The provision of academic accommodations is a shared responsibility between the University and the student requesting accommodation.

The University has a responsibility to:

- Provide reasonable accommodations, up to the point of undue hardship, to an otherwise qualified student with a disability; and
- Maintain confidentiality of the information obtained.

### **Legal Framework**

The guidelines shall conform to the provisions of:

- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and
- The Prince Edward Island Human Rights Act.

### **DEFINITIONS**

The following definitions shall apply in these Procedures and Guidelines:

**Academic Integrity** – the essential academic requirements of a course or program which includes, but is not limited to, the knowledge and skills which are necessary to meet the learning objectives.

**Disability** – as stated in the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities policy, the term disability shall be defined as a functional limitation caused by a long-term or recurring physical, sensory, mental, psychiatric or learning impairment that restricts the ability of the person to perform the daily activities necessary to participate in learning or daily living at UPEI.

**Examinations** - include but are not limited to midterms, tests, quizzes, lab examinations or final examinations.

**Undue Hardship** - although undue hardship must be considered in the context of each individual case, a finding of undue hardship could be supported in the following circumstances:

1. The financial cost is such that the operation of the University and/or its programs would be fundamentally diminished, or a program or service would cease to exist due to the financial burden of the accommodation;

2. There is a risk to public safety or a substantial risk of personal injury to the student with a disability;
3. The accommodation unreasonably impedes the ability of other students to pursue academic studies; or
4. When accommodation alternatives would result either in lowering academic standards or requiring substantial alteration of essential course or program requirements.

Significant costs related to a requested accommodation shall be considered in the context of the university as a whole, not on the basis of a department, division, faculty, school, or program.

The onus is on the University to prove undue hardship.

## **REGISTRATION WITH ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES**

To receive academic or physical accommodations, students must register with Accessibility Services.

## **DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Students requesting academic accommodations must provide appropriate documentation satisfactory to the University. The assessment must reflect the students' learning needs in a university setting and support the requested accommodation. Specific documentation requirements are as follows:

1. Documentation for students with learning disabilities must include a psychoeducational assessment report that contains a diagnosis of a learning disability. It must be completed and signed by a registered psychologist or a registered psychological associate to support these requests.
2. Documentation to support medical or psychological disabilities must be from a qualified professional and include a statement of the diagnosis and nature of the disability; information on the severity, duration and intensity of the disability; and whether the disability is permanent or temporary.

Documentation will need to be renewed as appropriate to reflect the students' ongoing need for academic accommodations.

### **Documentation must be current**

- As psychoeducational assessment must be within a five-year time period from the date of assessment;
- For returning students whose conditions are stable the original supporting medical documentation will meet requirements;
- When new or returning students functional abilities show significant change, new supporting documentation may be required;

- In certain circumstances, a student will be provided accommodation on a limited basis while obtaining documentation.

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION**

Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the essential educational requirements of an academic course/program as determined by the University.

Academic accommodations may include but are not limited to:

- An adaptation to a component of a program, or alternative forms of evaluation (assigning a term paper instead of an oral presentation to a student with a speech impairment or autism);
- Use of assistive technology in the classroom/laboratory/field (e.g. FM systems worn by course instructor)
- Use of oral and visual language interpreters, educational attendants, and/or note takers in the classroom;
- Use of audio and/or visual recording of lectures;
- Support for examinations including extra time, a distraction-reduced environment, and use of a computer, adaptive software and a word processor;
- Special seating or accessible tables; or
- Adjustments to lighting.

## **PROVISION OF ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION**

Accessibility Services support students who have documented visible, invisible, and/or temporary disabilities.

Accommodations and Services include:

- Campus accessibility
- Confidential consultations
- Test, exam and classroom accommodations
- Assistance with grants
- Assistance with adaptive technology
- Note taking, tutoring, mentoring
- Use of a scribe or oral testing
- Learning -strategy support
- Assistance with self-advocacy
- Transition planning with high schools and families
- Textbook to audio/pdf

**The Human Rights Guidelines for Accommodating Post-Secondary Students (May 2017) state that:**

Accommodation does not mean that education providers are required to lower their academic standards. On the contrary, students with disabilities are expected to develop the same essential skills as their classmates. The manner in which those skills are developed may differ however if a certain course requirement poses particular difficulty for students with disabilities, the education provider should examine that requirement and determine whether it is truly necessary to meet the educational objectives of the program and whether it would be possible to waive or modify the requirement without affecting those objectives.

Ultimately, an education provider should develop curriculum with an eye toward inclusion. This process may include putting course materials online, ensuring that they are available in alternate format from the outset or implementing universal design principles. By designing the program in ways that permit students with disabilities to fully participate, an education provider cannot only promote an inclusive educational environment but may also make the accommodation process smoother for both the provider and the students. The education provider should also provide guidance to its instructors and support staff on working with students with disabilities to provide an environment that is welcoming, inclusive, and free from discrimination.

Recommendations from the students' documentation may necessitate the need for academic accommodations on a case-by-case basis and collaboration between the course instructor, the student, Accessibility Services will be required. These include requests for:

- Advanced provision of reading lists, class notes and other course materials (e.g. accessible PDFs);
- Alternate scheduling for the completion of course, project, thesis work, or examinations, including competency examinations;
- Waving the participation requirement by re-waiting other evaluation methodology, or by the provision of an alternative assignment;
- Extensions to incompletes.

**THE REGISTRATION PROCESS FOR ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES**

- The Registrar's office will provide Accessibility Services information on students with disabilities who self declare upon admission so accommodation needs can be arranged prior to starting university.
- Students will make appointments directly or will be referred through the year. Therefore, intake is a continuous process.
- Documentation will be reviewed and individualized accommodation plans will be developed.
- When necessary, referrals will be made and may include psychological assessments, academic or health-related supports, counselling, tutoring, mentoring, learning strategist, educational attendants or external services.

- Once a student registers with Accessibility Services, they are required to submit their [Student Accommodation Form](#) to their case manager. Once received, an email will be sent to each instructor/professor outlining approved classroom and exam accommodation needs.
- It is important to know that the student is not required to disclose their disability, nor should the course instructor request this of the student. The medical documentation has been reviewed and verified by the Accessibility Services coordinator. Students are encouraged to identify themselves to the course instructor and discuss their individual learning needs early in the term.

## **EXAM ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students registered with Accessibility Services (with supporting medical documentation) require some form of exam accommodation (e.g. distraction-reduced environment, additional time, adaptive technology, word processor, stand up desk, low lighting). Often this results in the exam being written with Accessibility Services at one of our two testing locations - Dalton Hall room 111 and Robertson Library room 304.

### **Student and proctor responsibilities**

- Students are required to schedule each of their tests and exams on Access Deck at least 72 business hours prior to each test or exam.
- Students are encouraged to schedule tests and exams as soon as they are available or made aware.
- Students are required to schedule their final exams with Accessibility Services as soon as the final exam schedule is released. The specific deadline will be sent by email.
- Approximately three days prior to the test or exam, Accessibility Services will contact the instructor/professor and arrange for the test or exam to be delivered either in person or electronically to Accessibility Services at least one business day prior to the test or exam time.
- Once the student arrives for an exam, the proctor will escort the student to an exam room and provide them with the exam.
- If a student arrives more than 30 minutes late, based on [Regulation 13 - Examination Regulations](#), they may not be able to write their exam.
- Exams taken at Accessibility Services are carefully invigilated. All materials taken into the exam rooms, such as pencil cases, are checked. Students are also regularly checked upon during the exam. All personal belongings of the student including all electronic devices are kept with the exam proctor.
- After the exam is completed it is secured under lock and key.
- An Accessibility Services staff member will deliver exams back to their departments at least once a week. Someone must be available in the department to sign for the exam. If not, it will be returned to Dalton Hall 111 for pick up. Completed exams can be picked up from Dalton Hall 111 Monday to Friday 8:00 am - 4:00 pm the day after the exam is written.

## **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

### **Accommodation Appeals**

If consensus cannot be reached between the student, instructor, and designate of Accessibility Services on a request for accommodation, the following process for dispute resolution will be followed:

- Appeals of decisions on academic matters other than grades may be made through the Registrar to the Senate Academic and Student Discipline Appeals Committee.
- An appeal must be made in writing, including all supporting documentation, and be submitted within 15 business days of the date of the decision.
- All decisions of the committee shall be final and binding, subject to a student's right to appeal to the Board of Governors pursuant to the University Act.

### **Academic Appeals**

The Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities states that students have the right to appeal under [Regulation 12 - Academic Appeals](#).

The Department of Student Affairs and Accessibility Services are available for consultations regarding various ways and options available to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to contact us with any questions related to the accommodation practices, student services, and supports offered at the University of Prince Edward Island