

Concussions: Academic Issues

Information for faculty and teaching assistants from Student Health Services (SHS)

1. A concussion is a biomechanical head injury that often causes cognitive side effects, such as impaired concentration, memory, and processing speed.
2. A lot of the literature on concussions is focused on sport concussions and "return to play issues," but for students the "return to learn" is usually the top priority.
3. Most students with concussions will recover in a few weeks, so for most it is a temporary medical condition. For short term temporary medical conditions (anticipated to last 2 to 3 weeks), students are encouraged to discuss the situation with their professors/instructors, who will advise the student of the appropriate university or departmental policy and make individual accommodations. However, if concussion symptoms persist and recovery is delayed, Student Accessibility Services can assist with providing accommodations, academic supports and liaison with the medical team to assist with a return to studies plan. Every student responds to a concussion differently, so most will need an individualized approach to returning to the rigors of academic life. The following is meant as a guide to what might be required to accommodate their return.
4. The initial stage in treating a concussion is complete rest, mental and physical. At this stage the student will not be in class and will not be doing any academic work. "Screen time" (i.e. computers, tablets, television, and smartphones) is restricted, so communication will be limited at first.
5. When symptoms have diminished to the point where the physician has said the student can start to resume activities, the student should be contacting you to arrange their re-integration to the learning environment.
6. **The initial return to the classroom is on a trial basis. For approximately one week, the student should not be expected to take notes or participate in any discussions at this stage. The student may need frequent breaks, and may need to be able to leave and return to the classroom, even during a one-hour class. Time spent at school will be limited, so the student will need to assess which classes can be managed at first. The student should not be asked to finish any assignments or complete missed tests or other work at this stage.**
7. If things go well, the expectation is that the student will gradually increase participation in class, be more active in note taking, and start to make up missed work. This is typically over a one-week period and is based on self-reported symptoms. It is common for students to over-estimate their mental recovery, so if the student's performance on assessments is lower than expected, this needs to be considered.
8. If things are not going well, students should be seeking ongoing medical care.
9. It is not uncommon for deadline extensions, test deferrals, and alternate assessments to be required.
10. In cases where a student is unable to complete a course, it may be necessary to apply for a "back-dated withdrawal" or "incomplete."

Medical Verification of Illness Certificates

SHS only provides medical verification of illness certificates for those students seen, assessed and followed at SHS in which case the following applies:

1. Students diagnosed with a concussion at SHS are advised complete rest as above. SHS will notify Gloria Gallagher, Associate Registrar, the student has been seen at SHS and has been diagnosed with a concussion. Gloria will apprise the students' professors of this situation and will let them know medical documentation will follow when the student is ready to return to class. and when their follow-up assessment is scheduled to take place. Students will remain under our care until we believe that they are ready to begin attending class.

2. For students with concussions who were seen and assessed in SHS, rather than multiple medical excuse certificates, we will provide one certificate when the student is able to return to the classroom.
3. For concussions only, our certificate will state that the diagnosis is concussion, the dates when the student was seen, and when the student is returning to the classroom.
4. This initial return is on a trial basis, which is typically of one-week duration. Please refer to points 7 and 8 in the above section.
5. If their return to the learning environment is going well, SHS typically stops seeing them. If the return is not going well, they should be following up at SHS. Further documentation from SHS would be provided in those cases.

If the severity or duration of a concussion results in a student being unable to complete a course SHS will write letters of illness verification and support.

Brock University Student Health Services, Medical Concussion Certificate

To expedite the administration of medical certificates, Brock University requires that the Student Health Services' Medical Certificate be used by a student when a medical condition requires special consideration for any academic activity e.g. missed seminar/lab, assignment extension, examination rescheduling etc. The student and the Student Health Services' staff must complete this certificate.

The completed certificate must be submitted to the Administrative Assistant for the Department/Graduate Program within three working days of the return to class date as noted below, in order to be considered.

The final acceptance of this medical certificate is at the discretion of the course Instructor, Department Chair and/or Graduate Program Director.

Completed by Student Health Services' Medical Staff
(for the student to present to instructors for their return to study)

Student ID: _____

Dates Examined: _____

I hereby certify that Dr. _____ has examined this student and verifies that this student has sustained a concussion on _____. This medical condition is sufficiently severe that it will affect his/her ability to perform academically.

This student was unable to attend any class or do any academic course work effective: _____.

They are returning to class on a trial basis on: _____.

Please see the separate document, " Concussions: Academic Issues " on accommodating students with concussions. During the first week the student is back in class, they will be gradually increasing time spent on academic work and should not be expected to write any examinations or complete any assignments. **If the student is not functioning at normal capacity after one week**, they are expected to follow up at Student Health Services for further assessment and medical documentation.

Further Details:

Medical Staff: _____ Date: _____

Please note the above medical letter and academic course work information has been completed by the medical staff with the permission of the student/patient.

Brock University protects your privacy and your personal information. The personal information requested on this form is collected under the authority of The Brock University Act 1964 and in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) section 39(2) for the administration of the University and its programs and services. Direct any questions about this collection to Melodie Shick-Porter, Student Health Services, Brock University at 905-688-5550 x3741.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

THIS CERTIFICATE MUST BE STAMPED IN RED FOR VERIFICATION BY STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

*** NOTE: The cost for this certificate has been paid by your student health fee. ***

For Department/Centre Use Only:

Date Rec'd: _____ Copy given to Instructor/Chair/Director/Graduate Program Director: _____

Signature (Instructor/Chair/Director/Graduate Program Director): _____ Date: _____

Date Original Rec'd: _____ Rec'd By (Please Print & Sign): _____