



Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Policy

Category: Academic;

Jurisdiction: Teaching and Learning Policy Committee;

Academic Liaison: Associate Vice-President, Students;

Approval Authority: Senate;

Effective Date: February 2012;

Amendments: February 2026.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide an accessible and inclusive educational experience for students with disabilities and ensure the University meets its legal duties under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. This policy aims to:

- a. foster and maintain a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons and protect the privacy, confidentiality, and dignity of students with disabilities;
- b. ensure that students with disabilities are accommodated in accordance with the University's legal responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code and accommodation principles, which promote inclusion and full participation,
- c. preserve the academic purpose of the University by reaffirming that all students must satisfy the essential requirements of their respective courses and programs, while also recognizing that students with disabilities may require reasonable accommodations to enable them to do so;

- d. clarify an accommodation process which reinforces equitable access for students with disabilities to all courses and programs throughout the learning and evaluation process;
- e. set out the roles and responsibilities, including legal responsibilities, of students, instructors, departments, faculties, and all University personnel in the provision of accommodations; and
- f. provide review and appeal processes to resolve disagreements regarding academic accommodations between students, Student Accessibility Services (SAS) instructors, and/or program administrators.

Scope

This Policy applies to Brock University undergraduate and graduate students as well as students registered in any course or program at the University.

This Policy also applies to all staff, instructors, and volunteers of the University in regard to a shared responsibility of the duty to provide academic accommodations for students with a disability.

This Policy applies to accommodations related to a Disability, as defined below. If a student requires accommodations related to a short-term medical condition that does not fall within the definition of a Disability, the process set out in the Faculty Handbook (FHB III: C.13.2.2) should be followed.

This Policy does not apply to applicants to Brock University who are seeking accommodations as part of the admissions process. Applicants may request accommodations directly through the Office of the Registrar and Enrolment Services, which will consult with SAS as needed on appropriate accommodations.

Policy Statement

1. Commitment to an accessible learning environment

The Ontario Human Rights Code guarantees the right to equal treatment in education, without discrimination on the ground of disability, as part of the protection for equal treatment in services.

The University is committed to providing an accessible learning environment that enables students with disabilities to receive equal opportunities to meet the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs, in accordance with the University's obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code. The University encourages proactive accessibility planning, including applying accessible pedagogical practices to remove barriers and provide multiple ways for students to access content, participate in learning, and demonstrate proficiency while recognizing that such measures do not replace the University's duty to provide individualized accommodations where needed.

2. Duty to accommodate

The University acknowledges its legal duty to accommodate students with disabilities who are adversely affected by a university requirement, rule or standard. The University commits to engaging in the accommodations process and providing appropriate accommodations in accordance with the principles of respect for dignity, individualization, integration, and full participation. All academic accommodations will be provided in accordance with the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Procedure.

3. Duty to participate in accommodation process

The provision of academic accommodations involves a collaborative process. Instructors, students with disabilities, Student Accessibility Services (SAS), and all Brock employees involved in the provision of educational services have a shared responsibility to participate in the accommodation process in good faith, in a timely manner, and to be flexible in developing accommodations that meet the needs of students and preserve the essential requirements and academic integrity of the University's courses and programs. Detailed roles and responsibilities are outlined in Appendix 1 to this Policy. All services provided by SAS and all engagement with SAS will comply with the SAS Standards of Practice, which can be found on the SAS website.

4. Duty to provide documentation

To enable the University to determine appropriate accommodations, students with disabilities have a duty to provide relevant and recent medical documentation that confirms that they have a disability and that the disability has adversely affected the student's ability to equally participate in the University's environment.

The University will limit requests for information to that which is reasonably necessary to understand the nature of the student's limitations or restrictions, assess needs, and provide appropriate accommodations. Examples of the information students may generally be expected to provide include but are not limited to:

- Medical confirmation of disability;
- The limitations or needs associated with the disability;
- Whether the student can perform the essential academic requirements of their course or program, with or without accommodation;
- Types of accommodations that may be needed to allow the student to fulfill the essential academic requirements;
- When the student is able to return to studies following an absence.

The University will not require that a student disclose a diagnosis in order to register with SAS or receive accommodations. SAS will only request information related to a diagnosis where the information clearly relates to the accommodation being sought, or the student's needs are complex, challenging, or unclear and more information is needed.

5. Determining appropriate accommodations

In consultation with the applicable student and instructor, the University will determine appropriate accommodations that respect the student's dignity, address the student's individual needs and best promote inclusion and participation, to the point of undue hardship.

Undue hardship will be determined giving consideration to cost, availability of outside sources of funding, and health and safety requirements.

In determining appropriate accommodations, the University will consider a student's preferred form of accommodation, however, a reasonable accommodation is one that meets a student's needs, not their preferences or expectations, and the *Human Rights Code* does not guarantee the right to one particular form of accommodation.

An academic accommodation will not be considered appropriate if it exempts a student from meeting a *bona fide* essential academic requirement of a course/program.

Efforts must be made to explore accommodation options before determining that no reasonable accommodations are available that would enable a student to meet an essential requirement of a course or program. Instructors and program committees are encouraged to clearly identify the essential requirements of all courses and programs in advance to enable students and others in the accommodation process to know what is expected and communicate essential requirements in writing to students, staff and others involved in the implementation of academic accommodations, when needed.

6. Interim accommodations

When a student is being assessed to determine the presence of a disability or requires reasonable time to provide documentation, the University will consider whether the provision of an Interim Academic Accommodation is appropriate. Interim Academic Accommodations will only be offered for more than one semester in exceptional circumstances and only where the University is satisfied that the medical documentation will be received shortly. The University may require that the student provide evidence that the medical documentation process is underway.

7. Retroactive accommodations

When a student has been prevented from following the University's processes and timelines related to academic accommodations due to disability, the University will consider requests for Retroactive Academic Accommodation on an individualized basis.

8. Confidentiality

The University is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of students. All personal information disclosed to instructors, Student Accessibility Services (SAS), or other employees or agents involved in the accommodations process will be maintained securely and confidentially in accordance with the Brock University Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Policy and will only be used or disclosed for the purposes of assessing and providing academic accommodations or as otherwise provided for under that policy.

9. Resolution of disagreements

If a student, instructor, and SAS are unable to reach agreement on an accommodation plan or individual accommodation measure, or the student or instructor are dissatisfied with the implementation of an accommodation plan, they may submit a request for review or re-assessment in accordance with the resolution process set out in the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Procedures.

Definitions

Academic Accommodation: an adjustment in the academic activities associated with the course or non-course degree requirements in order to acquire and demonstrate the essential academic requirements of a course or program.

Approval Authority: the body or authority which has the responsibility for approving the policy or policy-related instrument.

Disability: disability, as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code, means

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or

hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Essential Academic Requirements: a curriculum component that is “indispensable, vital and very important” (OHRC), rationally connected to the performance of a task, and adopted in the good faith belief of its necessity.

Instructor: The individual responsible for a University course, including individuals represented by the Brock University Faculty Association (BUFA), as well as part-time, sessional, professional and continuing education instructors and lecturers, ESL instructors, and clinical nursing instructors, who may be represented by Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) 4207 units.

Interim Academic Accommodations: appropriate Academic Accommodations offered for up to one semester while a student is in the process of obtaining appropriate medical documentation.

Medical Documentation: documentation from a health care professional(s) that verifies that a student has a disability and details the impact of the disability and any resulting functional limitations relevant to the University learning environment. Medical documentation must be based on a current, thorough and appropriate assessment from a registered healthcare professional qualified to diagnose and assess functional limitations and needs associated with the disability domain.

Non-course Degree Requirements: non-course degree requirements include but are not limited to: seminars, theses, major research papers, comprehensive/candidacy examinations,

dissertations, co-op work term, experiential learning opportunities, clinical placements, and required certifications.

SAS: Student Accessibility Services

Undue hardship: There is a duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship. The three factors to be considered are listed below:

1. Cost: Quantifiable and substantial such that the cost of accommodation would alter the essential nature of the enterprise, or so significant that the costs would substantially affect the institution's viability

2. Outside Sources of Funding: Make use of outside resources in order to meet the duty to accommodate and must first do so before claiming undue hardship, OHRC, guidelines, section 4.3.2.

3. Health and Safety: "There may be situations where a student poses a health and safety risk to him or herself that would amount to an undue hardship or an otherwise appropriate accommodation is impossible to implement in the particular circumstances. However, it is important that education providers not rush to such a conclusion. Further training for staff or further supports for the student may resolve the issue. The threshold for undue hardship is high and therefore "the accommodation process must be fully explored, to the point of undue hardship." VI "It is not discriminatory to refuse an [accommodation] because a person is incapable of fulfilling the essential requirements or exercising the right. However, a person will only be considered incapable if the needs of the person cannot be accommodated without undue hardship." "Where there is a dispute regarding a proposed accommodation, and [the university] alleges undue hardship, the onus is on the [university] to demonstrate it. It is not the responsibility of a student seeking accommodation to prove that a proposed accommodation would not cause undue hardship."

Policy Compliance

The Provost and Vice-President, Academic is responsible for overseeing the implementation, administration, interpretation, and review of this Policy. Administrative responsibility is Associate Vice-President, Students

The University manages compliance and enforcement of this Policy through the implementation of procedures, training, and periodic reviews.

Review Period: 5 years;

Next Review Period: 2030-2031;

Related Policies and Policy Instruments:

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Procedures

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Policy

Discrimination and Harassment Policy;

Required Consultations: N/A;

Recommended Consultations: TBD.

The University Secretariat manages the development of policies through an impartial, fair governance process, and in accordance with the Policy Management Policy & Procedures. Please contact the University Secretariat for additional information on University policies and policy related instruments and/or if you require this information in another format:

Open: Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.;

Email: universitysecretary@brocku.ca

Appendix I: Roles and Responsibilities

Many parties within the University are involved in the collaborative process of providing academic accommodations. Accommodation is a shared responsibility. One of the primary responsibilities of all parties is to engage in a meaningful dialogue about academic accommodations.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student Accessibility Services (SAS)

SAS is the University office deemed to have primary responsibility for determining appropriate academic accommodations and facilitating the provision of services and supports for students with disabilities.

SAS is committed to working in partnership with others in the Brock community to support students with disabilities through the education process and promote an inclusive learning environment.

SAS will:

- Receive, verify, and hold confidentially and securely, all applicable documentation regarding disability-related needs per the requirements outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- Review all documents related to the student's circumstances, in consultation with the student, to consider functional capacity and functional limitations assessment related to academic accommodations.
- Request and obtain additional documentation regarding disability where reasonably required by the University.
- Work with students to create and implement individualized academic accommodation plans.
- Partner with students, faculty, instructors, staff and other professionals to facilitate academic accommodations for students with disabilities.

- Support problem-solving solutions for students, staff and instructors regarding accommodations, where needed.
- Consult with instructors and Faculty/Programs/Schools, on academic accommodations to ensure an accommodation(s) does not impact the essential requirements of a program of study.
- Provide confirmation, upon request and where necessary for the purpose of the academic accommodations process confirming a student's registration with SAS and outlining the student's academic accommodation requirements.
- Provide consultation to the University on topics related to disability-related accommodations for students.
- Provide education, when appropriate, to students, staff, instructors and instructors as to accommodations for students with disabilities, including rights and responsibilities for members of the University community under this policy,
- Ensure that accommodated tests and exams held by SAS are conducted and invigilated in accordance with University policy and procedures. In cases where a student is writing an exam with SAS, the Service has the authority to deal with conflicts, consecutive exams and any other accommodations requiring modification to the exam schedule.
- Provide clear deadlines for academic accommodations-related requests on the SWAC-SAS website.
- Engage in the review and appeal process as outlined in the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Procedures, when initiated.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students

Students are essential contributors to the development and implementation of their individualized academic accommodation plan. Their participation and engagement in the process are critical. Students seeking academic accommodation will:

-
- Register with SAS as soon as they are enrolled at Brock or as soon as they are aware of their disability-related impacts to determine academic accommodations.
 - Provide appropriate documentation related to functional impact to Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to be considered for appropriate accommodation(s). Students who suspect they have a disability affecting their academic performance, but do not yet have medical documentation to support a disability, are encouraged to connect with SAS to explore whether interim accommodation may be considered.
 - Meet in an appointment and actively engage with their SAS Case Manager to provide input into the development of an academic accommodation plan. Students may involve a support person, however must remain personally engaged in the accommodations process to ensure individualized and appropriate accommodations.
 - Learn and follow the Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Procedures, as well as SAS processes for the provision of academic accommodations and services.
 - Advise SAS of functional impact changes and ensure information remains current for the period of their accommodation. Provide updated documentation related to changes, where needed.
 - Proactively engage with SAS, the instructor, Faculty or Department as soon as possible to discuss any concerns regarding participation or ability to meet the essential requirements.
 - Proactively communicate the academic accommodation plan to course instructors or program directors for implementation.
 - Follow SAS processes for registration, renewing accommodation plans, booking quizzes, tests and exams.
 - Follow and engage in the review and appeal process as outlined in the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Procedures, when seeking to appeal an accommodation plan or implementation matter.

Roles and Responsibilities of Instructors

Instructors play a vital role in shaping a student's post-secondary experience. An important relationship for many students while at university is the one established between themselves and their instructors, and one which can be the key to success for many students. Although this relationship is very important to all students, it perhaps takes on more importance to students with disabilities whose academic success may rely on good communication with their instructors. Instructors can help facilitate a student's academic success and maintain the University's academic standards for the benefit of all students.

Instructors will:

- Define the essential course requirements and share essential requirements in writing with SAS, as needed, in order to facilitate the procedural and substantive components of the academic accommodation process. It is important to note that determining essential course requirements is a key element of developing reasonable, appropriate academic accommodations.
- Ensure that the essential requirements of the course or program are upheld and that standards are not lowered or compromised by the provision of accommodation.
- Ensure that a student has demonstrated the assessed level of competency of course components in order to obtain an appropriate grade.
- Inform SAS, either via email or OASIS, if there is concern regarding the impact of an academic accommodation on essential requirements or undue hardship. Work in collaboration with the student, SAS and other parties, such as the Dean or their designate or CPI, as appropriate to resolve concerns regarding accommodations.
- Instructors who have a reasonable basis to believe that a student's academic performance is being negatively affected for reasons relating to disability are expected to refer to SAS. Requests for accommodation for a temporary medical impairment should follow the processes outlined in the [Faculty Handbook \(FHB III: C.13.2.2\)](#).

-
- Engage in the academic accommodation process and provide the specified appropriate accommodation.
 - Determine course content, general methods of teaching, textbooks and resources so that any necessary accommodations (e.g. alternative formats, in-class or lab personal supports) can be in place for the beginning of term. Instructors are encouraged to consider Universal Design for Learning principles wherever possible to support accessibility.
 - Consider inclusive course design in any new or revised academic courses, curricula, programs, services, processes and facilities, within their responsibility. SAS and the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation (CPI) will provide support and guidance in the principles of Universal Instructional Design and accessible pedagogy.
 - Include a statement regarding academic accommodations and SAS in course outlines. A course outline template can be found on the CPI website.
 - Determine, through consultation with SAS and other knowledgeable professionals, the most appropriate ways to adapt the course to the needs of a particular student with a disability.
 - Maintain students' dignity and privacy.
 - Work with the student, SAS and the program chair/director or Dean or their designate to explore alternative forms of accommodation in the event that the student or instructor determines that the current accommodations are not working well.
 - Provide SAS with any required information regarding tests and examinations (e.g. the use of specialized course-specific software programs, examination format, time and test scripts, etc.).
 - Follow the procedures and guidelines of SAS in order to facilitate the implementation of accommodations, services, and supports.
 - Engage in the review and appeal process as outlined in the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Procedures, when initiated.

Roles and Responsibilities of Department Chairs and Graduate Program Directors

Chairs/Directors and Graduate Program Directors contribute to supporting the academic accommodation process and will:

- Refer students with disabilities, or suspected disabilities, and requests for accommodation to SAS.
- Provide an opportunity for all instructors to familiarize themselves with this policy.
- Upon the request of SAS and/or the instructor, consult and provide advice when an accommodation request is in question, to assist in implementing accommodations or developing accommodation alternatives.
- Work with SAS and relevant instructors to explore alternative forms of accommodation in the event that the current accommodations are not working well or do not suit particular courses.
- Engage in the appeal process as outlined in the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Procedures, when an appeal has been initiated and is applicable based on the instructor role.

Roles and Responsibilities of Deans/Associate Deans

Deans and Associate Deans play an important role in the academic accommodation process and will:

- Assist instructors, Chairs/Directors in encouraging accessible course instruction, materials and activities, and non-course degree requirements in order to develop an inclusive environment for students with disabilities.
- Provide time and resources, as appropriate, to implement approved academic accommodation plans.
- Refer instructors to the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation (CPI) to support inclusive and accessible course pedagogy and assignment design.

- Assess decisions with the Chair/Director regarding accommodation concerns or appeals and ensure accommodation plans are upheld within the scope of the University's legal duty to accommodate.
- Engage with the Chair/Director in the appeal process as outlined in the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Procedures, when an appeal has been initiated.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Office of Human Rights and Equity Services (HRE)

The Office of Human Rights and Equity Services promotes diversity and equity on campus and administers the Discrimination and Harassment Policy. HRE will act as a resource for students, instructors and staff as to their rights and responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code and related University policies.

Roles and Responsibilities of Library

The Library works in collaboration with SAS to provide accessible course materials available through the Accessible Content E-portal (ACE) and other services. The Library supports students in navigating and accessing Library services and resources.

Role and Responsibilities of the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation (CPI)

The CPI provides resources to instructors related to accessible pedagogical practices.

In collaboration with SAS, Vice Provost Teaching and Learning and others, CPI provides consultation and support for instructors related to inclusive pedagogical design specifically for students with disabilities. CPI provides guidance on supporting students who have identified accommodations and shares campus resources for learners, including how to contact SAS.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Office of the Registrar & Enrollment Services (ORES)

ORES will maintain a process for fairly assessing tuition fees where a reduced course load is an approved accommodation and works with SAS to arrange accessible course locations. The ORES will also administer the backdated withdrawal process.

Role and Responsibility of Student Accounts & Financial Aid (SAFA)

SAFA will collaborate with SAS and other key stakeholders in the administration of specialized funding, bursary and scholarships according to Ministry guidelines.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA)

FGSPA will support the accommodation process for non-course degree requirements for graduate students, in liaison with the Program Director. FGSPA will maintain a process for fairly assessing tuition fees where a reduced course load is an approved accommodation for graduate students. The FGSPA will also administer the backdated withdrawal process for graduate students.

Role of Co-op, Career & and Experiential Education (CCEE)

CCEE, departmental practicum coordinators, and SAS will work together, and in liaison with community partners, to implement accommodation recommendations in the practicum, placement, internship, co-op work term, or experiential learning environment.