

Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities

“Section 4 [of the Alberta Human Rights Act] prohibits discrimination in the provision of goods, services, accommodation or facilities customarily available to the public.” (Alberta Human Rights Commission website). Services include post-secondary education for those with physical and mental disabilities. Accommodation is the process through which persons with disabilities have equal access to education. We must provide accommodation “to the point of undue hardship” to our institution.

Accommodation does not lower academic or non-academic standards, and does not relieve the student of the responsibility to develop the essential skills and competencies expected of all students.

“The point of undue hardship” cannot be defined precisely because it can vary from case to case. Factors that may amount to undue hardship include

- financial cost that hurts the viability of the institution
- inability of students to meet the requirements for entering or completing a program
- significant interference with the rights of other students
- health and safety concerns for students being accommodated, other students, or service providers.

There is no duty to provide instant or perfect accommodation.

No accommodation will be provided without documentation.

College responsibilities:

We will provide a procedure for students to request accommodation and respond promptly to those requests.

We will consider providing a variety of accommodations depending on student needs. The following are examples.

For course work:

- Textbooks and course materials in alternate formats, including large print, audio, electronic text
- Assistive technology (like text to speech software)
- Instructor’s notes on the Internet (Populi)
- Power Point presentations or notes made available in print or on Populi
- Note takers in class
- Flexible attendance policies for students whose disability cause them to be absent more than regular policy allows

For exams:

- Distraction-free test areas
- Extended time
- Exam in alternate formats
- Computers and adaptive software
- Scribes and/or readers (not provided by the College, but allowed)
- Medical accommodations (for example, stretch breaks, food breaks)

Accommodations during testing would cause undue hardship to the institution when the testing no longer reasonably assesses the student's ability to meet essential requirements of the course or program.

In cooperation with the student, we will keep written records.

Student responsibilities:

- Obtain information from Student Success and initiate request for accommodation.
- Inform your instructor that you are seeking accommodation.
- Provide documentation to support your request for accommodation. This can be IPPs from high school, psychoeducational assessments, letters from therapists or DSDs.
- Develop a set of options for accommodating your specific disability. This may include examples of accommodations that you or others have used in the past.
- Have research and resources available to help put the accommodation in place.
- Keep written records.
- Review and revise accommodation plans as necessary.

Information for this document derived from: Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in Post-Secondary Educational Institutions, Interpretive Bulletin, September 2010.

https://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/Documents/Bull_DutytoAccom_web.pdf