ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY
ACCESSIBLE LEARNING SERVICES

Introduction

As an institution of higher learning, the diversity of our student body should at all times be recognized as an enriching factor. It is of the utmost importance that we ensure the courses we develop and ultimately, the programs we offer, facilitate inclusive learning environments.

Despite the best effort of the institution to facilitate inclusive learning environments, students with disabilities may encounter barriers as a result of course and/or program design. This document is intended to be a resource for faculty and academic administrators. These guidelines inform the process of reviewing accommodation requests and determining the most effective way to implement academic accommodations.

The staff in Accessible Learning Services (ALS) aim to work with students to identify barriers and develop an Accommodation Plan based on our expertise in the area of disability and higher education. We look to faculty to be the content experts. When barriers are identified, we are eager to collaborate with faculty to ensure that appropriate accommodations are implemented in a manner that upholds academic integrity.

Access – An Institutional Responsibility

All post-secondary institutions in Ontario are required to ensure that students with disabilities are provided full access to the learning environment. This requirement is legislated by the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Specifically, the Ontario Human Rights Commission outlines the responsibilities of educators:

Educators at the post-secondary level are responsible for participating in the accommodation process (including the provision of specific accommodations), being knowledgeable about and sensitive to disability issues, and maintaining student confidentiality.

It is important to note that the institution has an Accessibility Policy as well as a Human Rights Policy (2013), which together outline the broad responsibilities of all staff with respect to accessibility. The policies were developed in response to the legislation and our commitment to facilitating accessible learning environments.

**Definition of Accommodation**

The term "accommodation" may be used to describe an alteration of environment, evaluation format, or specialized technology that allows an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or complete assigned tasks.

Accommodations do not alter what is being taught, but may change how a student learns and demonstrates their knowledge of the content being taught. Instructors use the same grading scale for students using accommodations as they do for students who do not - accommodations do not guarantee or predict outcomes.

**Essential Academic Requirements**

Accommodations are intended to provide students with an equitable opportunity to meet the essential requirements of their course or program successfully, with no alteration in standards or learning outcomes. In determining appropriate accommodations the essential academic elements of the course and program of study are considered.

Bona fide academic elements are those competencies, expectations, essential skills and abilities, and other learning outcomes that must meet the following criteria to be deemed "essential requirements", in the legal sense:

1. rationally connected to performance of a task/skill,
2. adopted in the good faith belief of its necessity, and
3. demonstrably necessary, to the point of incurring undue hardship


**Process for Identifying Disability-Related Barriers and Accommodations**

Determining if a request for a disability-related accommodation is warranted:
Students who register with Accessible Learning Services will meet with an Accessibility Consultant. Based on their interaction with the student and expertise in the area of disability and higher education, the Accessibility Consultant will determine if there is a disability-related need for academic accommodations.
The need for accommodation will stem from a barrier that the student has encountered or may encounter due to the impact of their disability and the design of the learning environment. In most cases, once the need for academic accommodations has been established, the Accessibility Consultant will be able to recommend appropriate accommodations. At this stage, the Accessibility Consultant will develop an accommodation plan and prepare an Accommodation Letter.

**Communicating Accommodation Requests to Faculty:**
The recommended accommodation(s) will be communicated to faculty via an Accommodation Letter from the Accessibility Consultant. Sometimes students opt to have Accessible Learning Services send this letter directly to faculty and sometimes students wish to communicate with faculty directly. This is their choice. This process may include communication with the Program Coordinator, Associate Deans and Deans (Humber) or Program Head (Guelph-Humber) where appropriate.

**Accessibility Consultants may require information prior to determining accommodations:**
To assist with the process of recommending appropriate accommodations, the Accessibility Consultant may require information about the specific course and program before an initial plan for accommodation can be developed. In this case, it is important that the requested information be provided to the Accessibility Consultant in a concise and timely manner.

Depending on the nature and timing of the request the Accessibility Consultant may contact faculty, Program Coordinator, Associate Dean, Dean (Humber), Academic Advisor and/or Program Head (Guelph-Humber). The name of the student may or may not be provided at this point in the process. Students may not want their name disclosed until it is determined if the Accessibility Consultant will be recommending an accommodation.

Requests submitted to faculty, Program Coordinators, Associate Deans, Deans (Humber) or Academic Advisors and Program Heads (Guelph-Humber) must be kept confidential.

**Things to consider:**

- Accommodations can change over time based on nature of disability, program demands etc. Therefore, an Accommodation Letter may be amended and reissued.
- Students can register with Accessible Learning Services at any point in the academic year. Faculty should expect to receive requests for accommodations throughout the term.
- Certain accommodations may require significant lead time. To facilitate accommodation planning, course and/or program information may be required prior to the start of term.
Understanding Specific Academic Accommodations:

Faculty play an integral role in the facilitation of inclusive learning environments and the process of implementing accommodations. Students may approach faculty directly to request a disability-related accommodation without providing an Accommodation Letter and may choose not to register with Accessible Learning Services.

It is important to note that faculty are not required to receive approval from the Accessible Learning Services office in order to grant an accommodation request. On the contrary, faculty are encouraged to grant an accommodation request if they feel it is reasonable and have no concerns with respect to academic integrity.

Faculty Guides on Specific Accommodations:

As an appendix to these guidelines, we have included our faculty guides on specific accommodations. We developed these guides to assist faculty in understanding the possible rationale for some accommodations and to provide recommendations with regards to implementation.

While we hope the information is useful, the Accessible Learning Services team is always eager to collaborate with faculty to support the facilitation of inclusive learning environments. Faculty should feel free to contact us at any time with questions about a requested accommodation.

Appendix 1 includes information on memory aids, note-taking, student absences and extensions.
Memory Aid Accommodations – Faculty Guide

Accessible Learning Services

What a Memory Aid Is

A memory aid is an accommodation intended to allow equal opportunity to demonstrate competence and to display knowledge and understanding of the course content. A memory aid’s purpose is to cue or trigger recall of information that the student has learned.

A memory aid is an 8½” X 11” page, double-sided, double spaced in 12 pt. font or handwritten equivalent that may (depending on the nature of the test and of the student) include:

- acronyms
- diagrams
- tables
- category headings
- list of steps in a procedure
- key terms
- formulae

What a Memory Aid is NOT

A memory aid is not intended to record all the facts, all the concepts, or all the procedures a student is expected to know. Memory Aids are in no way intended to reduce academic requirements or alter the standards by which a student’s academic performance is assessed.

A memory aid is not:
- an answer sheet
- full course notes
- an open textbook
- a memory bank

How a Memory Aid is Developed and Approved

- Students are responsible for learning the material, for discerning which material may require cues or triggers, for developing the cues that will appear on the aid, and for securing the faculty member’s approval.
- **Students must submit their memory aid to professors at least 7 days in advance of the test date.**
- Only the professor can determine whether a memory aid compromises academic integrity.
- If an item on the memory aid provides a complete answer, rather than a trigger for an answer, the item must be removed.
- Professors are responsible for submitting the memory aid with the exam materials to the Test Centre.
Note Taking Services – Faculty Guide

Accessible Learning Services

Accessible learning environments can often be achieved through course design. For example, the need to accommodate students who require support with note taking can be reduced by posting lecture notes to Blackboard or encouraging students to post notes to be shared with the whole class. Where the need for note taking services remains, two different solutions are available - both of which are coordinated by Peer Assisted Learning Support (PALS).

1) Audio Recordings Used to Produce Notes:
Students audio record their classes using a cell phone, tablet, digital recorder, laptop or other device and upload the audio files to their secure account with Humber's service provider. The service provider creates notes within 72 hours and makes them available on the students' secure account for download. This is currently the primary note taking solution being provided to students.

2) Peer Note Taker:
In a limited number of circumstances, students may be assigned a peer note taker.

PALS may need faculty help: PALS occasionally hires students as peer note takers to take notes which are confidentially distributed to students requiring this service. **You may be contacted by** Christine Bartley, Coordinator, Note Taking Services at christine.bartley@humber.ca in the event a peer note taker is required for a student in one of your classes.

Note taking services are not a replacement for class attendance. Students with note taking services, like all students, are expected to attend classes regularly.

For more information on Note Taking Services, and answers to frequently asked questions, we invite faculty to visit http://www.humber.ca/learningresources/faculty-information to learn more.
Extensions as an Accommodation – Faculty Guide

Accessible Learning Services

Ensuring that students are granted extensions where appropriate is a key component of facilitating equitable opportunities for success. Due to the impact of a student’s disability, they may experience difficulty meeting course deadlines. The purpose of an extension is to provide students an opportunity to submit course work past the deadline without academic penalty.

Timing of Request:
All requests must be meaningfully considered regardless of when they are received.

Depending on the nature of their disability, the student may be able to request extensions in advance. However, when the nature and impact of the student’s disability is unpredictable, the student may not be able to request an extension in advance.

Determining the length of an extension – factors to consider:
Providing feedback to students – Students may need to receive feedback on earlier assignments in order to complete subsequent assignments. This may impact the length of time needed to complete the assignment.

Large assignments – Rather than one extension, it may be advisable to develop a schedule for the student to hand in parts of the assignment in stages.

Other courses – The student may be negotiating extensions for multiple courses. It can be very helpful to allow this to be factored into the date that is agreed upon.

Requests for additional extensions – For disability-related reasons, the student may be unable to meet the extended deadline. In this case, faculty are encouraged to consider a second extension if requested. When the request is received from the student directly, faculty may wish to contact the student’s Accessibility Consultant for further consultation before responding.

Group assignments – Where extensions may not be possible or appropriate due to group work, faculty may need to consider alternatives. This may result in providing the student with an individual assignment based on the learning outcomes and essential requirements of the course.

Communication:
Students may choose to contact faculty directly to request an extension and include their Accessibility Consultant in this communication. In some circumstances, the student may request that their Accessibility Consultant contact faculty on their behalf to request an extension.

Accessible Learning Services encourages students and faculty to record any extended deadlines in writing (i.e. via email) so that expectations are clear.

Faculty are encouraged to contact the Accessibility Consultant if they have questions or concerns about a particular request.
Accommodating Student Absences - Faculty Guide

Accessible Learning Services

Ensuring that students who are absent from class for disability related reasons are appropriately accommodated is a key component of facilitating equitable opportunities for success. Due to the unpredictable and episodic nature of a student’s disability, they may experience difficulty attending class. The purpose of this document is to provide faculty with a framework to assist with the provision of academic accommodations for periodic absences from class.

Communication

Students’ whose academic accommodations include flexibility with respect to absences, are encouraged to communicate with faculty in a timely manner when they are unable to attend, or have previously been absent for disability related reasons from class. Depending on when the student connects with Accessible Learning Services (ALS), the Accommodation Letter may not be provided in advance of the student being absent from class.

Students may choose to contact faculty directly regarding their absences. Students may also choose to include their Accessibility Consultant in this communication.

All requests for accommodations must be meaningfully considered regardless of when they are received.

Faculty are encouraged to contact the Accessibility Consultant if they have questions or concerns about a particular request.

Determining if Flexibility with Attendance will Compromise Essential Learning Outcomes

It is important to analyze the essential requirements of the course when considering possible accommodations for students who are absent from class for disability-related reasons. The questions below may assist with the analysis.

1. Is attendance an essential requirement of the course? – If yes, how is attendance connected to the learning outcomes for the course?
2. Is participation only possible through in-class attendance? If yes, how is attendance connected to the essential requirements?
3. Are there alternate ways in which a student can participate in the course (e.g., discussion boards, webinars)?
4. Is there a threshold for the number of absences a student can have in your course? What is the rationale for this number and how is it connected to the essential requirements?
5. Is it possible for students to acquire the necessary knowledge and/or skills by accessing course material/content in an alternate way (e.g., online videos or tutorials)?
6. What is the format of assessments (e.g. group work, group projects, quizzes, lab work)? Can an alternate assignment be developed to replace marks that are linked to
attendance that would provide the student with an equitable opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills?

Note: When developing an alternate assignment, it is important that the time and effort required is comparable to the original assessment(s).

**Additional factors to consider when identifying accommodations to address absences**

**Access to course material** – When a student is absent, it may not be possible for them to connect with peers to request their assistance in obtaining notes or information from missed classes. Not having access to missed material is often a barrier for students. Faculty and/or the academic school are encouraged to assist students in obtaining information presented in class.

**Access to lab or other practical learning environments** – Some courses will have a lab or practical component that requires students to have access to specific software, lab equipment and/or other material only available during class time. The academic school may need to support students to ensure that they are provided supplemental and/or additional access to the learning environment they require to complete coursework.

**Group assignments** – Students who experience difficulty attending class may be unable to effectively participate in group assignments. This may require you to provide the student with an individual assignment based on the learning outcomes and essential requirements of the course.

**Extensions on assignments** – Students who experience difficulty attending class may require extensions. Please review the Accessible Learning Services faculty guide on extensions for guidance on addressing these requests. For more information on providing extensions as an accommodations, visit our website at: [http://www.humber.ca/student-life/swac/accessible-learning/faculty-portal/guides/extensions](http://www.humber.ca/student-life/swac/accessible-learning/faculty-portal/guides/extensions).

**Absence from Placement**

The considerations for absences from placement will be somewhat different than the considerations for in-class courses. When a student is absent from placement, the process for identifying an appropriate accommodation must still focus on the essential learning requirements.

Due to the diverse nature of programs at Humber and Guelph-Humber as well as the wide variety of placement settings that students may be working in, the accommodations may be very different depending on the situation. Any staff or faculty working with students requiring accommodations for placement, are encouraged to contact the student’s Accessibility Consultant to discuss possible options.
**Prolonged Absences**

If a student has a prolonged absence from class/placement that is compromising their ability to meet learning outcomes and you are aware that they are registered with ALS, please consult with the Accessibility Consultant.