

## Academic Accommodations

The process of academic accommodation operates across a continuum with those accommodations that are straightforward to determine and provide, to those that emerge as complex and nuanced when being considered/determined/provided.

The academic accommodation process is one where all parties (i.e. students and course instructors/academic departments) have complementary duties and obligations as per the [Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities E-2.11 Policy](#). As accommodations and/or the academic program requirements become more complex, this process becomes highly collaborative, taking time and effort for all parties.

Occasionally, disagreement arises on whether an accommodation can be provided, is being provided or is being provided to the standard requested or expected. When that happens, it becomes important for the parties involved in the process of accommodation to review how/if the process has been functioning on both procedural and substantive dimensions.

### Key Concepts

- A student's medical documentation guides decisions about which specific accommodations are recommended by the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) Instructor. Medical provides evidence to the functional or task barriers faced and often clues for accommodations suited to try.
- Each term a student is provided with a copy of their personal Accommodation Letter. It is the responsibility of the student to share a copy with the course instructor for each class for which academic accommodation is required on a class-by-class, term-by-term basis, as early as possible. Time is to be given for a course instructor to read, consider and possibly consult on the content of the letter and make logistical arrangements for the accommodation if it is to be provided.
- The purpose of an accommodation is the removal or reduction of a barrier to full participation and learning. The emphasis is on access, not outcome or success. For example, a student might receive an accommodation but still fail a course if essential course requirements/learning outcomes are not demonstrated to the level required.

#### Case example:

**Student A** has an accommodation for a medical disability for double time, supervised breaks and the ability to stand at a height adjustable desk during exams. This student is provided with all three, but still fails the course.

- A diagnosis of a disability alone does not guarantee an academic accommodation.
- Accommodations are considered on a case-by-case, course-by-course basis.
- Students may not receive all the accommodations requested, recommended by their medical assessor or received in another educational institution.
- There is no obligation to provide a perfect or preferred accommodation.

### Key content of academic accommodations in the post-secondary environment:

Academic accommodations strive to reduce barriers to a student's participation resulting from

- The way information is presented (e.g., text, lecture, video, experiential)
- The way in which the student is asked to respond (e.g., writing, speech, practical)
- The characteristics of the setting (e.g., lighting, seating, location)
- The timing and scheduling of the instruction and/or assessment (e.g., time of day, length of assignment)

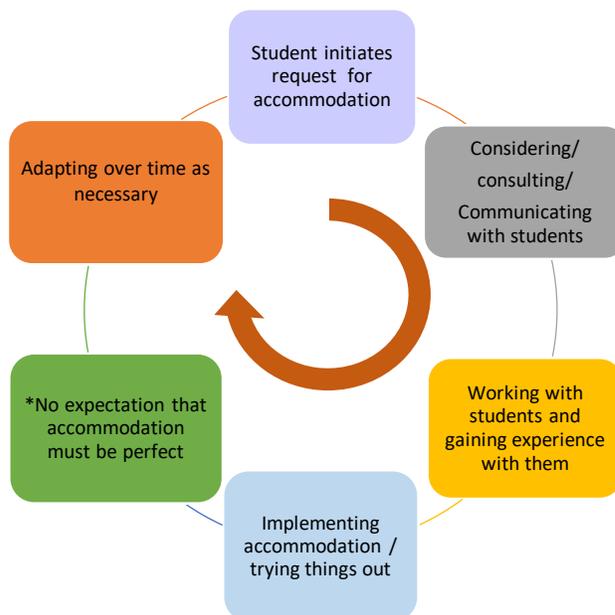
Stated accommodations may be concrete and specific, outlining particular adaptations to task requirements or more general, providing the parties a context from which to consider adaptations.

### Case example:

**Student B** has a learning disability affecting the mechanics of writing and has an accommodation for use of a computer with a word processor and 1.5x extra time for timed exams. This student is provided with both and completes the course successfully.

### Academic accommodations is a dynamic process:

The process is dynamic, collaborative, moving along and evolving. It involves parties communicating and working together to consider, trying things, learning from experiences of accommodation and making adaptations over time where possible.



### Limits on Accommodation

- Essential learning requirements are determined by course instructors and academic departments and are the knowledge and skills that must be demonstrated in order for a student to meet specific learning objectives.
- Essential requirements reflect established practices, standards and methods in the academic field or discipline and are supported by the regulator in academic programs governed by one.
- A course syllabus or statement of course learning outcomes may or may not contain an exhaustive list of all the tasks required as essential.
- In many cases, academic accommodations do not jeopardize the learning requirements and can be provided. When they interfere, and there is no other way to meet that requirement, course instructors and academic departments cannot provide the requested academic accommodation. This is a limit on accommodation.

### Case example:

**Student C** enrolls in a program and is required to use dental instruments with a high level of fine motor control and to be able to visually discriminate between subtle shades of colour in a patient's gum-line. Accommodations for fine motor and visual colour discrimination cannot be provided for tasks involving dental instruments in the mouth.

- This limit also applies if providing the accommodation would substantially affect the learning or safety of other students and there are no other ways to adapt the task without compromising its integrity.
- Accommodations are considered on a case-by-case basis. What is considered essential may be different across courses in a program. As tasks are practiced and mastered and learners progress to higher levels of complexity, new essential requirements may emerge in the current course or in future courses.

**Case example:**

**Student D** enrolls in a program and receives an accommodation for extra time to experience and practice a specific task or skill (i.e. suturing a bleeding wound using a practice model or Manikin). However, in the subsequent courses the essential requirement to reduce substantial risk to the patient is to perform the suturing technique without extra time. For this task, an accommodation for extra time cannot be provided.

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