

#AC820: Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Policy Title:	Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Policy Number:	AC820
Owner:	Director, Student Services
Approved by:	College Executive Team
Effective Date:	April 1, 2018
Reference:	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005), Ontario Human Rights Code (1990), Ontario Human Rights Commission’s Guidelines on Accessible Education, (2004), Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Mental Health Disabilities and Addictions (2014)

Links to Other Policy:

St. Lawrence College is committed to making our resources usable by all people, whatever their abilities or disabilities. This document will be made available in alternative format upon request.

BACKGROUND

St. Lawrence College is committed to creating a welcoming, barrier-free, inclusive learning environment. This commitment applies to all aspects of learning: classroom, laboratory, online, and placement requirements, as well as attitudinal beliefs. The College affirms the rights of prospective and current students with disabilities to have equitable access to educational opportunities and, when necessary, provides appropriate academic accommodations, to the point of undue hardship.

Definitions:

Academic Accommodation (hereafter referred to only as “accommodation”):

- Educational practices, systems, and support services designed to equalize the opportunity of a person with a disability in meeting essential requirements of applying for or achieving the documented learning outcomes of a course or program

- Extends distinctly beyond a standard level of service provided for the general population
- Will be considered appropriate if it will provide an equitable opportunity to attain the same level of performance, or to enjoy the same level of educational benefits experienced by others

Interim Accommodation: An accommodation that is provided to a student who is waiting for documentation to verify a disability from a regulated health care practitioner. The period of time for which interim accommodations are provided depends on a number of factors, including the availability of health care practitioners in the community, the location of the student's health care practitioner and the time it takes for a diagnosis to be made.

Permanent Accommodation: An accommodation that is provided to a student who is expected to have functional limitations for the duration of the period of study based on documentation provided from a regulated health care practitioner.

Retroactive Accommodation: An accommodation that is provided to a student after an evaluation has taken place or a course is completed, as the result of identified functional limitations that existed at the time of the evaluation of which the student was previously unaware or that interfered with their ability to follow typical processes and procedures.

Temporary Accommodation: An accommodation that is provided to a student who has functional limitations for a limited period of time based on assessment and/or the documentation provided from a regulated health care practitioner, as required by Counselling & AccessAbility Services

Disability: As defined by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and the Ontario Human Rights Code (1990), a disability is:

- a) Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness
- 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).

Functional Limitations: identified area(s) of challenge, caused by a disability that may affect academic performance and are used to identify appropriate accommodations

Undue Hardship: Under the Ontario Human Rights Code (1990), the College, as a post-secondary educational institution, is required to accommodate students with disabilities to the point of undue hardship. In the test for undue hardship, three considerations apply:

- i. The cost of providing the accommodation;
- ii. The availability of outside sources of funding, if any; and
- iii. Health and safety requirements, if applicable.

The onus of proof to demonstrate undue hardship is the responsibility of the College and not the student requesting accommodation. Inconvenience, faculty and student morale, third party preferences, and collective agreements are not relevant in the test of undue hardship.

Purpose:

To outline definitions, responsibilities, and procedures that apply to the provision of academic accommodations for prospective and current students with disabilities that complies with the requirements of all relevant legislation.

Scope:

This policy applies to all qualified prospective and current students who self-identify as having a disability and are registered with Counselling & AccessAbility Services. It applies to all full-time or part-time programs/courses, in the classroom, laboratory, online, and/or on placement

POLICY STATEMENTS

Guiding Principles:

1. The College is committed to creating an accessible learning environment and strives to eliminate attitudinal, academic, and physical barriers that hinder the academic success of students with disabilities.
2. The College is committed to treating all students with dignity and respect and promoting their full participation and inclusion within the College learning community.
3. The College affirms that academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities are a right, not a privilege
4. The College further affirms its commitment to the following principles:
 - Dignity – Treating students with disabilities as valued and as deserving of effective service as any other student, and ensuring they are free from the control or influence of others and permitted to make their own choices.
 - Individualization – Ensuring that each student with a disability is treated as a unique individual with unique accommodation needs.
 - Inclusion – Ensuring students with disabilities are provided with opportunities to benefit fully from the same services, provided in the same place and in the same or similar manner as all other students.
 - Full Participation – Ensuring that students with disabilities have the same or similar choices, options, and benefits as all other students

Policy Statements:

1. Students with disabilities are encouraged to self-identify with St. Lawrence College's Counselling & AccessAbility Services as early as possible to allow for the development and implementation of appropriate academic accommodations in a timely manner
2. In accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, students are not required to provide a diagnosis to receive academic accommodations or other support services. Please note that there may be external funding sources that require the provision of a diagnosis
3. The academic accommodation process is an internal one; information about accommodations provided to students with disabilities does not appear on any official document provided by the College, such as the credential achieved (e.g.

- certificate, diploma, degree), transcripts, grade reports, recommendations for scholarships, agency bursaries, or references to other post-secondary institutions
4. The duty to accommodate does not require the College to fundamentally alter admission standards or essential program outcome requirements. To graduate with an academic credential from St. Lawrence College, all students must meet the academic standards set by the College
 5. Academic accommodations do not alter the need for students to demonstrate essential skills and abilities, however, the manner in which they are demonstrated may be altered
 6. Students with disabilities must meet all documented course learning outcomes and program requirements, which in some cases limits the types of accommodations that can be provided by the College to a student with a documented disability
 7. In some circumstances, the functional limitations experienced by a student with a disability, or the related accommodations, may represent a potential risk to the health and safety of others. The College has an obligation to consider the health and safety of all students, College staff, and members of the public in assessing what accommodations can be provided to a student

Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the Student:

- Register with Counselling and AccessAbility Services to request accommodations. Since all accommodation planning is individualized and collaborative, advance notice is important to allow for the development and implementation of appropriate academic accommodations in a timely manner
- Inform Counsellor/AccessAbility Advisor if placement accommodations are also being requested
- Meaningfully collaborate with the College at all steps of the accommodation process. Where a student does not collaborate with the College, for example, by not providing additional documentation from a regulated health care practitioner, the College may be unable to provide or continue to provide appropriate accommodations to the student
- Provide the necessary documentation from a regulated health care practitioner that verifies that the student has a disability and outlines the functional

limitations associated with the disability. If needed, the College provides a form for this purpose (see Specific Links)

- Initiate discussions about accommodation needs with Counselling and AccessAbility Services staff members, and, with consent, faculty as needed, for academic accommodations
- Similarly, initiate discussions with Counselling and AccessAbility Services staff members, and, with consent, Program Coordinator or designate, for placement based accommodations
- Contact Counselling and AccessAbility Services immediately if a concern arises about the implementation of an accommodation.
- Seek guidance from Counselling and AccessAbility Services regarding possible appeal options if an accommodation concern is not resolved informally
- If requested by the College, participate in meetings with a view to developing the most appropriate accommodations that meet the student's accommodation needs, as well as the requirements of the program
- Provide updated documentation as requested by Counselling & AccessAbility Services.
- Notify Counselling & AccessAbility Services when the student would like the Accommodation Letter revised and/or renewed
- For students requiring placement accommodations, provide Worksite Placement Supervisor with copy of Placement Accommodation Letter

Responsibilities of Counselling and AccessAbility Services:

- Act as the primary support hub for students with disabilities. Provide information about the accommodation process and available support services
- Meaningfully consider all requests for accommodations (interim, permanent, retroactive, and temporary)
- Request and review documentation to support accommodation needs, as per College requirements
- Assess the student's need for accommodation based on supporting documentation of functional limitations and strengths, on input from the student, and on professional judgement. Similarly, these same criteria will be used to determine the type of accommodation (interim, permanent, retroactive, or temporary)

- Provide eligible students with an Accommodation Letter outlining the accommodation plan. Forward Accommodation Letters to faculty unless otherwise directed by the student
- For students requiring placement accommodations, provide student with a Placement Accommodation Letter. Forward Placement Accommodation Letter to College Placement Supervisor or designate unless otherwise directed by the student
- Facilitate access to specialized accessibility services, funding options, and other internal and external resources
- Act as a resource to faculty members on accommodation issues. Respond to faculty members' accommodation questions and address any concerns.
- Liaise with faculty members, administrators, Program Coordinators, and (if applicable) College Faculty Placement Supervisors, as needed. When it is identified that an accommodation interferes with a stated essential learning outcome, work towards an alternative accommodation (when possible) that is agreeable to all parties.
- Provide formal appeal information and support to students when informal negotiations fail to meet accommodation needs.
- Protect each student's right to privacy and confidentiality, including securely storing and maintaining students' disability-related information.

Responsibilities of College Faculty & Staff:

- Advise students of accommodation support services and how they can be accessed.
- Accept requests for accommodation in good faith and without prejudice. Recognize that the academic accommodation process is a right for students with disabilities, and that the College is legally required to accommodate to the point of undue hardship.
- Include information regarding students rights to accommodations on all course outlines, all placement-related course outlines and program placement handbooks
- Accommodate students with disabilities in accordance with the Accommodation Letter unless an accommodation interferes with a stated essential learning outcome, in which case, contact Counselling and AccessAbility Services

immediately and participate in designing an alternative accommodation that is suitable to all parties, when possible.

- As needed, work collaboratively with students, Counselling and Accessibility Services staff, other college faculty and/or staff, placement sites and/or external partners to determine appropriate accommodations that meet essential academic and placement requirements and standards, and protect the dignity of the student
- Respect each student's right to privacy; do not ask students to provide information about the nature of their disability
- Respect each student's right to confidentiality; keep accommodation-related information secure and do not share this information with others without consent from the student

MONITORING

All areas of the College are accountable for ensuring that the principles of accessibility and equity outlined in this policy are upheld. However, it is the responsibility of the Vice-President of Student Services and Human Resources to ensure that this policy is reviewed every three years, and more often if required, to ensure adherence to developing law.

POLICY REVISION DATE

April 1, 2023

SPECIFIC LINKS

Appendix A: Procedure for Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Confirmation of Disability Form (via link to Counselling & AccessAbility Services webpage – under development)

APPENDIX A

Procedure for Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The following procedure is based on the policy entitled Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities and outlines the accommodation process. It is part of the

College's commitment to accessibility and equity, and complies with the Ontario Human Rights Code (1990), the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Guidelines on Accessible Education, (2004), and the Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Mental Health Disabilities and Addictions (2014).

1.0 Intake Procedure

- The College meaningfully considers each request for accommodation on an individual basis.
- The type of accommodation (interim, permanent, retroactive, or temporary) provided is based on:
 - i. the documentation provided
 - ii. the student's report of functional limitations in the post-secondary academic environment and during past learning situations
 - iii. Counsellor/AccessAbility Advisor expertise
 - iv. the student's program of study
- The student must provide all required and relevant information necessary to assist the College in assessing request for accommodations, including but not limited to, reports from a regulated health professional identifying student's functional limitations in a post-secondary educational setting
- The student's disability documentation from a regulated health professional will be reviewed by the Counsellor/Accessibility Advisor
- The Counsellor/Accessibility Advisor may, if needed, contact the Program Coordinator or designate for input into developing appropriate classroom, laboratory, and/or online accommodations; such communication only occurs with explicit consent by the student
- If the student does not provide consent to Counselling & AccessAbility Services to communicate on their behalf, the student assumes the responsibility of communicating their accommodation needs, using the Letter of Accommodation, to all relevant parties
- Where a student develops a disability during the program of study and requires academic accommodation, the student should be referred to Counselling and AccessAbility Services for assistance
- When there is difficulty in meeting the accommodation needs of the student, with the student's consent, the College may convene a meeting comprised of the

Counsellor/Accessibility Advisor, faculty members, other College staff, and/or external service providers as needed

- Additional documentation from specialized health care practitioners may also be requested to support the design of the accommodation plan
- As needed, students may be referred to specialized accessibility services, funding options, and other internal and external resources

2.0 Procedures Specific to Accommodations for Classroom, Laboratory, and/or Online Courses

- Upon completion of the accommodation plan, the Counsellor/Accessibility Advisor prepares the student's Accommodation Letter and emails it to the student and all relevant faculty, unless otherwise directed by the student
- The purpose of the Accommodation Letter is:
 - i. to inform faculty members and other individuals who facilitate the implementation of accommodations of the accommodations to which the student is entitled
 - ii. to foster a collaborative approach between Counselling and AccessAbility Services, faculty members, and other individuals who facilitate the implementation of accommodations
 - iii. to inform faculty members and other individuals who facilitate the implementation of accommodations of the College's legal responsibility to accommodate students with disabilities
- When a concern arises in relation to an accommodation, faculty members are encouraged to contact Counselling and AccessAbility Services immediately with the view of finding an alternative accommodation that meets the needs of all parties.

3.0 Health and Safety

In circumstances where health and safety concerns are present, all feasible accommodation possibilities will be explored. The student may be asked to provide additional documentation from regulated health care practitioners to aid in designing accommodations that meet health and safety requirements, and requirements of the program.

4.0 Procedures Specific to Placement Accommodations

- Students must inform Counselling and AccessAbility Services if placement accommodations are being requested and all requests will be meaningfully considered
- The Counsellor/AccessAbility Advisor may, if needed and with the student's explicit consent, contact the Program Coordinator or designate for input into developing appropriate placement accommodations
- It is understood that the Program Coordinator or designate is the expert in determining the essential placement requirements for their specific program
- The Program Coordinator or designate may make recommendations for specific placement sites that would best accommodate the student's needs
- Upon completion of the accommodation plan, the Counsellor/Accessibility Advisor prepares the student's Placement Accommodation Letter and emails it to the student and their College Placement Supervisor, unless otherwise directed by the student
- The student is responsible for sharing the Placement Accommodation Letter with the Worksite Placement Supervisor
- The purpose of the Placement Accommodation Letter is:
 - i. to provide the student with a communication document that can be shared with the Worksite Placement Supervisor at the beginning of the placement experience
 - ii. to provide a structured, strengths-based approach to gaining accommodations in placement
 - iii. to foster a collaborative approach between Counselling and AccessAbility Services and academic program areas for addressing the student's placement accommodation needs
- When a concern arises in relation to a placement accommodation, students and/or College Placement Supervisors are encouraged to contact Counselling and AccessAbility Services immediately with the view of finding an alternative accommodation that meets the needs of all parties
- The College has an obligation to consider the health and safety of placement staff and members of the public.
- In the case of placement, if health and safety risks cannot be prevented or minimized to a reasonable level, a student's placement might need to be reassigned.

Acknowledgements

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