Students with Disabilities in the Educational Environment

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AccessAbility Services

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AccessAbility Services Team

Consultant Services
- Disability Consulting (Consulting, Workshops, Learning Strategies, Referrals)
- Assistive Technologist

Front Line Services
- Administrative Support
- Volunteer Resources (e.g. Note Taking Services)

Exam Office
- Coordination of tests/exams written under the supervision of AccessAbility Services

Outreach Services
- Outreach and education initiatives relating to the service and disability issues (internal and external communities)
Growth – Students Registering with AccessAbility Services

Total # of Students Registered


- 2012-13: Red bar
- 2013-14: Green bar
- 2014-15: Blue bar
- 2015-16: Purple bar
- 2016-17: Blue bar
- 2017-18: Yellow bar

Growth in students registering with AccessAbility Services.
Growth – Accommodated Tests/Exams

Total Number of Tests/Exams Accommodated
Duties in Accommodation Process
• Receive and review the student’s documentation (by a practitioner licensed to diagnose) on a confidential basis;

• Verify the student’s disability on behalf of the University;

• Determine, with the student, the faculty member and the academic department whether accommodations are appropriate and, if so, what accommodations would be effective;

• Adjust accommodations as needed;

• Collaborate with faculty and academic staff to implement accommodations in the classroom, for practicums, labs, graduate programs, and with respect to multiple forms of assessment.
- Receive and review student documentation (by a practitioner licensed to diagnose) on a confidential basis;
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**Accommodation Appropriate & Effective?**

- Health & Safety problem? *Let’s talk*
- Accommodation jeopardizes *Bona fide* academic requirements (essential criterion of the course)? *Let’s talk*
Eligibility: Assessment

Does the student have a disability?

Would providing the accommodation cause undue hardship for the university?

Does the disability impact services or academic requirements for which the student would need accommodations?

Does the student’s documentation support the accommodation requested?

Would providing the accommodation cause undue hardship for the university?

Is the accommodations informed by the following principles:
- Does the accommodation respect the student’s dignity?
- Is it individualized?
- Does it allow for integration and full participation?
What is an appropriate accommodation?

“An appropriate accommodation at the post-secondary level would enable a student to successfully meet the essential requirements of the program, with no alteration in standards or outcomes, although the manner in which the student demonstrates mastery, knowledge and skills may be altered. In this way, education providers are able to provide all students with equal opportunities to enjoy the same level of benefits and privileges and meet the requirements for acquiring an education without the risk of compromising academic integrity”

(OHRC, 2004, 2018)
Core Role - Accommodations

- Extensions Make-ups
- Academic Adjustment
- Accessibility
- Advanced Preparation for Courses
- Alternate Communication
- Alternate Testing
- Multiple Format Materials
- Note Taking
In its own consultations with people with disabilities, the Law Commission of Ontario reported:

...many participants talked about the suspicion and often contempt with which persons with disabilities are treated when seeking services and supports. Services which are designed to assist persons with disabilities in meeting their basic needs or improving their autonomy, independence and participation may in practice be implemented through an adversarial mindset, which assumes that those seeking services are attempting “to game” the system, or obtain benefits to which they are not entitled. This is particularly the case for persons with disabilities who are also poor. [66]
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‘Hidden’ or ‘Non-evident’ disabilities

Some types of disabilities are not apparent to the average onlooker. This can be because of the nature of the specific disability in question: it may be episodic, its effects may not be visible, or it may not manifest consistently in all environments.
“It may likely be an essential requirement that a student master core aspects of a course curriculum. It is much less likely that it will be an essential requirement to demonstrate that mastery in a particular format, unless mastery of that format (e.g., oral communication) is also a vital requirement of the program” (OHRC, 2004)
Retroactive: requesting an academic accommodation after a deadline has passed (missed exam, assignment)

8.3.4 Accommodation after a deadline, test or course has been completed
Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities, August 2018
“do not state or imply that requests for accommodation after a deadline, test or course completion (i.e. retroactive accommodation) will not be considered. In some cases, the nature of a mental health disability may leave a student unable to identify that they have a disability or that they have accommodation needs. In these cases, institutions should not refuse to consider accommodation requests retroactively. All requests for accommodation should be meaningfully considered on an individualized basis.”

Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2016
“Accommodations must be provided in a timely manner.

Delays in providing accommodation have the potential to directly impede a student’s ability to access and take part in the curriculum.

Delayed accommodations may also contribute to disability-related behavioural issues and the challenges faced by front-line educators in dealing with these issues.

Unreasonable delays may be found to violate the procedural duty to accommodate, and thus constitute a breach of the Code”

(OHRC, 2018)
Timeliness - Student Responsibility

• Advise the university of the need for accommodation related to my disability
• Give the university (AccessAbility Services, Faculty, Staff) ample time to ensure that accommodations will be available when needed, unless the student’s disability impacts their ability to do so
• Participate in accommodation discussion and provide documentation outlining restrictions and limitations to AccessAbility Services
• meet *bona fide* academic requirements, once accommodation is provided
It is **essential** that faculty not deny accommodations identified by AccessAbility Services, or requested by a student, without first consulting with AccessAbility Services.

Standard of *(undue hardship)* or violating **essential criterion of the course** requires consultation with AccessAbility Services, and other university personnel (e.g., other professors in the field, program coordinator, Chair, Deans)
Confidentiality of information is the foundation of an effective service for students with disabilities. AccessAbility Services believes that this practice generates a students trust and confidence; it is also the legal responsibility of all staff and faculty at the university.

“Maintaining confidentiality for students with disabilities is an important procedural component of the duty to accommodate”

(OHRC, 2004)
Next Steps

• Faculty Advisory Committee
  Tina Doyle, Maydianne Andrade (VDFAE), Karima Hashmani (Senior Advisor on Equity and Diversity), Connie Guberman (HCS)
  • Will recruit more members

• Ongoing conversation regarding faculty workload

• Reviewing processes to ensure consistent message from all staff in AccessAbility

• Student support services – proactive response
Room SW302

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416-287-7560 (tel/TTY)
Council of Ontario Universities Accessibility Resources Website:
http://www.accessiblecampus.ca/tools-resources/educators-tool-kit/