

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Universities are mandated by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and Ontario Human Rights Commission to provide reasonable accommodation to students with documented disabilities in order to allow them equitable participation in academic pursuits. At the base of this obligation is the recognition that true equality is understanding and respecting people's different needs.

Role of Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS)

- Funded by MTCU to advise the University and its faculty members about the legislative obligations to accommodate students with disabilities
- Receive, approve and maintain confidentiality of documentation about students' disabilities from relevant, qualified health care practitioners
- Meet with students to determine how the functional limitations arising from their disabilities create barriers to their performance/participation in an academic setting
- Determine accommodations to reduce the barriers to participation with consideration to preserving academic standards, integrity, and outcomes
- Provide students with time-limited letters of accommodation (LOA)
- Review the health status and accommodations on a schedule determined by the nature of students' disabilities and the variability of their functional limitations
- Provide advocacy and referral
- Consult with faculty and staff on implementation of accommodations
- Share students' exam accommodations with the Exams Office for their administration of the end-of-term exams

Please note: there are currently 3.5 Advisors in QSAS who see over 1,200 students per year. The appointment times in Sept. fill quickly and many students are unable to get their accommodations until Oct. or later. We continue to register new students and provide accommodations throughout the school year.

Role of Students

- Register with QSAS and get their accommodations as soon as possible in the school year, on an annual basis (when appropriate)
- Provide relevant and thorough documentation from their health care providers, outlining the functional limitations of the disability/ies
- Share their accommodations with their instructors on their receipt and/or in a timely manner
- Communicate their needs respectfully with their instructors, TAs and QSAS staff and participate in the discussion of fit between their accommodations and the course requirements
- Agree to keep private all class recordings or professors' notes to which they have access as an approved accommodation

Please note: students are entitled to privacy of their health information and are not required to disclose information about the nature or specifics of their disability to anyone at the University outside the QSAS office for the purpose of securing accommodations.

Role of Faculty

- Determine the essential requirements of their courses
- Implement accommodations in the classroom including accommodation for midterms, tests, etc., assuming the LOA is received in time to realistically implement.
- Contact QSAS Advisors about any ambiguous accommodations or for consultation on their implementation
- Avoid asking students directly about their disabilities. Instead, confine questions to accommodations and invite the students to tell you how you can cooperate to make the accommodations work.
- Direct resource issues to Department Heads who may in turn redirect them to the Faculty of Arts and Science or the Provost.
- Refer students who ask directly for accommodations because of ongoing disability or health issues to QSAS for longer term follow up.

Some Common Accommodations

Extra time for testing

- Intended to address barriers in to completing tests within the allotted time, such as: reading speed, comprehension, written output, recuperation time for chronic pain syndromes, processing speed, etc.
- Some professors design tests that most students can complete within one-two hours. Should they allow an entire three hour class for this type of test, there wouldn't be a need for the extra time accommodation as the professor has built the extra time into the test.

Different rooms for testing

- All students write accommodated tests in different types of rooms. This is intended to allow the facilitation of extra time as well as to provide an environment that is more conducive to their success. Examples are providing a distraction-free environment for students with ADHD or mental health concerns, a computer for students with physical/mobility impairments or dysgraphia, and private rooms for students to use height-adjustable tables given physical disabilities

Copies of overheads/notes/slides ahead of time

- Meant for students with visual impairments, processing difficulties, and various learning disabilities, among others, this accommodation addresses concerns regarding accessing the material while sitting in a lecture environment. Students who require some preparation for

and familiarization with the material need to have it ahead of time so that they can use it to best participate in class

One exam per calendar day

- This accommodation is intended to allow students some necessary time between exams. Students with ADHD often have difficulty switching focus quickly and require time between tasks to adjust properly. Other students are taking various medications that may interfere with their intellectual functioning at different times of the day and as such writing an exam during one of these times may not result in a true reflection of their ability. One exam per calendar day is also sometimes accompanied by specific timing for exams (afternoon only, morning only, etc.)

Extra time on assignments-to be negotiated with instructor

- This accommodation is meant to address various functional limitations that are associated with different, often invisible disabilities. Students are instructed by QSAS to work closely with professors to discuss the parameters around extensions within a reasonable amount of time before the assignment is due, ensuring that the extension is fairly facilitated.