



Student Handbook

**Academic
Accommodation
Support**

We are Academic Accommodation Support (AAS)

As Ryerson University's student disability services office, we work confidentially and directly with incoming and returning students who live with both temporary and permanent disabilities that impact their academic functioning.

Our job is to work with students to create and implement an individualised academic accommodation plan so that they can fully participate in their studies whether at the certificate, undergraduate or graduate level. We work with any student who requires academic accommodation regardless of their program or course load.

This handbook is your roadmap to the accommodation process at Ryerson.

Please take the time to review it from start to finish. Then connect with us to have any of your questions answered or to book your intake appointment.

In-person: Student Learning Centre - 4th floor

By phone: 416-979-5290

By email: aasadmin@ryerson.ca

Online: ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/academic-accommodation-support

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Section 1: How to register with AAS

Registering with Academic Accommodation Support (AAS) is a key step in ensuring you get the necessary support you need to participate fully in your academic studies if you live with a documented, permanent or temporary disability such as:

- A learning disability (LD)
- A sensory impairment (such as vision, hearing)
- An acquired brain injury
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- A chronic health issue (such as epilepsy, migraines)
- A mobility issue
- A mental health disability (such as anxiety, depression)

We also work with you if you suspect you have a disability or are in the process of obtaining documentation of your disability. We will ensure that you have appropriate interim accommodations and supports in place.

When to begin the registration process

Register for academic accommodation support as soon as possible, preferably prior to the start of the semester to ensure your accommodation plan is active when classes start. For incoming Ryerson students, it is recommended to register as soon as you accept an offer of admission and have a student number.

Generally, new registration requests made after our final exam deadline will be scheduled for the following semester.

Follow these steps to register with AAS.

Step 1: Book an intake appointment

Contact our intake administrator to schedule a confidential intake appointment. You can contact the administrator:

In person: Student Learning Centre - 4th-floor
Student Learning Support Main Reception, 341 Yonge Street

By phone: 416-979-5290

By email: aasadmin@ryerson.ca

Step 2: Obtain documentation

Before the scheduled date of your intake appointment, you should obtain documentation of your disability. Documentation helps your academic accommodation facilitator understand the impact(s) of your disability on your academic functioning. Having this information ensures that your accommodation plan meets your individual learning needs.

If you do not have the required documentation by the date of your intake appointment, don't worry; you can still attend the meeting. We work with students who are in the process of obtaining documentation or who suspect they may have a disability.

Documentation requirements

Documentation should clearly state the specific functional limitation(s) you experience in an academic setting. When we understand the correlation between your disability and its impact on how you learn, we are able to better collaborate with you to build the most appropriate and effective accommodation plan.

Our documentation requirements vary depending on the nature of your disability. There are two main types:

1. Students living with a learning disability, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or who are on the Autism Spectrum

We require a copy of your most current psycho-educational assessment for learning disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or a neuropsychological assessment for students with diagnoses on the Autism Spectrum, conducted by a registered psychologist or psychiatrist trained to test for and diagnose the condition.

- The assessment must contain information on the tests administered as well as the scores obtained; and
- The assessment must be completed at an adult age (>18), or within the last three years.
- If you have an older assessment or IEP, we will discuss options at your intake appointment for getting an updated assessment, including possible funding options, and explore the possibility of interim accommodations.

You may be eligible for funding for a new or updated psycho-educational assessment through one of the bursaries listed on page 8 or through your insurance. Check with your insurance company benefits plan to see if you (or your partner/spouse, or perhaps one of your parents/guardian) is covered.

Sliding scale psycho-educational assessments are offered through the Regional Assessment and Resource Centre's Mobile Assessment Team. Your academic accommodation facilitator will provide you with details if/as needed at your initial intake appointment.

2. Students living with a mental health, medical or sensory disability

We require a disability assessment form to be completed by an appropriate, registered health care professional who is qualified to diagnose the disability and can thoroughly assess its impact on your academics. The form can be downloaded from our website or a hard copy picked up at the Student Learning Support Reception on the fourth floor of the Student Learning Centre.

- Documentation provided to us must clearly state the impact(s) of the disability on your academic functioning. This means there must be a direct correlation between the impact(s) and the accommodation(s) that are requested.
- Documentation needs to be current (within the past year) so we have the most accurate information about the impact of your disability. This enables us to create the most effective accommodation plan with you.
- If you live with a mental health disability, you are not required to disclose your specific diagnosis statement, but it can be included if you would like us to know this information.

Step 3: Submit documentation

For students with documentation for a learning disability, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or Autism, documentation can be submitted to our intake administrator prior to your initial appointment. To submit your documentation:

In person: Student Learning Centre - 4th-floor
Student Learning Support Main Reception, 341 Yonge Street

By fax: 416-979-5094

By email: aasadmin@ryerson.ca

For students with documentation for a mental health, medical, or sensory disability, the completed disability assessment form should be faxed or mailed directly by the health care professional, or brought in an envelope with a stamp from the medical office over the seal. If it is not submitted in either of these ways, we will request your permission to confirm its authenticity by contacting the office directly.

Confidentiality and consent

Your confidentiality is very important to us. Any documents provided to, and correspondence with AAS, is treated confidentially. All documents are securely stored in our office in accordance with the university's privacy and records policies. We do not share documents unless a student requests us to and provides written permission.

We only communicate with you and relevant Ryerson faculty and staff members for the purposes of facilitating your academic accommodation and related learning needs. We need your written permission before we communicate with others on your behalf, e.g. family members like parents and spouses.

Step 4: Attend your intake appointment

The date of your intake appointment has arrived. Remember that this is a confidential appointment, and even if your documentation is not yet complete, you can still attend the appointment to discuss a potential interim accommodation plan.

What to expect

At your first meeting with your academic accommodation facilitator, you can expect to:

- Meet and get to know your facilitator
- Review our confidentiality and consent forms
- Discuss the impact(s) of your disability as it relates to your academics
- Develop an individualised accommodation plan
- Learn important procedures for making use of your accommodations
- Understand how to use our online services
- Discuss other appropriate supports and services, including bursary and grant information (if relevant) and/or enhanced service providers
- Discuss ongoing support

After this meeting, you are considered to be a registered student with AAS and your academic accommodation facilitator will be your main contact with our office.

Important note: Students diagnosed with a print disability (a learning, physical or visual disability that prevents a person from reading conventional print) can request their books in an accessible format. Inform your facilitator of any print disability-related needs as soon as possible, as this accessible format may take up to four weeks to arrange.

Understanding your accommodations

Academic accommodations support your ability to access and participate fully in the academic environment in a positive way that is responsive to your learning.

It is important to understand that your recommended accommodations are based upon the documentation on file, provincial best practices, the professional experience of our team, and your individual needs. It is possible that a student has a disability and does not require accommodation when there are no specific disability-related barriers. For example, if a student in a wheelchair has access to classrooms and washrooms, and can listen and take notes in the classroom, they may not require an academic accommodation.

Academic accommodations do not exempt you from meeting your course and program standards.

Section 2: How to activate your accommodations

Once registered with AAS, you need to activate your accommodations each semester. You do this by sending electronic accommodation letters to your professors or course instructors via our online system. After your letters are sent, we expect you to reach out to your professors or course instructors to discuss your individual accommodation plan and how it will work for each course. If you are not comfortable approaching them directly, contact your academic accommodation facilitator who can communicate with your professor or course instructor on your behalf.

Step 1: Send accommodation letters

AAS has an online system that generates the sending of electronic letters to your professors or course instructors outlining your recommended accommodations for each course. It is your responsibility to activate the sending of the letters by logging onto the AAS online system. Ideally, your letters are sent to your professors or course instructors as early as possible each semester, prior to a graded assignment, test or exam. You can access our online services from this web page:

www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/academic-accommodation-support

Step-by-step instructions and a how-to video for sending the electronic letters are also available online.

The system allows you to decide which professors or course instructors to send your letters to, and which accommodations you wish to request in each course.

Important note: If you do not indicate a specific accommodation on a letter, that accommodation will not be available to you for that particular class.

If you receive a message preventing you from using the system, contact AAS immediately for help.

Step 2: Follow-up with your instructors

Some accommodations require discussion with your professors or course instructors to determine how they will be implemented and/or any limitations. This is because some details need to be arranged collaboratively by both you and your professor or course instructor, such as the duration of extensions on assignments. Another reason is that not all accommodations work with the diverse ways course curriculum is delivered.

Your academic accommodation facilitator will provide information on the steps you can take to navigate these kinds of conversations during your intake appointment or at your request.

Important note: Please follow up with your facilitator right away if you and your professor or course instructor cannot come to an agreement when discussing an accommodation. With your permission, we will work with your professor or course instructor to come to an appropriate resolution.

Step 3: Book necessary quizzes, tests and/or exams

Your accommodation plan may include accommodations for tests. Tests include quizzes, tests, mid-terms and final exams.

There are some obligations when booking to write your tests with accommodations at the Test Centre. We appreciate these steps are not needed to write with your class (which you're always free to do; however, you will not have access to accommodations if you opt for this).

In order to ensure your accommodations are in place for writing at the Test Centre, you are required to:

- Book via our online service;
- Book at least ten (10) days in advance. If you miss this deadline, an exceptional booking request form has to be completed. The Test Centre cannot guarantee your request due to space limitations and invigilator availability, however every effort to fulfill your request will be made;
- Book your final exams by the deadline each semester; and
- Always book for the same date and time as the class unless your professor or course instructor has arranged a different time or date with you in advance; they will need to confirm this with the Test Centre.

Once you have completed the online booking, you will receive advance notice via your Ryerson email account of the following:

- Test date;
- Start time, and
- Exact location.

Online tests

To use your accommodations for online tests, you still need to book through the AAS online service. In the booking, indicate that the test is online, and whether it will be written at the Test Centre or if you are permitted to write off-campus. Online tests need to be written in the Test Centre unless the main class is also writing off-campus.

The Test Centre does not have the ability to change the duration (i.e. add extra time) of online tests. Speak to your professor in advance of the test date to ensure your accommodations are factored in to the online platform being used.

Day of your test

Please arrive at the scheduled location (confirmed in your email), approximately 15 minutes before the start time. For final exams, please arrive 30 minutes prior. Bring your Ryerson student card (your One Card) or a valid government issued photo ID as proof of your identity. This ID will be checked by the Test Centre.

Contacting the Test Centre

If you have questions or encounter problems related to booking a test with academic accommodations, contact the Test Centre:

By phone: 416-979-5000, ext. 7932

By email: testcentre@ryerson.ca

Step 4: Stay in touch

Keep your facilitator updated on any changes to your health or learning needs, or if you encounter any problems with school or using your accommodations. Facilitators are here to provide ongoing support to students, including working with professors or course instructors and/or academic departments to ensure that you have access to your accommodations as needed.

Placement or practicum accommodations

If you are in a program that has a placement or practicum component (e.g. Nursing, Child and Youth Care, Social Work, etc.), we will discuss your accommodations based on your disability-related needs in these contexts with you. Because implementation of placement and practicum accommodations often includes an external organization or agency (outside of Ryerson), it is essential to start the accommodation request process well in advance of when you apply for your placement.

Contact your facilitator to arrange placement accommodations **at least one semester before** you apply for your placement assignment with your department.

Section 3: Supplemental information

Financial assistance

OSAP

Applying for OSAP is the first step in determining eligibility for disability-related grants, bursaries, or funding for an assessment. The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) is used by AAS to determine if you have “financial need” that would make you eligible for the various government grants and bursaries.

Grant for students with permanent disabilities

Students who are receiving OSAP and live with a documented, permanent disability may be eligible for the provincial Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities.

To apply, check the Permanent Disability box on your OSAP application. You do not need to take a student loan to be eligible for funding. You can decline the loan portion of the program once your eligibility has been determined.

Important note: You will need to request a letter from AAS confirming that you live with a permanent disability.

Bursaries (BSWD & CSG-PDSE)

The Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD) and the Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Persons with Permanent Disabilities (CSG-PDSE) help eligible students meet their disability-related educational costs.

Consult with your facilitator for more information regarding these bursaries during your initial intake appointment.

Enhanced services

You may be eligible to work with one or more of our enhanced service support providers. This will be discussed during your initial intake appointment. Working with one of these staff members provides you with more opportunities to discuss various aspects of your accommodations and learning needs. These include:

Accessibility specialist

If you live with a sensory disability and use service providers, such as sign language interpreters or computerized note-takers, you will need to connect with our student accessibility specialist to ensure we make appropriate arrangements for these supports.

Assistive technology

Our assistive technology specialist works with students to help them explore and learn to use technology-based supports for their academics. Your facilitator will connect you with an AAS assistive technology specialist, if applicable.

AAS also has eight computer workstations loaded with adaptive software reserved for registered students.

Learning and transition

Our learning and transition facilitator works with students to help them identify their learning strengths, and develop effective learning and study skills. Your facilitator will connect you with their programming, if applicable.

Student note-taking: RU Noted

For students who will benefit from another student's notes, we offer the RU Noted student note-taking program as an enhanced service. Your facilitator will discuss your eligibility with you and how this support works at Ryerson, if applicable.

Library accessibility services

The Ryerson University Library offers a wide range of supports and services to students who live with disabilities.

Student Learning Support (SLS)

All students who are registered with AAS are welcome to access the programs of Student Learning Support (SLS). SLS offers individual help, group sessions and workshops, English language practice, math tutoring, writing assistance and more. You do not need to disclose to AAS that you are using these supports.

Summer transition programs

SHIFT and Portage are free transition programs for students living with disabilities who are heading into full-time studies at any post-secondary institution in Ontario. We offer participants a space to explore possibilities for personal empowerment, a positive start, and planning for post-secondary success.

For event dates and to register for SHIFT or Portage, visit this web page:

www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/academic-accommodation-support

You can also send an email to shift@ryerson.ca.

Section 4: Pulling it all together - your responsibilities

You, of course, play a vital role in your accommodation plan. You have a number of responsibilities related to your accommodations. Please keep in mind the importance of:

- Reading emails sent to your Ryerson email account
- Reviewing and meeting the important deadlines we post (e.g. test booking deadlines)
- Staying in touch and letting us know if you need to discuss your accommodation plan and its implementation, including any problems you are encountering
- Following the correct procedures associated with your accommodations
- Activating the sending of accommodation letters each semester
- Keeping track of the significant dates for students at Ryerson

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is an important skill for all students. It is also a key component of using your accommodations.

“Self-advocacy is essentially about knowing yourself, being able to promote yourself and your skills while speaking to any challenges you may face because of your disability, and being able to request the accommodations you need. ...[It] is a skill that is developed. It takes practice.”¹

Your facilitator will discuss what self-advocacy means in this context during your intake appointment. AAS also offers workshops and resources related to self-advocacy skills. For more information or guidance, speak with your facilitator.

Your facilitator is also always available to speak to professors or course instructors and academic departments on your behalf, with your permission, if you would like assistance with arranging any aspect of your accommodations.

¹National Educational Association of Disabled Students, 2016

Resource:

Academic accommodation checklist

- Think about and decide if your disability will impact your academics and whether you will require academic accommodations
- Book an intake appointment with AAS
- Obtain your disability-related documentation
- Submit your documentation to our office
- Attend your intake appointment to meet your facilitator and develop your accommodation plan
- Send electronic accommodation letters to your professors or course instructors via the AAS online system
- Follow-up with your professors or course instructors as necessary to discuss your accommodations
- Book tests (including quizzes, tests, midterms) for which you require accommodations via the AAS online system
- Check your Ryerson email account regularly to stay up-to-date with important AAS information and deadlines
- Stay in touch with your facilitator as necessary throughout the semester
- When the final exam schedule is released, book your final exams with accommodations via the AAS online system



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