

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

**SENATE POLICY 159: ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES**

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Responsible Office: Vice Provost Academic and Vice Provost Students

I. PURPOSE

This policy establishes guidelines for the academic accommodation of students with disabilities in order for them to access and demonstrate learning in a university context while maintaining the integrity of course content and objectives, as well as ensuring fairness for all students.

II. DEFINITIONS

In this policy and in its procedures:

- “**academic accommodation**” means a planned variation in the way a student with a disability receives course curriculum and materials, participates in course activities, or demonstrates mastery of course content and skills through evaluation and assessment. Ryerson University shall provide academic accommodation that does not impose undue hardship*.
- “**applicant**” means a person applying to become a student at Ryerson University.
- “**disability**” means disability as defined in the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19, as amended (“*Code*”).
- “**documents regarding disability**” means any and all documents verifying that a student has a disability, or to understand the impact of the disability and any resulting functional limitations it places on the student. These documents must be based on a current, thorough, and appropriate assessment from a registered health care professional qualified to diagnose the condition.
- “**essential academic requirements**” means the knowledge and skills that a student must acquire and demonstrate to meet successfully the learning objectives of a course or program.
- “**student**” means a student at Ryerson University registered in continuing education, undergraduate and graduate full-time or part-time programs, certificates, and continuing education courses;
- “**University**” means Ryerson University.

III. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

* “Undue hardship” is defined in the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.

- a. the instruction and delivery of course materials in the classroom and through electronic mediums;
- b. student participation in course activities; and
- c. an instructor's methods of evaluation and assessment, and a student's demonstration of mastery of course content and skills through evaluation and assessment.

IV. PRINCIPLES

Ryerson University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the *Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (“*AODA*”). The University strives to make its academic programming accessible to all students.

The University is committed to preserving academic freedom and high academic standards. The University will provide academic accommodations to assist students with disabilities to fulfill the academic requirements of their programs without alteration in academic standards or outcomes. The nature and extent of accommodations shall be consistent with and support the integrity of the curriculum and the University's academic standards.

The University re-affirms that all students are expected to satisfy the essential requirements of their program of studies and recognizes that students with disabilities may require academic accommodations to do so, including alterations to how the student demonstrates that she or he has acquired the necessary knowledge and skills.

Accommodating students with disabilities is a shared responsibility and a collaborative process. To this end, the University is committed to educating students, faculty and staff about the requirements to accommodate students with disabilities, the provisions of the *Code* and *AODA*, and the resources available to provide additional information and guidance.

The University is committed to fostering an inclusive educational environment that:

- promotes mutual respect;
- recognizes the equality, dignity and autonomy of all persons;
- recognizes that “disability refers to the negative aspects of the interaction between individuals with a health condition and personal and environmental factors...the disability experience resulting from the interaction of health conditions, personal factors, and environmental factors varies greatly.” (World Health Organization, 2011);

· Academic accessibility is based on inclusive design of course and program curricula, delivery methods and activities, and their forms of assessment which recognizes the difference between students and groups of learners.

- provides academic accommodations and equal opportunity without discrimination;
- fosters student learning through a range of teaching pedagogies;
- protects the privacy and confidentiality of its students, and
- recognizes the shared responsibility of students, instructors, Departments, Schools, Faculties, Academic Accommodation Support (formerly Access Centre), and administrative staff to exercise flexibility and creativity in the provision of academic accommodations.

The University is also committed to updating appropriate technology and providing education and training to faculty and staff so that materials are increasingly more accessible to all students.

V. CONFIDENTIALITY

All documents regarding disability will be held securely in Academic Accommodation Support. Information on accommodation is only released on a need-to-know basis within the University community or when the student consents to a broader release of information.

VI. RESOLUTION OF DISAGREEMENTS

Faculty, instructors, students and Academic Accommodation Support are encouraged to seek agreement regarding mutually satisfactory provision of academic accommodations. In the event of a disagreement, disputes will be resolved in accordance with the principles of this policy and using the procedures described below.

VII. AUTHORITY

The Vice Provost Academic and the Vice Provost Students are responsible for establishing procedures related to this policy and their regular review. The Vice Provost Academic has ultimate authority for the resolution of disagreements.

PROCEDURES

A. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. University Application Process:

- a. Applicants are strongly encouraged to declare that they have need of accommodation(s) in the process of application to Ryerson. For University programs that require on-site attendance for auditions, interviews, essays, tests, and other like non-academic criteria, advance notice is recommended to ensure appropriate accommodation can be arranged within the critical admission timelines.
- b. Upon request, the University will provide admission information to applicants in accessible formats within a reasonable timeframe.
- c. If questions arise during the application process pertaining to the ability of an applicant to fulfill the essential requirements of a program, even if accommodated, the issue will be discussed by Admissions, Academic Accommodation Support, the Chair/Director of the department, and the Dean of the applicant's prospective Faculty (where appropriate). The Chair/Director shall work with the applicant and Academic Accommodation Support to determine academic accommodations which may enable the applicant to meet the essential academic requirements.
- d. In the event that the Chair/Director, in conjunction with the Dean determines that no accommodation would enable the student to meet the essential academic requirements, Admissions shall so inform the applicant and other options shall be discussed.
- e. Admission into a program does not guarantee that an applicant will, in fact, be able to meet the essential academic requirements of the program or any specific course.

2. Academic Accommodation Support will:

- a. partner with students, faculty, instructors, staff and other professionals to facilitate academic accommodation;
- b. receive and verify all documents regarding disability;
- c. request and obtain any additional documents regarding disability reasonably required by the University;
- d. assist students in obtaining documents regarding disability, as reasonably required;
- e. ensure that all student information and all documents regarding disability are treated confidentially and maintained in secure files;
- f. review all documents regarding disability, conduct an interview with the student and recommend an academic accommodation plan where appropriate;
- g. facilitate academic accommodations for students with disabilities;

- h. consult with instructors and faculties/schools, as needed, on crafting academic accommodations to enable students to satisfy the essential requirements of their program of studies;
- i. coordinate the requests for and assist in the provision of academic accommodations;
- j. inform students with disabilities of their obligations as registrants;
- k. provide problem-solving support to students with disabilities when applicable;
- l. assist and provide information pertaining to academic accommodations to instructors, Chairs/Directors, Deans and other administrative staff;
- m. provide documentation, upon request and with the consent of the student, confirming a student's registration with Academic Accommodation Support and outlining the student's academic accommodation;
- n. educate, when appropriate, students, faculty, and administrative staff as to their rights and responsibilities under this policy;
- o. consult with various individuals and offices as required;
- p. ensure that tests and exams held in Academic Accommodation Support are conducted and invigilated in accordance with University policy and procedure; and
- q. ensure confidential and timely delivery of tests or exams according to Academic Accommodation Support procedures.

3. Students with disabilities requiring accommodation:

- a. are responsible for:
 - i. following academic accommodation procedures;
 - ii. meeting the essential academic requirements of a course/program; and
 - iii. discussing with Academic Accommodation Support, their instructor, their Department or Faculty, any concerns they may have about whether or not they would be able to meet the essential academic requirements of a course/program prior to enrolling in a course/program;
- b. are advised to register with Academic Accommodation Support when they need assistance beyond what is provided in the course in relation to:
 - i. receiving course curriculum and materials; and/or
 - ii. participating in course activities.
- c. must register with Academic Accommodation Support when they need an accommodation for demonstration of mastery of course content and skills through evaluation and assessment;
- d. provide Academic Accommodation Support with all documents regarding disability that are reasonably requested by the University, to keep that information up to date, and to consent to the University making use of this information on a need-to-know basis for appropriate University purposes, including the administration of this policy;
- e. contact Academic Accommodation Support as soon as possible about any required accommodations, taking into account the complexity of implementation of the required accommodation(s);
- f. learn and follow Academic Accommodation Support procedures with regard to registration, renewing registration, booking quizzes, tests and exams, and the provision of accommodation and supports;

- g. collaborate with Academic Accommodation Support, instructors, and others (for example, academic advisors, Chairs/Directors, Deans, Library staff etc.) by identifying learning needs to develop an appropriate accommodation plan;
- h. understand that they need to activate the sending of accommodation letters to their instructors through the online accommodation support system used by Academic Accommodation Support;
- i. understand that choosing not to use an approved accommodation while completing a course may impact any appeal made on the basis of disability in that course.
- j. request that their eligibility for university awards, scholarships or other opportunities be considered on the basis of their accommodation (e.g. reduced course load).

4. Instructors shall:

- a. strive to make course curriculum and materials and course activities accessible to all students;
- b. work with University stakeholders to accommodate Academic Accommodation Support registrants who require specific accommodation while preserving the essential academic requirements of the course and program;
- c. direct students seeking evaluation of their disability-related documentation to Academic Accommodation Support;
- d. not accept or review a student's documents regarding disability;
- e. maintain the confidentiality and privacy of students with disabilities who are registered with Academic Accommodation Support;
- f. understand that they are the primary agents of providing student academic accommodation within the University; Academic Accommodation Support facilitates the accommodation process for students who are registered with Academic Accommodation Support;
- g. collaborate with Academic Accommodation Support in structuring an appropriate accommodation plan that meets the needs of the student with a disability and satisfies the essential academic requirements of the respective course or program;
- h. notify the student and confer with Academic Accommodation Support as soon as possible, regarding concerns that may arise related to fulfilling the essential academic requirements of the course or program within the agreed upon accommodation plan, and continue to work with the student and Academic Accommodation Support to explore alternative accommodations. If unsuccessful in developing an appropriate accommodation plan, refer to the Department/School Chair/Director;
- i. provide textbooks and other materials to the library as soon as possible to ensure that materials can be provided in an accessible format; and
- j. incorporate identified techniques to provide academic accessibility within the teaching/learning environment.

5. The Department/School Chair/Director shall:

- a. provide an opportunity for all faculty members to familiarize themselves with this policy;

- b. assist faculty in ensuring that course instruction, materials and activities are accessible in order to develop an inclusive learning environment for students;
- c. provide resources to support approved academic accommodations;
- d. consult with students and Academic Accommodation Support, as required, when students have first identified their need for accommodations. This may occur prior to registration, following registration, or when a student approaches Academic Accommodation Support with an accommodation request;
- e. discuss with the student and Academic Accommodation Support concerns about how accommodations relate to the essential academic requirements of the course/program;
- f. collaborate with Academic Accommodation Support to provide accommodations for university entrance requirements, (e.g. entrance tests);
- g. review, upon a student's, instructor's and/or Academic Accommodation Support's request, concerns with the recommended accommodation plan and assist in developing alternatives;
- h. ensure that field placements/practicums are informed of, and able to respond to, accommodation requirements of students with disabilities prior to assigning students to a specific placement setting; and
- i. ensure the provision of accommodations for students with disabilities is outlined in the Department/School student handbook in accordance with the Course Management Policy.

6. Deans shall:

- a. work with the Department/School Chairs/Directors to ensure that all instructors are made aware of this policy and that the practices associated with the delivery of accommodations are consistent with this policy;
- b. assist faculty, chairs, and directors in ensuring that course instruction, materials and activities are accessible in order to develop an inclusive learning environment for students;
- c. review decisions not to provide any academic accommodation or a particular academic accommodation;
- d. provide resources as appropriate to implement any approved academic accommodations; and
- e. ensure that academic accommodations received by students will not be a barrier to eligibility for university honours or opportunities.

7. The Convocation and Awards Office shall make accommodations for convocation ceremonies, in conjunction with Academic Accommodation Support as appropriate, with advance notice from the student or other relevant parties.

8. Financial Services shall, in accordance with the Ryerson Memorandum: Tuition Rebate Policy for Students with Disabilities, maintain a process for fairly assessing tuition fees where a reduced course load is an appropriate academic accommodation.

9. Library Services shall:

- a. make efforts to provide access to information for students with disabilities;
- b. collaborate with the instructor and Academic Accommodation Support to provide information in accessible formats to students with disabilities; and
- c. collaborate with CCS to provide adaptive technology within the library to improve accessibility.

10. Learning & Teaching Office shall:

- a. provide resources to faculty members related to universal instructional design, delivery and evaluation methods; and
- b. provide information and training related to academic accommodations specifically for students with disabilities.

11. Student Financial Assistance shall: collaborate with Academic Accommodation Support in the administration of specialized funding according to Ministry guidelines.

B. RESOLUTION OF DISAGREEMENTS

1. Review of Accommodation Plan if Not Accepted:

- a. If the student with a disability, Academic Accommodation Support and the instructor cannot agree on the academic accommodations to be provided, the instructor or Academic Accommodation Support Manager (or designate from Academic Accommodation Support) shall discuss the matter with the Chair[†] of the Department[‡] promptly after it becomes clear that there will be no agreement on the provision of academic accommodations.
- b. The Chair shall review all relevant documentation and will consult with others as appropriate. The Chair may request additional documentation from all parties. If the Chair agrees with the student's requested academic accommodations, the Chair shall direct in writing that those academic accommodations be provided. If the Chair does not agree that the academic accommodations requested by the student are appropriate, the Chair shall as soon as possible forward all relevant documentation to the Dean[§] for her or his review.
- c. The Dean shall review all relevant documentation and will consult with others as appropriate in an effort to resolve the matter. The Dean may request additional documentation from all parties. If the Dean agrees with the student's requested academic accommodations, the Dean shall direct in writing that those academic accommodations be provided. If the Dean does not agree that the academic accommodations requested by the student should be provided, the Dean shall provide

[†] Chair includes Director or designate of either a Chair or a Director, as appropriate

[‡] Department includes School or other division of the University, as appropriate.

[§] Dean includes a designate of the Dean.

her or his decision and the reasons for that decision in writing to the student, the instructor, and the Chair.

- d. If the student is not satisfied with the Dean's response, she or he may write to the Vice Provost Academic within two weeks from the date of Dean's letter.
- e. The Vice Provost Academic, in consultation with the Vice Provost Students, shall review all relevant documentation and will consult with others as appropriate in an effort to resolve the matter. The Vice Provost Academic may request additional documentation from all parties. The Vice Provost Academic will render a final decision on the matter. There shall be no review of or appeal from the decision of the Vice Provost Academic.

2. Accommodation Pending Review

- a. The University recognizes that decisions involving academic accommodations must be made expeditiously. In the event that a request for accommodation is under review, the instructor and Academic Accommodation Support shall review the accommodation plan to determine what portion, if any, of the plan it is appropriate to implement immediately.
- b. Where a student has been accommodated, pending the final outcome of all reviews, and the final result is that the academic accommodation should not be granted, the Chair may, in his or her discretion, recommend that a student be retroactively withdrawn from a course.