

# Instructor Handbook



University  
of Windsor

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The University of Windsor is committed to creating an inclusive teaching and learning environment that aligns with provincial guidelines for academic accommodations. Here at the University of Windsor our guidelines are outlined in our statement of commitment regarding persons with disabilities:

[Senate Policy on Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)


Instructors are essential partners in the academic accommodation process. The Student Accessibility Services Office (SAS) works in partnership with instructors to provide the academic accommodations that support a fair and inclusive learning environment for undergraduate and graduate students. The accommodations process must maintain safety for self and others and the academic standards that all students must demonstrate.

This document has been created to provide instructors with information about accommodating students with disabilities. In the following pages, you'll find information about:

- Roles and responsibilities of the student, the Accessibility Advisor, instructor and staff
- Frequently asked questions
- Communication style
- Universal design and considerations for providing accessible education
- Contact information

**It is the University's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner... In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participating in the full range of activities that the University offers and achieve their full potential as members of the University community.**

**Statement of Commitment Regarding persons with Disabilities**



# **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS: THE BASICS**

## Types of Disabilities

Students registered with SAS may be registered in any of the following disability categories:

- Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing
- Low vision or legally blind
- Mobility or functional limitations
- Mental Health issues
- Learning Disability
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Concussion and Acquired Brain Injury
- Medical conditions

Students may also be registered for temporary disabilities such as a broken limb or short-term impairment after medical treatment or surgery. Assistance can be given to address the completion of academic work.

Students with disabilities meet the same admission criteria as all other students. They will also meet the same academic requirements and standards as all students, although the manner by which students with disabilities meet these may vary.

## Accommodations

Academic accommodations are provided when students experience disability-related barriers in demonstrating their knowledge and skills. Accommodations provide equitable access for students with disabilities to meet the academic standards of their program. It's also possible for a student to have a disability and not require accommodation. For example, a student with a chronic health disability managed well by medication, diet and appropriate coping strategies, may decide not to register for these services. On the other hand, a student might register but not use their accommodations until they are required due to a change in the student's health.

Graduate students and second-entry professional students may require unique academic accommodations due to their personalized research and/or field work/practicum or other licensing requirements.

## Essential Requirements

The provision of accommodations will not change the essential requirements of a course or program curricula.

“An appropriate accommodation enables 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.”<sup>1</sup>

Instructors play a key role in the accommodations process by communicating what a student must know and demonstrate. When necessary, instructors assist with problem-solving based on their academic expertise. The question of fairness often comes up when providing students with alternate ways of performing academic tasks. Accommodations level the playing field to provide

an opportunity for students with disabilities to complete certain tasks differently, while still meeting the essential requirements of the curriculum. Students with accommodations are expected to demonstrate the same knowledge and skill development as their peers.

**If you believe that implementing the accommodations listed in a student’s Letter of Accommodation will compromise academic standards, contact the Accessibility Advisor listed at the bottom of the letter. In some circumstances, the nature and degree of disability may mean that no accommodation would enable an individual to meet the essential academic requirements or behavioural expectations of a course or program. In these cases, the University is not required to accommodate. However, efforts must be made to provide all reasonable options.**

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<sup>1</sup>Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2004). *Guidelines on Accessible Education* (ISBN: 0-7794-7191-1). Toronto, ON: Canada.

## Privacy & Confidentiality

A student's specific diagnosis is private medical information under Human Rights Code guidelines. Under no circumstances should you ask a student to disclose this information.

While some students are willing to talk about their disability, many others might be reluctant to do so. They might fear being denied opportunities or creating unwanted curiosity or concern. Encourage students to talk about the impact of their disability on their learning.

Because any category of disability contains a wide range of differences in how someone functions, knowing a student's type of disability isn't particularly helpful without the more detailed information provided during the intake process. This information describes additional challenges due to other conditions, family and social supports, past experiences of learning and areas of strength that can compensate for difficulties.

## What the Student Accessibility Service Office Provides:

- a review of the student's medical documentation and needs to determine if academic accommodations are required
- a place for students to discuss their disability-related needs and the appropriate accommodations
- the development of an effective accommodation plan with the student
- ongoing support and problem-solving for disability-related issues that impact a student's academic and co-curricular experience (this frequently requires collaboration with instructors and staff)



- access to financial support (e.g. Bursary for Students with Disabilities) and referrals to other funding sources
- access to adaptive furniture, equipment and software
- coordination of specialized services such as sign language interpreting, etc.

## Types of Accommodations

Accommodations depend on the impact of the disability within a particular program of study. They may include:

## Classrooms

accessible classrooms and labs that are safe and provide appropriate supports

- sign language interpretation, note taking
- extensions on assignments/papers
- accessible materials in alternate formats (e.g. braille, large print, digitized text, voice-activated software, assisted-hearing devices)

## Exams

- writing within a test/ exam space in which accommodations may be provided (e.g. fewer distractions, additional time, ability to take breaks or attend to physical needs)
- alternate formats like large print or braille
- adaptive furniture and equipment (e.g. use of keyboard for writing, screen-reading software)

## Practicum/Placement

- guidance for requesting accommodations during practicum/placement
- development of safe, appropriate accommodations in the academic program and placement site

## Research

- estimates of additional time that may be required to complete research (this plan can be reviewed and adjusted annually, if necessary)
- solving problems with graduate student funding packages for students who require additional time or a reduced workload

## Outside the Classroom

- liaising with residences regarding disability-related needs
- referring students to campus and community resources
- peer mentoring and educational/support groups
- co-curricular programming in partnership with campus partners (e.g. navigating disability and disclosure in the workplace)

# **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES: WHO DOES WHAT?**

Students, staff and instructors all have responsibilities in the accommodations process and in creating an accessible environment. Each party brings an important perspective: the student has a unique and personal knowledge of their disability, the instructor has content knowledge and an understanding of the required outcomes, and the advisor has a broad-based knowledge of disabilities and their impact on academic performance. Roles and responsibilities may differ depending on the academic program, so please check for specific procedures.

## Instructor:

- participates, when necessary, in structuring an accommodation plan that meets the essential requirements of the course/program and the needs of the student
- provides accommodations as outlined on the Letter of Accommodation, as appropriate, and works with the student and/or Accessibility Advisor to find solutions if issues arise
- Email or deliver an exam to Dillon Hall within 48 hours of the exam time
- when you receive and email from the Exam Team, fill out the Exam Receipt and provide it to the Exam Team with the exam
- directs students to register with SAS if an accommodation request is made but is unaccompanied by a Letter of Accommodation
- makes every effort to develop an inclusive learning environment (e.g. provides clear information in the course syllabus about course policies regarding accommodations)
- approves the memory aid and works with the student to have a memory aid approved. Deliver the memory aid with the exam to Dillon Hall

## Student:

- Initially completes a SAS Intake form to be given an appointment with the appropriate advisor
- registers with SAS once the need for academic accommodation has been determined
- provides appropriate and timely medical documentation to the SAS advisor, verifying the need for disability-related accommodation and outlining the restrictions and limitations of functioning within an academic environment
- informs instructors about the need for accommodation by providing a Letter of Accommodation for each course for which accommodation is being requested
- fulfills agreed-upon procedures to implement their accommodations, (e.g. requests extensions, informs their instructor and Accessibility Advisor of difficulties in meeting deadlines, registers exams in SNAP to write tests and exams)
- SNAP is SAS's exam management software. Students use SNAP to register any exams they want to write in SAS at Dillon Hall

## Accessibility Advisor:

- verifies that there is a disability-related need that requires accommodation within a particular learning environment (e.g. classroom, lab, practicum setting)
- receives medical documentation from a registered medical practitioner confirming a disability and the student's disability-related academic **functional limitations** (*a substantial impairment in the individual's ability to function in the condition, manner, or duration of a required major life activity.*)
- uses best practices, input from the student and the medical documentation to develop accommodations
- supports the facilitation of the accommodation process with the student, instructor and staff
- provides information about other resources on campus to develop student's academic skills (e.g. studying, writing, self-management)

## Associate Dean:

- assists student in accessing non-disability-related accommodations arising from exceptional life circumstances (e.g. serious family illness
- or a death of a family member)
- works with the student when it comes to completing a medical certificate/VOI for missed exams or assignments if not outlined as an accommodation in the Letter of Accommodation
- helps student to understand petitions guidelines and process
- liaise with SAS and the student, if necessary

## Faculty Advisor/Academic Advisor:

- raises any questions regarding professional licensing requirements early in the accommodations process so they can be addressed
- discusses approved accommodations with the student's permission and makes specific course or instructor recommendations to help students make informed decisions when considering and selecting courses or academic programs
- handles academic progression when a student requests a reduced course load

**“The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is a piece of legislation in the Province of Ontario aimed at making the places you work, live and learn as accessible as possible. Visit the University’s AODA website for more information on the various standards within the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation as well as tip sheets, training modules, resources, relevant policies and building access notices.”**

<http://www.uwindsor.ca/ohrea/61/aoda-and-human-rights-training>



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# General

## What should I do if I think a student has a disability?

Encourage them to go to the Student Accessibility Office in Dillon Hall room 117. There they will be encouraged to fill out an [Intake Form](#) which will lead to having an appointment with a SAS advisor.

## One of my students has disclosed their disability to me. What do I do with this information?

If a student discloses their disability/medical condition to you, this suggests that the student is experiencing enough challenges that they feel they need to seek help. It's reasonable for you to ask the student if they've accessed any of the on-campus services for support.

If the student doesn't mention SAS, you can encourage them to visit the SAS office to find out if they may be eligible for specific supports or accommodation, to find solutions for present issues and, if appropriate, receive a referral to on-campus supports or

community professionals.

If the student indicates that they're already registered with SAS, encourage the student to contact their Accessibility Advisor. If appropriate, you can also offer to contact the Advisor directly in order to address an ongoing situation in the classroom.

The student, instructor and Accessibility Advisor may then collaborate on finding reasonable solutions.

If the student isn't interested in working with SAS (not all students with disabilities are registered with accessibility services) then it's reasonable to encourage them to access other campus services, such as the Wellness Centre on campus to discuss their concerns. Disability-related accommodations are not provided unless the student registers with SAS and provides the necessary medical documentation.

## What should I do if a student brings an animal to class?

Refer to the [Policy of Presences of Service Animals on Campus](#)

# General

## How are academic accommodations determined?

Students provide documentation from a Registered Medical Professional that confirms they have a disability that requires academic accommodations. The Accessibility Advisor reviews this documentation, meets with the student to determine their academic strengths and considers best practices. When academic programs have specialized accommodation requirements, the Accessibility Advisor will consult with the academic program.

## Am I required to accommodate a student's request?

When SAS has determined a need for academic accommodation, the student is accommodated unless there is undue hardship. Undue hardship consists of safety to self or others, the preservation of essential degree requirements and the cost of the accommodation to the institution. Academic accommodations should reasonably reflect (but

not extend beyond) what is specified in the official Letter of Accommodation. It's not appropriate for a student to negotiate accommodations beyond those outlined in the letter. If a student requests an academic accommodation that isn't previously identified, refer them to their Accessibility Advisor to discuss the request.

## What do I do if I disagree with the recommended accommodations?

SAS supports both instructors and students in negotiating the accommodation process. If you have questions about the accommodations recommended for a student, contact their Accessibility Advisor. These discussions can be very useful for clarifying misunderstandings and reaching mutually acceptable solutions.

# Design & planning

## How can I create a more accessible learning environment?

Create a section in your syllabus about accommodations and accessibility ([Syllabus statement](#)), and clearly state the knowledge and skills students need to know and demonstrate in your course/program. A statement in your syllabus can signal your openness and invite students to contact you. You might say something along the lines of: “Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Student Accessibility Services Office.

## Why might instructors be asked for course materials so far in advance of the start of each term?

Course textbooks and readers are requested in advance to allow for the lengthy production time it takes to reproduce print and graphical materials into an alternate format. [Link to Alt Format](#) For example,

reproduction time for braille and tactile images can take as long as three months. This creates a disadvantage to the student who is then unable to access the course material alongside their peers. Please be in touch with the Accessibility Advisor as soon as you receive this request to discuss options.

## How do I modify a lab or practicum for a student with a disability?

Students with disabilities may require accommodation in clinical placements, internships, cooperative placements, practicum placements and other experiential-learning courses. Supports that have been suited to the classroom environment don't necessarily transfer to the placement environment. Contact the Accessibility Advisor to find a solution if what is being suggested won't work within your practicum/lab setting or could compromise the health and safety of clients, essential requirements or requisite licensing processes.

# Delivery

## What is a Letter of Accommodation?

The Letter of Accommodation informs an instructor that the student has registered with SAS. It lists Classroom accommodations to help you support the student in the classroom (e.g. request a volunteer note-taker, respond to requests for extensions and questions about course material and expectations.) It also lays out the Exam Accommodations that will be facilitated through the Exam Team. Feel free to contact the Accessibility Advisor listed at the bottom of the letter if you have any questions or concerns about implementing the recommended accommodations.

## Why don't students provide their Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term?

Students can be diagnosed with a disability at any time, so registration with SAS continues throughout the academic year.

Some students try to complete their academic work without accommodations until they realize that they're unable to do so. Other students fear the stigma of being known as a student with a disability.

## What is a VOI/Medical Certificate and what should I do if I get one?

A Verification of Illness or Injury (VOI) or Medical Certificate is used for any University of Windsor student experiencing a time- limited medical condition. If the student is experiencing an illness unrelated to their disability (e.g. the flu), then a VOI/Medical Certificate is appropriate. Each academic area has its own policies and processes regarding accommodation for illness or injury. Please consult your faculty/ graduate coordinator for detailed information.

A student registered with SAS isn't usually asked to provide a VOI/Medical Certificate because registration at SAS already requires students to provide health-related documentation.

If a student registered with SAS does provide you with a VOI/Medical Certificate, it's likely for a time- limited illness, unrelated to their disability. You may check with their Accessibility Advisor.

[Link: Senate Medical Certificate](#)

# Delivery

What information can I share about a student's needs with other students or a TA/GA?

Be careful in classrooms and casual conversations to maintain the confidentiality of a student's registration with SAS. There will be times when you need to communicate information about a student's accommodations to other staff involved in teaching the course, such as a TA/GA. Share information on a need-to-know basis and make efforts to preserve the student's private information. When it comes to making decisions and following procedures in the accommodation process, outline the responsibilities for yourself and your TA/GA.

# Evaluation & assessment

## What's my role in the test and exam process for students with accommodations?

Test and exam accommodations are frequently required, and students must register with SNAP to write in the accessibility office. If you receive email notifications about test and exam accommodations, please respond to these requests. Most frequently, you'll be asked to send a copy of the test or exam to SAS where the student will write with access to their accommodations.

### 48-hour notice

is strongly recommended and greatly appreciated that instructors deliver or email their exams to the exam team in SAS at least 48 hours in advance of a scheduled exam. On any given day SAS is required to deliver 150+ exams. Organizing and preparing exams takes time.

If a student has approved Memory Aid, this will need to be sent by you for use on the exam when you email or drop off your exams.

SAS Exams follows university guidelines for invigilation. Tests and exams are stored securely in a safe. This room can only be accessed by professional staff members in the Student Accessibility Office.

- A) Once provided with a change of exam form, negotiate a new exam time with your student
- B) Should you have questions about an exam change request or if you are having difficulties negotiating a new date with your student, please contact the student's accessibility advisor

If exams are delivered hours or minutes before a scheduled exam it could mean your students won't start on time and/or it can lead to other challenges.

## What do I do when a student asks for an extension on an assignment or other work to be submitted for evaluation in my course?

Ask your student for the Letter of Accommodation to ensure that they require additional time.

Learn about the procedure for extension requests from SAS.

Negotiate with the student to find an appropriate date to complete the work, being mindful of the University's deadlines and policies. Usually, students are granted up to a seven-day extension beyond the deadline. Extensions longer than seven days require the student to consult with the Accessibility Advisor who will then verify the need for the request. If there are questions or concerns about an extension request, contact the Accessibility Advisor for consultation.



# Evaluation & assessment

How do I handle requests for alternatives from class participation?

Clarify how participation may be an essential academic requirement of your course (e.g. language learning courses) and negotiate viable alternatives early in the course to prevent misunderstandings at the end of term. Contact the accessibility advisor to discuss options if needed.

What does “may miss class for disability-related reasons” mean?

Although there is an expectation that students will attend most classes, this statement informs you that the student may need to miss class because of their medical condition. Contact the Accessibility Advisor if you need assistance in establishing reasonable expectations for attendance.

Why do students living with disabilities need extra time?

Students with disabilities often need more time to process the information required for learning or communicating knowledge due to: neurological differences, chronic health issues that limit focus and concentration or physical disabilities that require the use of adaptive technology.

How do I handle a Change of Exam Request?

Check the Accommodation Letter for “May need to reschedule”, “only one exam per calendar day”, “write in the AM/PM”, “one exam per 24-hour period”. When these accommodations apply the student will present you with a change of exam form.

- A) The form should be negotiated with you to come up with a new date/time for the student to write.
- B)
- C) The form needs to be given back to SAS within 5 days to ensure there will be a seat for the student on the decided new date and time.

Anything you have questions about, please contact the advisor on the bottom of the letter for clarification.

# Evaluation & assessment

What do I do if a student makes a request for a Memory Aid?

These requests will be outlined in the student's Letter of Accommodation and follow stringent criteria. Students requesting a [Memory Aid](#) must have it approved by the instructor at least 5 days before the test/exam. Review the aid sheet and either approve it or ask for revisions from the student. If there are issues or concerns, you or the student can contact the Accessibility Advisor for assistance. Once a decision has been reached about the use or content of a Memory Aid, send it to SAS via email, or in person, when providing the test or exam material. Any Memory Aid used during a test or exam is returned along with exam materials upon completion.

What happens if a student registered with SAS isn't meeting academic expectations?

Appropriate accommodations shouldn't lead to diminished academic expectations. Contact the student's Accessibility Advisor if the student is in academic jeopardy, as this may indicate that the accommodation needs to be renegotiated or the student may benefit from other campus supports and resources.

What security features are in SAS to ensure my exam will remain safe?

SAS takes exam security very seriously. Among other security features and processes employed by SAS, it has:

- 2 security cameras (maintained 24/7 by campus police)
- A locked exam storage room accessible only to professional staff
- The presence of a professional staff member to access all exams
- Cameras to monitor all group exam rooms
- Computer without internet access

# COMMUNICATION AND CONTACT

## Conversations with Students

- Speak privately with the student.
- Be straightforward and factual in your approach.
- Outline what you've observed and describe the services available.
- Allow time for the student to think about what you've said.
- Recognize that the student may not know that support for **functional limitations** within the Canadian context is legally mandated.
- If you think a student may not understand what you're saying, summarize your points in written form.
- Allow time and space for the students to ask questions and to clarify what it is they need to know.

## Registering with SAS

- Information is available at [Uwindsor.ca/sas](http://Uwindsor.ca/sas)
- Students complete the intake form and submit relevant documentation.
- Students meet with an Accessibility Advisor for an intake appointment in order to register with SAS. This advisor will work with the student moving forward.

## Responding to distressed students

1. Observe
2. It's OK to ask
3. Pick a good place and time to have the conversation
4. Say what you see
5. Be prepared for the possibility of denial or difficulty
6. Trust your instincts
7. Keep the door open
8. Remember your resources
9. Know your limits

More information here: [How to respond to a student in distress](#)

## Emergency

In case of emergency, please dial 911 or 4444 on any university phone to access Campus Police 24/7.

**“We strive to foster an inclusive climate of mutual respect and understanding on the UWindsor campus, so that all students are welcome and able to contribute to the fabric of the university community. SAS is further committed to the promotion of heightened awareness on campus and in the community about the responsibility we all share to provide equal access to higher education for all students.**



# **INFORMATION TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTORS WITH ACCESSIBLE DESIGN**

Consider implementing basic universal design principles to make your course accessible for a wide variety of learners in diverse life circumstances. When teaching a student with any disability, remember that many of the principles for inclusive design could be considered beneficial to any student. The idea of “universal design” is a method of designing course materials, content and instruction to benefit all learners.

Create learning environments in which students feel free to ask questions and discuss/apply the material to help them integrate their learning.

“The value and goals of this Strategy are meant to be lived out loud, integrated into day-to-day disclosure, and situated at the forefront of University operations and decision making. It is a campus-wide call to action that necessitates buy-in at all levels and summons each member of the University community to become dynamically involved in creating change.”

**Student Mental Health Strategy- University of Windsor.  
2018, pg. 10.**



## Consider the following these top 10 tips for Universal Design tips:

1. Ensure your syllabus clearly articulates the essential course requirements and includes the Accessibility Statement.
2. Provide handouts (e.g. PowerPoint slides) and any other course information ahead of time and in electronic formats to assist students in preparing for and following the lecture.
3. Include the equivalent text alternative for all graphics and images.
4. Use captioned or subtitled video and transcribed audio, where possible.
5. Use colour effectively by providing crisp, high-contrast handouts.
6. Avoid using animated, flickering or flashing content.
7. Use a font that is a sufficient size (i.e. 12 point or larger) and a readable style (e.g. sans serif typefaces such as Arial or Calibri).
8. Repeat student questions and comments out loud to help students follow the discussion.
9. Request electronic versions of textbooks when ordering.
10. Be open to meet with students who request special meetings to talk about Memory Aids or the like.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Developing accessible programs and courses through the Council of Ontario Universities

Resources to help educators at Ontario universities create accessible learning environments for students.

Available at:  
<http://www.accessiblecampus.ca>

## Hub for teaching and learning at the University of Windsor

Learn more about the support offered to University of Windsor instructors and staff with teaching and learning related issues.

Available at the Centre for Teaching and Learning  
[www.ctl.uwindsor.ca](http://www.ctl.uwindsor.ca)

## Understanding accessibility in graduate education

Results of a study focused on the major myths and perceptions surrounding the academic experience of graduate students.

Available at: [www.neads.ca](http://www.neads.ca)

## Memory Aid

[Link: Memory Aid Information](#)

## Medical Certificate

[Link: Medical Certificate Uwindsor](#)

## Audio Recording

[Link: Statement Regarding Student Recording](#)

## Alternate Format

[Link: Alt Format](#)

## Notetaking

[Link: Notetaking](#)

**NEED TO REACH US?**

Look for the Accessibility Advisor's name and email address on the bottom of a student's Letter of Accommodation and contact them through email. Contact the front desk staff if the Accessibility Advisor is away from the office.

## Student Accessibility Services

Email: [sas@uwindsor.ca](mailto:sas@uwindsor.ca)

Phone: 519-253-3000  
ext. 6172

## Exam Related Concerns

Email: [exam@uwindsor.ca](mailto:exam@uwindsor.ca)

Phone: 519-253-3000  
ext. 3463

## Notetaking

Email: [notetaker@uwindsor.ca](mailto:notetaker@uwindsor.ca)

Phone: 519-253-3000  
ext. 3463



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