Accessibility Services 2020

https://www.rrc.ca/accessibility/

Abstract

Working to strengthen communication and participation by faculty with students with disabilities.

Faculty reference guide

*Assisting Students with Disabilities*

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# **Preamble**

Red River College is dedicated to ensuring access to education for academically qualified persons with disabilities. Due to the obstacles students with disabilities may face, whether physical, medical, learning, or psychological, under human rights legislation they are afforded the same opportunity to learn as non-disabled students. Red River College has a human rights obligation to accommodate students with disabilities as reflected in the Manitoba Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, and College Policies, specifically RRC's [Academic Accommodation policy](https://www.rrc.ca/legal/policies/academic-accommodation/).

Fundamental to access to education for people with disabilities in post-secondary institutions is the determination and implementation of academic accommodations. All members of the RRC community share responsibility for providing instructional and learning-related accommodations for students with disabilities in order to support and encourage their potential for academic success.

# **Introduction**

Red River College is committed to reasonable accommodation of the needs of persons with documented disabilities by providing services while maintaining a commitment to appropriate academic standards. Students with disabilities are required to meet the same academic criteria as non-disabled students. That is, to be admitted to the College, they must meet the same admission requirements as other students. Students with disabilities are expected to meet all essential learning outcomes and demonstrate the same competencies as other students in their program.

The practical and ethical purpose of any accommodation is to equalize access and opportunity as much as possible between students with, and without, disabilities. For example, exam accommodations are intended to remove, or reduce, the effects of a disability on a student's demonstration of knowledge and skills. The intended outcome is for equal opportunity between students with, or without, disabilities and that neither group has advantages that the other does not. The core issue of academic accommodation involves the determination of what allowances can equitably be made for the learning process while maintaining academic standards.

Generally, the most appropriate accommodations are attained through a collaborative effort between:

* Student - who has personal knowledge of their disability
* Instructor - who has content knowledge and an understanding of the required outcomes
* Manager/Counsellor - from Accessibility Services (AS), who has a broad-based knowledge of disabilities and their impact on academic performance

Accessibility Services is comprised of three units: Counselling & Accessibility Services, Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services, and Exam Accommodations & Assistive Technology, each of which provides specific services to students with disabilities. Each unit has an Accessibility Services manager who oversees the services provided by their respective unit.

# **Part 1. Accommodations and Support Services at Red River College**

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

### **Students have a right to:**

* Equal access to participation in the post-secondary education experience
* Be treated with dignity and respect regarding their disability and accommodation needs
* Appropriate, individualized accommodation
* Protection of confidential information
* Timely service provision, consistent with the notice provided by the student
* Prompt, equitable investigation and resolution of complaints
* Opportunity to appeal accommodation decisions (see [Accommodation Policy](https://www.rrc.ca/legal/policies/academic-accommodation/))

### **Students with a disability have a responsibility to:**

* Meet entrance requirements and on-going academic standards of the selected college program
* Comply with RRC's [Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities](https://www.rrc.ca/legal/policies/student-code-of-rights-and-responsibilities/), as all students of the college are required to do
* Self-identify as a student with a disability to Accessibility Services (AS), or to an instructor who will refer them to AS
* Provide relevant and current documentation verifying their disability
* Bring requests for accommodations, or discuss academic supports, with an AS manager/counsellor
* Contact AS at the beginning of each term, or a time mutually agreed upon with the manager/counsellor, to discuss their requested accommodations
* Contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible if they are diagnosed with a disability while at the college, either permanently or temporarily
* Determine educational supports with the manager/counsellor
* Request exam or test accommodations no less than 7 full days (one week) prior to the exam or test
* Follow procedures in receiving accommodations as set out by Exam Accommodations
* Establish a good working relationship with instructors, which may involve discussing their disability with them, as well as other needs or concerns. Self-advocacy is supported by AS.
* Meet regularly with the manager/counsellor in order to monitor the effectiveness of their accommodations and supports
* Make their needs known – with sufficient notice - if they require assistive technologies or alternate format of materials, so the manager/counsellor can assist the student in acquiring these supports

### **Faculty members have a right to:**

* Determine course content and general methods of teaching
* Ensure that the standards in a course are not lowered or compromised
* Ensure that a student has demonstrated mastery of the essential learning outcomes of the course in order to grant an appropriate grade
* Make informed decisions about how best to adapt their teaching and assessment methods to accommodate all students
* Fail any student who has not demonstrated mastery of essential learning outcomes relative to their peers without disabilities
* Question, discuss and appeal a specific accommodation (to appeal, faculty can complete the Academic Accommodation Appeal Form *(see Appendix A)*
* Determine, in consultation with knowledgeable professionals, the most appropriate way to adapt a course to the needs of a particular student
* Be treated respectfully by all students in their class

### **Faculty members have a responsibility to:**

* Create a classroom atmosphere that is harassment-free, inclusive and nondiscriminatory
* Respect the dignity of students with disabilities, as outlined in the [Manitoba Humans Rights Code](https://gov.mb.ca/fs/imd/hr.html) and the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccdl/rfcp-cdlp.html)
* Encourage, but not require, students with disabilities to identify themselves privately to the instructor
* Refer students with disabilities to Accessibility Services
* Protect and maintain student confidentiality (i.e. not discussing any aspect of the student's disability with anyone without the student's informed consent)
* Cooperate with Accessibility Services in providing authorized academic accommodations
* Cooperate with Exam Accommodations by providing exam details in a timely manner, and by dropping off and picking up exams
* Consult with Accessibility Services on questions regarding disabilities and academic accommodations, when necessary
* Allow the recording of classes by students with disabilities when such recordings are necessary to compensate for difficulties due to the disability (the student is required to sign an agreement protecting copyright by the instructor, if necessary)
* Ensure all course materials follow accessibility standards (refer to section below on “How to Create Accessible Course Material”)
* Provide instructional materials and PowerPoint presentations when such resources are requested (the student is required to sign an agreement to ensure accountability and proper use of materials)
* Present disability related issues to the attention of Accessibility Services

### **As an instructor, you should know:**

* What recognized disabilities are and what they are not
* Accommodation requests are based on appropriate documentation of a student's disability
* Managers/counsellors are available to assist and provide consult about how to adapt your course to accommodate a student’s needs
* Some students with disabilities may have academic or behavioural concerns unrelated to their disability. Instructors are not obliged to treat such concerns any differently than they would for a student who does not have a disability

## **How to Create Accessible Course Material**

The [Accessibility for Manitobans Act](http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/) (AMA) defines accessibility as “giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life. Accessibility refers to the ability to access and benefit from a system, service, product or environment.”

When something is accessible, we think of it as being available to a wide range of people. Accessibility involves designing content that removes barriers for all people, and especially for people with disabilities.

From a post-secondary education perspective, accessibility involves making course content accessible to all students regardless of their abilities. This includes access to content in LEARN, class handouts, Power Point lecture slides, Word and PDF documents, and video and audio resources.

In keeping with [The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html), [The Manitoba Human Rights Code](https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/h175e.php), the [Accessibility for Manitobans Act](http://accessibilitymb.ca/#:~:text=The%20Accessibility%20for%20Manitobans%20Act%20became%20law%20on,significant%20portion%20of%20the%20population%20from%20full%20participation.), and [RRC Academic Accommodations Policy (A28)](https://www.rrc.ca/legal/policies/academic-accommodation/), the College is **required** to ensure education access for academically qualified persons with disabilities, hence the requirement for all course material to be accessible. However, it is important to note that everyone benefits from accessible content, not just students with disabilities.

RRC’s Centre for Learning and Program Excellence (CLPE) has developed [accessibility standards](https://www.rrc.ca/flexible-delivery/accessibility/) within the [Flexible Online Delivery Model](https://www.rrc.ca/flexible-delivery/). Included in the model are standards for creating accessible [PDF](https://www.rrc.ca/flexible-delivery/accessibility/pdfs/), [Word](https://www.rrc.ca/flexible-delivery/accessibility/word-documents/) and [PowerPoint](https://www.rrc.ca/flexible-delivery/accessibility/powerpoint/) documents, [audio, video and digital media](https://www.rrc.ca/flexible-delivery/accessibility/audio-video-and-digital-media/), [images](https://www.rrc.ca/flexible-delivery/accessibility/images/), and [LEARN](https://www.rrc.ca/flexible-delivery/accessibility/learn/) content, as well as [accessibility tips](https://www.rrc.ca/flexible-delivery/accessibility/tips/). Instructors are required to review these standards, as all course content **must** meet the standards outlined in the Model.

## **Administration**

### **Documentation Verifying Disability**

Students are required to provide appropriate documentation from a qualified professional (e.g. physician, psychologist, or psychiatrist) in order to be supported by Student Support Services for classroom and/or exam accommodations. This professional has specific training, expertise, and experience in the diagnosis of the condition for which accommodation is being requested.

In the case of a student with a Specific Learning Disorder, a psycho-educational assessment from a certified psychologist is required. This documentation includes:

* Clear identification and diagnosis of the disability
* Indication that the disability impacts academic functioning
* Recommendations for appropriate academic accommodations

This assessment outlines the nature of the disability, the impact the student may face within a learning environment, and recommendations for support services.

The assessment must be current having been administered within the last five years. Students who require a psycho-educational assessment may be able to receive diagnostic services through Accessibility Services.

### **Academic Accommodations**

Academic Accommodations refers to an intervention that helps a student with a disability receive the most benefit from course delivery and demonstrate required performance standards. Accommodations may occur in an academic environment or in a field placement setting. Accommodations must be reasonable, meaning that no one suffers unduly - not the student, the instructor, or the College.

The purpose of academic accommodation is to provide students with documented disabilities equal opportunity to master the essential learning outcomes of a post-secondary education. Students with disabilities have met all admission requirements, but may have done so with the use of accommodations. Similarly, they are expected to meet the same academic and non-academic requirements as their peers without disabilities. Academic accommodations do not relieve students of their responsibility to develop the essential skills and abilities expected of all students.

The nature and type of academic accommodations vary from student to student and are dependent upon the student's disability and the academic requirements.

Academic accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

* Note taking (peer)
* Audio recording of lectures
* Copies of lecture notes, if available
* Priority seating at the front of the class
* Wheelchair accessible desks
* Ergonomic chairs
* Text books and other print material in alternate format
* Assistive technology/software
* ASL – English Interpreters
* Computerized note-takers
* Exam accommodations such as:
* additional time to write quizzes, tests, and/or exams
* private or small group space to write quizzes, tests, and/or exams
* use of a computer when taking quizzes, tests, and/or exams
* quizzes, tests, and/or exams in alternate format (e.g. Braille, enlarged print)
* use of a dictionary or calculator during quizzes, tests, and/or exams if the use of such does not compromise learning outcomes
* oral quizzes, tests and/or exams
* use of a scribe for quizzes, tests, and/or exams
* stretch/bathroom breaks
* use of an ergonomic chair, adjustable table, or podium
* ASL-English interpreting

The manger/counsellor reviews the documentation and, in consultation with the student, recommends accommodations. Accommodations are made judiciously and in accordance with documentation provided.

In determining accommodations it is important that academic standards are not compromised. The student must demonstrate the essential learning outcomes required by the course or program.

Faculty are welcome to discuss the recommendations for accommodations with the Accessibility Services manager/counsellor.

### **Essential Requirements and/or Learning Outcomes**

*Essential requirements* is a specific term used in Human Rights legislation, referring to the bona fide requirements of a task or program that cannot be altered without compromising the fundamentals of the task or program. Determining what is an essential learning outcome, and what is not, is critical in distinguishing requirements that cannot be accommodated from what can, and should, be accommodated.

Learning outcomes essential to accredited programs, or for certification, cannot be waived. To do so would negate the validity of the program. However, while the integrity of academic standards must be upheld, the emphasis of accommodation is the way in which the essential learning outcomes in a program, or course, are attained.

For example, an essential learning outcome may be that a student master core aspects of a course curriculum. It is much less likely that it will be an essential learning outcome to demonstrate the mastery of the course or program in a particular format, unless mastery of that format is also a vital requirement.

It is important that instructors identify the essential learning outcomes in their course and/or program. If an instructor is clear about what the essential learning outcomes are, and why they must be demonstrated in a certain way, it is much easier to determine appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities.

Some questions to consider may include:

1. What is the purpose of this course/program?
2. Is the competency integral to the learning of this course?
3. Does the ability or skill necessarily need to be performed in a prescribed manner? Why?
4. What methods of instruction are non-negotiable and absolutely necessary? Why?

If faculty have concerns that a recommended accommodation compromises essential learning outcomes, a discussion with Accessibility Services is very welcome. If agreement regarding accommodation cannot be found, faculty can the Academic Accommodation Appeal Form *(See Appendix A)*.

### **Field/Practicum/Clinical Considerations**

Students with disabilities may require accommodation in practicum placements, clinical rotations, co-op placements, or other experiential hands-on learning courses. Supports that have been suited to the classroom environment do not necessarily transfer to the work placement environment. Just as essential learning outcomes must be decided for classroom education, they must also be decided for these types of learning experiences. Red River College, together with practicum/clinical supervisors, must define the essential, and nonessential, tasks of the placement.

Programs are not required to lower standards or waive requirements in order to accommodate a student with a disability. However, if entry into a particular profession is to be denied due to a disability, it should not be done without appropriate forethought and consideration. This decision cannot be made without complete and careful consideration of all available information concerning possible accommodations, as well as the capabilities and limitations, of the student with a disability. The College must investigate all possible accommodations available to include the student in the program of study.

There may be times when a student with a disability can meet the essential learning outcomes of course curriculum, but may not be able to fulfill essential requirements in a practicum or clinical setting without creating a risk of considerable harm to the health or safety of self or others. In these cases, if there is no reasonable accommodation available that would allow the student to perform the essential requirements without creating such a risk, the student may need to pursue another type of program/career. However, reasoned professional and/or academic judgment of this should occur on a case by case basis and should not be done in isolation.

**Making Placement Decisions**

The following is predicated on the student's self-disclosure of disability related issues, as well as registration with Accessibility Services:

* Practicum or clinical decisions for students with a disability should be based on a realistic assessment of the student's learning needs and not on biases about their disability. Students with a disability often face attitudinal barriers resulting in prejudicial treatment or discrimination.
* If possible, practicum or clinical arrangements for students with disabilities should be prepared in advance of arrangements for students without disabilities. This may provide more opportunities for the student with a disability to find a barrier-free environment in which to learn.
* Instructors/supervisors of the practicum or clinical rotation should discuss all evaluation procedures, including behavioural standards, with the student with a disability and clarify all questions in advance of the placement.
* Practicum or clinical decisions regarding a student with a disability should not be based on an assessment of a student's potential for future employment in the field.

Accommodations in a practicum or clinical setting may look like, but are not limited to:

* Having a mentor who is sensitive to the challenges of a particular disability
* Using an alternate format or specialized assistive technology or equipment
* Having an individualized schedule
* Experiencing an alternate practicum or clinical location or project
* Receiving more frequent feedback about performance
* Using ASL-English Interpreters

### **Release of Information**

No information, written or verbal, can be released to a third party without the written consent of the student. This applies to faculty and staff of the entire College. Students' disabilities are a private matter and it is their right to share the information as they see fit. It is not appropriate to reveal the use of accommodation of exams to other students or faculty, or to offer any disability related information to another program or potential employer, when providing a reference.

If the accommodations are appropriate, the student's performance is achieved in a fair and equitable manner and reflects ability to the same degree any student's performance reflects individual ability.

Therefore, there is nothing to be gained by revealing the use of accommodations. In fact, there is more to be lost - the student's trust, privacy, and right to confidentiality.

### **Audio Recording of Lectures**

For some students with disabilities, audio-recording of lectures is a useful and necessary accommodation that enables them to gain full access of a course or lecture that might not otherwise be fully available to them. Permission to record lectures should be granted only through Accessibility Services who reviews the documentation from students verifying disability and accommodation requirements.

Faculty is made aware when this accommodation is required. The student recording lectures is required to complete and sign an agreement confirming that the recording will be used exclusively for the purpose of private study.

In some courses, personal discussions and self-disclosure from students is encouraged. If faculty are concerned that the recording of classes will violate students' right to privacy, the student needing the accommodation should be made aware that there may be some classes, or portions of classes, that are deemed inappropriate to record. In such cases, arrangements should be made to provide the student with copies of notes from a peer immediately following these discussions, if possible. These notes should not contain personal information discussed by peers, but refer only to theories or principles discussed.

### **Requesting Copies of Instructor Resources**

For some students with disabilities, having access to instructor resources such as PowerPoint presentations and notes from lectures is a useful and necessary accommodation which enables them to gain full access of a course or lecture that might not otherwise be entirely available to them. To determine eligibility, and ensure appropriate usage, permission to receive instructor resources should be granted only through Accessibility Services who reviews the documentation from students verifying disability and accommodation requirements.

After review, faculty is made aware when this accommodation is required. The student receiving instructor notes or PowerPoint presentations is required to complete and sign an agreement confirming that these resources will be used exclusively for the purpose of private study.

## **Accessibility Services**

<https://www.rrc.ca/accessibility/>

Accessibility Services offers professional and qualified staff to provide services to students with disabilities on a confidential and voluntary basis. Once a student with a disability registers with Accessibility Services, the assigned manager/counsellor becomes the student's "case manager" by assisting in the development and implementation of an accommodation plan. Accessibility Services also informs and provides consultation to faculty, staff, and administration in the College.

Accessibility Services can assist students with disabilities and faculty in the following ways:

* identify reasonable accommodations for the individual student based on the documentation from the student’s registered health care provider
* understand and provide information regarding the impact of the disability on learning and the college experience
* refer students to Exam Accommodations and Assistive Technology, the Academic Success Centre, Assessment Services, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
* encourage students to advocate for themselves
* with the student's consent, advocate for students when appropriate
* refer students for assessment when they do not have appropriate documentation or have never been diagnosed with a disability, but symptoms are evident
* assist students with disabilities in applying for and accessing funds to cover the costs of assistive technology and other equipment and services that
* provide consultation to faculty, staff, and academic administrators on disability policy and best practice and procedures
* provide professional development and training to staff and faculty to increase knowledge of our duty to accommodate

### **Counselling Services**

<https://www.rrc.ca/counselling/>

Personal well-being is fundamental to academic success for anyone in post-secondary education. Thus, providing students with [counselling services](https://www.rrc.ca/counselling/) is an integral component of student success initiatives. Counsellors at RRC are professionally qualified to assist all RRC students with emotional support and problem-solving assistance for a variety of personal, emotional, and social concerns. Common concerns students identify in counselling include; anxiety and depression, family issues, relationship problems, and difficulty adjusting to change. Students with disabilities may be referred to, and benefit from, counselling services.

### **Same Day Crisis Services**

<https://www.rrc.ca/counselling/personal/>

Counselling Services is aware that emergencies requiring immediate attention can exist for students seeking help.

Same Day Crisis Services are offered to assist students who are confronting life threatening circumstances, current or recent traumatic crises, and serious mental illness. Some examples include:

* suicidal thoughts
* the need to be hospitalized
* thoughts about harming another person
* recent assault or abuse
* the safety of someone else
* recent death of a loved one

**If a crisis occurs outside of office hours, students can reach out to local community resources available 24/7.** <https://www.rrc.ca/counselling/personal/community-crisis-resources/>

### **Contact Information**

**Notre Dame Campus**

2055 Notre Dame Avenue

Room D102

Ph. (204) 632-3966

**Exchange District Campus**

160 Princess Street

Room P210

Ph. (204) 949-8375

*Students attending Regional Campuses can contact their designated community counsellor. Contact information is available* [*online*](https://www.rrc.ca/counselling/contact/)*.*

**Exam Accommodations**

[www.rrc.ca/accessibility/exam/](http://www.rrc.ca/accessibility/exam/)

Once students with disabilities are determined eligible for reasonable test/exam accommodation through presentation of verifying documentation (permanent or temporary), they are referred to Exam Accommodations & Assistive Technology (EAAT).

Students who are eligible to receive exam accommodations because of a disability, are entitled to access them under [Human Rights Legislation](https://gov.mb.ca/fs/imd/hr.html) and RRC's [Academic Accommodation Policy](https://www.rrc.ca/legal/policies/academic-accommodation/).

Exam accommodations are intended to "level the playing field" for students with disabilities. Facilitators with Exam Accommodations work together with the student, as well as faculty, to make arrangements for accommodation.

***Please note:*** *Eligible students are able to utilize exam accommodations for all quizzes, tests, exams, and graded in-class assignments, regardless of exam length or percentage of total grade.*

### **The Role of Exam Accommodations**

* Provide test/exam accommodations in a supervised but accommodating environment while maintaining test/exam integrity and Red River College policies
* Schedule tests/exams and coordinate with instructors to receive the required test/exam materials
* Maintain a secure environment for tests/exams
* Notify instructors regarding students requiring exam accommodations
* Educate students and staff on test/exam procedures

### **Student Responsibilities**

* Register with Accessibility Services
* Provide the necessary documentation of a disability and maintain regular contact with their manager/counsellor for re-assessment of needs
* Contact each instructor about writing their tests/exams with this department by presenting to the instructor a Letter of Exam Accommodations. Although not a requirement to receive exam accommodations, students are encouraged to discuss their accommodation plan with their instructor(s).
* Submit an exam request to Exam Accommodations, through the Accessibility Services Self-Service website, at least seven (7) days prior to the test/exam they require accommodations for
* Follow all procedures as outlined in the [Exam Accommodations – Student Responsibilities](https://cpb-ca-c1.wpmucdn.com/www.rrc.ca/dist/4/9/files/2019/09/NDC-Student-Responsibilities.pdf) document.
* Follow Red River College test/exam writing policies

### **Faculty Responsibilities**

* Provide sufficient notice of scheduled tests/exams to students (i.e. at least seven (7) days) to allow Exam Accommodations time to arrange for the required accommodations
* Use and regularly check their RRC email account, as this is the main method used to correspond with faculty regarding exam accommodations
* Provide Exam Accommodations with all information necessary to invigilate the exam, either through completion of an Exam Cover Sheet (provided by Exam Accommodations), or submission of details electronically
* Deliver exams or submit them electronically, and pick up completed exams from Exam Accommodations
* Provide the complete exam package, including any special instructions and allowed reference materials/equipment
* Be available to answer questions during test/exam (e.g., in person, telephone, text messaging), including student’s eligible time extension (i.e., in person, telephone, text messaging, or email), if necessary
* Discuss with the student or, when applicable, the student's manager/counsellor, appropriate accommodation or concerns for the test/exam
* Inform Exam Accommodations of any changes or errors in tests/exams
* Inform Exam Accommodations if, during the course of the exam, students writing in the classroom setting are provided with additional time, or are provided with additional information regarding the test/exam
* If the invigilation of a quiz, test, or exam requires the knowledge, or judgment, of the instructor or teaching assistant from the program, the academic program, in collaboration with Exam Accommodations, will provide accommodation

### **Possible Test/Exam Accommodations**

Accommodations are tailored to individual student needs and specific test/exam situations. If an instructor believes that a test/exam accommodation compromises learning outcomes, it is critical that this opinion be shared with Accessibility Services so the situation can be reviewed.

Commonly requested test/exam accommodations include (but are not limited to):

* Extended time – a student’s extended time is based on the disability related documentation completed by the student’s health care provider, the format of the exam, as well as course content. 1.5X (150%) that of the rest of the class is the most common time extension.
* Private or small group space to minimize distraction
* Alternate format of test/exam - the test/exam may need to be converted to enlarged print, e-text or Braille, printed on coloured paper, or graphs/charts may need to be created in a tactile format
* Assistive technology/software/equipment, technology (e.g. computers, calculators, or spell checkers), or software programs (e.g. screen reader, magnification, text to speech, speech to text)
* Test/exam date/time change if multiple tests are scheduled on the same day a date/time change may be required or a student may require a test/exam to be split into sections
* Physical accommodations - stretch, special seating, washroom breaks due to medical condition, adjustable table/chair, natural lighting
* Early preview of test/exam - ASL interpreter may need to preview the test/exam to prepare for the interpretation of questions. If the exam is required to be provided in alternate format, Exam Accommodations will need to receive the exam in advance in order to complete the required reformatting. Two copies of the exam is required – one for the student and one for the interpreter to reference during the exam
* Deaf students may choose to answer test and examination questions in ASL (their first language) and responses will be scribed by the ASL-English interpreter into English
* Test questions read - all or some of the questions may need to be read aloud by the proctor
* Test questions scribed – all, or some, of the student’s answers, given orally, are scribed or typed verbatim by a proctor; they may also fill out a Scantron answer sheet - according to the student's instructions
* Additional copy of the test/exam - a proctor may invigilate an oral exam and would require their own copy of the test to read the questions to the student
* Editing - spelling, grammar, sentence mechanics, spell/grammar check may be required; both the student's answers (draft) and the edited (final copy) is returned to the instructor; editing is not permitted for tests/exams where demonstration of editing is being assessed (i.e. Communications)
* Music – the student is permitted to listen to music during the exam while writing in a private room. The student is only permitted to listen to music using an Exam Accommodations electronic device, which is programmed so the student is unable to access any other applications or websites.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

*Q – What should I do if I feel a test/exam accommodation is not warranted?*

A – Contact the student’s manager/counsellor to discuss your concerns. If the counsellor has consent from the student they can share information with you that may provide understanding. You can also discuss your concerns with the student, but ensure that you do so privately and with a sense of willingness to learn from the student.

Students often feel stigma attached to their disability, so it is important to understand that the student may have some sensitivity concerning such a discussion. Additionally, students have a right to keep their disability information confidential and may choose not to provide you with the information you are looking for.

*Q – The student doesn’t look like they have a disability, why are they receiving accommodations?*

A – Not all disabilities are visible. Learning disorders, epilepsy, head injury, or Fibromyalgia are all examples of "invisible" disabilities which may require some form of test/exam accommodation.

*Q – What can I do if a student does not tell me what their disability is?*

A – Some students may be uncomfortable speaking about their disability and, due to confidentiality, the student is not required to disclose their disability to you. Because personal health information is confidential, ask the student if you can contact their manager/counsellor to discuss the needed accommodations and how those accommodations may impact the program.

 If you show a willingness to understand and work with the student, the student may feel more comfortable discussing the situation.

*Q – Why do students need accommodations for some tests/exams and not for others?*

A – Test/exam accommodations are dependent on the disability and the format of the test/exam. Someone with a back injury may only need the accommodation for lengthier exams. Some students may need more time for tests/exams that require a great deal of writing as compared to tests/exams that are multiple-choice.

*Q – What is Letter of Exam Accommodations?*

A – The Letter of Exam Accommodations (LEA) informs the instructor, in writing, what accommodations the student is eligible to receive.

An Exam Accommodations Facilitator meets with the student and creates a letter for each course. The student is then expected to hand deliver the letter to each instructor. This provides an opportunity for the student to discuss their academic needs with the instructor, as well as to discuss the accommodations and impact their disability may have on the program.

This form is used for all tests/exams scheduled for the semester.

*Q – What if the student does not provide me with a Letter of Exam Accommodations?*

A – Students are encouraged to provide the instructor with a LEA as well as discuss their academic and accommodation needs. However, **due to RRC’s duty to accommodate, accommodations must be provided regardless of whether or not a LEA is presented to the instructor**. Exam Accommodations staff confirms a student’s eligibility for exam accommodations before requesting a copy of the test/exam from the instructor.

*Q – Why do I have to complete an Exam Cover Sheet for each test/exam?*

A – It is vital that instructors provide Exam Accommodations staff with all information required to facilitate the exam.  Providing detailed information regarding the exam is required in order for Exam Accommodations staff to organize exams, as well as ensure exams are properly administered by Exam Accommodations staff (e.g., only authorized materials are allowed). Exam Accommodations staff will provide instructors with instructions on how to convey this information.

*Q – Why do I need to deliver exams and pick up completed exams from Exam Accommodations?*

A – Exam Accommodations invigilates approximately 4000 exams per year. As a result, Exam Accommodations staff does not have the resources to pick up and drop off exams due to volume. Additionally, instructors are often not at their desks when deliveries are attempted.

Instructors can also email exams to Exam Accommodations. Once the exam is printed, the electronic file is deleted.

### **Test Anxiety**

Everyone feels nervous before a test. This is natural as well as normal. Everyone wonders if they can answer the questions, if they have prepared enough, or if they will remember what they have studied. In fact, a certain amount of nervous tension often helps students perform to the best of their ability and produces a healthy rush of adrenaline which gives them what they need to stay alert and focused.

However, too much anxiety can also BLOCK thoughts, create a negative frame of mind, and lead to panic as well as poor test performance.

#### **What Does Test Anxiety Feel Like?**

Some students experience physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea, faintness, or feeling too hot/ too cold, etc. Others experience emotional symptoms such as crying easily, feeling irritable, or getting frustrated quickly.

Typically, the most significant challenge related to test anxiety is its effect on thinking ability. It can cause a student to “blank out” or have racing thoughts that are difficult to control. There are a number of things students can do to help manage test anxiety, which turns uncomfortable, panicky thoughts into more creative tension. Test anxiety can be directly related to underdeveloped study, testing taking, and time management skills. The Academic Success Centre can help students with test taking strategies and developing these kinds of skills. In addition, Accessibility Services can assist students in developing strategies to manage the anxiety.

***Please note:***  *Test Anxiety may interfere with an individual's ability to demonstrate their knowledge, but it is not a diagnosable disability which would qualify for exam accommodations (i.e. extra time). If a student identifies to their instructor as having anxiety about test taking, encourage the student to review the* [*ASC Test Anxiety webpage*](https://library.rrc.ca/ASC_Student_Success_Skills/Test_Anxiety) *as well as connect with an* [*ASC Academic Coach*](https://library.rrc.ca/ASC_Tutoring_Coaching/Academic_Coaching)*.*

### **Provincial/National Exams or Licensing and Professional Bodies**

When a student completes a college program, they may need to write a provincial or national exam to be licensed with the professional association of their chosen vocation.

The licensing or professional body is also responsible for reasonably accommodating the student with a disability. Just as is required of the College, the licensing or professional body is required to demonstrate that their rules and standards are reasonable and justifiable.

Accessibility Services provides assistance to students with a disability who are applying for accommodation when writing tests for professional licenses. The licensing body should have a process in place for a student with a disability to request these accommodations, and when necessary, the Accessibility Services manager/counsellor discusses the potential accommodations with the licensing body so the accommodation is designed in a way that reduces potential conflict with the licensing body's rules and standards.

### **Contact Information**

**Notre Dame Campus**

2055 Notre Dame Avenue

Room D110

Ph. (204) 632-3992 or (204) 632-2592

**Exchange District Campus**

160 Princess Street

Room P210

Ph. (204) 949-8392

## **Assistive Technology and Alternate Format**

<https://www.rrc.ca/accessibility/assistive-technology/>

### **Assistive Technology**

Assistive Technology refers to any item, piece of equipment, product, or system which directly improves functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

The key to effective assistive technology is finding the right match between the technological tool, the individual's needs, and the implementation. Identifying the appropriate tool is typically easy - addressing the needs and implementation may not be as easy.

Devices or equipment may be high tech - such as using sophisticated electronics, or low tech, such as using sticky notes, chart systems, calendars, or check lists.

Below are some examples of appropriate assistive technology for adults with various disabilities. The purpose of the assistive technology is to alleviate, or compensate, for any difficulties caused by the disability.

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders:**

* Audio recorder or Livescribe Pen (compensating for attentional difficulties during lectures)
* Mind mapping software/graphic organizers (organizing thoughts and content)
* Text-to-speech reading software (enhancing reading comprehension i.e. research shows that presenting information in multiple modalities (e.g., visual and auditory) assists students with ADHD in sustaining attention)
* Various mobile apps – calendars, timers, and other reminders (helping with time management and organization)
* Noise-canceling headphones
* Highlighter pens

**Blind/Partially Sighted:**

* Screen reader software (allowing individuals to independently use computers, including navigating the Internet)
* Refreshable Braille display (allowing individuals to read text in a tactile format that is typically displayed visually on a computer monitor)
* Magnification software (enlarging text and images on a computer monitor)
* Portable magnifiers (allowing individuals to read signs, print on a white board, and other print materials such as instructor handouts)

**Deaf/Hard of Hearing:**

* Assistive listening devices (hearing aids, FM systems)
* Computerized note-taker for class lectures, group work
* Closed captioned videos
* Closed captioned lectures/ presentations
* Mobile devices for texting
* Video screens (mobile devices or computers) to communicate using American Sign Language
* Speech-to-text software

**Physical/Mobility Disabilities:**

* Height adjustable desks
* Adjustable/ergonomic chairs
* Ergonomic keyboards
* Touchpad/trackball computer mouse
* Touch screen tablets (replacing keyboarding)
* Audio recordings (compensating for any writing difficulties during class lectures)
* Speech-to-text software (for writing difficulties)
* Electronic books (for those who have trouble manipulating books)

**Specific Learning Disorders** (reading, writing and math disabilities):

* Text-to-speech reading software (enhancing reading comprehension)
* Reading rulers
* Highlighter pens
* Word processor (MS Word) features, such as spelling and grammar checker (compensating for writing difficulties)
* Speech-to-text software, such as Dragon Naturally Speaking (compensating for writing difficulties)
* Audio recorder or Livescribe Pen (compensating for spelling difficulties during lectures)
* Mind mapping software/graphic organizers (organizing thoughts and content)
* Calculator (alleviating math difficulties)
* Graph paper for math calculations (helping with number alignment)
* Various mobile apps – calendars, timers, and other reminders (helping with time management and organization)

### **Assistive Technology at RRC**

Exam Accommodations & Assistive Technology staff provide assistive technology assessments for students with disabilities to determine what, if any, assistive technology could benefit a student in their academic program. Staff also provide assistive technology training to students to ensure they have the necessary skills needed to use the equipment effectively.

Between the Notre Dame Campus and the Exchange District Campus, the following assistive technology is available through Accessibility Services:

* Desktop computers with the following programs:
* Kurzweil 3000 - comprehensive software that supports students with reading, writing, and study skills, including text-to-speech reading capabilities.
	+ RRC has a Kurzweil 3000 site license, which allows all RRC students and staff to access the software. Interested students and staff simply need to contact the RRC Assistive Technologist to request access.
	+ While this software is most commonly used by students with disabilities, the **Kurzweil features are such that all students can benefit from this software**.
* ZoomText - Screen magnification and screen reading program for partially sighted students
* JAWS - screen-reading software for students who are blind
* Dragon Naturally Speaking - computer voice recognition system which allows a student's speech to convert to text
* Livescribe pens – simultaneously records instructor lectures and student notes and links the two for quick and easy review at a later time
* Braille embosser (printer)
* Braille label maker
* Ergonomic keyboards
* Large screen monitors
* Large print keyboards
* Touchpad computer mice
* Trackball computer mice
* Reading rulers

### **Alternate Format of Print Materials**

<https://www.rrc.ca/accessibility/assistive-technology/alternate-format/>

Students with disabilities may benefit from the provision of alternate format for their print materials. If students have learning disorders in the area of reading, have ADHD, are blind, or partially sighted, this can be particularly useful.

With reading software and electronic textbooks, students can listen to their textbooks and follow along with the text displayed on their computers. Students who are partially sighted may utilize electronic textbooks by magnifying the text on their computer. Students who are blind may use screen reader software to read electronic textbooks, or they may prefer to access textbook material in a Braille format.

Exam Accommodations & Assistive Technology is responsible for securing the necessary alternate format materials for RRC students. This is done through special requests to publishing companies (in the case of e-text) and Special Material Services, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. In some cases, alternate format is created “in-house” by Exam Accommodations & Assistive Technology staff (e.g., course outlines, class schedules, tests/exams).

Obtaining alternate formats can take anywhere from a few hours, when requesting e-versions of common textbooks from publishers, to four months for more specialized/complex requests (e.g., a Braille version of a math textbook). As a result, students are encouraged to contact Exam Accommodations & Assistive Technology well in advance of the start of their courses to ensure alternate format material is available on time. Similarly, it is vital that instructors confirm their textbook lists several months in advance to ensure time to obtain the necessary material.

If instructors develop their own print materials that students are required to purchase or read, arrangements can be made for these materials to be converted into an alternate format, within Exam Accommodations & Assistive Technology, either by scanning the print material or utilizing an electronic version. However, depending on the size of document or package of materials, this can be labour intensive. The more lead-time Exam Accommodations & Assistive Technology has in these situations, the more likely it is that the student with a disability can use the alternate format at the time needed for class. Providing Student Support Services with an electronic version (MS Word) is preferred, as this eliminates the need to scan material, and thus, accelerates the production process.

Exam Accommodations & Assistive Technology also reproduces quizzes/tests/exams in alternate formats. Should one of your students require an alternate format, Exam Accommodations staff will contact you approximately 1 week in advance of the test date to request a copy of the test. Once again, Exam Accommodations staff will request a MS Word version of the test, as this format is the easiest to manipulate.

### **Contact Information**

**Notre Dame Campus**

2055 Notre Dame Avenue

Room D110

Ph. (204) 632-3998 or (204) 632-3808

**Exchange District Campus**

160 Princess Street

Room P210

Ph. (204) 949-8392

## **Academic Success Centre**

[www.rrc.ca/asc](http://www.rrc.ca/asc)

The Academic Success Centre provides a variety of academic supports to students at Red River College. ASC staff can match students with tutors, academic coaches, study groups, or supplemental instruction classes to review content and develop new study skills. Students can also visit ASC for study skill handouts, referrals, or on-line study resources.

*Specific services are available for students with disabilities.*

### **Staff Tutoring for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities may be referred by their manager/counsellor for individualized tutoring with a staff tutor. Disabilities include; diagnosed specific learning disorders, physical/auditory/visual disabilities, mental health, and chronic medical conditions.

To access this service, direct students to Accessibility Services where their eligibility for disability-based tutoring support will be assessed. If eligible, full-time students typically receive 2-3 hours of academic support per week from experienced staff tutors. Tutoring hours for part-time students are pro-rated to reflect their course loads.

*Early detection and intervention are key*. The sooner the student connects with Student Support Services and the Academic Success Centre, the greater their chances for success!

*Students requiring staff tutoring in programs with a high degree of specialization are strongly advised to make tutoring arrangements several months before the start of their program, as a suitable tutoring match cannot be guaranteed.*

### **Other Academic Supports**

Students with disabilities can also take part in the many workshops, EAL supports, study groups, and supplemental instruction sessions that the ASC offers. These are advertised on posters throughout the College as well as on the [ASC website](https://rrclibrary.libguides.com/ASC). Students are encouraged to contact the Tutoring Supervisor for more information.

### **Contact Information**

**Notre Dame Campus**

2055 Notre Dame Avenue

Room CM40 (Library)

Ph. (204) 632-2251

**Exchange District Campus**

160 Princess Street

Room P214D (Beside the Library)

Ph. (204) 631-3342

## **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services**

[www.rrc.ca/interpretingservices](http://www.rrc.ca/interpretingservices)

Deaf and Hard of Hearings Services works with students to determine the best support services to reduce barriers to accessibility.

Deaf students and those who have a hearing loss may have ASL-English interpreters or computerized note takers in classes.

### **The Role of ASL-English Interpreters and Computerized Note-Takers**

American Sign Language- English (ASL) interpreters and computerized note-takers provide services to Deaf and hard of hearing students and College faculty and staff.

ASL-English interpreters facilitate communication from English to American Sign Language and from American Sign Language to English. Everything that is heard will be interpreted to ensure access to information. As well, when a Deaf person uses ASL, the interpreter will voice the message into English.

Computerized note-takers facilitate communication for hard of hearing students at the College. Everything that is heard is captured in real time using a laptop computer.

Both ASL-English interpreters and computerized note-takers provide communication support services in lectures, labs, seminars, tutorials, meetings, demonstrations, presentations and other College events and activities as needed.

### **Code of Ethics**

ASL- English interpreters and the computerized note-takers adhere to the [Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada's Code of Conduct.](https://www.avlic.ca/ethics-and-guidlines/english#overlay-context=user/285)

* ASL-English interpreters and computerized note-takers will remain neutral and will not interject their personal opinions and therefore, they cannot participate in class discussions or activities
* ASL-English interpreters and computerized note-takers will respect the privacy of consumers and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional services
* Every interpretation shall be faithful to and render exactly the message of the source language; interpreters and note-takers do not delete, explain, define or repeat information
* ASL-English interpreters and computerized note-takers are responsible for properly preparing themselves for the work assigned. Preparation materials will be requested to ensure the highest quality services.
* ASL-English interpreters and computerized note-takers shall approach professional services with respect and cultural sensitivity towards all participants

### **Contact Information**

**Notre Dame Campus**

2055 Notre Dame Avenue

Room D106

Ph. (204) 632-3092

# **Part 2. Disabilities and Disorders**

## **Guiding Principles**

* A person with a disability is a person first
* Treat a person with a disability as a healthy person; although a person may require accommodation, it does not mean the person is sick
* Recognize that disabilities can vary across a spectrum of severity
* It is always good to focus on the student's capabilities and individuality
* Persons with disabilities, like all people, have a range of strengths, abilities, and challenges that are unique to their own experience
* As an instructor, your role is to assist the student in finding practical solutions to specific requirements
* It is important that faculty not lower their expectations of a student due to assumed limitations
* It is important that faculty understand the difference between the provision of accommodations that remove barriers to education and lowering of academic expectation
* At the beginning of a term or semester, it would be helpful to invite students who require accommodations because of a disability, to meet privately with you. Some students are more willing to disclose if they believe their instructors are receptive to such a conversation. This announcement can be made verbally, but should also be included in the course outline
* It is important to remember that accommodations made in the classroom will likely benefit all students, not simply those who have a recognized disability

## **Types of Disabilities**

In order to qualify as a student with a disability, and thus for academic accommodation, a student's disability must be consistent with the [**definition**](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/education/grants/disabilities.html) as described by the Government of Canada:

Permanent Disability means, “a functional limitation caused by a physical, or mental, impairment that restricts the ability of a person to perform the daily activities necessary to participate in studies at a post-secondary school level or the labour market and is expected to remain with the person for the person's expected life."

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/education/grants/disabilities.html>

Accessibility Services at Red River College recognizes various major areas of disability that are consistent with this definition and are likely to occur among the college population. They are:

* Acquired Brain Injury
* Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders
* Autism Spectrum Disorder
* Blind and Partial Vision/Low Vision
* Chronic Illnesses
* Deaf and Hard of Hearing
* Mental Health Disabilities
* Physical/Mobility Disabilities
* Specific Learning Disorders

In this section, a brief introduction is given regarding the most common types of disabilities presented by students at Red River College. Various instructional and academic accommodations for these disabilities are also provided. This information is not meant to be exhaustive but rather to provide some helpful information for faculty. If faculty would like further information, please contact [Accessibility Services.](https://www.rrc.ca/accessibility/contact/)

### **Acquired Brain Injury**

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) is any type of injury to the brain that occurs after birth. It can result from trauma, hypoxia, infection, substance abuse, degenerative neurological disease, or stroke.

The impact depends not only on the cause, but also on which area of the brain suffers damage. ABI can affect a person's physical, cognitive, or emotional functions or, in some cases, all three. This may have serious consequences for the person's level of independence. It is common for many people with ABI to experience increased mental and physical fatigue and some slowing down in the speed with which they process information and solve problems. They may experience changes in their behaviour and personality, physical and sensory abilities, or thinking and learning.

The effects of Acquired Brain Injury may lessen after several years, but many symptoms can remain indefinitely, causing long-term cognitive, social, or emotional difficulties. In many cases, the person who has experienced a brain injury must cope with the sudden realization that mentally they are not the same as before the injury. Depression is a common outcome for individuals who have suffered brain injury, as well as a sense of denial and inaccurate self-observation.

#### **Educational Implications of Acquired Brain Injury**

Students with ABI who enter Red River College, are required to meet all entrance requirements, as do all students entering the college. However, students with Acquired Brain Injuries, depending on the severity, will be impacted educationally. Some possible effects include:

* Poor memory and/or concentration skills
* Slower rate of information processing
* Difficulty reasoning and problem solving
* Difficulty organizing time and prioritizing
* Difficulty with language comprehension and speech
* Physical problems: affected vision, dizziness, headaches, fatigue, pain, fine motor skills, and coordination
* Social difficulties: impulsive or disruptive behaviour; inappropriate responses
* Possible feelings of low self-esteem, depression, or anxiety

#### **Instructional Strategies and Exam Accommodations for Students with ABI**

Many of the instructional strategies and exam accommodations useful for students with learning disorders will also apply to the student with Acquired Brain Injury.

* Due to difficulties with concentration, it may be important for the student to sit near the front of the class
* Students with ABI may need a note-taker or may need to audio record lectures
* Students with ABI may benefit from assistive technologies
* Acquiring print materials in alternate format may be very useful; it is important that instructors provide a list of required reading material months in advance, if possible
* Students with ABI need additional time for tests and exams
* They benefit from a distraction-free examination setting
* They may need short breaks during testing
* They may require exams be broken into smaller pieces and be tested in units
* Students with ABI may perform better with visual stimulus, i.e., multiple choice rather than essay exams

### **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting both children and adults. It is described as a persistent or on-going pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that gets in the way of daily life or typical development. Individuals with ADHD may also have difficulties with maintaining attention, executive functioning (or the brain’s ability to begin an activity, organize itself and manage tasks), and working memory.

**There are three presentations of ADHD:**

* Inattentive
* Hyperactive-impulsive
* Combined inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive

**What can ADHD look like?**

**Inattentive presentation:**

* Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
* Has difficulty sustaining attention
* Does not appear to listen
* Struggles to follow through on instructions
* Has difficulty with organization
* Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring a lot thinking
* Loses things
* Is easily distracted
* Is forgetful in daily activities

**Hyperactive-impulsive presentation:**

* Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair
* Has difficulty remaining seated
* Runs about or climbs excessively in children; extreme restlessness in adults
* Difficulty engaging in activities quietly
* Acts as if driven by a motor; adults often feel inside like they are driven by a motor
* Talks excessively
* Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
* Difficulty waiting or taking turns

**How post-secondary culture and environment can impact a student with ADHD:**

* Expectations of increased independence at post-secondary level can be challenging; trouble with time management, missed deadlines, managing decreased parental involvement etc.
* Longer class lengths at post-secondary level with fewer breaks can impact concentration, focus, and behaviour
* Fewer individualized supports in the classroom can lead to an abrupt change in classroom experience
* Issues with impulsivity can lead to behavioural issues which may impact relationships with instructors and classmates and, in some cases, may lead to removal from the class, probation and suspension

**Interventions for students with ADHD include some, or all, of the following:**

* Increasing self-awareness
* Learning self-management strategies
* Increasing study skills
* Time management
* Using accommodations
* Taking medication
* Counselling

#### **Educational Implications of ADHD**

Students with ADHD may have problems sustaining attention for long periods of time and may be prone to daydreaming, or the student with ADHD may be easily distracted and "hyper." Impulsivity affects students with ADHD in their care and attention to detail, causing them to rush through work and failing to proofread for errors.

Other problems can be expressed in the following ways:

* Slow and inefficient reading
* Distractibility
* Frequent and careless errors (math and grammar)
* Slow essay writing, including difficulty organizing thoughts and expressing those thoughts on paper in a coherent manner
* Time management
* Poor concentration
* Weak handwriting
* Anxiety
* Procrastination and organization
* Problems with follow through
* May follow intuition rather than logic

#### **Instructional strategies for Students with ADHD**

Using some of the following instructional strategies for course preparation, presentation of lectures, developing assignments, and exams will not only help your students with ADHD, but will also help all of your students succeed.

As was noted as instructional strategies for students with learning disorders, it is recommended that faculty:

* Select well-organized texts with aids such as chapter summaries, glossaries, indexes
* Make book lists and other materials available well in advance
* Make syllabus available and, if possible, discuss it with students in advance
* Begin lecture with brief review of material covered previous day
* Vary the pace and activities in class and allow breaks if lectures are longer than one hour
* Give written reinforcement of oral instructions and assignments
* Invite students with ADHD to sit near front of class to minimize distractibility
* Discuss with the student what helps them best - they are often experts at their own "variety" of ADHD

Note-takers and/or audio recordings of lecture materials may be helpful by ensuring the student does not miss information when attention and concentration are affected.

#### **Exam Accommodations for Students with ADHD**

Below are a number of exam accommodations typically recommended for students with ADHD. These accommodations are based on the recommendations of a diagnosing professional and on psychometric findings.

* Extended time on tests and exams
* Breaks
* Writing exams in a quiet, reduced distraction setting (e.g., with fewer students)
* Writing exams alone to allow for talking aloud
* Use of a white noise machine, noise cancelling headphones, or listening to music

### **Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behaviors. As of May 2013, all autism disorders (Asperger Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified, and RETT Syndrome) were merged into one umbrella diagnosis of autism. Depending on the year of diagnosis, or because of personal preference, students may continue to use disability labels such as Asperger Syndrome, or describe themselves as neurodiverse, when talking about their disability. Doctors, psychiatrists, developmental pediatricians, and clinical psychologists are professionals who diagnosis ASD.

For a diagnosis of ASD:

* Symptoms must be present from early development
* Symptoms cause clinically significant challenges in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning
* Persons with ASD are distinguished through the spectrum by level of support: Level 1 (requiring support), 2 (requiring substantial support) or 3 (requiring very substantial support) due to functional limitations in each of the three categories.

**The Paradox**

All individuals with ASD present a unique variety of strengths and challenges. In a person with ASD you may notice the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Difficulties with**  | **Strengths**  |
| * holistic thinking
* being imaginative
* understanding figurative language
* being flexible
* pragmatics
 | * often above average intellect
* verbal and articulate
* detail oriented
* rote memory
* literal interpretations
* respond well to structure and routine
* practice/logical
 |
| **It has its advantages!**  | **Challenges in everyday life**  |
| * original thinking
* excellent memory for details
* concentration on and expertise in a special interest area
* honesty – not afraid to say what they think
* firm in beliefs (not wishy-washy)
 | * interacting with others ( at work, home and school)
* decoding subtle cues
* changes and transitions that are unexpected
* rigid (black and white) thinking
* finding meaningful work
* being understood
* sensory issues
 |

#### **Examples of Ways the Post-Secondary Culture and Environment Can Impact a Student with ASD in the Classroom**

* Group Work: A student may struggle with group selection, initiating and creating group work plans, making sense of team dynamics, and rules
* Socialization/Networking: a student may struggle with isolation from peers and instructors, loud noises levels, and unclear roles involved in educational networking events can increase symptoms of ASD and overwhelm
* Students with ASD may struggle with generalist programming (interests can be narrow)
* ASD can impact time management and organization
* Students with ASD may not be able to meet classroom participation expectations in traditional ways
* Impacted dexterity can decrease efficacy of tasks involving fine motor skills (use of tools, medical and lab equipment, culinary instruments etc.)

#### **How Autism can Impact “Theory of Mind” and an Understanding of RRC’s Hidden Curriculum**

The mind is comprised of beliefs, desires, emotions, perceptions, and intentions. Theory of mind is the ability to attribute these mental states to self and others in order to understand and predict behavior For example, knowing when another is feeling sad or upset based on their non-verbal body language. It involves making the distinction between the *real* world and *mental representations* of the world. Individuals with autism spectrum disorder tend to be less proficient “mind readers” compared to others without an ASD diagnosis.

The post-secondary hidden-curriculum concept is based on the recognition that students absorb lessons in school that may or may not be part of the formal course of study. For example, how they should interact with peers, teachers, and other adults on campus. Ideas and behaviors that are considered acceptable, or unacceptable, within a college setting are often taught informally through an understanding of the social environment and are reliant on a person’s ability to ‘read the room’ and respond accordingly.

Students with ASD are often great at revealing the hidden curriculum in a classroom and on campus. While a unique world view can offer a fresh perspective and reveal the campus community’s unspoken rules and norms, students with ASD may benefit from support and understanding that makes the implicit more explicit.

#### **Supporting Students with Autism**

* Speak privately to the student, if they approach you, to discuss their disability or classroom needs
* Set expectations directly through verbal explanations. For example, if you have 15 minutes to meet with your student state that expectation from the start and indicate verbally when the meeting is coming to a close; do not rely on non-verbal cues (watch checking, standing, prolonged conversational pauses) to indicate that the meeting needs to wrap-up
* Consider creating a discussion around class rules at the start of the course for all students; get specific about lateness, attendance policies, and participation expectations

#### **Class Participation**

A person with ASD may not realize that the tone of their voice is loud, that they are interrupting, or speaking out of turn. They also may not pick up on subtle social cues that this type of behaviour may be considered disrespectful or disruptive in a classroom setting.

**Tips**:

* Determine a set number of questions that the student is able to ask during class; communicate the rule verbally to the student
* Arrange a private signal or a (non-derogatory) code word, or phrase, to cue the student if they are dominating discussion
* Pre-arrange time after class, or during office hours, for further questions
* Consult with Accessibility Services

A student with ASD can also present as problematically quiet (never volunteers to speak in class, may sit separate from peers, avoids eye contact, and fidgets when attention is on them). It is important to remember that a quiet student with ASD is not always disengaged. Many students with ASD are forced to spend a lot of their in-class energy deciphering social cues and managing and organizing all of the information and discussions that happen within class. Because of unique processing needs, a student with ASD’s ability to participate in traditional ways, and at the speed of their peers, may be impacted and they may manage by staying quiet.

**Tips:**

* Consider allowing different methods of demonstrating class participation (a journal submission, blog, or web thread)
* Allow students with ASD to leave class on occasion for short break. A break can be helpful if they are feeling overstimulated
* Recognize that the need to fidget or doodle can be a focusing technique; if it is distracting to the class it is reasonable to tell this to the student privately and brainstorm quieter solutions (e.g. use of a hand held stress ball)
* Allow for help with note-taking; making copies of your PowerPoints available online before class, allow lectures to be recorded

**Group Work**

Group work can build on a student’s unique strengths and needs, but it can also be a source of stress for a student with ASD.

**Tips:**

* Speak privately to student with ASD about their group work needs
* Consider assigning groups or assisting students with their group selection
* Consider introducing group work contracts; i.e. a document that each group uses to set expectations and distribute work load and manage conflict
* For larger group projects, consider creating a timeline guide for completion of work to assist students with structuring their time and setting milestone goals
* If learning outcomes will not be impacted, consider including alternative independent project options.

#### **Exam Accommodations for Students with ASD**

Although each individual is unique and accommodations can vary, the following accommodations may be helpful to students with Asperger Syndrome:

* Extended time to review and clarify instructions
* Private space to minimize distraction and assist with organization
* Earplugs or noise-canceling headsets, when appropriate
* Computer use, especially word processing, for writing

#### **Educational Video for Faculty**

[The will of opportunity -- the path of autism to college](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sg9TlsMRVA) | Kerry Magro | TEDxJerseyCity

In this talk, you will hear from Kerry Magro a 26-year-old adult who was nonverbal at 2 ½ years of age and diagnosed with autism at 4. He has just recently graduated with a Master’s Degree in Strategic Communication and Leadership from Seton Hall University and today is a national motivational speaker.

In Kerry’s talk he will discuss his experiences navigating education, creating a path both to, and through, college. This will include time management, managing independence, advocating for your needs, and much more! Above all, Kerry will share how there is a great deal of potential for those with autism to thrive in college and give other examples of individuals who are doing it today.

#### **Websites and Blogs**

[Musings of an Aspie](http://musingsofanaspie.com) – This blog is written and managed by Cynthia Kim, a 42 year old adult who received a late diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome. It provides visitors with resources, essential readings, strategies, stories, opinions, and more for anyone wishing to learn.

[Autism Manitoba](http://www.autismmanitoba.com/) – This website is dedicated to the promotion of quality of life for people living with ASD and their families. It provides information and resources about programs and services available to the ASD community in Manitoba.

[Asperger Manitoba](http://www.asperger-manitoba.ca/) – This website provides supports for individuals and families living with Asperger Syndrome. It works to build awareness, increase understanding, and ensure that resources are available to the community.

### **Blindness and Partially Sighted/Low Vision**

The term *partially sighted or low vision* is used to describe a variety of challenges with eyesight from total blindness to variations of partial sightedness.

Visual acuity is "normal," or 20/20, when the bottom line of the Snellen wall chart can be read at 20 feet. Visual acuity of 20/200 would indicate that only the top line can be read at 20 feet, whereas an individual with “normal” vision can read the same line at 200 feet.

Individuals with visual acuity equal to, or less than, 20/200 are considered to be legally blind. It is impossible to correct their vision by medical or surgical means or corrective glasses/lenses. These individuals rely on the use of dog guides or white canes to assist them, as well as the use of sound and touch. They may use Braille, audio texts, and a variety of assistive technologies.

Partial sight, or low vision, is another category of vision loss that refers to individuals with acuity levels between 20/70 and 20/200, or from mild to severe. Some possibilities include:

* Distinguishing colours
* Reading a whiteboard or textbook with special glasses or a monocular
* Having adequate vision if they read in excellent light and rest their eyes frequently
* Reading textbooks/other materials if the print is enlarged
* Seeing objects at a distance with little difficulty but are unable to see immediately in front of them

Although most sighted people associate Braille with blindness/low vision, not all individuals are proficient with Braille. Most use assistive technology such as audio recorded books, scanners, or screen-reading computer systems in lieu of Braille.

#### **Educational Implications of Low Vision/Blindness**

The learning processes of students with low vision/blindness may be affected in the following ways:

* Not being able to access course material due to the nature in which the material is presented (e.g., providing students with inaccessible documents in LEARN).
* Accessing information in various ways (enlarged print, audio formats, Braille); these methods of accessing information do not allow students to skim read; in fact, it may take up to three times as long as it does for other students to read
* Not being able to take their own notes without the aid of technology (e.g., a laptop)
* Needing print information in alternate formats and often having to wait several months for the material to be available for them; if they do not have these materials in time, they often fall behind other students in class
* Appearing isolated in the learning environment; the possibility for social contacts and interaction with others may be limited and this can have an impact on learning
* Headaches resulting from eyestrain; this may reduce the study time available to the student
* Participating and interacting in class and group work can be limited; it is difficult for students who cannot see body language and the interactions of others to feel comfortable contributing; judging when participation is appropriate can be difficult for students

#### **Supporting Students with Low Vision/Blindness**

To help facilitate learning, faculty should consider the following:

* Ensure all course material is accessible, including information presented in class (e.g., Power Point notes) and information posted on LEARN. Please refer to the “How to Create Accessible Course Material” section of this handbook.
* Since vision loss is individual, the most effective way to determine how vision loss affects an individual student is to talk with them about their personal circumstances. The needs of an individual will depend on the degree of vision loss, how long they have had low vision/blindness, what coping strategies and vision training has been acquired, access to alternative format print material, technological skills and devices, as well as the environmental demands.
* Make required book lists and course materials available well in advance so there is sufficient time to acquire or produce alternate formats. It is essential for students who are blind/partially sighted to have the required and supplemental reading list several months before the term begins, whenever possible.
* Do not rearrange the physical environment which is familiar to the student; consistency in the physical arrangement is important. If you do make changes, inform the student.
* When walking with a person with vision loss ensure they receive verbal information about approaching doorways, stairs or other obstructions. You should tell them which direction the door opens, how many stairs there are and when approaching a curb or another mobility obstruction in the area.
* When giving directions to someone who is blind, use descriptive words such as straight, forward, left, three doors down on the left. Be very specific in direction changes. Do not say "over there", but instead "left, three steps ... on top of the desk, in the middle".
* Identify yourself when speaking to the person; tell the person you are leaving the area if you have been having a conversation and ensure that they are in contact with something solid to give them a reference point in the room.

#### **In the Classroom**

* Discuss seating arrangements with the student at the beginning of the term to identify where maximum communication opportunities are. Be aware of the arrangements of desks, other furniture and other visual and listening obstructions in the class. Ensure pathways are clear.
* For students with low vision/blindness your teaching style will need to be verbal. Think about how to communicate information to students who cannot see what you are doing.
* Students with low vision/blindness may not be able to view boards, diagrams, graphs, and pictures. Faculty and other classmates should be aware to explain all visual information in words.
* Minimize classroom and/or hallway distractions and noise. Because visual communication opportunities are hampered, clear verbal information is critical.
* Outline lecture and class plans at the beginning of class.
* Prepare as much information as possible in electronic format - this makes it much easier for users with low vision/blindness to adapt the information to a format which is suitable for them.
* The student may not be able to take adequate notes on their own. Recording lectures, copies of PowerPoint presentations/notes (either paper copies or e-copies depending on the degree of vision), or accessing volunteer note-takers may be recommended.

#### **Assignment Accommodations for Students with Low Vision/Blindness**

* Class assignments or instructions should be outlined orally
* Provide the student with ample notice when assigning research papers - the student may require assistance finding and translating material into an alternate format, such as large print or e-text, as well as proofreading the final product
* Provide extensions to assignment deadlines if extensive reading has been set; consider setting alternative assignments in which students have the opportunity to work intensively on a few selected texts rather than having to read broadly
* Oral assignments may be requested by a student with low vision, as opposed to an essay type of assignment; the instructor bases the appropriateness of this type of accommodation on the essential learning outcomes of the course or program
* Students with low vision may not be able to read your handwritten comments; it is helpful to negotiate alternative feedback mechanisms with the student

#### **Exam Accommodations for Students with Low Vision/Blindness**

Discuss with the student what evaluation accommodations are needed.

* Students with low vision/blindness may use a scribe or computer for tests/exams
* Tests or exams can be converted into an alternate format. Additional time is required to do so.
* Extended time for tests and exam may be requested
* Oral exams may be most appropriate
* Breaks may be needed during examinations

#### **Guide Dogs**

Some students have guide dogs to assist them with their daily activities. Guide dogs are highly trained, selected for their intelligence and placid nature.

In the classroom, guide dogs usually lie quietly at their owner's feet. It may be helpful to the student (after discussing this with them) that an announcement is made to the class early in the term that the dog is a working dog, not a pet, and should not be petted or distracted when it is in harness.

#### **Guiding a Blind Person**

Ask the student if they require assistance. If so, offer your arm and walk at a normal speed. Slow your pace if you are approaching steps or other obstacles, telling them why you are doing so. Inform them if you are ascending or descending steps. Use words like *left*, *right*. If you are approaching a door indicate if it is open or shut.

### **Chronic Illnesses**

Chronic Illnesses may include conditions such as cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, Crohn's disease, diabetes, HIV, lupus, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, or other long term illnesses. These types of conditions can be exacerbated by stress. Therefore, careful pacing of a student's workload is very important.

#### **Educational Implications of Chronic Illness**

Chronic illnesses share several symptoms which require accommodation in an academic setting, such as:

* Fatigue and limited physical endurance due to draining energy or the presence of chronic pain
* Fluctuating capacity to participate in daily activities due to exacerbations and remissions of the disease itself
* Difficulty concentrating due to emotional factors, medication side effects, or pain
* Difficulty with mobility due to inflammation of joints, limited nerve function, or decreased strength
* Periods of diminished productivity through the day (e.g. waiting for medication to take effect or after several hours of pain)
* Frequent absence from class
* Difficulty sitting for extended periods of time

#### **Instructional Strategies for Students with Chronic Illness**

* Students with chronic illness may require a note-taker to ensure that they have a complete set of notes due to necessary absences
* Hard copies of notes, overheads, and PowerPoint presentations can be very useful
* Recording of lectures may help the student to review material presented in class
* Flexibility with deadlines can be very helpful

#### **Exam Accommodations for Students with Chronic Illness**

* Extra time on exams or tests to allow for washroom breaks, position changes to alleviate pain, and pacing of work to avoid excessive fatigue
* Writing exams privately, or semi-privately, to rule out environmental distractions

### **Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

“Deaf” is a medical/audiological term referring to people who have little or no functional hearing. Deaf individuals may use American Sign Language, oral with sign support, speech reading, and other non-verbal means of communication. Hard of hearing refers to a person whose hearing loss ranges from mild to profound and whose usual means of communication is speech. It is both a medical and a sociological term.

It is important to use correct language when referring to a Deaf or hard of hearing individual. The acceptable term is Deaf or hard of hearing. Hearing Impaired or Mute are not acceptable terms.

People who are Deaf most likely use American Sign Language and they are members of a distinct linguistic group as well as members of a separate cultural group with distinct values, beliefs, and traditions. These individuals are bilingual. American Sign Language is their first language and English is their second language. As with any cultural group, it is necessary to be sensitive and attentive to cross cultural information in the classroom setting. It is not uncommon to encounter people who are hard of hearing using sign language or people who are Deaf preferring oral communication.

Students with a hearing loss may not be easily identifiable. Unless they specifically tell people that they are Deaf or hard of hearing their hearing loss may go unnoticed. Each person's hearing loss and adjustment to that loss varies and each person must be accommodated differently.

Deaf and hard of hearing students face significant obstacles in an academic setting due to the large amount of information being conveyed in an oral and written format as well as the fact that English is often their second language. There are many ways that Deaf and hard of hearing students may have their needs accommodated in the classroom.

#### **Instructional Strategies for Deaf and hard of hearing students**

* Provide handouts, lecture notes and outlines ahead of time.
* ASL-English interpreters require preparation materials in advance to ensure quality services. Provide lecture notes, Power Point and any videos ahead of classes. This applies to computerized note takers as well.
* Speak as clearly and distinctly as possible in the classroom; do not lecture with your back turned away from the class or pace as you speak
* Try not to cover your mouth while talking and avoid talking as you are handing out papers, etc.
* Do not exaggerate lip movements as you are speaking
* If the student has requested an ASL-English interpreter, speak to the student, **not** the interpreter
* If a class member asks a question, you may need to repeat the question before answering. The interpreter will ask for you to repeat if needed
* Ensure course material is Closed Captioned
* Minimize auditory distractions in the classroom
* Cooperate by wearing an FM sound transmitter, audio recording of lectures, etc. if requested

#### **Classroom Accommodations for Deaf and hard of hearing students**

Students who are Deaf or hard of hearing may lip-read, rely on amplification devices, and/or use ASL-English interpreters or computerized note-takers in the classroom. The communication system the student uses in the classroom must also be available for any other learning environment. Any accommodations agreed upon should continue in all learning environments required during the course. This includes work experiences, Co-op, Clinical, off-site learning opportunities.

Some Deaf and hard of hearing individuals use hearing aids to amplify sound. Background noise and other sounds can be very distracting for a hard of hearing person trying to listen in class. These sounds may not seem distracting to the average listener but when the hearing aid amplifies the sound to 100 decibels it can become painful and annoying. For those individuals with personal hearing aids, it is important to sit within ten feet of the speaker or else the microphone will not pick up the speech. For example, papers rustling, drinking or eating while trying to speak, and other kinds of distracting activity can reduce the student's understanding.

FM systems may be used by students with a hearing loss. The student wears a receiver that connects to their hearing aid while the instructor wears a transmitter. A miniature microphone is clipped to the instructor's clothing.

Some students use American Sign Language-English interpreters to gain access to spoken information. Due to the interpreting process, there may be a short lag time. Therefore, it is important to give time for the student to catch up while watching the interpreter so that any questions can be interpreted and clarified before the topic continues passed.

Most students who are Deaf or hard of hearing cannot take notes while they are lip reading or watching an interpreter. A volunteer note-taker and copies of notes and information is required. The student may require assistance in finding a suitable peer note taker.

Deaf students prefer to answer questions in their first language- ASL. This is also true for assignments that require written responses. Some students may prefer to reply to assignments in ASL and the ASL-English interpreter will interpret the response into English.

#### **Exam Accommodations for Deaf and hard of hearing students**

* Deaf and hard of hearing students should not be penalized for grammar and spelling errors unless these skills are being assessed on the test or exam. These errors are caused by their delay in English language acquisition and the fact that there is no written form of American Sign Language.
* Students need extended time for examinations
* ASL- English Interpreters may be used
* Deaf students may want to respond to questions in ASL and answers will be scribed into English by the ASL-English interpreter.

### **Mental Health Disabilities**

Mental health disabilities can result in several symptoms which require academic accommodations. The most frequently occurring diagnoses are affective disorders (e.g. depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorders), personality disorders (e.g. obsessive compulsive disorder, borderline personality disorder), schizophrenia, and dissociative identity disorders.

Mental health disabilities interfere with a student's ability to concentrate at various times. This may be due to primary symptoms of fatigue, limited ability to focus and sustain attention, internal events such as disturbing or obsessive thoughts, or medication side effects.

Productivity may also be affected with these types of conditions since the ability to engage in studies and attend class varies with the course of the condition. In some cases, the very nature of the course material may trigger difficult emotional responses and have a profound effect on the student's ability to participate.

Also, an anxiety disorder in the context of a mental health disability is very different from the type of anxiety most students experience during exam time. A diagnosed anxiety disorder can include panic attacks (difficulty breathing, rapid heart rate, sweating, and a profound fear of impending disaster). This is an ongoing long term condition that requires treatment.

Similarly, a clinical diagnosis of depression is very distinct from experiencing "the blues." Clinical depression can be very persistent, lasting months or years, affecting the student's appetite, sleep patterns, engagement in activities, concentration and productivity. There can be a biochemical imbalance requiring the combination treatment of medication and therapy.

#### **Educational Implications of Mental Health Disabilities**

As mentioned in the previous section, the extent to which a mental health disability impacts a student academically is dependent on the extent of symptoms and the course of the condition. Some of the most common ways a psychiatric disorder may impact a student are:

* Fatigue
* Limited short term memory
* Limited ability to focus and sustain attention
* Missed attendance
* Late assignments
* Course material may evoke a difficult emotional response

#### **Instructional Strategies for Students with Psychiatric Disorders**

* Note-takers and audio recording of lecture material may be helpful by ensuring the student does not miss information when attendance and/or concentration is affected
* Hard copies of notes, overheads, and PowerPoint presentations are useful
* Flexibility in deadlines may be important
* Awareness that material could be emotionally reminiscent for the student; a sensitive approach from instructors goes a very long way
* Do not attempt to counsel on your own; most students with a mental health diagnosis have sought professional counselling

#### **Exam Accommodations for Students with Psychiatric Disorders**

* Extended time for tests and exams allows students with mental health disabilities to compensate for time lost to intrusive thoughts, lack of focus, slowed mental processing, or medication side effects
* Private, or semi-private space, to write tests and exams can be helpful by reducing the stress of the exam environment and providing less distraction
* Computer to organize longer responses

### **Mobility Disabilities**

Mobility disabilities can be the result of many different conditions including; injuries to the spinal cord, arthritis, neurological conditions such as muscular dystrophy, or cerebral palsy. Students may, or may not, use mobility aids such as wheelchairs, canes, crutches, braces, or prostheses. As a result, there may be limitations of speed, strength, endurance, and dexterity/coordination.

#### **Educational Implications of Mobility Disabilities**

Since the range of mobility issues is broad, the issues that arise can vary as well. However, most common are the physical barriers students with mobility disabilities face. Consider the Notre Dame Campus of Red River College. Although many upgrades to make this campus more accessible have been made, and continue to be made, there will always be some challenges. The reality is that older buildings require greater adaptation to increase accessibility. Since these changes are retrofitted, they may never be ideal for some with mobility disabilities. These changes can also take time.

#### **Instructional Strategies for Students with Mobility Disabilities**

* Physical access to all locations that you hold class is necessary. This may mean changing the location of your classroom once you learn a student with a mobility disability is enrolled
* Know what parts of your classroom can be used by persons in a wheelchair. Bear this in mind when scheduling special events in alternate locations, including the **South Gym and Lecture Theatres at NDC**, as these locations are not fully accessible
* Special seating or adjustable tables may be necessary
* Ensure that the student can see you, the chalkboard, and/or screen
* Students may need more time to travel between classes and might be late arriving
* Students may rely on specialized transportation, such as Transit Plus, which is not always reliable, resulting in students occasionally arriving late to class
* The student’s mobility disability may make it difficult to take notes and thus require a note- taker or to audio recording of lectures
* Allow for flexibility with deadlines. Many students with mobility disabilities contend with issues outside the classroom such as travel arrangements, medical care, or attendant care, all of which can be very time consuming
* Provide advance notice for field placements so the student can make appropriate travel arrangements. Ensure that students have an accessible practicum site
* When you speak to a student who uses a wheelchair, assume a position which allows eye contact with the individual on the same level (i.e. pull up a chair and sit down)
* Do not avoid words like "run" or "walk"

#### **Exam Accommodations for Students with Mobility Disabilities**

* Extra time to complete tests or exams
* The use of a scribe to transcribe the answers into print
* Oral exams
* Wheelchair-accessible exam sites
* Assistive technology (e.g., speech-to-text software, roller ball mouse)

### **Specific Learning Disorders**

It is estimated that up to 10% of today's college population has some form and degree of a specific learning disorder (formerly known as a Learning Disability). More students with specific learning disorders are successfully meeting entrance requirements to post-secondary schools, largely due to earlier recognition and support in the school system. This can present challenges for instructors, as specific learning disorders can be very diverse from one student to the next and can be easily misunderstood.

It is helpful to know what a specific learning disorder is and what it is not. Individuals who have been diagnosed as having a specific learning disorder have deficits which interfere with their abilities to process information efficiently and accurately. These deficits affect the student's performance in one or more areas involving thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, and/or doing mathematical calculations. Specific learning disorders are neurobiologically-based. There are various possible causes of specific learning disorders including genetic predisposition, trauma before or after birth, environmental toxins, or medical factors.

The difficulties taking in, retaining, and/or expressing information are NOT due to:

* Low intelligence
* Poor educational backgrounds
* Poor motivation
* Emotional problems
* Vision or hearing deficits

In fact, most individuals with a specific learning disorder have average to above average intelligence. It is very important to recognize that students with specific learning disorders are not of low intelligence or overall cognitive ability, but struggle to process certain types of information as accurately and efficiently as their peers. Given appropriate accommodations, the impact of a student's specific learning disorders can be lessened, giving the instructor a more valid measure of their knowledge.

#### **Diagnosis and Testing Process**

Specific learning disorders must be diagnosed by a professional - either a registered clinical psychologist or educational (school) psychologist, on the basis of standardized test results. The individual completes 4-6 hours of standardized psychometric tests which measure:

**Academic achievement:**

* Reading (decoding, speed, comprehension)
* Writing (spelling, speed, written expression)
* Arithmetic (calculation, speed, applied problems)

Standardized measures are also commonly administered to assess:

* Intelligence (verbal-conceptual, perceptual-organizational)
* Processing speed (sequential information, spatial information)
* Memory skills (verbal, visual, short term, long term)
* Attention and concentration

For a diagnosis of a specific learning disorder to be made, at least one area of academic skills (reading, written expression, or mathematics) must be substantially below average for the student’s age. Additionally, limited academic achievement must significantly interfere with academic or occupational performance or daily living skills.

If assessment results indicate the presence of a specific learning disorder, the psychologist provides recommendations for appropriate accommodations consistent with identified areas of weakness.

#### **Educational Implications of a Specific Learning Disorder**

Students may experience difficulty with:

* The mechanics of reading (phonics) and may read very slowly
* Reading for meaning
* Picking out main points, or summarizing text
* Finishing examinations in allotted time, or may rush through exams
* Poor retention
* Expressing themselves in writing
* Spelling and grammar inaccuracies
* Poor penmanship
* Printing rather than cursive writing
* Poor organization of ideas in written responses
* Copying from the board or overhead and/or poor note-taking skills
* Calculations or incomplete mastery of basic facts (e.g., multiplication table)
* Spatial difficulties

Students may require:

* Oral exams rather than written exams
* Information to be presented in a different or multi-modal manner

#### **Instructional Strategies for Students with a Specific Learning Disorder**

* Select well-organized texts with aids such as chapter summaries, glossaries, indexes
* Make book lists and other materials available well in advance
* Make syllabus available, and if possible, discuss it with the student in advance
* Present information in multiple ways (lectures, written, visual, applied)
* Begin lecture with brief review of material covered the previous day
* Break information into small steps when teaching new tasks/concepts
* Provide students with study guides and review sheets for exams, as well as sample practice tests
* Use PowerPoint or whiteboard instead of solely relying on oral lectures
* Allow students access to PowerPoint presentations
* Emphasize important points, main ideas
* Provide periodic summaries throughout class
* Give assignment instructions in writing, as well as orally
* Canvass class for volunteer note-takers
* Do not pressure students to read aloud
* Ask student (privately) how you can help with their learning

#### **Exam Accommodations for Students with a Specific Learning Disorder**

Although specific learning disorders are unique to each individual, there are certain "standard" accommodations which seem to assist students with specific learning disorders to achieve their full potential. These include:

* Extended time on tests and examinations
* Writing exams in a room with fewer students, and therefore, fewer distractions
* Writing exams alone to allow for talking aloud, even fewer distractions
* Access to a computer to allow for spell checking, sequencing written material, and producing legible results
* Considerations (no penalty) for spelling or grammar mistakes when a spell-checker was not used
* A reader to read the test questions aloud and, infrequently, a scribe to write answers
* Alternate format – tests/exams printed on coloured paper
* Use of a reading ruler to assist with visual tracking of lines of text

# **Part 3. What Instructors Can Do**

## **Before Classes Start and Early in the Term**

* During the first class, let students know that if any of them are students with disabilities, they can come and see you after class or at a mutually convenient time. Let them make you aware of how you can support them
* Learn from colleagues with experience, students, organizations, Accessibility Services, and through written materials - how the student's disability could affect learning in your course
* If the student has not approached you, and you are aware they have a disability, approach the student to ask if adjustments are necessary and to indicate that you are available to help
* Give an outline of the course, explain course content and requirements clearly, be exact about necessary reading materials, and provide this information early in the term to allow for advance planning by the student
* Discuss potential teaching and learning alternatives with students, take strengths and weaknesses into account, and make individual adjustments if these are needed and appropriate
* Discuss with the student what resources are available to help you make the necessary adaptations
* Know about services available for students with disabilities - contact Accessibility Services for information, or to discuss any concerns

## **During the Term**

* Make lectures and notes easy to understand, make assignments clear, be open-minded when dealing with students, and understand that some students have unique needs
* Be flexible with the content and format of assignments and exams when it does not conflict with essential learning outcomes. This includes assignments and responses from Deaf students in ASL vs. written English when appropriate
* If you are aware that a student has a disability, check in with them periodically to find out how they are managing
* Encourage the student to stay in touch with you (e.g. "If you have a problem, come and see me")
* Discuss problems with the student (e.g. frequent absences, lack of participation in class activities, inappropriate social behavior such as continually interrupting others)
* Arrange for other students in the class to help (e.g. mobility, tutoring, study, readers, notes) and encourage them to interact with disabled students (e.g. by assigning students to work in pairs, having students work in small groups)
* If students need help finding classmates for note-taking, help them find someone
* Allow choice seating for students with disabilities
* Let students with disabilities know that it is acceptable to audio record lectures, to have someone take notes, and to bring an interpreter to class, when these are approved accommodations
* Encourage the student and comment on their good work

## **What if I Don’t Agree?**

Deciding and implementing appropriate accommodations is most effective if collaboration occurs between the student, the faculty member, and the RRC manager/counsellor. However, there may be times when agreements regarding the appropriateness of accommodations cannot be reached.

If faculty do not agree with the type of accommodation recommended in the student's documentation, and/or by the student's manager/counsellor, the Academic Accommodation Appeal form *(See Appendix A)* can be completed and submitted to Accessibility Services. This form and procedure considers information regarding essential learning outcomes of the course, program or practicum, and how these learning outcomes are assessed. Pulling together this kind of information can assist both faculty and Accessibility Services in determining what can and cannot be accommodated, within reason. If faculty, together with Accessibility Services, cannot reach agreement about accommodation, the Dean of Student Services and the program Chair are consulted. The original accommodations are provided while the appeal is considered.

# **Part 4. Some Final Thoughts**

What is not explicit, but is implied throughout this handbook, is that most suggestions for effective teaching of students with disabilities apply equally well to the teaching of non-disabled students.

All students benefit from:

* Lectures which are audible, clear, and well organized
* Readings and assignments which are specified early
* Flexibility with the format and content of assignments and exams

The best solution for determining disability related needs is for students and instructors to engage in dialogue. If the student does not initiate such discussions, the instructor can take the initiative. Research shows that dialogue between instructors and students is the most effective way of resolving teaching and learning problems and getting on with the work of educating all students in the most efficient way possible.

Accessibility managers/counsellors are available to all staff as a resource. Instructors are encouraged to contact Accessibility Services with any questions or concerns they may have.

# **Appendix A**

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION APPEAL FORM**

*If you feel that an accommodation a student is eligible for represents a change in the CORE REQUIREMENTS of your course please complete this form. The accommodations will be provided while the appeal is being considered.*

**If you are appealing multiple accommodations a separate form must be completed for each accommodation.**

**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Department: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Course: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Section: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Accommodation: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

### What are the Core Requirements of the Course?

*Please attach a syllabus AND list the core requirements of the course with an explanation of why these are core requirements. Attach additional sheets if necessary.*

### How does the accommodation change the Core Requirements of this course?

### What alternate accommodation do you suggest?

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date Received by Disability Services: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

*The following questions can be helpful in determining core requirements of a course:*

What are the essential components of the course?

• Why are these essential?

• What instructional methods are essential?

• Why are these instructional methods necessary?

• What skills do students need to demonstrate?

• Are the skills or the method of demonstration more important?

• What are the levels of performance that students have to show in order to show they have mastered course material?

• If the course is part of an accredited and/or licensure program what skills/knowledge related to the course are required for program accreditation/licensure?