

August 1, 2024

Response to the recommendations of the Joint Working Group on Student Accommodations and Faculty Workload

Dear Elizabeth and Lynne,

Thank you for submitting the report and recommendations on behalf of the Joint Working Group on Student Accommodations and Faculty Workload. I appreciate the research, consultations and discussions that culminated in the April 2024 submission, and I thank the working group and those who supported their good work.

I am pleased to provide my response to the recommendations within the report, to complete the requirements as per the letter of understanding in the Collective Agreement (Appendix R). Responses and implementation plans have been informed by discussion with the Division of Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation (LTSI), the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL), the Office of the Registrar and Enrolment Management (OREM), University Systems, and Deans' Council and Academic Leadership, among others.

My response, along with your report and recommendations, is posted on the [VPAC website](#).

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Croft
Vice-President Academic and Provost
University of Victoria

Recommendation	Response and implementation	Timeline
<p>1. Maintain a system that provides centralized coordination of timed in-term and final tests and exams for students requiring accommodated assessments. This includes centralized scheduling of space and invigilators.</p>	<p>As the Working Group’s report indicates, the number of students with disabilities in the BC post-secondary system is anticipated to increase, as outcomes for students with disabilities and diverse needs in the BC K-12 system are showing steady improvements. Adding more resources without reviewing and updating our existing processes is an unsustainable model and does not improve the quality of education or outcomes for our students with diverse needs. Going forward, we must focus on creating access-centred learning environments, with the goal of decreasing the need for accommodations for assessments, including through changes to course design and assessment practices. VPAC recognizes that students with complex accommodation needs in an assessment environment may still require centralized supports.</p> <p>As announced on May 1, Executive Council approved interim funding for the Winter Session 2024/25, similar to the supports provided in 2023/24. These time-limited supports will help ensure students receive a high-quality education in an inclusive environment while providing instructors with more time to update their courses and assessment practices.</p> <p>As part of this transition period, LTSI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add invigilation training for teaching assistants (TAs) as part of their onboarding process. 	<p>Additional, time-limited resources have been provided for 2023/24 and Winter Session 2024/25 to support instructors with the transition to access-centred approaches</p> <p>Invigilation initiatives are short and medium term</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a proposal for a central pool of TAs available to support instructors with high-needs and large courses. Deans, chairs and directors will be encouraged to work with LTSI on high-needs courses. • Consult the Instructors of First Year Courses Working Group on additional resources and training opportunities. <p>Depending on uptake, outcomes and funding, LTSI will offer these enhanced invigilation supports on an ongoing basis.</p>	
<p>2. Revise CAL guidelines for accommodated assessments by considering the following:</p> <p>a) Extend deadlines for booking and printing midterms, tests and exams. This should also be applicable to other offices that administer accommodated tests and exams.</p>	<p>It is expected that CAL continue its mandate of supporting registered students who have complex accommodation needs. CAL is best positioned to determine deadlines for their services to ensure their staff can complete requests in a reasonable timeframe and has recently reviewed and shortened their deadlines for printing and receiving exams.</p> <p>It is not within OREM's mandate to administer accommodated tests and exams. The additional, bridging supports offered in 2023/24 and Winter Session 2024/25 are cost prohibitive on an ongoing basis and are intended to help support units and instructors as they transition to access-centred assessment practices.</p>	N/A
<p>2.b) Improve communication with instructors by providing them with a list of students and their respective accommodations in advance of assessments.</p>	<p>Beginning in September 2024, CAL will create and share spreadsheets for the largest courses through SharePoint, updating them regularly. CAL is exploring software options to automate this process.</p>	In progress

2.c) Integrate automatic notifications for scheduled assessments (via Outlook).	Instructors currently receive a number of system-generated email notifications related to scheduled assessments. CAL and OREM will undertake a review of these communications to ensure timelines are appropriate and to determine if additional system-generated email notifications may be possible and beneficial.	In progress; TBD short term
3. Replace Clockwork with new academic accommodation software.	Work is underway to consider technology solutions to manage the scope and scale of requirements that are currently offered through the accommodation management software Clockwork enterprise platform, under the leadership of the Associate Vice-President Academic Programs.	In progress
3.a) Establish a process for selecting accommodation management software that involves engagement with campus stakeholders (i.e., instructors, students, CAL staff, and UVic Systems). Encourage representation from the Department of Computer Science or related discipline on the selection committee.	<p>Engagement with campus stakeholders will be critical to ensuring accommodation management software aligns with both our needs and our larger learning and teaching technology ecosystem.</p> <p>To ensure a positive user experience, students, faculty and staff will be consulted before any new technology solutions are selected. It will be important that any team selecting new campus-wide software understands the diverse disciplinary needs across campus.</p> <p>In addition to pedagogical considerations, the university has a fiscal responsibility to consider one-time and ongoing costs (e.g., fees for purchase or development, ongoing licensing fees, labour costs, etc.) as well as privacy laws (e.g., FIPPA) and cyber security concerns.</p>	In progress with VPAC, CAL & SYST

<p>3.b) Establish “Accommodation Management Software Review Taskforce” with a mandate to periodically evaluate UVic’s accommodation software. This includes consulting with campus stakeholders to gather feedback and suggestions for enhancements/ upgrades to keep software responsive and relevant for all users.</p>	<p>I will ask the Associate Vice-President University Systems and the Executive Director, LTSI to consider a monitoring and review process for accommodation software within the context of UVic’s holistic learning and technology ecosystem that aligns with our existing IT Governance processes, engaging stakeholders as appropriate.</p>	<p>TBD with VPAC, LTSI, VPFO & SYST; long-term initiative</p>
<p>4. Foster a culture of inclusive and accessibility centred learning and teaching to reduce reliance on accommodations by:</p> <p>a) Promoting Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as appropriate in course (re)design. (For examples of possible UDL strategies, see the Appendix below, and the UDL Learning Guide on the Teach Anywhere site.)</p>	<p>The university is committed to continuing to work towards a culture of inclusive and access-centred learning and teaching to reduce reliance on accommodations. All faculty and staff share the responsibility to promote equality, remove barriers, and create a respectful and inclusive learning environment.</p> <p>Academic leaders and faculty are encouraged to work to promote UDL as appropriate in course (re)design, including by sharing and accessing resources offered through LTSI.</p>	<p>Acknowledging that culture change takes time, there are short-, medium-, and long-term initiatives proposed</p>
<p>4.b) Allocating resources to enhance the accessibility of courses and assessments. Examples include:</p> <p>i. Creating more grants and enhance existing grants to assist instructors in developing and supporting inclusivity and accessibility in course and assessment design.</p>	<p>While resources are constrained in our current fiscal environment, we will explore opportunities to (re)allocate resources for additional grants and enhanced discipline-specific supports as recommended.</p> <p>LTSI currently administers several learning and teaching grants. The Course Design/Redesign Grant supports the design of a new course, or a redesign of an existing course and its implementation. Funded projects apply learning principles and intended outcomes that incorporate active</p>	<p>Medium-term initiative (resource dependent)</p>

<p>ii. Providing enhanced supports for discipline-specific advice on integrating accessible learning/UDL principles through LTSL.</p>	<p>and/or participatory learning strategies and follow principles of UDL.</p> <p>It will be important to continue to acknowledge faculty and instructors who are championing UDL. Outstanding colleagues are celebrated and recognized through a new REACH Award for Inclusive and Innovative Course Design, first awarded in 2023, as well as through Faculty-level teaching awards.</p>	
<p>4.c) Develop university-wide orientation and handbook for instructors on CAL best practices and legal requirements regarding accessible education. Offer workshops for all instructors to provide further information about legal requirements for accessible education, CAL best practices and communication protocols between CAL and instructors.</p>	<p>LTSL plans to redesign the Teach Anywhere website to better serve the needs of faculty and instructors. Building on their UDL Learning Guide, the revised Teach Anywhere will serve as a virtual handbook that includes best practices regarding accessible education.</p> <p>The university's legal requirements are outlined in the recently revised Academic Accommodation and Access for Students with Disabilities Policy (AC1205), effective September 1, 2024. There will be opportunities to align the redesigned Teach Anywhere website with Policy AC1205 and CAL best practices and protocols.</p> <p>There will also be an information campaign for the recently approved update to Policy AC1205 that highlights changes that faculty, staff and students should be aware of beginning this fall term.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>4.d) Create Faculty-level service positions, to be held by an instructor and/or staff in that Faculty, to assist instructors with discipline-specific ideas for making courses</p>	<p>A faculty member's academic responsibilities include self-directed and assigned service tasks, congruent with the Collective Agreement (s.13). Interested faculty members are</p>	<p>TBD by unit; will be a topic of discussion for academic leaders in 2024/25, including as it</p>

and assessments more accessible, as well as to liaise with LTSI and CAL.	encouraged to reach out to LTSI to learn how they can support their colleagues with accessible course design.	relates to a Unit's Standard
4.e) Ensure that academic units implement clear procedures for determining individuals responsible for providing accommodations/ accessibility within a given course component (i.e., clarifying whether it falls under the purview of the instructor, senior lab instructor, TAs, etc.).	The responsibility for fostering an inclusive, accessible and welcoming environment for students with disabilities is shared by all members of the UVic community. Reflecting this principle, the revised Policy AC1205 articulates the institutional principles and requirements of academic leaders, instructors and students in developing and implementing a plan for academic accommodation through collaborative processes, and in a manner that is consistent with UVic's educational mandate and legal obligations.	TBD by unit; will be a topic of discussion for academic leaders in 2024/25
4.f) Entrust LTSI with leading a community of practice for instructors to share ideas and experiences aimed at promoting and enhancing accessibility in their courses.	<p>LTSI offers one-on-one support, group support, self-serve support, ecosystem support and partnerships. This includes tailored workshops for specific disciplines and departments, networking and community building opportunities as well as a peer learning module that includes examples from instructors on how to apply UDL principles. Also, LTSI will launch a new Community of Practice on Accessible Teaching and Learning, creating a cross-discipline community of UVic faculty and instructors seeking engagement in pedagogy and access-centred learning. Academic units and leaders are encouraged to connect with LTSI to discuss workshop opportunities.</p> <p>LTSI will develop a proposal for faculty mentorship and peer training opportunities that are discipline specific.</p>	In progress
5. Following evaluation of the midterm pilot and depending on success and lessons	As per the Report on Pilot for Centrally Scheduled Midterm Examination Period that was submitted to Senate and	TBD

learned, including the use of universal extra time, expand centrally scheduled midterm exams across campus, at least twice per term, as appropriate.	discussed at their May 2024 meeting, additional time is needed before committing to a longer-term plan.	
<p>6. Develop protocols for situations when students with accommodations need to take timed tests and exams at different times than the rest of the class to prevent potential academic integrity concerns. Academic units or instructors are encouraged to adopt an approach (or approaches) appropriate to their specific context.</p> <p>a) Requiring students to sign an agreement not to disclose test or exam content if they write prior to the rest of the class or to refrain from seeking information about the content if they take it after the rest of the class completes the assessment.</p> <p>b) Requiring students to remain at the test or exam location for a specified period until or after the start of the non-accommodated test or exam. Students must be informed of the waiting period and any limitations on their activities during that time before the test or exam date.</p>	<p>As part of good governance practices, UVic regularly reviews institutional policies, including the Scholarly Integrity Policy (AC1105). University policies must be applied consistently and must not target or disadvantage a specific group (i.e., students with disabilities). An access-centred approach means providing all students with the same experience, consistent with equity and human rights principles.</p> <p>Academic units are encouraged to adopt an approach (or approaches) appropriate to their specific context, provided they align with UVic policies and legal requirements, and that they are applied consistently within a course. For example, in the Faculty of Law, students writing an exam at a time prior to their peers are required to sign an agreement not to disclose test or exam content, regardless of their accommodation needs. Units are best positioned to determine solutions appropriate to their disciplines, in consultation with General Counsel as needed.</p> <p>Units and instructors are reminded to follow Senate-approved regulations regarding the evaluation of student achievement.</p>	TBD by unit; VPAC continues to facilitate a community of practice for academic leaders (e.g., Deans, Associate Deans Academic, Chairs and Directors)

<p>6.c) When necessary, accommodated tests or exams should be scheduled to overlap with the non-accommodated tests or exams by a specified period, at least 30 minutes. To ensure that this is always possible, CAL and OREM should extend their weekday evening hours by up to one hour (to 7:00 pm) as necessary to accommodate evening timed assessments starting at 6:30 pm.</p>	<p>University business hours for offices are generally 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Some offices may adjust their hours based on resources, staffing availability, demand, need, etc.</p> <p>For 2024/25, CAL has made efforts to support exams between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. depending on staff availability. Also for 2024/25, OREM has made efforts to support exams between 8:30 and 6:00 p.m. During final exam periods, OREM will offer invigilation services corresponding to the official exam schedule (i.e., 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.).</p>	<p>TBD; resource dependent</p>
<p>7. In the long term, establish a separate assessment centre, with specialized space for holding accommodated tests/midterms and final exams across campus.</p>	<p>Promoting an access-centred environment does not align with this recommendation.</p> <p>UVic's infrastructure needs are outlined in our Five Year Capital Plan, which is approved by UVic's Board of Governors and shared with the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to ensure alignment with provincial priorities. New capital requires significant one-time and ongoing investments. An assessment centre has not been identified as a current or future priority.</p>	<p>N/A</p>