

# Academic Accommodation and Access for Students with Disabilities

**University Policy No.:** AC1205  
**Classification:** Academic and Students  
**Approving Authority:** Senate  
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## **Associated Procedures:**

Procedures for Academic Accommodation and Access for Undergraduate Students with Disabilities  
Procedures for Academic Accommodation and Access for Graduate Students with Disabilities

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## DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply.

**“Academic Accommodation”** means an individualized adaptation or alteration of instructional environments, materials, or methods of assessment to provide a Student with a Disability an alternative means of meeting the Essential Requirements of a course or program. Providing Academic Accommodation mitigates barriers to the Student’s participation in the university’s academic programming but does not modify or lower the academic standards of the university or eliminate academic evaluation. A Student with a Disability who receives Academic Accommodation is responsible for meeting the Essential Requirements of a course or program. Academic Accommodation is individualized for a particular Student and may include but are not limited to:

- (a) the provision of alternative formats and methods of communication;
- (b) the use of adaptive technology;
- (c) an adaptation of the course assessment and/or the mode of delivery of a course assessment.

Academic accommodation may be provided on an interim basis for a Student who is in the process of being assessed for a disability.

**“Academic Concession”** See [Request for academic concession - University of Victoria \(uvic.ca\)](https://www.uvic.ca/academic-standards/academic-concessions/) [Please note: the wording of this section and section 3.3 will be revised in consultation with the Senate Committee on Academic Standards to distinguish between academic accommodation under Policy AC1205 and academic concessions.]

**“Accessible”** means the degree to which university environments, facilities, procedures, and teaching and learning materials are usable by people, with or without adaptation or special design. Many

barriers to full participation reside in the environment (e.g., physical, curricular, attitudinal, informational).

**“Administrative Head”** means any one of the following, as the context requires: Chair of an academic department, the Director of a School, or Associate Dean of a Faculty.

**“Director”** means the Director of the Centre for Accessible Learning.

**“Essential Requirement”** means the core and indispensable knowledge, skills, and abilities of a course or program that every Student must acquire and demonstrate (with or without Academic Accommodation) to successfully complete the course or program. The Essential Requirements are established by applying the factors in section 7.3.

**“Instructor”** means the faculty member or sessional instructor who is responsible for a course and includes a Graduate Supervisor (or Co-Supervisor).

**“Student”** means a person who is currently registered in one or more credit courses as a candidate for a University of Victoria undergraduate degree, graduate degree, or diploma or certificate.

**“Student with a Disability”** (collectively, Students with Disabilities) means a Student with a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric, or learning impairment that causes or results in functional restrictions or limitations on their ability to perform the range of life’s activities, including the daily activities necessary to participate in studies at a post-secondary level.

**“Undue Hardship”** is a legal test related to reasonable Academic Accommodation. The University of Victoria is limited to providing reasonable Academic Accommodation without the university incurring undue hardship, as that term has been interpreted under BC law. What constitutes undue hardship varies based on, and must be considered in the context of, the circumstances of each individual case. The onus is on the university to show evidence of undue hardship.

**“Unit”** means academic or administrative areas at the university, including but not limited to faculties, divisions, departments, schools, offices, and centres.

## FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS

### 1. Principles

- 1.1 All members of the university community share the responsibility to foster an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming academic environment by reducing or eliminating barriers for Students with Disabilities.
- 1.2 The university recognizes and affirms its duty to accommodate Students with Disabilities and to provide reasonable Academic Accommodation to them in a manner that is consistent with its educational mandate, academic principles, and legal obligations.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 This policy sets out the university's framework for addressing Academic Accommodation for undergraduate and graduate Students with Disabilities.

## SCOPE

### 3. Jurisdiction of the Policy

- 3.1 This policy applies to Academic Accommodation for undergraduate and graduate Students with Disabilities.
- 3.2 This policy does not apply to a Student's employment relationship with a co-op work term employer or with the university. Where a person is both a Student and an employee of the university, this policy only applies to those activities that are associated with the person's status as a Student.
- 3.3 This policy does not apply to Academic Concessions [See - [Request for academic concession - University of Victoria \(uvic.ca\)](#)]

## RESPONSIBILITIES

### 4. The University's Responsibility

- 4.1 The university will provide appropriate mechanisms to implement the provisions of this policy in a reasonably timely and effective manner. Specifically, the university will:
- a. Support the operations of the Centre for Accessible Learning ("CAL") to fulfill its mandate to:
    - i. offer advice, guidance, and support for Students seeking Academic Accommodation;
    - ii. guide members of the university community in providing reasonable Academic Accommodation and help to advance their understanding of disability issues;
    - iii. based on appropriate supporting documentation, make decisions about Academic Accommodation in a timely manner.
  - b. Take steps towards making its programs and courses more accessible to qualified Students with Disabilities by mitigating barriers.
  - c. Inform and educate all members of the university community about the obligations, duties, responsibilities, and expectations under this policy and the means for appropriately implementing it.
  - d. Through the Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost, appoint and maintain an Advisory Committee on Academic Accommodation and Access for Students with Disabilities that

will address issues relevant to the implementation and improvement of this policy. This committee will provide a report of its activities to Senate on an annual basis. [*Please note: section 4.1.d is under discussion.*]

## 5. Shared Responsibility for Developing and Implementing Academic Accommodation

- 5.1 Developing and implementing a plan for reasonable Academic Accommodation is a shared responsibility that requires participation, co-operation, and communication among university employees, the Centre for Accessible Learning, the Instructor, the Administrative Head of the academic unit, and the Student with a Disability. A collaborative working relationship between all parties involved in the accommodation process is essential to meet the Student's need for Academic Accommodation.

## 6. Responsibilities of Students

- 6.1 All Students are responsible for:
- (a) meeting the degree, diploma, or certificate requirements of their program; and
  - (b) acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the Essential Requirements of the course or program.
- 6.2 A Student with a Disability who is seeking Academic Accommodation is expected to and is responsible for contacting the Centre for Accessible Learning ("CAL") to register and to initiate the process.
- 6.3 A Student with a Disability who is seeking Academic Accommodation is expected and required to participate fully in the process of developing a plan for reasonable Academic Accommodation, which includes:
- (a) seeking the advice and assessment of the CAL, maintaining contact with the CAL as necessary, and meeting established timelines;
  - (b) identifying their individual needs and providing adequate documentation of their disabilities to CAL with sufficient notice to enable CAL to assess the information provided, to develop a plan for reasonable Academic Accommodation, and to communicate the plan;
  - (c) actively engaging with CAL, Instructors, and others as necessary to explore options and to develop a plan for reasonable Academic Accommodation;
  - (d) where appropriate, taking reasonable measures to address their own particular and individual needs and personal requirements relating to the need for Academic Accommodation; and
  - (e) fulfilling their part in implementing the plan for Academic Accommodation.

- 6.4 A Student with a Disability whose program includes a practicum will notify their Faculty's Practicum Co-ordinator in advance of their practicum if a specific accommodation is required. The Practicum Co-ordinator will determine reasonable accommodation in the practicum (see section 10.1 below), in consultation with the Student, the placement agency, and the faculty (where appropriate).

## 7. Responsibilities of Instructors

### 7.1 Instructors:

- (a) identify the Essential Requirements of the course (working collaboratively and as needed with their unit's curriculum committee and/or with their Administrative Head);
- (b) upon request, communicate the Essential Requirements of the course to their Administrative Head, or to CAL, in writing;
- (c) work in co-operation with CAL and the Student to implement the plan for Academic Accommodation.

### 7.2 Instructors are encouraged to:

- (a) consider accessibility and the principles of universal design when designing their course(s) and in their approach to classroom interaction and evaluation methods;
- (b) include a statement on their course outline or syllabus about the Centre for Accessible Learning;
- (c) communicate the Essential Requirements of the course in their course outline or syllabus.

### 7.3 Identifying the Essential Requirements of a course or program is a critical step in determining Academic Accommodation. To be an Essential Requirement, the knowledge, skill, or ability must be:

- (a) logically connected to the Student's ability to successfully complete the course or program;
- (b) reasonably necessary for the Student to successfully complete the course or program; and
- (c) included in good faith, in the belief that it was necessary (not just desirable) for the fulfilment of the objectives of that course or program.

## 8. Responsibilities of Administrative Heads

### 8.1 The Administrative Head:

- (a) works collaboratively and as needed with their unit's Instructors and curriculum committee to identify the Essential Requirements of a course or program;

- (b) communicates the Essential Requirements to the Student and to CAL in a timely way, when requested;
- (c) supports the Student and the Instructor to implement the plan for Academic Accommodation; and
- (d) makes reasonable efforts to educate themselves and the Instructors and other relevant employees within their unit about the obligations, duties, responsibilities, and expectations under this policy.

## 9. Responsibilities of the Centre for Accessible Learning (“CAL”)

9.1 The CAL is responsible for fulfilling its mandate, as set out in section 4.1.a and specifically for:

- (a) offering advice, guidance, and support for Students seeking Academic Accommodation;
- (b) coordinating the process for reviewing requests for Academic Accommodation;
- (c) working with each Student with a Disability to develop a plan for reasonable Academic Accommodation;
- (d) making decisions about reasonable Academic Accommodation based on assessment of appropriate supporting documentation;
- (e) communicating the Academic Accommodation plan to the Student and to the Instructor to implement;
- (f) communicating relevant information to the Student and, as appropriate, to Instructors, Administrative Heads, and to other employees of the university.

## 10. Responsibilities of Practicum Coordinators

10.1 Practicum coordinators are responsible for determining reasonable accommodation for a Student with a Disability who is required to participate in a practicum placement. The practicum co-ordinator will normally only make this determination after consulting with the Student and the placement agency (and the faculty, where appropriate).

## 11. Processes for Resolving Disagreements about Academic Accommodation

### Instructor and/or Administrative Head

11.1 An Instructor who believes that the plan for Academic Accommodation either compromises an Essential Requirement of a course or program, or constitutes Undue Hardship to the university, will discuss their concerns with the Administrative Head of their unit. The Administrative Head,

alone or together with the Instructor, will discuss the matter with the Director to attempt to resolve the concern informally.

- 11.2 If no resolution is reached under section 11.1, the Administrative Head, alone or together with the Instructor, may consult with the Dean of the Faculty who may in turn discuss the matter with the Director to attempt to resolve the concern informally.
- 11.3 Failing informal resolution, the Dean (after consulting with the Instructor and the Administrative Head) may request the Vice-Provost to review the matter. The Vice-Provost will decide whether the plan for Academic Accommodation:
  - a. compromises an Essential Requirement of a course or program;
  - b. constitutes Undue Hardship.
- 11.4 Prior to making a decision, the Vice-Provost may consult with the University's General Counsel (or delegate).
- 11.5 The Vice-Provost's decision will be communicated to the Dean, the Administrative Head, the Instructor, and the Director. The Vice-Provost's decision normally will be communicated to the Student only when that decision changes the plan for Academic Accommodation.

#### Students

- 11.6 A Student who disagrees with the plan for Academic Accommodation may, in accordance with the procedures, request the Director (or delegate) to reconsider it.
- 11.7 A Student may appeal to the Senate Committee on Appeals in accordance with its Terms of Reference and Procedural Guidelines. The Senate Committee on Appeals' decision is final within the university.

#### 12. Confidentiality and Privacy

- 12.1 The university must and will act in compliance with British Columbia's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* ("FIPPA") which regulates the collection, use, disclosure, storage, and retention of personal information.
- 12.2 The information and records created and received to administer this policy are subject to the access to information and protection of privacy provisions of British Columbia's FIPPA legislation, and the university's Protection of Privacy Policy (GV0235) and Records Management Policy (IM7700). The information and records will be treated as highly confidential, in compliance with FIPPA, and with applicable university policies.

## GENERAL

### 13. Review of Policy

- 13.1 The university will continue to monitor best practices and research and will review and update this policy and its associated procedures whenever it is reasonable to do so.
- 13.2 In any event, the university will review this policy at least once every three years.

### 14. Retention and Disposal of Records

- 14.1 Information and records must be retained and disposed of in accordance with the records retention schedule in the directory of records.

### 15. Authorities and Officers

- 15.1 The following is a list of authorities and officers for this policy:
- (a) Approving Authority: Senate
  - (b) Designated Executive Officer: Vice-President Academic and Provost
  - (c) Procedural Authority: Senate
  - (d) Procedural Officer: Associate Vice-President Student Affairs

## RELEVANT LEGISLATION

[\*Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, RSBC 1996, c 165\*](#)

[\*Human Rights Code, RSBC 1996, c 210\*](#)

## RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

[Discrimination and Harassment Policy \(GV0205\)](#)

[Policy on Human Rights, Equity and Fairness \(GV0200\)](#)

[Protection of Privacy Policy \(GV0235\)](#)

[Records Management Policy \(IM7700\)](#)

[Academic Concessions \[Request for academic concession - University of Victoria \(uvic.ca\)\]](#)