

# ALBERTA GUIDELINES FOR ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN POSTSECONDARY STUDIES

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Postsecondary Service Providers for  
Students with Disabilities (PSPSD)

# Dedication

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This guide is dedicated to Marion Vosáhlo, the epitome of a mentor – willingly sharing, collaborating and guiding colleagues to ensure the best possible quality of services for students in our institutions. During her 30 years with Specialized Support and Disability Services at the University of Alberta, she freely offered her support, expertise, perspective, charm, insights, humour, and amazing talent to everyone in the field, whether a seasoned advisor or a brand-new practitioner. Over the past thirty years, her advocacy and awareness-building around the duty to accommodate, service provision, and equity have significantly influenced the progress of accessible postsecondary education in Alberta.

A number of years ago, Marion, with other pioneers in the field who coordinated postsecondary access services in Alberta, called together representatives from universities, colleges, and technical schools from across the province to look at access services, to discuss the coordination of practices and standardization, and to offer support to new or smaller offices. This initiative has led to a collaborative consortium of dedicated people working with students in the field of accommodation and access services,

(The Alberta) Postsecondary Service Providers for Students with Disabilities

– PSPSD –

We, her colleagues, dedicate this document to Marion to acknowledge, honour, and celebrate her impact on access and accommodation services in Alberta and her passion for equity for students with disabilities in the postsecondary setting.

Enjoy retirement!

Page 2 of 64

Marion Vosáhlo



## Table of Contents

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. PSPSD - ALBERTA
2. THE GUIDE
  - 2.1 EVOLUTION OF THE GUIDE
  - 2.2 PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE
  - 2.3 TERMINOLOGY
3. INSTRUCTIONAL MODIFICATION
  - 3.1 UNIVERSAL INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN
  - 3.2 ACCOMMODATION
4. ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT AND FUNCTIONAL IMPACT
  - 4.1 ACADEMIC NORMS
  - 4.2 FUNCTIONAL IMPACT OF DIFFERENCE AND ACCOMMODATIONS
  - 4.3 PRACTICUM, FIELD PLACEMENTS, FIELD WORK, COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

### B. SERVICE PROVISION

1. RESPONSIBILITY
  - 1.1. INSTITUTIONS
    - 1.1.1 DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICES
    - 1.1.2 DISCLOSURE
  - 1.2 STUDENTS
    - 1.2.1 DOCUMENTATION
    - 1.2.2 ACCOMMODATIONS AGREEMENT

### C. APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A: COMMONLY NAMED DISABILITIES AND ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS
- APPENDIX B: ACCOMMODATION DESCRIPTIONS
- APPENDIX C: EXAM ACCOMMODATIONS DESCRIPTIONS

- APPENDIX D: PPSD ALBERTA GUIDELINES FOR DOCUMENTATION, ASSESSMENT, AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN POSTSECONDARY STUDIES
- APPENDIX E: LIST OF ASSISTIVE / ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES
- APPENDIX F: SAMPLE FORM - VERIFICATION OF LONG TERM OR PERMANENT DISABILITY
- APPENDIX G: SAMPLE FORM - AGREEMENT REGARDING AUDIO RECORDING OF LECTURES

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. PSPSD - ALBERTA**

Postsecondary Service Providers to Students with Disabilities (PSPSD) is a consortium of service providers working in postsecondary institutions serving students with disabilities in Alberta. Participants represent all types of postsecondary learning environments in the province: technical institutes, colleges, universities, public and private. PSPSD aspires to advocate for and facilitate full accessibility to all learners in postsecondary education in Alberta. Through networking and collaboration PSPSD institutions endeavor to develop consistency in services and standards of practice to support all students with disabilities attending Alberta postsecondary programs. This document is intended to augment, not replace, the research necessary to understand all the factors which could affect students' progress through their chosen programs of study. Networking and consulting with colleagues, and other domain specific experts is highly recommended.

### **2. THE GUIDE**

#### **2.1 EVOLUTION OF THE GUIDE**

The Guidelines for Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Studies was first developed by Shan Robertson and Bonnie Blankert as an in-house document for the office of Accessibility Services at Mount Royal College. They generously shared the document with participants at the 2006 PSPSD meeting in Red Deer; the group recognized its value to all institutions, particularly to schools that were just establishing access services.

From this meeting, the document underwent several transitions with the help of several PSPSD members. Betty Benson of the University of Alberta compiled and re-structured the guide to present the information from a 'functional impact' perspective rather than a deficit perspective.

The document, rich with information and resources, was expanded even further with appendices providing detailed descriptions of accommodation services and supports and then organized and edited by Tracy Hetman of the University of Alberta.

From 2008 to 2010 Tracy coordinated the final edits, enhancements, and reformatting of the guide with Betty, Karma Black of Lethbridge College and Marilyn Grabinsky of Concordia University College of Alberta.

This document was developed by and for the participants of the consortium of Postsecondary Service Providers to Students with Disabilities (PSPSD). We consulted out-of-province content experts in a number of service domains. We received contributions and responses from first year and experienced (< 30 years) practitioners, from pioneers in this form of service delivery, from psychologists, and from many with advanced degrees (masters and PhD) working in the field.

It is a living document that will be updated and revised as practices in the field improve, modify or adjust to changes in service options, technology, legislation, and societal views.

## 2.2 PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to instructors and advisors who serve students with disabilities to address the impact of educational barriers in the postsecondary academic environment.

PSPSD endorses the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the statement that “disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (Preamble)<sup>1</sup>.

The path to reaching the PSPSD vision (stated above) is through the use of principles of universal instructional design (UID) in conjunction with reasonable accommodations. Toward this end, the guide briefly describes UID and then focuses on reasonable accommodation practices in postsecondary institutions. While universal instructional design will reduce and may ultimately eliminate barriers in education, *accommodation* is the current leading approach for ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to postsecondary education.

As a result, this document outlines accommodations that serve to address the academic, environmental, systemic, program, and attitudinal barriers that interfere with access to learning, or interferes with the students’ potential to achieve to their full capacity. Accommodations described in this document will be linked to common functional limitations resulting from various disabilities, medical conditions or illnesses.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=259> Accessed November 12, 2010

While the document has been developed to help institutions to provide quality access services to students, it is intended only to augment, not replace, the research necessary to understand the factors which affect individual students' progress through their chosen programs of study. The guide is meant to be used in conjunction with continual networking and consulting with colleagues and with other domain specific experts in the field of accessible postsecondary education.

### 2.3 TERMINOLOGY

Since terminology is not standardized, throughout the guide Disabilities Services Offices are sometimes called Accessibility Services Offices, or some combination of these terms. Disability Services Advisors may also be Access Advisors. Adaptive technology and assistive technology both refer to the specialized field of devices, software and hardware that provide accessibility to learning. This document uses most of these terms interchangeably, as a reflection of the varied nomenclature in the field.

## 3. INSTRUCTIONAL MODIFICATION

### 3.1 UNIVERSAL INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

**Universal Instructional Design (UID)** is a process that involves considering the potential needs of all learners when designing and delivering instruction.

- UID means identifying and eliminating unnecessary barriers to teaching and learning while maintaining academic rigor.
- UID evolved from the concept of universal design in the physical world, where domains such as architecture and industrial design have identified key goals for their products, including flexibility, consistency, accessibility, explicitness, and supportiveness. UID applies these very same principles to teaching and learning.

- UID is about truly universal thinking – it goes beyond just accessibility to reflecting on how to maximize learning for students of all backgrounds and learner preferences while minimizing the need for special accommodations.<sup>2</sup>

Readers are encouraged to educate themselves on the topic of Universal Design. Many excellent resources are available such as Burgstalher and Cory's *Universal Design in Higher Education: from Principles to Practice*, 2008, as well as numerous web sites, including the ones referenced in this document.

### 3.2 ACCOMMODATION

**Accommodation** is the process of making alterations to the delivery of services so that those services become accessible to more people. In an educational setting, variations in course design, delivery, evaluation and learner differences will determine the need for, and nature of, an accommodation.

Accommodation is a shared responsibility of the institution and the learner. PSPSD recognizes the right of students with disabilities to participate fully in the life of and the opportunities available within the postsecondary environment, and is committed to providing academic accommodations, to the point of undue hardship, to overcome discriminatory barriers (structural, systemic, program, administrative, etc.) for students with disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

The goal of providing academic accommodations is to establish an “equitable playing field” for all students within the postsecondary environment. As institutions adopt and incorporate the principles of universal instructional design, the playing field for all students will begin to be leveled.

Reasonable academic accommodations must be linked to functional limitations. A functional limitation refers to the effect of the disability on access, learning, behaviour, or performance.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/uid/uidbrief.pdf> Accessed November 12, 2010

<sup>3</sup> See also the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission's Interpretive Bulletin called Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Educational Institutions (2010) Accessed November 12, 2010 [http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/bulletins\\_sheets\\_booklets/bulletins/interpretive\\_bulletins.asp](http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/bulletins_sheets_booklets/bulletins/interpretive_bulletins.asp)

Not all accommodations will be beneficial for all students with the same disability. Accommodations may also vary depending on the design and learning outcomes of individual courses and programs.

#### **4. ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT AND FUNCTIONAL IMPACT**

##### **4.1 ACADEMIC NORMS**

This section presents information linking the interaction of the educational environment and the impact of functional limitations to accommodations, regardless of the precipitating disability. Each individual's experience with his or her own disability must be considered carefully when determining appropriate accommodations that will meet the student's particular needs and yet do not contravene the integrity of the course/program objectives, policy guidelines and professional ethics.

The accommodations should be linked to the functional limitations or barriers the student is experiencing in the educational setting, whether it is in the classroom, chemistry lab, seminar, machine shop, computer lab, field work, practicum placement, and so on (see section 4.3).

A diagnosis of a disability, medical condition or disorder alone is not sufficient to be eligible for accommodations and supports. The learning environment must be sufficiently inaccessible or present barriers such that the student's ability to perform tasks required to achieve his or her educational goals to his or her potential is negatively impacted.

##### **4.2 DISABILITY-RELATED FUNCTIONAL IMPACTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

While accommodations will be linked to both functional limitations and disability, it is apparent that:

- students with different disabilities often share functional limitations, and
- Students with the same diagnosis may not necessarily share the same functional limitations, or experience them to the same degree.

For example, it is widely understood that attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder affect concentration and attention, but it may be less understood that concentration and attention can be significantly impacted by conditions such as acquired brain injury, chronic pain, mental health conditions, as well as certain medications.

Similarly, not all students with a learning disability, an acquired brain injury, bi-polar disorder or a chronic medical condition experience the same academic barriers and need the same accommodations. Some accommodations are generally helpful to many, but all must be individualized for each student to ensure that they address the particular impacts for that student. The specific design and/or the required learning outcomes of a course or program may also affect the accommodations recommended for an individual student.

The accommodations listed in this section, although in no way exhaustive of all impacts experienced by students with disabilities, will attempt to address the more common barriers that have consequences for otherwise capable students in postsecondary studies. The accommodations below are possible options, again, emphasizing that it is essential to explore the needs of the individual student in the specific setting, whether it be the classroom, lab, seminar, theatre, art studio, library, industrial shops, simulation environment, recreation facility, and so on.

Additional information regarding commonly named disabilities and accommodations can be found in Appendix A. Descriptions of the accommodations outlined below can be found in Appendix B.

**TABLE 4.2 FUNCTIONAL IMPACT OF DIFFERENCE AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

INTERACTION WITH ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT	ACCOMMODATIONS TO EXPLORE
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**ABSENTEEISM**

Conditions such as depressive disorders, anxiety-related disorders and other mental health conditions may preclude students from attending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Record lectures</li> </ul>
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<p>classes on a regular basis, especially when medications do not stabilize the condition. Chronic health conditions that are subject to unpredictable relapses may result in temporarily or extended absences, depending on the severity of the relapse or the need for treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructors' lecture notes</li> <li>• Note taker</li> <li>• Extensions for course requirements</li> <li>• Flexible Program exit and re-entry</li> <li>• Extended time for completion of coursework (possibly beyond the end of term)</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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### ANXIOUSNESS AND STRESS

<p>While all students experience varying degrees of stress, some conditions elevate anxiety levels to the point of causing rapid heartbeat, profuse perspiration, physical illness, lightheadedness, fainting or panic attacks. As a result, one can be left emotionally and physically unable to perform common behaviors or tasks. Anxiety elevation may be triggered by different settings such as the classroom, labs, making presentations, or during exams. High levels of anxiety can affect one's ability to think, recall information, concentrate, or pay attention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Access to syllabus and textbooks before term begins</li> <li>• Advance Registration for classes</li> <li>• Note taker</li> <li>• Record lectures</li> <li>• Advanced notice of assignments, quizzes</li> <li>• Extensions for course requirements</li> <li>• Alternate assignments for course requirements</li> <li>• Alternate format for print materials</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time; low distraction environment; computer; breaks; limited number of exams per day; split exams; alternative question formats; rescheduling of exam times<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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### ATTENTION, CONCENTRATION, FOCUS

<p>Some conditions and medications create restlessness, decrease attention span, which</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Advanced Registration for classes</li> </ul>
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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix D for description of exam accommodations

<p>impact concentration while reading, studying, doing assignments or attending class. The inability to focus and concentrate efficiently impacts productivity. The student may have to read textbooks and other material repeatedly to comprehend it. It may take longer to determine what is being asked, to organize thoughts and to produce a response, therefore increasing the time required to complete assignments or exams. Tutoring may be a recommended accommodation as a strategy to review what may have been missed, and to help the student engage more actively with the material; however, tutoring introduces an additional time-consuming commitment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record lectures</li> <li>• Preferred seating</li> <li>• Note taker</li> <li>• Instructions in clear, concise written format</li> <li>• Classroom microphone / amplification system</li> <li>• Alternate format for print materials</li> <li>• Adaptive technology</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time; low distraction environment; limited number of exams per day</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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**AUDITORY INFORMATION PROCESSING**

<p>Auditory information such as lectures, discussions, verbal directions is processed differently, often more slowly. Information presented visually (diagrammatically or in text) may be more accessible and comprehensible. Information presented simultaneously in multiple modalities may not be beneficial.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Written instructions to accompany all auditory instructions</li> <li>• Note taker</li> <li>• Adaptive technology</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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**BLIND OR REDUCED VISION**

<p>Perception of visual information is impacted (text, diagrams, models, demonstrations, video, projections, etc.). Navigation, mobility, and spatial orientation may be impacted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Preferred seating</li> <li>• Note taker (notes are to be converted to compatible alternate format)</li> <li>• Navigation and way finding training</li> <li>• Alternate format for print materials</li> <li>• Adaptive technology</li> <li>• Lab / in-class assistant</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time; computer; reader /scribe; assistance with</li> </ul>
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	scantron sheets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service animal relief area</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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### DEAF OR REDUCED HEARING

<p>Perception of auditory information is impacted (lectures, presentations, video, instructions, discussions, conversations, etc.). Expression of spoken language may be impacted. Written language may be affected as a result of not having adequate access to language at a formative stage, impacting level of fluency in reading, and writing.<sup>5</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Interpreting services</li> <li>• In-class transcription services (e.g., CART or electronic / computerized note taking)</li> <li>• Preferred seating</li> <li>• Note taker</li> <li>• Captioned videos</li> <li>• Instructors' notes</li> <li>• Adaptive Technology</li> <li>• Editor</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time; computer – grammar/spellcheck</li> <li>• Visual warning signals (fire alarms, etc.)</li> <li>• Videophones and TTYs</li> <li>• Service animal relief area</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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### DISTRACTIBILITY

<p>Various conditions, disabilities and medications, create a heightened awareness of, and sensitivity to, a range of environmental stimuli. Conversely, they may decrease one's ability to tolerate noise and crowded settings. The buzz from fluorescent lighting, shifting of students in their seats, shuffling of papers, coughing, odours or background noise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Advanced Registration for classes</li> <li>• Registration in small classes, if possible</li> <li>• Reduced environmental stimuli, if possible</li> <li>• Preferred seating</li> <li>• Note taker</li> </ul>
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<sup>5</sup> Warick, Ruth 2003 University of British Columbia PhD Thesis Voices Unheard: The Academic and Social Experiences of University Students who are Hard of Hearing.

<p>or visual distractions, can impact a student's efforts to concentrate on the academic task at hand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptive technology</li> <li>• Classroom microphone / amplification system</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time; low distraction environment</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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**ENDURANCE, ENERGY, STAMINA**

<p>Sleep disorders, medications and many other conditions can increase fatigue and otherwise reduce energy levels. Reduced energy levels impact attention, productivity, concentration and comprehension. It can also impact the management of (meeting) deadlines and other time pressures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course-load</li> <li>• Advanced Registration for classes</li> <li>• Extensions for course requirements</li> <li>• Classroom re-location</li> <li>• Note taker</li> <li>• Alternate format for print materials</li> <li>• Designated safe spot to rest each day</li> <li>• Locker for on campus storage of texts and materials</li> <li>• Additional set of texts for use at home</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time; breaks; limited number of exams per day; flexible exam timetable</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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**LANGUAGE PROCESSING**

<p>Conditions affecting language processing, phonological processing, visual spatial processing, processing speed, memory, attention, and executive functions can all affect listening, speaking, understanding, reading, decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension, spelling and writing. There may be affects on interpreting questions, seeing "whole-to-part/part- to-whole" relationships and over-looking the 'big picture' by taking a detail-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Record lectures</li> <li>• Note taker</li> <li>• Alternate assignments for course requirements</li> <li>• Editor</li> <li>• Alternate format for print materials</li> <li>• Adaptive technology</li> </ul>
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<p>oriented approach to learning and performing tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time; computer; spell and grammar check; reader / scribe; low distraction environment; alternate question formats</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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**MANAGING AND RESPONDING TO CHANGE**

<p>Some disabilities and medical conditions create elevated stress and anxiety due to changes in routines, for example in coursework, classroom schedules, assignments, due dates, or professors. Coping with too many choices may be a challenge. Interruptions may be difficult to tolerate, which can affect the dynamics of settings such as group work or classroom discussions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Advanced Registration for classes</li> <li>• Access to syllabus and textbooks before term begins</li> <li>• Advanced notice of assignments, quizzes</li> <li>• Extensions for course requirements</li> <li>• Consistency, if possible, between instructors regarding presentation of course materials in courses with more than one instructor</li> <li>• Social coach</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time; low distraction environment</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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**MOBILITY, DEXTERITY, PHYSICAL STRENGTH**

<p>Conditions which affect fine or gross motor coordination, strength, mobility or dexterity in specific limbs, or throughout the entire body. Some impacts include: the ability to lift and/or carry, take notes, navigate space or handle lab equipment. Fatigue may also be a factor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Personal attendant</li> <li>• Advance registration for classes</li> <li>• Record lectures</li> <li>• Note taker</li> <li>• Lab / in-class assistant</li> <li>• Adaptive technology</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time; computer; reader / scribe; adjustable chair or other ergonomic items; breaks; limited number of exams per day; assistance with</li> </ul>
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	scantron sheets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service animal relief area</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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### MULTI-TASKING

<p>Some disabilities and conditions impact one's ability to cope with situations that present two or more tasks that simultaneously demand attention and focus. For example, listening to a lecture and taking notes--listening could result in insufficient notes and note taking could result in decreased comprehension of the lecture. Labs involving instruction and participation at the same time may also be challenging.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Note taker</li> <li>• Lab assistant</li> <li>• Written instructions to accompany all auditory instructions</li> <li>• Captioned videos</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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### ORGANIZATION AND TIME-MANAGEMENT

<p>The development of effective organization and time management, prioritizing, arranging and sticking to schedules, remembering and keeping commitments, and completing tasks in an orderly manner can be affected by some disabilities and conditions. Success in an academic environment depends on managing volumes of information through reading, researching, preparing for and doing assignments, labs and exams. These obligations can be overwhelming for students who have conditions that interfere with these tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Access to syllabus and textbooks before term begins</li> <li>• Daily organizer /planner - paper or electronic</li> <li>• Note taker</li> <li>• Adaptive technology</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: extended time; computer; low distraction environment</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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### DAILY PHYSICAL NEEDS

<p>Disabilities or conditions that impact daily routines such as timely meals, snacks, bathroom breaks, administration of medications, exercise, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Advance registration for classes</li> <li>• Classroom re-location</li> <li>• Preferred seating</li> <li>• Note taker</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refreshments / food in classroom, lab, seminar, exam</li> <li>• Exam accommodations: breaks</li> </ul>
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### RESPONDING TO NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

<p>Some disabilities impact one’s ability to respond openly to negative feedback (including poor marks) or criticism. As a result, feelings such as defensiveness, disappointment and distress can distract from exploring and understanding the issues and considering suggestions to initiate change to improve the situation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Instructor and student engage in regular feedback sessions (ask student’s perspective of performance, describe both strengths and weaknesses, suggest specific ways to improve), involve disability services advisor, if needed</li> <li>• Provide student written feedback a day or two before setting appointment to discuss</li> <li>• Alternate assignments for course requirements</li> <li>• Social coach</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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### SOCIAL INTERACTION/SOCIAL SKILLS

<p>Some disabilities and conditions affect the formation of interpersonal relationships and the development of social skills. Social cues may be misunderstood or simply not perceived. Conversely, the comments or gestures of others may be misinterpreted. Meaningful eye contact may be avoided, and conversations may be limited to minimal exchanges. Having to explain a situation or problem to a professor, working on a group project, giving a presentation in class may be a challenge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced course load</li> <li>• Advanced Registration for classes</li> <li>• Private housing or living arrangements</li> <li>• Pre-term meeting with professor, student and disability services advisor to review student’s learning strengths and functional limitations</li> <li>• Social coach</li> <li>• Alternate assignments for course</li> <li>• Academic Strategist</li> <li>• Tutor</li> </ul>
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## 4.3 PRACTICUM, FIELD PLACEMENTS, FIELD WORK, COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

As mentioned in section 4.2, particular attention must be given to analyzing the barriers of a practicum or field placement in relation to the *bona fide educational requirements* (those requirements that are a justifiable component of a program that may limit entry to, or completion of, a program or course) and the appropriate reasonable accommodations.

Licensing bodies for professionals, such as nurses, physicians, lawyers, pharmacists, and teachers; paraprofessionals, such as practical nurses and assistants; as well as, apprenticeship boards for the trades, will evaluate *bona fide occupational requirements* (those requirements that are justifiable components of an occupation or specific job). Licensing bodies are responsible to put in place appropriate accommodations for their testing processes for eligible applicants. However, postsecondary institutions are often consulted and can play an important role in guiding these agencies in setting up accommodations that properly address the barriers while maintaining the integrity of the evaluation.

Employers are seeking educated and qualified employees. By law and in practice, companies are putting in place various accommodations for employees with a range of needs, whether they are medical, home-life, work-life, disability-related or some other factor that can address health and productivity.

## **B. SERVICE PROVISION**

### **1. RESPONSIBILITY**

#### **1.1 INSTITUTIONS**

##### **1.1.1 Access Services Offices/Disabilities Services Offices**

In consultation with students and based on the academic impact of documented disabilities, access advisors must develop an *Accommodations Agreement* that outlines compatible accommodations for their programs of study, including field and practicum placements.

The accommodations should be linked to the functional limitations or barriers the student is experiencing in the educational setting. Information used to determine the

scope of limitations and appropriate accommodations include the documentation of disability or medical conditions, results of assessments (e.g., psycho-educational, adaptive technology, neuropsychological, functional capacity or other relevant assessments), interviews with the student, accommodations used in other settings, and other relevant data. Reasonable and appropriate accommodations are often creative solutions that develop from consultations with the student, the access advisor and the instructor.

Each individual's experience with his or her own disability must be considered carefully when determining appropriate accommodations that will meet the student's particular needs and yet do not contravene the integrity of the course/program objectives, policy guidelines and professional ethics.

How well students can articulate their functional limitations, and how thoroughly documentation identifies the impact of the disability, will also determine how well the access advisor is able to identify and recommend reasonable accommodations that will best address the learning environment. In addition, the more in-depth knowledge and understanding the access advisor has, or acquires, about each student's particular disabilities, the more likely that individualized accommodations will be compatible.

Frequently, students with a newly identified disability or medical condition experience an emotional period while learning to accept and adjust to the changes that may be required because of the diagnosis. Such stressors can lead to responses that are non-productive, that may be isolating, and that could interfere with efforts to achieve academic excellence. Varying degrees of seclusion may impact social interaction, integration and a sense of belonging. The role and guidance of the access advisor may be particularly valuable during this time in determining appropriate accommodations, and in making referrals to additional support services. Guidance in the development of self-advocacy skills may be required to help students through this process.

### 1.1.2 Disclosure

Each institution must determine the appropriate degree of disclosure of students' medical or disability documentation among staff and faculty. It is recommended that the documentation remains within the Access Services Office, and that disclosure is provided on a 'need to know' basis in compliance with local and national legislation and regulations governing freedom of information and protection of privacy.

Instructors should be provided an *Accommodation Letter* from the Access Services Office to outline the recommended classroom or course accommodations for a student, including field or practicum placements. The student should be encouraged to explain to instructors how the academic environment and disability interact and how this can impact academic performance. The student can go on to discuss how the accommodations that have been recommended will address the impact. The need to disclose the specific disability or diagnosis may not be necessary.

Some students, particularly those with mental health disorders and brain injuries, may be sensitive to how their disability is perceived, and therefore may be reluctant to disclose, not knowing how that information will be received. When disability-related discussions focus on functional limitations and accommodations rather than diagnosed disabilities, personal attitudes toward disability are much less likely to be an issue for concern.

## 1.2 STUDENTS

### 1.2.1 Documentation

Postsecondary students seeking disability- or medically-related accommodations and services or funding for assistive services and technology, are required to provide documentation from a qualified professional such as a physician, psychologist, audiologist, ophthalmologist, or other licensed specialist. The documentation<sup>6</sup> should clearly outline the impact the disability or condition has on the student in an academic setting. It may identify or recommend specific accommodations and supports that would reduce the barriers encountered in an educational setting. The access advisor will use this documentation, along with other information obtained during interviews, assessments and trials, to determine appropriate disability-related accommodations and

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<sup>6</sup> Appendix E Sample of *Request for Documentation* form.

supports. Some conditions are subject to change (e.g., relapses, remissions); therefore, to ensure that the identification of impacts and functional limitations can be properly addressed, updated medical documentation (including information about the effects of medication) may be requested, periodically, throughout the duration of the program.

For more details on documentation of learning difficulties which are identified through psycho-educational assessments performed by psychologists (e.g., learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, and attention deficit / hyperactivity disorder) see Appendix D *PSPSD Alberta Guidelines for Documentation, Assessment, and Services for Students with Learning Difficulties in Postsecondary Studies*.

A diagnosis of a disability, medical condition or disorder alone is not sufficient to be eligible for accommodations and supports. The learning environment must be sufficiently inaccessible such that the student's ability to perform tasks required to achieve his or her educational goals to his or her potential is negatively impacted.

### 1.2.2 Accommodations Agreement

In collaboration with their disability services advisor, all students should develop an *Accommodations Agreement* that outlines compatible accommodations for their programs of study, including field and practicum placements. The accommodations should be linked to the functional limitations or barriers the student is experiencing in the educational setting. The key to arranging effective services and supports is to begin the process several weeks, if not months, before the beginning of the study period.

## APPENDIX A

### COMMONLY NAMED DISABILITIES AND ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

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Descriptions of the accommodations outlined below can be found in Appendix B.

#### Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder

Attention deficit / hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) is a neurobiological condition.<sup>7</sup>

The DSM-IV TR specifies three major subtypes of AD/HD:

- Primarily Inattentive Subtype. The individual mainly has difficulties with attention, organization, and follow-through.
- Primarily Hyperactive/Impulsive. The individual mainly has difficulties with impulse control, restlessness, and self-control.
- Combined Subtype. The individual has symptoms of inattention, impulsivity, and restlessness.

**Assessments** should be completed by clinical psychologists, physicians (psychiatrist, neurologist, family doctor, or other type of physician), or clinical social workers. Diagnosis from a general practitioner is only acceptable as interim documentation. A psycho-educational assessment would be required.

#### ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:

- Advanced Registration for Courses
- Record Lectures
- Alternate Formats for Print
- Adaptive Technology
- Reduced Course Load
- Note taker
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Academic Strategist

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from The National Resource Centre on AD/HD – A Division of CHADD. Accessed November 12, 2010  
<http://www.help4adhd.org/en/treatment/guides/WWK9>

- Exam Accommodations

- Tutor

<http://www.add.org/site/PageServer>

<http://www.russellbarkley.org/adhd-facts.htm>

<http://www.drhallowell.com/add-adhd/>

## (Central) Auditory Processing Disorder

Auditory Processing Disorder results from impaired neural function and is characterized by poor recognition, discrimination, separation, grouping, localization or ordering of non-speech sounds. It does not solely result from a deficit in general attention, language or other cognitive processes.<sup>8</sup> Persons with APD often do not recognize subtle differences between sounds in words, even though the sounds themselves are loud and clear to others.

**Assessments** should be completed by audiologists, neuropsychologists, educational psychologists, or speech-language pathologists.

### ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:

- Preferred Seating
- Instructors' Notes (copies)
- Captioned videos / films
- Alternate Formats for Print
- Adaptive Technology
- Exam Accommodations
- Write down verbal exam instructions and other announcements to augment auditory input and enhance processing, receptions and recall of instructions
- Environmental Modifications to classroom acoustics, placement and seating may help improve the listening environment.
- Reduced Course Load
- Note taker
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Academic Strategist
- Tutor

<http://www.thebsa.org.uk/>

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders. Accessed November 12, 2010

<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/auditory.asp>

## Autism Spectrum Disorders

Autism is a developmental neurological disorder. Autism spectrum disorders range from a severe form called Autistic Disorder, to a milder form called Asperger Syndrome. If a person has symptoms of either of these disorders, but does not meet the specific criteria necessary for either, the diagnosis will be referred to as *Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified* (PDD-NOS). Although rare, other severe disorders that are included in the autism spectrum are Rett Syndrome and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder. This spectrum of impairments affects several areas of functionality, including: reciprocal social interaction skills, communication skills, atypical stereotyped behaviours/interests and intellectual functioning. It is important to note that the symptoms displayed by an individual with autism may change as the individual matures and/or receives treatment.<sup>9</sup>

**Assessments** should be completed by physicians, psychologists or psychiatrists. A letter from a physician or psychiatrist may be sufficient; although a psycho-educational assessment from a psychologist is preferred.

### ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:

- Preferred Seating
- Alternate Formats for Print
- Adaptive Technology
- Exam Accommodations
- Instructor's notes
- Housing
- Social coach
- Reduced Course Load
- Advanced Registration for classes
- Note taker
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Academic Strategist
- Tutor

[www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/autism.cfm](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/autism.cfm)

<http://www.cpa-apc.org/>

[www.autism.ca](http://www.autism.ca)

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<sup>9</sup> Adapted from National Institute of Mental Health. Accessed November 12, 2010  
[www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/autism.cfm](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/autism.cfm)

## Chronic Health Conditions

Chronic medical conditions may include but are not limited to, such conditions as multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, HIV, cancer, hepatitis, kidney disease, allergies, asthma, fibromyalgia, chemical sensitivities, and many other disorders.

**Assessments** should be completed by family physicians or medical specialists.

### ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:

- Preferred Seating
- Classroom Re-location
- Record Lectures
- Lab / in-class Assistant
- Refreshments / Food
- Adaptive Technology
- Exam Accommodations
- Housing
- Reduced Course Load
- Note taker
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Extensions for Course Requirements
- Program Exit / Re-entry
- Furniture
- Academic Strategist
- Tutor

<http://www.webmd.com/>

## Hearing Loss

**Hard of Hearing** persons have partial hearing, ranging from mild to a profound loss, and use speech as major means of communication.<sup>10</sup>

**Deafened** persons have very little or no hearing after childhood and use speech as a major means of communication.<sup>10</sup>

**Deaf** persons identify with a cultural and linguistic minority group and use a signed language as a major means of communication. In Canada the signed languages are American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des Signes Quebecoise (LSQ). Like all cultural minorities, Deaf people share a common history and experience, which provide the basis for group cohesion and identity.<sup>11</sup> Audiologically, their hearing loss ranges from mild to profound.

Decibel loss does not always correlate with educational implications and therefore should be considered as only one of the factors when determining reasonable accommodations. Accommodations will depend upon the major means of communication used by the individual.

**Assessments** for hearing acuity should be completed by an audiologist.

### ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:

- Preferred Seating
- Reduced Course Load
- Instructors' Notes (copies)
- Note taker

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<sup>10</sup> Adapted from *A Chance to Hear A Chance to be Heard* brochure, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association November 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from Padden and Markowicz, 1976, Markowicz and Woodward, 1978, Schlesinger and Meadow, 1972 cited in Baker-Shenk and Cokely, 1980 *American Sign Language: A Teacher's Resource Text on Grammar and Culture*. Silver Spring, Md.: T.J. Publishers; <http://www.ccsdeaf.com/indexe.html> Accessed March, 2008.

- Captioned videos / films/ web media
- Interpreting Services
- CART Services
- Computer Assisted / Electronic Note taking
- Adaptive Technology
- Exam Accommodations
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Academic Strategist
- Tutor
- Videophones / TTYs
- Visual Warning Systems
- Service Animal Relief Area
- Editor

**INTERPRETERS:**

<http://www.avlic.ca/>

<http://www.acrid.ca/>

<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/ssds/interpreting.cfm>

**CART:**

<http://nationaldb.org/index.php>

<http://cart.ncraonline.org/About/>

<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/ssds/cart.cfm>

**ELECTRONIC OR COMPUTERIZED NOTE TAKING:**

<http://www.bcit.ca/drc/currentstudents/interpret.shtml>

[http://www.georgebrown.ca/saffairs/deaf/deaf\\_description.aspx#notetaking](http://www.georgebrown.ca/saffairs/deaf/deaf_description.aspx#notetaking)

<http://www.rit.edu/~easi/itd/itdv01n2/cuddihy.htm>

**CAPTIONING:**

<http://deafness.about.com/cs/accessibility/a/captioning.htm>

**TTYs AND VIDEOPHONES:**

<http://www.harriscomm.com/catalog/default.php?cPath=1185>

<http://www.cad.ca/en/news/details.asp?newsID=34>

<http://www.chs.ca/info/TTY/index.html>

**Organizations:**

<http://www.deafculturecentre.ca/Public/index.aspx>

<http://www.chha.ca/>

## Intellectual Disability

A person is considered to have an intellectual disability if their global intellectual functioning level falls below the normal range on an individually administered psycho-educational assessment of intellectual functioning. Disability related accommodations are unlikely to mitigate for this disability in a postsecondary academic environment.

**Assessments** should be completed by a psychologist.

### **ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:**

- Extended time to complete assignments and exams, if the student is required to fulfill these responsibilities
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Note takers for lectures, to allow the student to concentrate on the presentation of course material
- Participation in Inclusive Postsecondary Education program
- Audit status for course
- Social Coach
- Tutor
- Academic Strategist
- Refer to resources on and off campus

<http://www.thinkcollege.net/>

## Learning Disabilities

Learning Disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing; phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g., planning and decision-making).

**Assessments** should be completed by a psychologist.

### **ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:**

- Record Lectures
- Alternate Formats for Print
- Adaptive Technology
- Exam Accommodations
- Tutor
- Reduced Course Load
- Note taker
- Instructor's Notes
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Academic Strategist

Appendix D is *excerpt from the PSPSD Alberta Guidelines for Documentation, Assessment, and Services for Students with Learning Difficulties in Postsecondary Studies* provides further guidance regarding the assessment of learning difficulties.

<http://www.loyalistc.on.ca/services/ccdi/documents/LDResour.pdf>

## Mental Health Conditions

Mental health conditions, or mental illnesses are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour (or some combination thereof) associated with significant distress and impaired functioning over an extended period of time. The symptoms of mental illness vary from mild to severe, depending on the type of mental illness, the individual, the family and the socio-economic environment.

**Assessments** should be completed by psychiatrists, psychologists, or physicians. Diagnosis from a general practitioner is only acceptable as interim documentation.

### ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:

- Preferred Seating
- Readings in Advance
- Record Lectures
- Alternate Formats for Print
- Adaptive Technology
- Exam Accommodations
- Program Exit / Re-entry
- Class Breaks for sessions of 90 minutes or longer, short breaks can address elevating anxiety or restlessness
- Social Coach to stabilize affects of the condition on anxiety levels and social relationships
- Access to private room to allow for privacy when taking medication; to manage symptoms (e.g., psychotic symptoms; anxiety)
- Reduced Course Load
- Advanced Registration for classes
- Note taker
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Extension on Course Requirements
- Academic Strategist
- Tutor

The School Book, Building Accommodation in Post Secondary Settings for Persons with Mental Illness developed by the National Office of the Canadian Mental Health Association

Your Education: Your Future, [www.cmha.ca/youreducation/](http://www.cmha.ca/youreducation/)

DSM-IV

Merck Manual of Medical Information

## Neurological Disorders

Neurological disorders are impairments to the central nervous system, including the brain that has resulted from injury or illness. The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke outlines hundreds of conditions that fall within the classification of neurological disorders. Commonly known conditions include, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, graphic praxis, head injury, stroke, Parkinson's disease, Tourette's syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effect, and epilepsy. These conditions commonly impact recall, the control and use of cognitive functioning, sensory and motor skills, speech, language, organizational skills, information processing, affect, social skills, or basic life functions.

**Assessments**, depending on the specific condition, should be completed by: neurologists, psychologists, neuropsychologists, psychiatrists, or physicians. Assessments are often multi-disciplinary and may contain recommendations from the primary diagnosticians -- neuropsychologists, and neurologists, as well as occupational therapists, speech pathologists, psychiatrists, etc.

For many neurological conditions, specifically brain injuries, the documentation should include a comprehensive neuropsychological / psycho-educational assessment that reports on the student's aptitude, academic achievement and information processing capabilities.

### ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:

- Advanced Registration for courses
- Record Lecture
- Classroom re-location
- Furniture
- Alternate Formats for Print
- Adaptive Technology
- Housing
- Access to private room to allow privacy when taking medication; to manage symptoms; rest
- Reduced Course Load
- Note taker
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Academic Strategist
- Tutor
- Exam Accommodations
- Editor

<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/>

## Non-Verbal Learning Disability

NLD is a neurological disorder which originates in the right hemisphere of the brain. Reception of nonverbal or performance-based information governed by this hemisphere is impaired in varying degrees, causing problems with visual-spatial, intuitive, organizational, evaluative, and holistic processing functions.

The three categories of deficits are:

- **Motoric:** lack of coordination, problems with balance and graphomotor skills
- **Visual-spatial-organizational:** lack of image, poor visual recall, faulty spatial perception, and difficulty with spatial relations
- **Social:** inability to comprehend nonverbal communication, difficulty adjusting to transitions and novel situations, and deficits in social judgment.

**Assessments** should be completed by a psychologist.

### **Accommodation Options to Explore:**

- Preferred Seating
- Instructors' Notes (copies)
- Adaptive Technology
- Exam Accommodations
- Academic Strategist
- Verbal explanation of visual material to accommodate condition's impact on spatial relations and perception; to enhance recall of visual information
- Presentation of all instructions verbally and in print to accommodate the conditions' impact on perceiving, comprehending and processing information
- Reduced Course Load
- Note taker
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Tutor
- Housing

<http://www.nlda.org>

## Physical Disabilities

Physical disabilities include a number of conditions that have resulted in a loss of function to various areas of independent movement, caused by nervous system injury or impairment, amputation and/or muscular-skeletal disorders. Conditions commonly known include, arthritis and rheumatic disorders, repetitive strain injuries, carpal tunnel syndrome, soft tissue injuries, spina bifida, amputations, paraplegia, quadriplegia, obesity.

**Assessments** should be completed by physicians or other medical and health care specialists.

Because the provision of all academic accommodations is individualized and based on the impact of a disability on current academic requirements, it may be necessary to request functional capacity assessments and evaluations to be conducted by physical therapists or occupational therapists.

### **Accommodation Options to Explore:**

- Preferred Seating
- Advanced Registration of courses
- Classroom Re-location
- Alternate Formats for Print
- Adaptive Technology
- Exam Accommodations
- Lab / in-class Assistant
- Service Animal Relief Area
- Reduced Course Load
- Note taker
- Furniture
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Academic Strategist
- Tutor
- Housing

<http://www.abilities.ca/>

## Vision Loss

- **Partially sighted** indicates some type of vision change (loss) which can often be addressed with alternate formats
- **Low vision** generally refers to a severe visual impairment, not necessarily limited to distance vision. Low vision applies to all individuals with sight who are unable to read the newspaper at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of eyeglasses or contact lenses. They use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, although they may require adaptations in lighting or the size of print, and, sometimes, Braille
- **Legally blind** indicates that a person has less than 20/200 vision in the better eye or a very limited field of vision (20 degrees at its widest point); and
- Totally **blind** students learn via Braille or other non-visual media.
- **Visual impairment** is a generic term which refers to a range of vision, including those described above<sup>12</sup>

**Assessments** for vision acuity should be completed by ophthalmologists.

### ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:

- Preferred Seating
- Navigation and Way Finding
- Alternate Formats for Print
- Adaptive Technology
- Exam Accommodations
- Lab / in-class Assistant
- Reduced Course Load
- Note taker
- Alternate Assignments for Course Requirements
- Academic Strategist
- Tutor
- Service Animal Relief Area
- Instructors' Notes (adapted appropriately)
- Verbal explanation of visual material to accommodate for the condition's impact on perception of print, diagrammatic, or visual material
- Clear pathways in class to address safe navigation

<http://www.cnib.ca/>

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<sup>12</sup> Adapted from a publication of the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities *Blindness / Visual Impairment*. Accessed November 12, 2010 <http://www.nichcy.org/Pages/Home.aspx>

## Temporary Disabling Conditions

Temporary disabilities or conditions include, but are not limited to, broken bones, surgery (recovery period), concussion, illness or injury.

**Assessments** should be completed by professional with expertise in the area of the particular illness or injury.

### **ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:**

Dependent on functional impact of temporary condition.

## APPENDIX B

### ACCOMMODATION DESCRIPTIONS

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#### **ACADEMIC STRATEGIST**

An academic strategist works closely with students to identify functional limitations, academic strengths and the possible impacts of the medical condition or disability on the student's performance in his or her program of study. Customized strategies and approaches (including the incorporation of adaptive technologies and software) are explored to enhance academic achievement. Strategists coach students to evaluate existing strategy usage and to modify and apply strategies based upon academic requirements and the students' disability-related learning profiles. Topics covered include studying, note taking, reading, writing, concentration, time management, task analysis, organizational skills, self-advocacy, social relationships, networking, exam preparation, exam writing, handling anxiety, motivation, attitude; sleep, nutrition and relaxation. Strategists do not serve as course content tutors.

Academic strategists minimally have a bachelor's degree in a related field, but may have advanced credentials such as Masters degrees or be registered psychologists. Academic Strategists have specialized knowledge of the impacts of a range of disabilities and medical conditions on the responsibilities and tasks expected of students in the postsecondary environment, as well as, strategies (often in combination with assistive technology) that can respond to these impacts. Familiarity with a broad range of assistive technology is required.

#### **ADAPTIVE / ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

Adaptive technology or assistive technology (AT) refers to devices, hardware and software that can address functional limitations associated with disabilities (permanent and temporary), medical conditions and illnesses. As society has developed the use of electronics and sophisticated programming, new approaches and solutions have become available to address the impacts of many work- and learning-related barriers. Mainstream devices and programs may be explored as compatible accommodations, such as PDA's or grammar and spellcheck features, but in most cases, it is the use of specialized devices and software that should be explored to address various learning differences as they relate to reading, writing, researching, planning, organization, communicating, networking, and so on. Exploring adaptive technology options as they relate to identified functional limitations is encouraged, and must be performed by a qualified specialist.

Adaptive technology is a growing and complex area of expertise, and, as with all areas of technology, is constantly changing and upgrading. AT assessments (and subsequent training) should be done by specialists familiar with the academic setting, and can be revisited intermittently, as the technology in a given area progresses, or as the student experiences changes in his or her disability or medical condition. See Appendix E for more information.

### **ADVANCE REGISTRATION FOR COURSES**

This accommodation may be recommended for students with medical conditions, physical disabilities, mental health conditions, etc. Time slots can be chosen that best fit students' productive times based on medication, alertness, sleep schedule and/or to coincide with accessible transportation arrangements or for other disability-related reasons.

### **ALTERNATE ASSIGNMENTS FOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Alternate assignments for course requirements may be required for students with disabilities or medical conditions that impact, attendance, anxiety, stress, language, behaviour, speaking, hearing, vision, etc. When the demands of a course are taxing the functional limitations that a student experiences with his or her disability or medical condition, then a modification may be required (e.g., 1-1 oral presentation for professor only, written assignment, presentation to class in modified fashion). Formats compatible with student's strengths should be explored; the exact nature of the alternate assignment should be negotiated between the instructor and the student. The disability services advisor may be of assistance in this regard. The alternate or modified assignment should not be designed to be easier or harder, but 'equal' to the original assignment such that the instructor can evaluate the student's progress relative to the standards expected for the course.

Based on the principles of universal instructional design, options for completing course requirements could be offered for ALL students to choose from, to allow everyone to demonstrate their learning of the course content and objectives compatible with their strengths. Examples of options include (but are not limited to): regular assignments (e.g., weekly), group projects, oral presentations, essays, reports, research, experiments, reflection journals, community service learning, interviews, exams, etc.

In addition, a requested accommodation may be supplemental assignments to compensate for a poor grade. Again, this is a feature of course design and delivery that can be beneficial to all students.

### **ALTERNATE FORMATS FOR PRINT MATERIALS**

AF should be considered for students whose disabilities affect the processing of print and visual materials. Some examples are: blind or partially sighted students, students with certain learning

disabilities, students whose condition affects concentration and focus, and students with other conditions such as Irlen's Syndrome. The types of alternate formats depend upon the nature of the student's disability. Different formats should be explored to determine the most compatible approach. Examples of formats include: e-text, enlarged print, Braille, tactile diagrams and graphs, MP3 production, and audiotape.

Converting print material into an alternate format must be done by trained personnel. In some instances, printed material must be scanned into an electronic form, possibly edited for errors, omissions and compatibility with specific forms of assistive technology or output devices (e.g., e-text, MP3 formats). Many publishers now provide their products in electronic formats, which is very beneficial to postsecondary institutions. Converting print materials to Braille must be performed by a trained, certified brailist. With some basic training, alternate formats such as enlargements and audio recordings can easily be provided by non-specialized staff.

#### **CAPTIONED VIDEOS, FILMS, TV PROGRAMS, WEB MEDIA**

Most media produced for the public such as TV programs and films are closed captioned. Not all educational or privately produced material is captioned. Instructors should be encouraged to order captioned versions of material, if the option is available. Settings to 'display text' can be found on some web media, such as YouTube.

In consultation with the institution's audio-visual or classroom technical support department, the instructor can coordinate the viewing such that the video without captions can be projected (large screen) while at the same time the captioned version can be viewed separately on a TV. This arrangement allows the entire class to access the format that best suits their learning.

In some instances, when the medium is not captioned, a script of the media may need to be prepared to allow the student to read the text and review the visual media in combination (typically outside of class). A CART provider (see below), can fulfill this transcription role, but it can also be done by an electronic note taker or any other person who can effectively transcribe verbal dialogue on an audio or audio-visual based media. Alternatively, a video of the Sign Language translation for the material may need to be recorded.

If the medium for the educational material is strictly audio (such as podcasts), then a transcription (text-based) of the material may need to be provided, or a video-based Sign Language translation may need

to be recorded. These formats should be provided to allow the deaf or hard of hearing student to have repeated access to the material, as their peers have to the same podcasts or other audio/visual media.

### **CART<sup>13</sup> (REAL-TIME TRANSCRIBING)**

Used by deaf or hard of hearing students whose major means of communication is a written or spoken language, but whose hearing loss precludes hearing or speechreading well in the setting. Some students who use this service may, additionally, have a vision loss. It may be an accommodation compatible for students whose disability (ies) or medical conditions affect auditory processing.

The service provides near verbatim and instantaneous display of the spoken word in English text. The text appears on a (laptop) computer monitor or other display. The service is delivered by a CART provider who must be a graduate of court reporting / realtime reporting program (>225 wpm). Specialized equipment includes a stenotype machine, laptop computer and realtime software. There are advanced certification designations for CART providers.

There are companies and independent contractors in Alberta that can provide in-class or remote CART services for postsecondary institutions.

### **CLASSROOM RE-LOCATION**

Classroom re-location accommodates students with disabilities that impact mobility, fatigue, or daily physical needs by considering proximal washroom access, travel distance between classes, or other disability-related reasons.

### **COURSE LOAD ACCOMMODATIONS**

An adjusted course load (reduced) may be considered when disabilities or medical conditions affect productivity and extend the time necessary to complete academic tasks such as thinking, planning, reading, writing, researching; or if the accommodations required to reduce barriers themselves are necessarily time consuming, such as tutoring; or when access to the learning environment is mediated through services such as alternate formats for print material, interpreting or real-time transcribing services (CART), etc. Students may wish to explore with a disability services advisor the advantages and disadvantages of studying at various course loads.

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<sup>13</sup> CART stands for communication access real-time translation, and is the term designated by the {American} National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) to refer to those reporters who provide real-time captioning services.

The Canada Student Loan program recognizes that disabilities and medical conditions may lengthen the time students require to complete postsecondary programs, and acknowledges as 'full-time' (for funding purposes) students studying at a 40% or greater course load. Most institutions in Alberta also acknowledge the ratio of 40% or greater as full-time status for students with disabilities.

## **EDITOR**

This accommodation may be recommended for students whose disability significantly impacts fluency in written English, including, but not limited to, students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and who have certain learning disabilities.

Success in postsecondary studies requires a student to demonstrate acquisition of the content and competencies at, or above, the prescribed standard set out by the program. Determining whether the standard has been achieved may require the student to demonstrate that a standard of English fluency has been met, or exceeded, as well as the specific course and program objectives.

As an accommodation, an editor can be engaged to work with the student to enhance major written assignments, to allow the instructor to grade the student's progress in acquiring and applying course material. The pre-edited working notes and writing of the student may be appended to the assignment to demonstrate English and writing fluency as well as to verify the original generation of ideas and analyses.

The role of the editor is limited to reframing the students writing, thoughts, ideas, opinions, analysis and conclusions into academic writing. Conversations with the student to clarify points and to expand on the original information are encouraged. The editor should not be advising on resources, research methods or content development. The editor should be focused on the re-writing of the student's original material in an academic manner.

## **ELECTRONIC OR COMPUTER-ASSISTED NOTE TAKING**

Used by students with a hearing loss whose major means of communication is a written or spoken language, who would benefit from a visual text display of what is being said in the classroom to augment use of hearing, amplification, and speechreading.

This service intends to capture or summarize main points of the lecture; it does not approach a verbatim version for most lecture environments. Some students who use this service may, additionally, have a

vision loss. The goal of the service is to attempt to capture as much of the dialogue as possible or to summarize main points.

An electronic / computer-assisted note taker is a quick typist (> 70 wpm). Equipment required include a laptop computer, possibly specialized software (e.g., Typewell or C-Print) to increase wpm. The computer-assisted note taker should have an excellent working memory and a facility to target and summarize salient information as it pertains to the subject area.

### **EXAM ACCOMMODATIONS**

Exam accommodations are used by any number of students whose disabilities affect processing and comprehending printed material, learning, or concentration (either the condition itself, or the effects of the medication which is used to treat the condition), as well as by students with disabilities or medical conditions that require them to take rest periods. Examples include (but are not limited to) students with learning disabilities, students who are blind, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing, students who have mental health conditions, chronic illnesses, neurological disorders, physical disabilities and many more. See Appendix C for descriptions of various individual exam accommodations.

### **EXTENSIONS FOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

To accommodate time away due to illness or relapses, or to accommodate the impact some disabilities or medical conditions have on time management and organizational skills, attention, concentration, energy, anxiety and stress levels when they prevent or interfere with the student's ability to attend to academic responsibilities. Extension time frames should be negotiated between the instructor and the student. The disability services advisor may be of assistance in this regard.

### **FURNITURE AND OTHER ERGONOMIC ITEMS**

Adjustable chairs, tables, footstools, mats, pillows, book holders, etc. should be considered to address physical comfort (pain management) in the classroom, lab, seminar, exam setting, practicum or field placement, etc.

### **INTERPRETING SERVICES**

Used by students whose major means of communication is a sign language. Some students who use this service may, additionally, have a vision loss. The interpreter interprets lectures, labs, seminars, classroom dialogue, and other academically related meetings or events into American Sign Language (ASL) or a contact variety (other varieties of signing) according to the student's language preference.

Interpreters, minimally, will have graduated from an interpreter education program (>2 year), possibly work in teams of 2 or more, depending on the intensity of the learning environment and density of the content. Interpreters with additional specialized training specific to interpreting techniques to accommodate various vision losses should be hired for courses that have deaf – blind/partially sighted students registered. There are advanced certification designations for interpreters.

### **INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES**

Access to instructors' notes may be required by students whose disabilities impact their ability to take notes for themselves. Examples could be conditions that affect vision, hearing, concentration, language processing, mobility (e.g., ability to use arms / hands to write), etc. Acknowledging that many instructors now post their notes on web based sites, an excellent example of universal instructional design, this accommodation may be requested when this option is not available.

### **LAB ASSISTANT OR IN-CLASS ASSISTANT**

To accommodate students with mobility disabilities (dexterity, upper body, reaching), vision loss, etc., to carry out the task expectations of the course. The assistant will act on the instructions and directions of the student and, in the case of students who are blind or partially sighted, and depending on the situation may be required to verbalize or describe the results of the lab or classroom activity to the student so that he or she can complete his or her report or assignment.

The lab / in-class assistant cannot be a peer classmate. Neither the instructor nor the TA should fulfill this role. The lab / in-class assistant should be familiar with the particular setting, possibly a student in an advanced year of the program of study, or a TA in another related course are options to consider. The assistant should be fully oriented to the role to be performed. This person should have access to the course pack, manual or text books in advance to pre-read and prepare for each session.

The assistant does not 'do' the work for the student, but does carry out some of the tasks to facilitate the learning. The assistant should not report the student's progress (or lack thereof) to the instructor, TA or lab instructor, nor should these individuals engage with the assistant as a go-between for the student. The instructor and student should be coached to engage with one another like any other student and instructor might in that setting.

### **NAVIGATION AND WAY-FINDING**

This accommodation involves orientation and mobility training for students who are blind, partially sighted, or who have mobility-related disabilities, to acquaint them with geographical routes on campus.

This service is offered through CNIB to people with vision loss. Local Alberta offices are located in: Edmonton, Calgary, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Yellowknife.

## **NOTE TAKING**

Note taking services are used by students who are deaf or hard of hearing, students with mobility disabilities (upper body limitations), students with medical conditions that interfere with concentration (either the condition itself, or the effects of the medication required to treat the condition), blind or partially sighted students (which are then converted to a compatible alternate format), and others whose disability or condition impacts language processing, auditory processing, or writing.

Note takers concentrate on capturing the instructor's written presentation and other major points communicated verbally, while the student concentrates on comprehending the lecture material. The student is also encouraged to jot down some personal notes, to engage with the material, to capture points of emphasis or to formulate questions.

Note taking services may be required in the classroom, lab, seminar or any other learning environment.

Some Access Offices coordinate the recruitment of volunteer peer note takers (classmates), and some offices hire note takers to attend courses and hand off the notes at the end of each class. Resources required: note taker, two-ply non-carbonized paper, or photocopier to duplicate paper notes. Note takers can jot notes on handouts or on print-outs of on-line notes, and then photocopy for the student. Alternatively, carbon paper can be inserted between two sheets of the same document (e.g., handout) to transfer handwritten notes from one to the other. Note takers may also use laptop computers.

## **PREFERRED SEATING**

Reserved seating, the exact location to be determined with the student, which facilitates maximum access to the learning environment and which offsets the functional impacts of the disability or medical condition. Preferred seating is used to accommodate service animals, to allow for quick exit to attend the washroom, to consume food, to take medication, to improve concentration, for management of social interactions, to hear better, or to better see the: instructor, presented materials or communication services, such as interpreting or CART. In some cases, more than one seat may be reserved in order to create empty space around the student.

Signage may need to be developed to reserve the seating for specific time periods. Discretion is advised such that the signage does not identify the reservation for a student with a disability.

### **PROGRAM (FLEXIBLE) EXIT / RE-ENTRY**

This accommodation may be recommended for students whose disability or medical condition is subject to changes, cycles or relapses, such as chronic medical conditions, mental health conditions, neurological conditions, etc. Flexible program exit and re-entry, with limited bureaucracy and expense, will accommodate episodic illness necessitating periods of inactivity in academics.

### **RECORD LECTURES**

This accommodation may be recommended for students whose disability (ies) or medical conditions impact auditory processing, information processing, vision, language, working memory, writing, etc. A sample of a form to expedite this accommodation is provided in Appendix G.

### **REDUCED (ACCOMMODATED) COURSE LOAD**

This arrangement may be an appropriate accommodation for almost any student with a disability or medical condition, depending on the impacts of the disability on the learning environment (and vice versa), as well as the degree of service supports (often time consuming) the student accesses to perform academically. In consultation with the program of study staff, the student and the access provider, a suitable level of course load should be discussed.

### **REFRESHMENTS / FOOD IN THE CLASSROOM, LAB, SEMINAR, OR EXAM SETTING**

This accommodation meets the dietary requirements of a disability or medical condition, or assists with medication management. Students may need to consume items in the classroom or establish advance permission to leave the setting as needed.

### **SOCIAL COACH**

Used for students who have disabilities or conditions that affect social development or understanding of social cues. Some examples are Asperger Syndrome and intellectual developmental delays. The social coach may attend classes, social functions or other situations, with the student, to provide behavioural and social guidance and coaching, as needed. The goal would be to facilitate effective interactions, and to develop positive and understanding relationships amongst participants. Once that objective has been reached the presence of the social coach may be reduced in frequency, or concluded.

### **TUTOR**

Tutoring support may be recommended when the disability or medical condition (or medication used in treatment) affects attendance, concentration, attention, memory, processing speed, language, or when access to the material is mediated (e.g., through communication services or alternate formats).

The tutor should know how to facilitate active engagement with course content and social processing of the information to strengthen learning. The role of the tutor is to review and reinforce course content, keeping in mind how the disability or medical condition may impact information processing, and learning for the student. The disability services advisor may be able to provide information and guidance in this regard.

The tutor, ideally, is an individual recommended by the instructor, and must be someone with an excellent grasp of the course content, and familiar with tutoring and pedagogical strategies. The tutor should not be a classmate, or peer in the same year of study in the program. The tutor should always be at an advanced level of study to the student.

Students who lack the content background or prerequisites to understand the subject matter, or who 'never really liked the subject' may benefit from tutoring services, but these reasons would not be considered the basis for a disability-related service accommodation.

### **VIDEOPHONES AND TTYS**

A videophone (VP) is a web cam connected to a TV which allows users to see each other thereby allowing visual communication using sign language.

A video relay service (VRS) can facilitate communication between a person using a VP (deaf or hard of hearing) and a person using the telephone (hearing). In Canada, video relay services are pending.

A TTY is an electronic device with a keyboard and a small screen used with the telephone to communicate via text.

A TTY relay service can facilitate calls between a person using a TTY (deaf or hard of hearing) and a person using the telephone (hearing). In Alberta, hearing users of TTY relay services can dial 1-800-855-0511.

### **VISUAL AND AUDIBLE WARNING SIGNALS**

To address safety regulations, warning and emergency signals should be installed in all public areas (e.g., classrooms, labs, theatres, hallways, washrooms, libraries, recreation facilities), and any private areas

where persons with a hearing loss or vision loss may work, learn, or visit (e.g., residences, offices),  
Campus-wide emergency communication systems must include visual and audible messaging.

## APPENDIX C

### EXAM ACCOMMODATIONS DESCRIPTIONS

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Exam accommodations are used by any number of students whose disabilities affect processing and comprehending printed material, learning, or concentration (either the condition itself, or the effects of the medication which is used to treat the condition), as well as by students with disabilities or medical conditions that require them to take rest periods. Examples include (but are not limited to) students with learning disabilities, students who are blind, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing, students who have mental health conditions, chronic illnesses, neurological disorders, mobility disabilities, and many more.

#### TIME ACCOMMODATION FOR EXAMS

Exam time accommodations are based on individual needs and supported by formal disability-related documentation. Time accommodations are used by any number of students whose disabilities affect processing and comprehending printed material, learning, or concentration (either the condition itself, or the effects of the medication which is used to treat the condition). The most common time accommodation across North America is to extend the exam time to time-and-a-half (i.e., 1.5X). This norm has been supported by research that showed students with learning disabilities performed significantly better with the 1.5X extended time accommodation, while their non-learning disabled peers did not perform better given the same accommodation<sup>14</sup>.

Students may be assigned time accommodations which exceed 1.5X when there are factors that affect their performance, such as:

- multiple disabilities.
- the incorporation of multiple strategies and/or technologies while writing exams
- the use of technologies (hardware and/or software) relatively new to the student. (As the skill level in using the tools effectively and efficiently improves, the need for time adjustment will be re-evaluated.).
- the time consuming nature of reading an exam or producing answers (e.g., a blind student “reading” Brailled charts and graphs or a student, dictating answers to a scribe, whose speech is slow).

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<sup>14</sup> Ofliesh N. & Hughes, C. (2002) How much time? A review of the literature on extended test time for postsecondary students with learning disabilities, *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, Vol 16 (1) pp 2-16.

- The student’s history when receiving exam accommodations in high school or other postsecondary institutions is also considered.

Below are descriptions of how time accommodations can be applied. Other formulas can be explored such as time accommodations specific to questions types (e.g., essay and multiple choice exams) or other ratios such as 1.25X, 1.75X, 3X, 4X, etc..

- *1.0X (regular time)* for students whose disability requires modification of the exam or environment, but whose disability does not generally affect concentration or information processing (input or output). Examples: students using computers (simple word processing) due to upper body mobility disabilities; students who receive alternate formats which do not extended the time needed to process or access the information. Some students writing within regular time, additionally receive disability-related “breaks” as an exam accommodation to rest, use the bathroom (frequently or for time consuming needs), take medications, or to eat or drink. The exam time is extended to correspond with the time taken for breaks – see “Breaks” below.
- *1.5X (time-and-a-half)* for the majority of students with disabilities who receive exam time accommodations. Some students writing with 1.5X time, additionally receive “breaks” as an exam accommodation to rest, use the bathroom (frequently or for time consuming needs), take medications, or to eat or drink. The exam time is extended to correspond with the time taken for breaks – see “Breaks” below.
- *2.0X (double time)* for students with multiple factors which affect performance and their ability to demonstrate their academic knowledge on exams. Double time may be assigned to students who use exam scribes or readers.
- *3X - Time as Needed* is used in rare circumstances when the condition or disability has a profound impact on mobility, information processing, communication, concentration or efficiency of output. Two examples: student with severe and frequent Post Traumatic Syndrome episodes; student with Cerebral Palsy affecting reading and speech and thus affecting (lengthening) communication between student and scribe.

## **SPACE ACCOMMODATIONS**

The following are three common options for space accommodations. Other low distraction environments can be investigated. The disability services advisor and the student will need to explore the most appropriate setting.

### Space Accommodations – Classrooms

- Typical classroom style set up of 20 – 30 desks in rows. Recommended for students whose disabilities or medical conditions preclude them from performing well in large auditorium-style examination environments.

### Space Accommodations – Small group

- A low distraction space that typically can accommodate 5 – 10 students with either barriers (carrels or dividers) or sufficient space between students to minimize distractions. Recommended for students whose disabilities or medical conditions preclude them from performing well in classroom-style environments.

#### Space Accommodations - Isolation

- A low distraction space that can accommodate one student (room alone). These are often small interview-style rooms. Recommended for students with significant distractibility or concentration disabilities; those who require auditory stimulation to facilitate comprehension, e.g. self-talk or a reader, or those who require a scribe.

### **COMPUTERS**

Computers, as an exam accommodation, are used primarily in combination with adaptive technology (AT). Students with learning disabilities, mobility disabilities, ADD/ADHD, and print disabilities may use computers with adaptive technology. Word processing (without AT) may be the recommended accommodation to address disabilities that impact physical comfort, anxiety, or processing speed. It is not an accommodation provided to students because they can ‘type more quickly than write’ or because they have ‘poor hand writing.’ (unless these are disability related impacts)

### **GRAMMAR AND SPELL-CHECK**

Use of the grammar and spell check feature in word processing is a form of adaptive technology – used to offset the limitations resulting from disabilities that impact writing and spelling.

Procedures should be determined regarding the process for using this accommodation. Some Disabilities Services Offices require students to complete the entire exam without the use of a spell /grammar checker within the allotted exam time. This copy of the exam is printed and labeled “non-spell/grammar-checked version”. The student may then spell and grammar check the document after their allotted exam time. This time is used only to grammatically edit and spell-check the document. No new material should be inserted, and no substantial re-formatting should take place. This version of the exam is then printed and labeled “spell/grammar-checked version”. Both versions are returned to the instructor to review.

### **FURNITURE AND LIGHTING**

Some students use specialized furniture as a part of their exam accommodations. Examples may include: mats, pillows, book holders, adjustable chairs, foot stools, height adjustable tables, fans, clipboards, desk lamps, full-spectrum lighting, natural light (windows), etc.

## **BREAKS**

This accommodation may be recommended for students with disabilities and medical conditions that impact anxiety, energy levels or physical needs and comfort. Permission to take breaks, as needed, to rest, to use the bathroom, to take medications, or (for medical reasons) to eat or drink. Exam time is extended to correspond with the time taken while on breaks. The student would remain under supervision during the break, to ensure exam security. The student would not be allowed to access any papers, notes, books, computers, phones, etc. while on a break, to ensure exam security.

## **ASSISTANCE WITH SCANTRON SHEETS**

This accommodation may be recommended for blind/partially sighted students, students with upper body mobility disabilities, etc. which impact their ability to complete the Scantron (NCS) answer (bubble) sheets. Assistance may be provided by an exam administrator or another staff member. Transfer of answers to the Scantron sheets is completed after the allotted exam time. It is recommended that the student should stay until all the answers are completely transferred to the Scantron (NCS) sheet, in case there are any unclearly marked answers and the staff member filling out the sheet needs to consult the student.

## **READER**

This accommodation may be recommended for students with print disabilities e.g., conditions affecting vision, or processing disabilities affecting print comprehension or decoding. The reader reads aloud exam questions and any other exam material (as many times as the student requests). No other assistance is allowed.

## **SCRIBE**

This accommodation may be recommended for students with a manual or upper body mobility limitation. The scribe writes longhand or keyboards on a computer precisely what the student dictates. No assistance is allowed whatsoever with thought formulation, spelling, grammar, etc. Good spelling is expected of the scribe, but the student is responsible to correct misspellings, or to provide the correct spellings of technical terms and proper nouns. For essay questions on an exam, the student will tell the scribe when to begin a new paragraph. The student is encouraged to review what the scribe has written during dictation. The student is responsible for approving the final version of the exam answers before being submitted.

## **SPLIT EXAMS**

This accommodation may be recommended for students with disabilities that affect compulsivity, and anxiety, as well as those who require significantly longer time accommodations. In consultation with the instructor regarding recommended time demands for completing exam questions, the disabilities

services office staff could divide the student's exam into two or more parts to ensure that compulsive or perfectionist behaviours do not focus the student's attention on any one question for too long.

### **ALTERNATIVE FORMATS FOR EXAM QUESTION**

This accommodation may be recommended for students with documentation that confirms the student is clearly unable to demonstrate their learning of tested course material when required to answer in a specific question format (e.g., multiple choice).

### **CD PLAYER**

This accommodation may be recommended for students whose attention is enhanced by listening to music or 'white noise'. To ensure exam security, only professionally recorded CD's (store bought) may be used.

### **LIMITED EXAMS PER DAY**

This accommodation, often limiting exams to one per day, may be recommended for students with disabilities or conditions that affect their ability to sustain concentration and energy (easily fatigued), or that elevate anxiety levels. This may also be a recommended accommodation for students requiring double time accommodations, as it is not physically reasonable nor logistically possible to write two three-hour final exams on one day (i.e., two six hour exams given the double time factor).

Procedures should be established that outline the process of having exams re-scheduled for students with this accommodation. For example, the student is responsible to approach the instructors involved 2 – 4 weeks (midterms) or 4 – 6 weeks (finals) in advance of the exam date. The instructor and student can reschedule to a date they deem appropriate. Exams should be re-scheduled for the same general time period as the original date (i.e., the student should not be asked to write on the published deferred date for the exam if it is some weeks after the original exam date).

### **FLEXIBLE EXAM TIMES**

This accommodation may be recommended for students with chronic medical conditions, mental health conditions or other disabilities (or the medications used in treatment) that affect alertness, concentration and sleep patterns. Negotiated exam times should coincide with optimal functioning of the student, while at the same time maintaining the security of the exam.

## APPENDIX D

# ALBERTA GUIDELINES FOR DOCUMENTATION, ASSESSMENT, AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN POSTSECONDARY STUDIES

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The Postsecondary Service Providers to Students with Disabilities (PSPSD) has endorsed the Alberta Guidelines for Documentation, Assessment, and Services for Students with Learning Difficulties in Postsecondary Studies. The guidelines are suggested best practice and may assist postsecondary institutions in providing appropriate evaluation of need and supports. They promote a shared understanding and greater consistency among disability service providers in postsecondary institutions, psychologists, and funding bodies involved in the assessment of and support services for students encountering learning difficulties.

The following checklist outlines postsecondary documentation requirements as recommended in the Alberta Guidelines for Documentation, Assessment, and Services for Students with Learning Difficulties in Postsecondary Studies. Full reports of this type are most useful in guiding support services and assisting students to develop self-advocacy skills. The documentation requirements of individual postsecondary institutions may vary.

Assessments completed after the student reaches the age of 18 are considered current. Partial or full reassessment may be considered if information is needed to support the student in the current learning environment or if the student's health or other circumstances have changed.

Full re-assessments are required when assessments provided are out of date for reasons of age of the assessments or change of circumstances. Updated assessments may be needed if prior assessments were completed five or more years prior to onset of requested service (i.e., if the student is now 19 years of age and the assessment was completed at age 14) or as required by specific program licensing bodies (e.g., Nursing, Accounting).

A thorough psycho-educational assessment typically consists of:

1. **An initial interview.** An initial interview should cover a thorough review of birth history and early development; language and cultural background; medical history including vision, hearing, neurological status, illnesses, allergies, medications and current health conditions; family and social history to determine social, behavioural or emotional factors or any hereditary patterns; academic and work history; previous psychological evaluations and relevant medical tests.
2. **A measure of intellectual functioning.** The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale - Revised is widely used. In addition to determining levels of intellectual ability, specific measures should be included in the test battery to assess: short and long-term memory functions; language functions including receptive and expressive vocabulary; verbal and non-verbal abstract reasoning or logic; attention span, visual - perceptual abilities including various spatial tasks, sequencing, right-left orientation and fine motor dexterity; and organizational and planning skills.
3. **A measure of academic achievement levels.** Basic skill areas of reading, spelling, written expression and mathematics should be evaluated. The profile of reading sub-skills should be determined (e.g.: reading vocabulary, word recognition, comprehension of paragraphs and phonetic knowledge); math computation and problem-solving; mechanical and creative aspects of writing.
4. **Social and emotional evaluations.** This part of the assessment consists of formal instruments to determine whether social/emotional problems occur concurrently with, or are secondary to, learning disabilities. Anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem and attention deficit disorder are important areas to examine.
5. **Summary** Synthesis of the above information and a summary of findings.
6. **Recommendations and Strategies.** With this detailed information, the psychologist should outline an effective plan to remediate or compensate for the academic difficulties. Study skills, organizational skills and time management skills are some of the other areas that must be assessed along with the basic skills. Learning disabilities screening questionnaires may be used to assess the individual's perception of areas of ability and difficulty, life skills, specific academic problems, and workplace issues.

### Documentation Criteria Checklist<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> From the PSPSD Alberta Guidelines for Documentation, Assessment, and Services for Students with Learning Difficulties in Postsecondary Studies.

- Relevant background information.
- Statement regarding the overall validity of the present assessment.
- Behavioural observations during assessment.
- Description of individual strengths and needs based on formal test results (thinking and reasoning and academic achievement).
- Documented evidence of the cause of the learning difficulties (psychological processing deficits).
- Indication that the observed pattern of both abilities and achievement demonstrates the presence of a specific Learning Disability or other disability.
- A clear diagnosis of the disability.
- A description of the functional limitations of the disability (including the impact in the current academic environment).
- Recommendations specifically linked to the assessment data (strengths and deficits) relevant to postsecondary settings.
- Signature of an appropriately qualified member of a College of Psychologists, and/or College of Physicians and Surgeons.

## *APPENDIX E*

### *ADAPTIVE / ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES*

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Adaptive technology or assistive technology (AT) refers to devices, hardware and software that can address functional limitations associated with disabilities (permanent and temporary), medical conditions and illnesses. Mainstream devices and programs may be explored as compatible accommodations, such as PDA's or grammar and spell-check features, but in most cases, it is the use of specialized devices and software that may need to be explored to address various learning differences as they relate to reading, writing, researching, planning, organization, communicating, networking, and so on.

Adaptive technology is a growing and complex area of expertise, and, as with all areas of technology, is constantly changing and upgrading. AT assessments (and subsequent training) should be done by specialists familiar with the academic setting, and can be revisited intermittently, as the technology in a given area progresses, or as the student experiences changes in his or her disability or medical condition.

IMPACT AREA	AT OPTIONS TO BE EXPLORED
<p><b>Cognition</b></p> <p>Examples of potential functional impacts:  learning, reading, writing, language processing, math operations, studying, researching, note taking, organization, planning, networking, communication, concentration, stamina, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operating System Accessibility Features (Windows, Mac OS, iOS, Linux, Android, etc.)</li> <li>• Voice recorder</li> <li>• Recorded textbooks</li> <li>• E-texts</li> <li>• Touch pad</li> <li>• MP3 player</li> <li>• Text to MP3 conversion</li> <li>• Online or software-based study tools</li> <li>• Time management software</li> <li>• Math practice software</li> <li>• Mind mapping software</li> <li>• Screen reader</li> <li>• Electronic dictionaries</li> <li>• Word prediction software</li> <li>• Grammar/spelling software</li> <li>• Text reading devices</li> <li>• Note taking devices</li> <li>• OCR scan/read technology</li> <li>• Voice recognition software</li> <li>• Portable electronic book reader</li> <li>• Personal organizer</li> <li>• Text to speech</li> <li>• Highlighting software</li> </ul>
IMPACT AREA	AT OPTIONS TO BE EXPLORED
<p><b>Mobility</b></p> <p>Examples of potential functional impacts:  use of computers, writing, reading, researching, studying, note taking,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operating System accessibility features (Windows, Mac OS, iOS, Linux etc.)</li> <li>• Audio recorders</li> <li>• Touch pad</li> <li>• Pointing dowel</li> </ul>

<p>learning, networking, accessing rooms / spaces in educational environment, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keyboard shortcuts/remapping layouts</li> <li>• Alternate keyboard layouts (e.g., ergonomics)</li> <li>• Sip and puff devices</li> <li>• Word prediction software</li> <li>• Switches and buttons access</li> <li>• IR tracking systems</li> <li>• Magnification device (e.g., monocular, magnifier)</li> <li>• White cane</li> <li>• Retinal recognition</li> <li>• Voice recognition software</li> <li>• Portable electronic book reader</li> <li>• Alternative pointing devices (Trackball / joystick)</li> <li>• Alternative clicking device</li> <li>• Alternative clicking software</li> <li>• E-texts</li> <li>• MP3 player</li> <li>• GPS device</li> </ul>
<p><b>IMPACT AREA</b></p>	<p><b>AT OPTIONS TO BE EXPLORED</b></p>
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>Examples of potential functional impacts: hearing, vision, language processing, writing, reading, speaking, learning, note taking, group work, networking, participating in or understanding lectures, labs other educational environments, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operating System accessibility features (Windows, Mac OS, iOS, Linux, Android, etc.)</li> <li>• Communication boards (e.g., Bliss board, sign board)</li> <li>• Audio recorder</li> <li>• CART/captioning / electronic note taking (see Appendices A &amp; B)</li> <li>• Note taking devices</li> <li>• Augmentative communication device</li> <li>• Augmentative listening device</li> <li>• Text to speech electronic speaking dictionary</li> <li>• Voice recognition software</li> <li>• Word prediction software</li> <li>• Grammar/spelling software</li> </ul>

IMPACT AREA	AT OPTIONS TO BE EXPLORED
<p><b>Vision</b></p> <p>Examples of potential functional impacts: reading, writing, studying, researching, use of computer, group work, note taking, learning, networking, participating in or understanding lectures, labs other educational environments, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operating System accessibility features (Windows, Mac OS, iOS, Linux, Android, etc.)</li> <li>• Audio recorder</li> <li>• Audio books</li> <li>• E-texts</li> <li>• MP3 player</li> <li>• Computer hardware modifications (e.g., alternate keyboards with large print or tactile contrast)</li> <li>• Braille translation software</li> <li>• Braille embosser</li> <li>• Refreshable Braille display</li> <li>• Tactile image enhancer</li> <li>• Screen enhancer/magnification software</li> <li>• Screen reader</li> <li>• Text to speech programs</li> <li>• CCTV (Closed Circuit TV magnifiers)</li> <li>• Monocular</li> <li>• Magnifiers</li> <li>• Note taking devices</li> <li>• Speaking electronic dictionary</li> <li>• OCR scan/read software</li> <li>• GPS device</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX F

## SAMPLE FORM

### Verification of Long-Term or Permanent Disability

Print the full name of the client or patient:

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#### Nature of the Condition

Describe the nature of the disability / medical condition (e.g., specific diagnosis):

How long has the condition been present?

Is it expected to persist?

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#### Impact of the Disability

Comment on the impact of the disability on this individual's ability to perform tasks involved in achieving educational goals. For example, how does this disability affect: energy level, communication skills, exam writing; how does this disability affect this individual's ability, over extended periods of time, to: take notes, remain seated or stationary, maintain focus or concentration, etc. {continue on back of page if needed}

**I certify that the information provided on this form is accurate:**

Certifying Professional: \_\_\_\_\_ ( Print or use official stamp)

Address _____	Phone: _____
_____	Fax: _____
Signature _____	Date completed: _____

# APPENDIX G

## SAMPLE FORM

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### Recording Agreement Accommodation Services

Student, please complete the top section, sign the bottom, and give to the instructor of each of your courses.

Student Name		Student ID
Course	Section	Semester/Term
Instructor Name		Office Number

As a student registered through the (name of office) for accommodation services, I have been assessed as eligible to record lectures for disability-related reasons.

To facilitate the service, I acknowledge that the lecture material I record in your course is your intellectual property. Specifically, I agree that I will:

1. Use the audio tapes only for the purposes of my learning
2. Not share or transmit the recordings in any form to any other person
3. Not sell, transfer, record, publish, or distribute the recordings in any way
4. Erase or destroy the recordings when I no longer need them for the purposes of this course.

By my signature I acknowledge your proprietary rights of the material recorded and I agree to fulfill the conditions indicated above for the use of the recordings. I also acknowledge that breach of this agreement may constitute academic misconduct, for which (name of institution) will hold me accountable.

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Student Signature	Date	Instructor Signature
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Original:  Instructor