

Evolving Landscape of Accommodations

Facilitators

Dr. Mike Condra, Director, Health, Counselling and Disability Services, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Queen's University

Eleanor Condra, Research Consultant, Mental Health Innovation Fund Project, St. Lawrence College

Key Learnings

This workshop reviewed the findings from an extensive data-gathering exercise involving key stakeholders (students, faculty, disability advisors, administrators and campus physicians) and considered draft recommendations for changes to policies dealing with the academic accommodation process.

Student recommendations included (but not limited to):

- Training for faculty in mental health and in the accommodation process
- Survey about accommodation experience
- Shorter wait-times for appointments
- Clear policies
- Stigma

Emerging themes from faculty included (but not limited to):

- Faculty roles in responding to students in difficulty and in relation to accommodation
- Lack of training
- Lack of formal policies to guide decision-making
- Stigma

Emerging themes from administrators included (but not limited to):

- No clear policies
- Lack of best practice/Universal Instructional Design
- Abuse of accommodations
- Stigma

Emerging themes from Disability Advisors (but not limited to):

- Inconsistency in documentation
- Difficulty in determining appropriate accommodations
- Workload
- Students who don't disclose
- Stigma

Emerging themes from Physicians (but not limited to):

- Professors need to be more understanding
- Challenge of "permanent" disability requirement
- Stigma

Further consultations will occur with:

The Ontario Human Rights Commission, Dr. Chiachen Cheng, University of Manitoba (and others)

Draft Recommendations:

- Impairment focused – Not diagnosis focused
- Accommodations may be provided in good faith
- OSD to send letters of accommodation directly to faculty
- The need to provide retroactive accommodations in some situations
- Clear policies
- Streamlined services for students
- Effective training for faculty
- Accommodation Teams

Next steps: Team will continue to identify best practices, refine recommendations and develop training & implementation materials for mid-2015.

