



# FAQ for Students

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*\*Disclaimer: Disability-related accommodations and services may differ between post-secondary institutions. For more information on accessibility and accommodation services at your post-secondary institution, please contact your campus disability services office.*

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## How do I know if I'm eligible for accessibility services?

Persons with a variety of disabilities and conditions may be eligible for academic accommodations, including conditions that are permanent, temporary, episodic, chronic, etc. Interim accommodations may also be provided for students who are in the process of being assessed for a mental health disability. To determine their eligibility for accessibility services, students are required to complete a registration/screening form, submit disability documentation, and meet with a counsellor or advisor from their academic institution. For campus-specific information and steps to determine eligibility for accessibility and accommodation services at your academic institution, please contact your campus disability services office and/or visit their website. Note: the name of this office may vary slightly by campus.

## What would my academic institution's disability services office offer me?

Campus disability services offices provide a safe place for students to discuss disability-related needs and the appropriate accommodations. Accessibility/disability counsellors or advisors are available to:

- Review medical documentation and need to determine if academic accommodations are required.
- Co-develop an effective academic accommodation plan with students and course instructors.
- Provide ongoing support, advocacy, and problem-solving for disability-related issues that impact students' academic and extracurricular experience in partnership with the students and relevant course instructors/staff.
- Facilitate access to adaptive furniture, equipment and software, and/or accessible parking.
- Coordinate the delivery of specialized service requests such as sign language interpretation, computerized note taking and real-time captioning.
- Provide financial support information (e.g., Bursary for Students with Disabilities, SGS Accessibility Grants) and referrals to other funding sources in collaboration with the campus Financial Aid office.
- Provide other accessibility and accommodation supports as offered.

*Please contact your institution's disability services office or website to learn more about what is offered at your campus.*

## Can I register for accommodations if I don't have medical documentation verifying a disability?

Medical documentation verifying a functional limitation must usually be submitted to the academic institution's disability services office in order to receive accommodations. This often requires a valid written assessment specifying the accommodations that the student requires. Students are sometimes required to submit medical documentation completed by a regulated healthcare practitioner who is permitted to diagnose their specific disability(s) based on their training and license, within their scope of practice (see below). Established forms for this information can often be found on the website of the institution's disability services office.

**Examples of healthcare professionals who may be able to complete this documentation include:**

- **Physicians (medical doctors)**
- **Psychologists**
- **Psychiatrists**
- **Occupational therapists**
- **Physiotherapists**
- **Registered psychotherapists**
- **Social workers**
- **Nurse practitioners**

Campus disability services offices can work with you if you suspect that you have a disability or are in the process of obtaining medical documentation verifying a disability. Students who suspect they have a mental health disability/condition, are developing a mental health condition or are waiting to receive medical documentation from their healthcare practitioner may still receive reasonable accommodations. These students may seek academic accommodations without documentation of a diagnosed condition.

Further, the disability services office does not provide services to diagnose disabilities, but can review any academic difficulties students are experiencing and, if appropriate, suggest referrals for further assessment.

## What kind of documentation do I need?

To their campus disability services office, students are often required to submit medical documentation (e.g. disability verification form) completed by their regulated healthcare practitioner, who is permitted to diagnose their specific disability(s) based on their training and license, within their scope of practice. The purpose of this documentation is to identify a physical, cognitive or emotional condition that is disabling in an academic context.

To their course instructor(s), students are required to submit an Accommodation Letter and/or any other documentation indicating the nature of the accommodation request provided by the campus disability services office. An Accommodation Letter is issued when a student has connected with the campus disability services office, and it has been identified that the student requires one or more academic accommodations. Students may choose to connect directly with their course instructors or request that the disability services office manage the accommodation request on their behalf. Students may opt for different levels of support at various points in their program.

## Is there a cost to the process of seeking documentation or a diagnosis?

Many doctors will charge patients to fill out documentation forms as this service is not covered by the province. Depending on who is providing the diagnosis, there may be significant costs associated. For example, receiving a diagnosis of ADHD from a registered psychologist can cost up to \$3500.

### **Do I need to disclose my disability to my course instructor?**

Disclosing a diagnosis is a choice, and the decision of whether to disclose is very personal. Students are not required to disclose the nature of their disability or health consideration to their academic institution or course instructor to receive the requested and approved accommodations.

However, course instructors do need to know about the disability-related need if they are required to be involved in the accommodation process (e.g., to make a note taking announcement, assist with test/exam accommodations, and/or if an accommodation may compromise the essential core requirements of a course, etc.).

### **Does my professor have to follow my accommodation plan?**

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, an appropriate accommodation enables a student to successfully meet the essential requirements of the program, with no alteration in standards or outcomes, although the manner in which the student demonstrates mastery, knowledge and skills may be altered.

Course instructors are required to accept student requests for accommodation in good faith, unless there are legitimate reasons for acting otherwise; seek expert opinion or advice when needed; take an active role in ensuring that alternative approaches and possible accommodation solutions are investigated; keep a record of accommodation requests and action taken; and maintain confidentiality.

If a course instructor believes that implementing the accommodations listed in a student's accommodation plan will compromise academic standards, they may contact the student's counsellor or advisor, who can engage in their process for accommodation disputes.

### **Will my need for accommodations be listed on my transcript?**

Confidentiality of information is a legal responsibility of every academic institution. Information provided to an academic institution's disability services office is protected in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This confidentiality of information extends to student transcripts. A student's need for accommodations will not be listed on their transcript. Transcripts, entrance test result forms, or licensing exam result forms should not indicate that a student received accommodation, or that academic requirements were met under "special" or "non-standard conditions."

### **Will my need for accommodation affect my student/study visa or be disclosed to Canadian Immigration?**

Confidentiality of information is a legal responsibility, and information provided to an academic institution's disability services office is protected in accordance with the Human Rights Code and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. A student's need for accommodations will not be disclosed to Canadian Immigration.

Students may have other conditions listed on their study permit. They are required to adhere to these conditions, which could include if a student needs to report for medical procedures. Additionally, if students decide to take an authorized leave from their studies, they do not need to notify the Government of Canada; however, if requested, students must provide proof that their leave is authorized by their designated learning institution (DLI) and is no longer than 150 days. Authorized leave includes if the academic institution has authorized a leave from the study program due to medical reasons or pregnancy, family emergency, death or serious illness of a family member, or any other type of leave authorized by the school.

Please visit the Government of Canada Immigration and Citizenship website for more detailed information outlining your conditions as a study permit holder in Canada.

### **If I had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in high school, would I get the same accommodations I had in my IEP?**

Post-secondary academic institutions do not accept an Individualized Education Program (IEP) as documentation of a disability, and students' IEP documentation as a student with a disability in high school will not automatically transfer to their post-secondary academic institution. This means that students must initiate the accommodations process at their institution, and assume information from high school will not be transferred.

### **Am I required to use my accommodations at all times, in every course?**

Students are not required to use their accommodations at all times, in every course. Academic accommodations are designed to meet students' disability-related needs, but these needs may vary depending on the format of each course. Some courses or buildings may pose barriers that require accommodations, which may not be present in other courses or buildings. There also may be times when students choose not to use the available supports. In these cases, students are strongly encouraged to speak to their counsellor or advisor about this decision.

### **I do not have a diagnosed disability, but I continue to struggle with ongoing concerns and don't know what to do. Can I speak to someone to ask questions or get some guidance on next steps?**

Campus disability services offices do not usually provide services to diagnose disabilities, but can review any difficulties students are experiencing and, if appropriate, suggest referrals for further assessment. Please visit your campus disability services office website or in-person for more information. Depending on your academic institution, intake and assessment forms may be filled out online prior to an in-person initial appointment. You can also speak with your professor about the struggles you are having to see what kind of support they can offer you.

