



Access Resource Centre  
University of Northern British Columbia  
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Prince George, BC  
V2N 4Z9

Tel: (250) 960-5682  
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## **Instructors' Handbook**



## **INFORMATION TO ASSIST FACULTY IN ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The mandate of UNBC's Access Resource Centre is to assist in reducing the physical, attitudinal and systemic barriers faced by students with disabilities. The Access Resource Centre is committed to providing access and reasonable accommodations for academically qualified persons, so that whenever possible, such persons may be included in all aspects of the University experience. Accommodations put in place by the Access Resource Centre are intended to maximize accessibility while maintaining the academic integrity of the courses, programs and activities at the University.

### **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY**

The provision of access for students with disabilities is a shared responsibility among students, faculty, staff and administration. The University, as a whole is responsible for creating and maintaining a supportive environment for students with disabilities, while provision of service for students with disabilities will be coordinated through the Access Resource Centre.

While the University will strive to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations, students will be responsible for meeting course and program requirements.

## **TO THE INSTRUCTORS**

The University is committed to the goals of creating an accessible and welcoming environment for all students with disabilities.

This handbook for UNBC teaching staff is intended to clarify the various needs of students with disabilities at UNBC.

This handbook provides information about academic accommodation, individualized evaluation, and/or possible course adaptations. However, any adaptations must be tailored to the individual and the specific situation, since the essence of fairly accommodating students with disabilities is individualization. There is no perfect formula for alleviating all the barriers confronting people with disabilities. However, considering each student's disability related needs as unique will assist in providing an atmosphere that is conducive to personal and educational growth.

This handbook summarizes many of the instructional strategies, procedures, and accommodations for students with disabilities that already have been implemented by instructors at UNBC.

## INTRODUCTION

The Access Resource Centre was established to provide educational and support services to students, faculty and staff at UNBC. Students eligible for services must have one of the following verifiable disabilities: communication impairment, hearing loss, mobility impairment, visual impairment, learning disability, attention deficit disorder, mental health disorder, or non-visible disability related illness.

The Access Resource Centre coordinates the services necessary to respond to the needs of individual students. Needs assessments, which identify the appropriate academic accommodations, are based on

- relevant professional documentation;
- information gathered from the student; and,
- evaluation undertaken by an Access Coordinator at UNBC.

Once the appropriate academic accommodations have been determined, an Access Coordinator provides the student with documentation of the approved accommodations and encourages the student to discuss the accommodations with each of his or her instructors as soon as possible. The Access Resource Centre staff functions as consultants, facilitators and advocates for students with disabilities.

The Access Resource Centre promotes equal access to the educational experience and is committed to

- promoting awareness of disabilities, access and accommodation possibilities within the University and the community at large;
- encouraging and promoting access to the University for persons with disabilities;
- serving as an initial point of contact and ongoing support for persons with disabilities;
- promoting self-advocacy for students with disabilities;
- promoting and developing a collaborative process for serving the access and accommodation needs of students with disabilities;
- receiving and evaluating documentation of disabilities to ensure that such documentation meets the requirements of UNBC's Access and Accommodation Policy for Students with Disabilities and to ensure consistency in evaluation of documentation;
- recommending and supporting appropriate accommodations;
- promoting inclusive educational teaching practices;

- providing support to the institutional processes required through UNBC Policy;
- maintaining and promoting awareness of relevant legislation, legal precedents, and issues related to serving persons with disabilities;
- maintaining and promoting awareness of disabilities and their impacts on access; and,
- maintaining and promoting awareness in advances in accommodations and assistive technologies for persons with disabilities.

## **RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH THE ACCESS RESOURCE CENTRE**

The Access Resource Centre provides individualized one-to-one support designed to assist each student registered with that office. The primary goal of the program is to

- assist students in developing strategic academic skills and strategies;
- strengthen existing academic skills; and,
- help students with disabilities develop greater academic independence and increase the likelihood of academic success.

The Access Resource Centre arranges or provides services such as:

### **Note-taker Volunteers**

Volunteer note-takers are sometimes required for students who have difficulty taking notes in class. Volunteer note-takers are sought in the same class in which the student is enrolled. If this accommodation is requested, the Access Resource Centre will provide the instructor with instructions with regards to requesting volunteers. Volunteers are to contact the Access Resource Centre, where they will be registered as note-takers and receive guidelines for note-taking strategies. The Access Resource Centre keeps a record of volunteer note-takers and provides the volunteers with acknowledgement letters at the end of each semester.

### **Reader Volunteers**

Volunteer readers assist in providing printed material in audio format for students who are visually impaired or whose disability creates difficulties in understanding printed text.

## Study Skills Development

One-to-one assistance with time management, note-taking, essay writing, reading comprehension, studying and memory techniques, and test taking strategies is available.

## Examination Invigilation

The Access Resource Centre is open Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. with the exception of the Fall and Winter final exam period\* and, during hours of operation, will provide exam invigilation for students with disabilities who require the use of a computer, a quiet environment and/or other test and examination-related accommodations.

*\*Extended hours during Fall and Winter final exam periods are Monday to Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 6:15 p.m.*

## Learning Disabilities Screening

Students who suspect they might have a learning disability are encouraged to discuss their circumstances with an Access Coordinator. The Access Coordinator has a number of evaluation instruments available that will help determine the likelihood of the existence of a learning disability. UNBC does not provide formal psychoeducational assessments, but the Access Resource Centre can provide referrals to accredited specialists for such assessments.

## Financial Assistance for Students with Permanent Disabilities

Access Resource Centre staff can help full-time and part-time students with applications for various loans and/or grants that are available to *qualified* individuals. Funding may be available for tutors, readers, attendant care, technical aids, and so on.

## ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT

### Identification of a Disability

In order to be supported for academic accommodations, a student with a disability must self-identify and provide the Access Resource Centre with appropriate and current documentation from a recognized professional (e.g., a physician, specialist psychiatrist or psychologist etc.).

The documentation will include

- a statement to the effect that the individual has an ongoing identified disability;

- a statement that the condition and/or impairment warrants academic accommodation; and,
- for students with learning disabilities, the results of a psychoeducational assessment conducted by a recognized learning assessment specialist, who may be a school psychologist, a registered psychologist, or other appropriately accredited professional trained to do learning assessments.

### **Determining Need for Academic Accommodation**

Students must bring appropriate and complete documentation to the Access Resource Centre if they require academic accommodations. The necessary current documentation must be brought to the Access Resource Centre as soon as possible after the student has been accepted for studies at UNBC. The Access Coordinator will determine the most appropriate accommodations based on the provided documentation. These accommodations will be conveyed to instructors in writing.

In exceptional circumstances wherein all necessary documentation is not available when the student's first semester begins, staff of the Access Resource Centre, or an appropriate professional as determined by the Access Resource Centre, may recommend one semester's accommodations in the interim while documentation is unavailable or delayed. The Access Resource Centre has the final authority in recommending or not recommending accommodations based on this interim documentation.

Students seeking accommodation through the Access Resource Centre for undocumented concerns such as learning disabilities, anxiety and/or depression are screened and, if appropriate, referred to a professional practitioner.

### **Confidentiality Guidelines**

- An Access Coordinator is available for consultation on the needs of any student who is registered with the Access Resource Centre and who has signed a release of information consent form.
- All documentation submitted by a student is confidential and will not be given out to instructors or administrative departments. The nature of the disability may be discussed provided the student has given written authorization.
- The Access Resource Centre will provide the student with a 'General Access and Accommodation Agreement' form indicating a disability and appropriate academic accommodations. The student is responsible for

discussing this form and his or her accommodations with the instructor within the first week or two of the semester.

- Confidentiality of personal information not relating to accommodation needs will be maintained by the Access Resource Centre.

## **GENERAL ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATION AGREEMENT**

### **Individualized Accommodation**

A student who has provided the Access Resource Centre with well-documented disability information that supports the need for specific accommodations is given a General Access and Accommodation Agreement. This agreement form is to be used both as a means of introduction to instructors and a confirmation of authorized accommodations.

The intention of the General Access and Accommodation Agreement is to allow the best possible interaction between the instructor and the student in working together to achieve academic success, despite a disability. The Agreement form outlines the accommodations that have been authorized through the Access Resource Centre. The accommodations are intended to facilitate equal access and alleviate barriers to the achievement of the student's academic goals.

### **Accommodation Procedure**

- i. Each student authorized through the Access Resource Centre to receive academic accommodations will receive a completed General Access and Accommodations Agreement (GAAA) form that he or she is to discuss with each course instructor.
- ii. The student must meet with each instructor, preferably before the semester begins or as early in the semester as possible, to discuss the academic accommodations listed on the GAAA form. The student and instructor are to discuss course requirements and how the accommodations might affect those requirements.
- iii. The student and instructor indicate agreement to the accommodations by signing the GAAA form. The student is responsible for returning the signed form to the Access Resource Centre. Instructors are encouraged to make a photocopy of the student's GAAA form for their files.

## Sample General Access and Accommodation Agreement Form

[Front]

### UNBC Access Resource Centre

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Brenda J. Christensen,  
Access Coordinator  
Email: christb@unbc.ca  
Tel: 250.960.6711  
Fax: 250.960.5775

University of Northern British Columbia  
10-1048, Disability Services Centre  
3333 University Way  
Prince George, BC  
V2N 4Z9

#### GENERAL ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATION AGREEMENT

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THIS AGREEMENT CERTIFIES THAT THE FOLLOWING STUDENT HAS PRESENTED  
UNBC ACCESS RESOURCE CENTRE STAFF WITH THE NECESSARY  
DOCUMENTATION TO AUTHENTICATE THEIR DISABILITY.

*The information contained in this document is CONFIDENTIAL and must not be disclosed  
to a third party without the express permission of the student.  
Any questions should be referred to the Access Resource Centre.*

SEMESTER: FALL YEAR: 2009  
COURSE NAME: COURSE NO:  
STUDENT NAME: STUDENT NO:

TO EQUALIZE THIS STUDENT'S CHANCES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS,  
THE FOLLOWING ACCOMMODATIONS ARE NECESSARY:

- Extended time for examinations (standard time plus 50% additional standard time).
  - Use of a computer with grammar/spell check for essay format exams.
  - Note-takers for lectures (subject to availability of volunteer note-takers).
- 

\* Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Access Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Brenda J. Christensen*

\* Please Note: Student signature above acknowledges understanding and compliance with exam accommodation procedures as described on the reverse side of this form. G: Drive/Forms

## Examples of Assignment Accommodation Strategies

Below is a list of some general assignment accommodation strategies that may be appropriate.

- Provide advance notice for field assignments so students with mobility impairments can make appropriate travel arrangements. Consider any possible difficulties and discuss these with the student.
- For students with mobility impairments, allow for alternate assignments for field components that are not accessible.
- Allow for extra time in rare cases where the disability is a factor in meeting timelines. Note: When consideration of extensions on major assignments is suggested as an accommodation of disability, the intent is for students and instructors to negotiate a revised deadline. It is at each instructor's discretion as to the number of days late an assignment may be submitted without penalty (Access Resource Centre staff are available for consultation, if necessary). This accommodation is based on the student's disability that may periodically affect their pace of productivity. It is not an across-the-board extension on all coursework.
- Write down the date, time, and location for assignments, as well as any other relevant information for students with hearing impairments. Announce them orally for students with visual impairments.
- Allow for the use of assistive equipment in the completion of assignments.
- For oral assignments, allow a student who uses a sign language interpreter to give his or her presentation in sign language with an interpreter, or allow a written assignment in place of an oral presentation.
- Some students may be accompanied in class by an aide.
- Meeting with a student's aide or interpreter may be important.
- Encourage students to see Access Resource Centre staff if problems arise. The Access Coordinator and staff can make referrals to services such as Academic Advising, Counselling, the Academic Success Centre, and/or the Health and Wellness Centre if necessary.

## TEST AND EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATION PROCEDURES

Class tests are defined as short tests or quizzes conducted within the classroom. A formal examination is defined as an examination that is a mid-term, final, deferred final, supplemental, or grade-raising examination.

Test and examination accommodations are meant to give equal opportunity to students with disabilities. Accommodations are not general to the disability group, but specific to the individual.

## **Steps for Arranging Class Test and Formal Examination**

### **Accommodations**

#### **Scheduling of Quizzes, Midterms and Final Examinations:**

1. Only students who have completed a General Access and Accommodation Agreement (GAAA) form may apply for examination accommodation.
2. Students are responsible for obtaining Examination Access and Accommodation Agreements (EAAA) forms for all quizzes and midterms to be invigilated through the Access Resource Centre. Students should meet with each of their instructor(s) at least one week prior to any scheduled examinations to discuss, fill out and sign the EAAA form. Fall and Winter final exam booking forms must be received no later than 2 weeks prior to the first day of the final exam period.
3. Students are responsible for bringing completed EAAA forms to the Access Resource Centre by the deadlines list above prior to any scheduled examination dates. It is, however, in the student's best interest to have forms completed as soon as possible as any amendments to the agreements must be discussed with the instructor(s) and/or Access Resource Centre staff prior to examinations.
4. If a student is unable to attend a scheduled invigilated examination, the student must first contact the instructor and then the Access Resource Centre to explain the situation and request alternate arrangements. The instructor has final authority in authorizing alternate arrangements.

Examination dates and times may be adjusted by the Access Resource Centre and/or instructor(s) to:

- a) fit within the Access Resource Centre's hours of operation;
- b) minimize missed class time;
- c) address back-to-back examinations which may overlap; and/or,
- d) address issues with scheduling of examination rooms and availability of examination invigilators.

In the event that a student is granted an alternate time to write an examination, the instructor and student are asked to read, discuss and sign the Examination Confidentiality Agreement printed on the back side of the EAAA form.

Important note: Due dates for booking tests and examinations are strictly adhered to in order for Access Resource Centre staff to ensure adequate resources are available. Failure to book tests or examinations within the stated time frames could result in writing the examinations in class, without the Access Resource Centre supports.

### **Examination Day Procedures:**

1. Students should arrive at the Access Resource Centre 10 minutes before the examination start time.
2. Students may be required to provide identification before writing the examination.
3. EAAA forms should indicate whether students are allowed to bring in anything other than writing materials (e.g., notes, books, calculators, and formula sheets will not be allowed in without explicit written authorization from the instructor).
4. Students store their backpacks, briefcases, cell phones and electronic devices, or other personal items in a designated area within the Access Resource Centre. Students are advised to ensure that they do not have any unauthorized materials with them prior to entering the examination room. The invigilator will conduct security checks and if unauthorized materials are found, the examination will be halted.
5. Examination start and stop times will be strictly followed. If students are late for their examination, the time will be deducted from their overall writing time. As with all formal UNBC examinations, students who arrive more than 30 minutes late will not be permitted to write the examination and the invigilator will notify the instructor(s) for further instruction. Students will not be permitted to leave during the first half hour of the examination unless authorized by the invigilator and/or instructor(s).
6. Examinations will end at the accommodated time and the invigilator will collect all examination materials which will be submitted to the instructor(s).

## Sample Exam Access and Accommodation Agreement (EAAA) Form

[Front]



### ACCESS RESOURCE CENTRE EXAMINATION ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATION AGREEMENT

TAL 10-1048  
3333 University Way  
Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9

Telephone: 250.960.5682  
Fax: 250.960.5775  
Email: [arc@unbc.ca](mailto:arc@unbc.ca)

**\*\* Incomplete Forms Cannot Be Processed \*\***

**STUDENT** to complete:

**C**

- Student is to oversee completion and submission of this request to the Access Resource Centre (ARC)
- Completed requests must be submitted at least 1 week before any quiz/midterm invigilation date and at least two weeks before the first date of the Fall or Winter final exam period.
- Invigilation in accordance with the student's signed General Access and Accommodation Agreement on file at the ARC.

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Stu #: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Student E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Course Name: \_\_\_\_\_

~ PLEASE NOTE ~

If the scheduled exam date/time (including extended writing time) does not fall within ARC office hours, the student and Instructor are to agree on an alternative date/time for the ARC exam invigilation.  
ARC invigilation must be held Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. with the exception of the Fall and Winter final exam period.\*\*\*  
\*\*\*Extended hours during Fall and Winter final exam period – Monday to Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 6:15 p.m.

**INSTRUCTOR** to complete:

- 1) Scheduled date/time of class exam: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Invigilation date and time if different from class \*\*: \_\_\_\_\_  
\*\*Please sign Confidentiality Agreement on reverse side.\*\*
- 3) Time allowed for class to complete the exam:  50 min  80 min  2hr 50min  3 hr Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) A copy of the exam is to be delivered to the ARC (Room 10-1048) by the Instructor (or his/her delegate) at least 1 day before the invigilation date. **DO NOT SEND EXAMS THROUGH INTER-OFFICE MAIL.**
- 5) Please indicate below how you would like ARC staff to handle return of the completed exam:
  - DELIVER the completed exam to the instructor or delegate's office (Room #): \_\_\_\_\_
  - HOLD the completed exam for pick-up at ARC (Room 10-1048) by (Name): \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Please list any materials that will be allowed in the exam room (e.g., names of textbooks, dates of lecture notes, calculator, dictionary, scrap paper, etc.) or special instructions regarding exam materials and/or invigilation.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**ARC OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Date request received: \_\_\_\_\_ complete  Yes  No Booked:  Yes  No  
Exam start time: \_\_\_\_\_ Exam finish time: \_\_\_\_\_ GAAA:  Yes  No  
Date completed exam returned: \_\_\_\_\_  delivered  picked up

## Sample Exam Access and Accommodation Agreement (EAAA) Form

[Back]



### EXAMINATION CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

By signing this form, I acknowledge that receiving or sharing information with other students about the contents of the scheduled exam is considered cheating. I will be diligent in maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the exam.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Instructor's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATION PROCEDURE

Exam Accommodation arrangements are designed to ensure that appropriate disability related accommodation is in place. UNBC's academic and examination regulations and policies apply.

#### Responsibility:

- Student picks up Exam Access and Accommodation Agreement (EAAA) form from the Access Resource Centre (ARC).
- Student takes the EAAA form to Instructor during his/her **scheduled office hours**.
- Instructor completes items 1 to 6 on the EAAA, signs the form and returns it to the student.
- Student returns the completed EAAA form to the ARC at least **ONE WEEK** before quiz/midterm date and at least **TWO WEEKS** prior to the first day of the Fall and Winter exam period.

#### Exam Day Procedure:

- Students should arrive at the ARC **10 minutes** before the exam start time.
- Students may be required to provide identification before writing the exam.
- Students store their backpacks, briefcases, cell phones and any electronic device and other personal items in a designated area within the ARC.
- Students are to remain in the ARC exam room for the duration of the exam, except in the case of a medical condition or at the discretion of the invigilator.
- Exams will end at the accommodated time and the invigilator will collect exam materials.

#### Cheating:

- Academic dishonesty is a serious offence. University students are expected to be informed as to what constitutes cheating. Ignorance of UNBC's standards of cheating is not an acceptable excuse. Refer to the University Calendar for definitions of plagiarism and cheating. (<http://www.unbc.ca/calendar/GeneralInformation/regulations.html>)

### Examples of Alternative Test/Examination Evaluation Strategies

- A series of tests or examinations, rather than a major examination at the end of a semester, may be more appropriate for evaluating the progress of a student with a learning disability.
- Some students with disabilities may require the use of a computer with spell-check and/or grammar-check software for written tests and examinations.
- Consider accepting test/exam answers in audio format as an alternative to writing, or allowing a student to present the material to you orally.
- The format of a test or examination may be altered if the course work can be appropriately assessed in an alternative manner (e.g., take-home test or an essay exam could be substituted for a multiple-choice test).
- Students with learning disabilities, visual impairments, or motor impairments may need extended time to complete tests and examinations.
- Computer-scored answer sheets may be difficult for some students. They may benefit from writing answers on a separate sheet of paper and having the items hand-scored.
- Where recall of terminology is not an issue, consider allowing the use of a dictionary or allowing the student to question the meaning of a specific word.

### INFORMATION REGARDING DISABILITIES

#### Definition of Disability

Students with disabilities, as defined in the UNBC Access and Accommodation Policy for Students with Disabilities, are persons who

- i. have a significant and persistent mobility, sensory, learning, or other physical or mental health impairment which may be permanent or temporary in nature; and
- ii. experience functional restrictions or limitations of their abilities to perform the range of life's activities; and,
- iii. may experience attitudinal and/or environmental barriers that hamper their full and self-directed participation in life.

#### Announcement Request

Many students are self-conscious about their disability, and will be more apt to seek help if they are approaching someone they believe to be receptive. It is suggested that each instructor make an announcement in class at the beginning

of each semester stating a willingness to meet with students with special needs. As well, this should be stated on each course outline. For example,

*"If there are students in this course who, because of a disability, may have a need for special academic accommodations, please come and discuss this with me, or contact staff at the Access Resource Centre located in the Teaching and Learning Centre, Room 10-1048."*

## **SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

Instructors are encouraged to consider alternative instructional strategies based on individual need and to contact the Access Resource Centre if they have questions or concerns regarding a student with a disability.

### **Disability Categories**

There is no universally accepted approach to defining the categories of disabilities. The approaches used in this section are intended to cover major categories that are likely to exist among the university student population.

Within each category of disability, there are variations between individuals in terms of actual type of disability, its degree and its impact. As well, a person may have more than one disability. The key to understanding an individual's requirement is to discuss directly with the student his or her particular needs.

### **Communication Disabilities**

There are two types of speech difficulties:

- i. difficulty reproducing vocal sounds, articulation problems, or an unusual fluency pattern, as is the case in stuttering, and
- ii. impairment in the comprehension and/or use of language, whether spoken, written, or in symbol form.

This section is concerned with the former (i), while the latter (ii) is covered under Learning Disabilities.

Speech difficulties range from problems with articulation or voice strength to complete inability to produce speech. Speech difficulties may be the only impairment an individual has, or may be accompanied by a hearing, mobility, or other disability. The adaptations used to communicate with others will vary, depending on the person and the nature of the disability. Adaptations may include the use of a prosthetic device, such as an artificial voice box, or non-prosthetic techniques (e.g., use of a computer to produce speech). Almost all

communication difficulties can be aggravated by the anxiety inherent in oral communication in a group setting.

### **Suggested Instructional Strategies for Vocal Communication Disabilities**

- Be patient and allow the person to complete his or her phrases.
- Try to be relaxed and attempt to get the gist of what the person is saying. However, avoid guessing what is being said beyond more than one or two words.
- Do not pretend you understand. It would be better (and preferred by the student) that you ask him or her to repeat what he or she previously said.
- Avoid speaking excessively slowly or loudly as such adjustments are not necessary for most persons with a communication disability.
- Allow for silence to give the student time to respond to a question. The person may simply need time rather than further explanation of the question.
- Minimize external distractions so that full attention is on the communication.
- Maintain eye contact with the person.
- Observe body language and facial expressions.
- If the student is hesitant to speak in class or in one-to-one meetings, consider asking the student to prepare questions or comments in writing. Ask the student if he or she would mind if you shared their written comments with the class.
- Encourage other class members to include the person with the disability as part of the class and to involve him or her in discussions and class plans.

### **Hearing Loss**

Hearing impairment is an invisible disability that affects communication. It may occur in one or both ears, and hearing loss may range from mild to profound. Individuals with a hearing impairment are grouped into two major categories: those who are hard of hearing and those who are deaf.

#### **Hard of Hearing**

Persons who are hard of hearing may rely on visual cues and the use of assistive listening devices, although adaptations vary with each individual. Some hard of hearing persons, particularly those with hearing loss from early childhood, may have speech and language irregularities or difficulties.

Many factors can contribute to a student's inability to use residual hearing. For example, a student who has no difficulty functioning in a quiet environment may have difficulty in a room in which there is ambient noise (e.g., a hum produced by an air system or an overhead projector), in a room that has poor acoustics (e.g., a room that has a bank of windows that cause sound to reverberate), or in following conversation when more than one person is speaking (such as in a seminar course). Level of fatigue may also dramatically alter a person's ability to discriminate language.

## **Deaf**

The term Deaf is used to refer to a group of persons who share a common culture, including means of communication (signs) which provides the basis for group cohesion and identity. While there may be variation in degree of hearing loss within this group, it is usually so severe that everyday speech and environmental sounds cannot be heard or understood, even with the use of a hearing aid. Visual cues are often mandatory for the comprehension of speech, and sign language is frequently the main means of communication. Many individuals who use sign language as a means of communicating use English as a second language and may have difficulty with written communications. Therefore, it is important for an instructor to determine a student's level of proficiency with regards to written communication if the student has a hearing impairment.

## **Education Aids**

Many hard of hearing persons use one or two hearing aids that help to amplify sound. In addition, many persons use an assistive listening device that provides sound amplification. There are several types of such systems, each consisting of a transmitter and a receiver. As an instructor, your cooperation in wearing the transmitter, when necessary, will assist the hard of hearing student to participate in the classroom.

## **Note-takers or Audio Recording of Lectures**

To allow students to concentrate on information presented orally or visually, some persons with hearing loss, and all deaf students, may need supplemental note-taking. Your assistance will be of help in finding appropriate volunteer note-takers. The Access Resource Centre will advise instructors if note-takers are required and will provide guidance on how to arrange for the note-taking accommodation.

## Interpreters

Interpreters belong to a professional occupational group bound by a Code of Ethics. They are trained to provide Sign Language interpretation services for communication between deaf and hearing persons. Some interpreters also do oral interpreting. Visual and verbal communication by instructors and students should be directed to the deaf or hard of hearing person, not to the interpreter. While attention may initially be drawn to the interpreter in a group situation, the interpreter's role soon becomes accepted as an integral part of the communication process between deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing people.

## Sign Language

Among the various forms of Sign Language are Signed English, which follows the syntax of the English language, and American Sign Language (ASL), a visual language composed of precise hand shapes and movements. The latter is considered an independent language in and of itself, with its own distinct grammatical structure.

Often Sign Language is the individual's first language. Since the grammatical structure of ASL is vastly different from English, this may be reflected in a student's written assignments.

## Suggested Instructional Strategies for Hearing Loss

- Reserve a front-row seat for the student. If an interpreter is necessary, the student should be positioned in such a way as to see both the instructor and the interpreter.
- Insure that you have the person's attention before speaking. If not, tap the person's shoulder or arm, or wave your hand gently.
- Maintain eye contact with the person. Do not turn away in the middle of a sentence.
- Direct your comments or questions to the person, even if a third person such as an interpreter is present.
- Re-phrase a word or sentence if not understood the first time, rather than repeating the same words.
- Speak normally without 'over-enunciating' or speaking loudly unless the circumstances require it. If you tend to speak quickly, try to moderate your pace.
- Avoid communicating when moving, as facial visibility may be reduced and background sounds may be distracting.
- Repeat questions or statements from other students.

- Make available in printed format as much of the lecture material as possible.
- Use a chalkboard or overhead to reinforce spoken presentations as much as possible. Remember that students with hearing loss will likely be relying on visual cues (e.g., lip reading), so do not turn your back and continue talking when using a chalkboard.
- Provide the student with printed class outlines, lecture notes, lists of new technical terms, and transcripts of audio and audio-visual materials whenever possible.
- Do not hesitate to communicate with the student in writing when conveying important information.
- If an interpreter is needed, make students aware during the first class that lectures will be interpreted during the course.
- The interpreter may request a list of course-related terms before classes begin in order to prepare new signs for use in the course.

### **Hearing Dogs**

Hearing dogs are trained to assist hearing-impaired person through daily activities. In the classroom setting, a highly trained guide dog will usually lie quietly at its owner's feet. Hearing dogs are not pets and should not be disturbed by staff or students when they are wearing their "working harness."

### **Mobility Impairments**

Mobility impairments include a number of disabilities that have in common the loss of function in areas of independent movement. These range from lack of coordination to complete paralysis.

The impact of mobility impairment on an individual's participation in postsecondary education is unique to the individual, depending not only on the specific nature of the disability, but also the individual's means of dealing with each situation. It is essential to recognize that the individual is the expert with regard to the impact of their disability in the academic setting. It is also important to recognize that two individuals with essentially the same disability may require entirely different accommodations. Instructors should meet with each student to outline course requirements and expectations and allow the student to identify problem areas.

There are two types of physical impairments:

- Orthopaedic impairment
- Neurological impairment

Orthopaedic impairment involves a deformity of the skeletal system (bones, joints, limbs, and associated muscles and ligaments). The impairment can be the result of congenital anomaly (e.g., muscular dystrophy, arthritis), or the result of trauma or accident (e.g., amputation).

Neurological impairment involves the nervous system and affects the ability to move, use, feel, or control certain parts of the body. Neurological impairments can be the result of congenital anomaly (e.g., cerebral palsy), the result of disease (e.g., poliomyelitis), or the result of an accident (e.g., spinal cord injury, head trauma).

### **Suggested Instructional Strategies for Mobility Impairments**

- Allow sufficient space and aisle movement for those who use wheelchairs or for those who use crutches.
- A change in the location of the course may be necessary if the room is inaccessible.
- Ensure that the student can see the instructor, chalkboard and screen.
- Have needed equipment and supplies located in close proximity to the student.
- Speak directly to the person who is mobility impaired. Consider sitting at eye level with the person using the wheelchair, if the conversation lasts more than a few minutes.
- Use common, everyday language, including words such as 'walk' or 'run'.
- Students with arm or hand dexterity problems may require note-takers, audio recorders, use of a laptop computer, or a combination of the above.
- Allow for breaks, as the student may require an opportunity to move around or take frequent breaks during long lecture or lab sessions.

### **Visual Impairment**

The definition of legal blindness in Canada is fairly broad in scope and ranges from persons having a corrected visual acuity of 20/200 (10% of 'normal' vision) to those who have no sight at all. Some students have partial vision and may rely on residual vision with the use of assistive equipment.

### **Technical Supports**

Although Braille is associated with blindness, only a small number of visually impaired persons are proficient in using it (2 to 3% in North America). The majority, especially those who become blind later in life, use other assistive

technologies such as electronic books, personal readers, and/or computers that convert print to speech. The majority of visually impaired persons will use typing or word processing for their written communication. Instructors are asked to permit these devices in the classroom.

### **Guiding a Blind Person**

- Ask if the visually impaired student would like assistance, and then offer your arm.
- Ensure that when giving directions you are clear and accurate. Use north, south, east, west as well as left and right. Do not point and gesture.
- Guide a blind person by slowing down when approaching steps or obstacles, and mention why you are stopping. Let the student know if stairs are ascending or descending, and try to put the person's free hand on the railing. When approaching a door, mention if it opens in or out.

### **Guide Dogs**

Guide dogs are trained to lead a visually impaired person through daily activities. In the classroom setting, a highly trained guide dog will usually lie quietly at its owner's feet. Guide dogs are not pets and should not be disturbed by staff or students when they are wearing their "working harness."

### **Suggested Instruction Strategies for Visual Impairment**

- Provide your name and shake hands, if appropriate, when meeting the blind student.
- Speak to the blind person directly, not through a third person. Address the person using his or her name.
- Talk and act naturally. The use of words such as 'see' and 'look' is quite appropriate.
- Answer the person's questions verbally. A nod or gesture will not be seen.
- Speak at a normal volume unless the person also has hearing loss.
- Provide a list of assigned texts and support readings as far in advance of the course as possible. Students must make arrangements to have alternative to print formats and/or brailled early, as this process may take up to several months.
- Encourage the student to orient him/herself in the classroom and any laboratories prior to the start of classes.
- Restrict your movement away from a tape recorder and repeat any student comments and/or questions to ensure they are recorded.

- Read aloud any written material being presented to the class, including materials on chalkboards, overheads, or flip charts.
- Try to verbalize briefly other visually presented material, such as slides or graphs.
- Consider the student's need for preferential seating.
- Use good contrast in printed material for persons who are partially sighted. Yellow chalk on green board has been found to provide maximum visibility.
- Create a noise-free environment, as unnecessary sounds can be distracting. For example, turn off the overhead projector when it is not in use.
- If possible, make course material available for a private viewing.
- Let the student know when you are leaving the room.

### **Non-Visible Disabilities**

There exists a range of hidden disabilities for which some form of accommodation may be essential in order for individuals to compete equally in the educational environment. Medical, mental health and learning disabilities comprise the broad categories. It is not uncommon for a student with an invisible disability to have greater need for accommodations than a person with a visible disability such as paraplegia.

Instructors are invited to contact the Access Resource Centre if there are concerns about the appropriateness of academic accommodations for a student in their courses.

### **Learning Disabilities**

A learning disability is a deficiency in the processing of information. It is a disorder in one or more of the processes involved in understanding, perceiving, or using language or concepts. This disorder may manifest itself in listening, thinking, speaking, writing, reading, spelling, and/or doing mathematical calculations. It is neither an intellectual impairment nor an emotional problem. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumably due to central nervous system dysfunction.

Accommodations for students with learning disabilities vary, determined by the form of learning disability present, the individual's coping strategies, and the manner in which course material is being presented and/or assessed. Discussion with the student often provides the most useful information regarding accommodation strategies.

While a learning disability cannot be cured any more than a physical or visual disability, a student with a learning disability can be greatly assisted through instructional intervention and compensatory strategies. A variety of instructional modes that incorporate audio, visual, and/or hands-on interaction can enhance learning for students with learning disabilities, as well as for other students.

Learning Disabilities may include difficulty with

- reading or understanding printed material;
- the processing of auditory information, particularly in a limited-time situation such as a lecture;
- producing written material, particularly when writing under strict time constraints such as those present in examination situations;
- computational skills;
- remembering details, even when concepts are understood and can be integrated; and,
- coordination, which may interfere with activities such as writing or reading.

A student with a Learning Disability meets the following criteria:

- significant difficulties in one or more of the basic academic areas, that is, reading, written language, and/or mathematics;
- academic performance is significantly discrepant with the student's general intellectual ability; and,
- no other primary disability is present (e.g., emotional disturbances, sensory disability, or history of adverse educational opportunities or cultural disadvantage) to which the academic dysfunction can be attributed. However, learning disabilities may coexist with the above mentioned complication factors.

NOTE: Students with learning disabilities will derive greater benefit from academic accommodations if their needs have been considered on an individual basis.

### **Learning Disability Needs Assessment**

The Access Resource Centre is available to help students who have been formally identified with a learning disability to access appropriate academic accommodations. This "formal identification" consists of a recent psychoeducational assessment conducted by a recognized learning assessment specialist, who may be a school psychologist, a registered psychologist, or other

appropriately accredited professional trained to do learning assessments. The assessment includes measures of intellectual functioning and measures of achievement in the areas of reading, written language, and mathematics. A UNBC Access Coordinator evaluates the appropriateness of recommendations made by the assessor for the university setting.

### **Learning Disability Assessment Process**

Students registered at UNBC may make an appointment with an Access Coordinator at the Access Resource Centre to explore the possibility of a learning disability. A referral will be made to a professional trained to do learning assessments if a psychoeducational assessment seems appropriate for the student.

### **Suggested Instructional Strategies for Learning Disabilities**

- Provide a course outline and reading list several weeks in advance of course registration in order to assist students with arrangements for having reading material audio-taped.
- Provide handouts of formulas, or allow the student to copy materials such as overheads and/or class notes ahead of time.
- Be sure models, diagrams, graphs, and maps are clear, and allow extra time for students to copy before or after class.
- Highlight print by varying the letter size, underlining, or changing the typeface and spacing.
- Recognize that some students may require the use of a digital recorder or note-takers. Your assistance will be of help in finding appropriate volunteer note-takers. The Access Resource Centre will advise instructors if note-takers are required and will provide guidance on how to arrange for the note-taking accommodation.
- Organize information sequentially to increase the student's ease in course comprehension.
- Minimize classroom distractions.
- Speak clearly and slowly, and avoid talking while writing on the board, as students benefit from eye contact.
- Provide a brief summary of the previous class at the beginning of each lecture to make sure students are clear on the important concepts.
- Be flexible with evaluation techniques without reducing academic standards.
- Read drafts of written assignments to determine whether the student understands necessary requirements.
- Refer students to the writing tutors in the Academic Success Centre for assistance with research papers and essays.

- Make test, examination, and other evaluation results available for the student to review for feedback.

### **Other Non-Visible Disabilities**

- Head Injuries are usually caused by a direct injury to brain tissue. The part of the brain affected can vary; each area of the brain controls a different body function from muscular control to speech, memory or personal attributes. The student may need to develop new ways of functioning in a number of areas.
- Epilepsy refers to a condition in which seizures occur chronically and repeatedly as a result of abnormal electrical activity in the brain. Seizures are sudden, brief, temporary states of uncontrolled brain electrical discharges. For many adults, epileptic seizures may be largely or wholly controlled by anticonvulsant medications. Seizure activity is often exacerbated by stress.
- Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses among students. The condition may be episodic or chronic.
- Anxiety is also prevalent among students and may be a transient reaction to stress. Mild anxiety may, in fact, promote learning and improve the student's functioning. Severe anxiety, however, may reduce concentration, distort perception and weaken the learning process. Anxiety may manifest itself as withdrawal, constant talking, complaining, crying, fantasizing, or extreme fear, sometimes to the point of panic.
- Addiction(s) recovery
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder
- Cancer
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Chronic pain (fibromyalgia, arthritis, back injuries etc.)
- Diabetes
- Environmental allergies
- Kidney disease
- Lupus
- Migraines
- Psychiatric disability
- HIV-infections

### **Suggested Instructional Strategies for Non-Visible Disabilities**

- Provide a list of readings as early in the semester as possible.
- Allow for seating arrangement modifications if required.

- Allow scheduled breaks during long lecture sessions, tests and examinations.
- Provide personal feedback on academic performance.
- Allow the possibility of written assignments in lieu of oral presentations (or vice versa).
- Discuss inappropriate classroom behaviour with the student privately, directly outlining limits of acceptable conduct, or refer the situation and student to the Access Coordinator.
- In your discussion with the student, do not attempt to diagnose or treat the psychological disorder. Concentrate only on the student's behaviours in the course.
- If you sense that discussion would not be effective, or if the student approaches you for therapeutic help, refer the student back to the Access Resource Centre. Appropriate referrals will be made through that office.
- Provide the authorized test/exam accommodations or contact the Access Resource Centre if you require assistance with those accommodations.
- Consider allowing take-home tests and/or examinations in place of in-class assessments.

NOTE: A wide range of counselling, advising, and support services are available to students attending UNBC. If you are not familiar with these services contact the Access Coordinator for information.

### **Temporary Disabilities**

Temporary disabilities can include, but are not limited to, fractures, severe sprains, or recovery from an operation. These disabilities usually call for temporary accommodations and may have a serious impact on the student's ability to function in his or her usual manner.

Where a student experiences a temporary disability during a semester and requires accommodations, the student should first contact his or her instructor(s) to discuss temporary reasonable accommodations. If an instructor is unable to provide the required temporary accommodations, the student should be referred to the Access Resource Centre.

Should the prognosis for a temporary disability appear to be longer than one semester, the student should contact the Access Resource Centre for more extensive assistance.

## Suggested Accommodations Strategies for Temporary Disabilities

Accommodations for these situations rely on an assessment of the impact of the disability on the student's required academic activities. The actual accommodations required are usually the same as for individuals who have long term disabilities with similar academic limitations (e.g., mobility impairments).

## THE LANGUAGE OF DISABILITY

### A Way with Words

"Language is a powerful and important tool in shaping ideas, perceptions and ultimately public attitudes. Words can be and often are a mirror of society's attitudes and perceptions. Attitudes can be the most difficult barrier persons with disabilities must face in gaining full integration, acceptance and participation in society" (Status of Disabled Persons Secretariat, Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, 1991).

The next section will assist instructors with appropriate language usage when speaking to persons with disabilities.

### Words with Dignity

People with a disability can and should be described in words and expressions that portray them in an appropriate, positive and sensitive manner. The following guidelines are suggested/preferred by some 200 organizations that represent or are associated with Canadians with a disability.

In general, remember to describe the person, not the disability; refer to a person's disability only when it is relevant. Avoid images designed to evoke pity or guilt. Finally, when in doubt, ask. People with a disability will be more than willing to help you.

Use the following phrases:

- Person with a disability, rather than disabled, handicapped, or crippled.
- Person who has..., or person with..., rather than crippled by, afflicted with, suffers from, victim of...
- Person who is mobility impaired, rather than lame.
- Person who uses a wheelchair, rather than confined to, bound to, restricted to or dependent on a wheelchair.
- Person who is Deaf or hard of hearing, rather than deaf and dumb, deaf mute, hearing impaired.
- Person with Cerebral Palsy, rather than spastic.
- Able-bodied or non-disabled, rather than normal.

- Person with a physical disability, rather than physically challenged.
- Person with a mental illness, who has schizophrenia, who has..., rather than mental patient, mentally ill, mental, insane.
- Person with a learning disability, rather than learning disabled, learning difficulty.
- Persons who are visually impaired, blind, rather than the visually impaired (as a collective noun).
- The terms paraplegic, quadriplegic and amputee are used and accepted by persons with those disabilities.

"Words with Dignity", published by the Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability, Ottawa, 1995.

### **Guidelines for Relating to Persons with Disabilities**

- Use common sense: people with disabilities want to be treated with respect and dignity.
- Don't be patronizing: show the person the same respect that you expect to receive from others. Treat adults as adults.
- Be considerate and patient: be patient if the person requires more time to communicate, to walk, or to accomplish various tasks. When planning a meeting or event, consider individual needs ahead of time.
- Respect the person's privacy: if you find yourself speculating about areas of the person's private life or medical condition (unrelated to the educational setting), refrain from asking questions which would otherwise be inappropriate to ask of any other person.
- Do not put unnecessary pressure on yourself to know and do everything "right": be patient with yourself in learning what the specific needs of the person are. Don't be embarrassed if you find yourself doing or saying the wrong thing. Remember that the person with a disability is usually aware of and sensitive to your discomfort and your good intentions in the situation.
- Don't be afraid to offer assistance. If there is something you can do, offer assistance. However, do not automatically give help unless the person clearly needs or has asked for it.
- Communicate with the person, not with his or her interpreter, companion or assistant.
- Be aware of the language that you use in relation to people with disabilities (see Words with Dignity).
- Assume nothing. This is one of the most important things to remember in any conversation with someone with a disability.
- Don't be afraid to ask.