

SUBJECT: ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish principles, procedures and responsibilities of the University of Northern British Columbia in providing access to the University for 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.

2. Authority

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 services 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.

The Provost and Vice President Administration and Finance are responsible for the administration of this policy.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all students who have disabilities and require special accommodations and services in order to assist them with accessing University services and to faculty and staff involved in providing these services to students with disabilities.

4. Definitions**4.1 "Disability"**

For the purpose of this policy, students with disabilities are defined as persons who:

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

4.2 “Appropriate Documentation”

For the purpose of this policy, appropriate documentation will be reflective of differences in the types of disabilities (e.g., physical, learning, mental). To be considered by the University, appropriate documentation must meet the following criteria:

- a) will normally be within the previous three years of the student’s initial semester of accommodation(s) at the University;
- b) will summarize the nature of the disability and provide an explanation of the functional impact of the disability in a post-secondary setting. A diagnosis alone is not sufficient to support a request for an accommodation. Documentation should also provide recommendations for accommodations.
 - i. Persons with Physical Disabilities: are required to provide appropriate and current documentation from a recognized and appropriate professional such as a licensed physician, specialist, ophthalmologist, certified audiologist or speech pathologist. If applicable, the documentation should also include the impact of medication on the student’s ability to meet the demands of the post-secondary environment.
 - ii. Persons with Learning Disabilities: must provide appropriate and current documentation of disability. They must submit an assessment report from 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 submitted to the Access Resource Centre should be based on adult norms.
 - iii. Persons with Mental Health Disabilities: are required to provide appropriate and current documentation from a licensed physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or neurologist. The documentation must include a diagnosis and should include an explanation of the functional impact of the disability on the pursuit of post-secondary education. If applicable, the documentation should also include the impact of medication on the student’s ability to meet the demands of the post-secondary environment.

4.3 “Reasonable Accommodation”

For the purpose of this policy, reasonable accommodation refers to any adaptation, modification or alteration to the environment, instructional or evaluation methodology necessary to assist in access to the University. Accommodation may also include alternate formats and methods of communication, physical renovations to the University, and the use of assistive technology or the provision of special services through third party service providers. To be considered by the University, proposed accommodation requests must meet the following criteria:

- a) the accommodation must be based on documented individual need;
- b) the accommodation must not pose a threat to personal or public safety;
- c) the accommodation is not of a personal nature unrelated to the disability;
- d) the accommodation will assist the student to access University services;
- e) the accommodation does not compromise the essential requirements of a course or program;
- f) the accommodation does not impose undue hardship on the University.

5. Procedure for Accommodation Requests

5.1 Accommodation Steps

There are four general steps required for processing accommodation requests:

- a) Request for Accommodation;
- b) Provision of Appropriate Documentation;
- c) General Needs Assessment; and,
- d) Decision and Implementation.

As these steps should be completed well before classes commence, the University encourages students seeking accommodation to contact the Access Resource Centre in a timely manner, normally 3 months prior to first semester of enrolment.

If special transportation needs or extensive physical modifications are anticipated, the student should meet with the Instructor(s), the Access Resource Centre and Director of Facilities six months in advance of the semester of registration to permit reasonable planning time.

If accommodation requires the acquisition of special or additional resources not regularly available within the University, it is recommended that six months advance notice be given in order for the University to assess the accommodation request.

5.11 Request for Accommodation

There is no requirement for students with disabilities to disclose their disability. However, to be considered for authorized accommodations under this policy, students with disabilities must identify themselves to the Access Resource Centre and provide sufficient advance notice. Students must further provide appropriate documentation confirming their disability, and request access or accommodations through the procedures set forth by the Access Resource Centre.

Returning students are required to contact the Access Resource Centre prior to/or at the very beginning of each semester in which accommodations are required.

5.12 Provision of Appropriate Documentation

Students must provide appropriate and current documentation to confirm the nature and extent of their disability and the appropriateness of the accommodation sought.

Students are responsible for any costs incurred in receiving, acquiring or accessing documentation of disabilities.

If the initial documentation is incomplete, inadequate, or not current enough to determine appropriate accommodations, the Access Resource Centre shall require additional documentation. The cost of supplemental documentation will be the responsibility of the student.

Additional information regarding specific documentation requirements can be referenced in Article 1.0 *Access Resource Centre Documentation Requirements*.

5.13 General Needs Assessment

After appropriate documentation is accepted by the Access Resource Centre, that documentation will be deemed proof of the disability in question. Students

requesting academic accommodation will meet with a UNBC Access Coordinator who will assess the student's accommodation needs.

After assessing the student's accommodation requests, the Access Coordinator and Instructor(s) will determine if the student's needs can be reasonably accommodated.

5.14 Decision and Implementation

Where accommodation needs are agreed to, the Access Coordinator, the student, and Instructor(s) will sign a General Access and Accommodation Agreement.

The student, Access Resource Centre, and the student's Instructor(s) are jointly responsible for ensuring that accommodations are arranged prior to or during the first two weeks of classes.

The Access Resource Centre reserves the right to review and make recommendations to the student and the University regarding the appropriateness and reasonableness of accommodations being requested within the context of the University environment and resources that are available.

6. Accommodation for Examinations and Evaluations

Whenever possible, the University requires students to follow the normal procedure for writing examinations. However, if examination accommodation is required, the student must discuss their examination requirements with the Access Resource Centre and their Instructor(s) before or during the first two weeks of the semester. Failure to follow this procedure may mean that the Instructor and/or the Access Resource Centre will be unable to accommodate the request.

Only students who have completed a General Access and Accommodation Agreement form may apply for examination accommodation.

The Access Resource Centre must receive requests for examination accommodations at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of the examination.

More specific information regarding examination accommodation procedures can be referenced in Article 2.0 *Access Resource Centre Examination Accommodation Procedures*.

7. Note-Takers

A request for volunteer note-taking services should be made by the student with disabilities during their initial meeting with the Access Coordinator while developing the General Access and Accommodation Agreement.

If note-taking services are required, the Instructor may request a volunteer peer note-taker from the class. The Access Resource Centre will provide the Instructor with an information sheet that outlines procedures in regards to note-taking services. If a volunteer is not forthcoming, the Access Resource Centre will arrange appropriate accommodation.

Students who receive note-taking services are responsible for notifying the Access Resource Centre staff of any missing or inadequate notes within two weeks of the lecture. Students are also responsible for picking up their notes on a regular basis.

8. External Support

Students are encouraged to obtain disability support through local, provincial and federal agencies serving persons with disabilities. The Access Resource Centre will assist students by providing information as to the appropriate support agencies.

9. Temporary Disabilities

- 9.1 Students with temporary disabilities must provide documentation to confirm the nature and extent of their disability and the appropriateness of the accommodation sought.
- 9.2 Documentation should summarize the nature of the disability and provide an explanation of the functional impact of the disability in a post-secondary setting. Documentation should also include estimated timelines for recovery and provide recommendations for accommodations. Students are responsible for any costs incurred in receiving, acquiring or accessing documentation of a temporary disability.
- 9.3 Where a student experiences a temporary disability during a semester and requires accommodations, the student should first contact their Instructor(s) to discuss temporary reasonable accommodations. If the Instructor(s) is unable to provide the required temporary accommodations, the student should contact the Access Resource Centre for more extensive assistance.
- 9.4 Should the prognosis for a temporary disability appear to be longer than one semester, the student should contact the Access Resource Centre for additional assistance. The Access Resource Centre may require supplemental documentation in these cases. The cost of supplemental documentation shall be the responsibility of the student.

10. Residence

A number of accessible residential units are available on campus for persons with disabilities. Students requiring an accessible residential unit should notify Housing and Residence Life of their requirements several months in advance of their application for residence. The amount of time will vary depending upon the extent of accommodations requested. Accessible units are subject to availability and the same Residence Application Process rules apply as to other units. The Access Resource Centre may offer guidance to Housing and Residence Life on issues of accessibility.

11. Graduation

Students with disabilities or persons with disabilities who are a member of a graduating student's family should contact the Convocation Centre within the Registrar's Office if access or accommodations provisions are required. Notification for the Convocation Ceremony should be received one semester prior to the ceremony to allow adequate time to plan. The Access Resource Centre may offer guidance to the Convocation Centre in these cases.

12. Dispute Resolution Procedure

- 12.1 If a student with disabilities disputes the access or accommodations recommended or provided by the University, they should first attempt to resolve the disagreement informally. The recommended steps to informal resolution are as follows:

12.1.1 that the student shall meet with the other party (staff/faculty responsible for access/accommodation decision) as soon as possible in attempts to resolve the situation. If still unresolved:

- a) the student shall meet with the other party's Supervisor or Chair in attempts to resolve the situation. If still unresolved:
- b) the student shall meet with the other party's Director or Dean in attempts to resolve the situation.

A student following informal dispute resolution procedures may request a third party to accompany them to the above-mentioned meetings and to assist them in explaining the disability and corresponding accommodation implications.

12.2 If a student with a disability is not satisfied with the results of informal dispute resolution procedures, they may choose to attempt to resolve the disagreement through formal procedures. Two possible formal procedures are available to the student:

- a) consulting with the University Harassment and Discrimination Advisor for assistance in resolving the situation through UNBC Harassment and Discrimination Policy and procedures or,
- b) requesting further dispute resolution assistance through the BC Human Rights Commission.

13. Documentation Control and Retention

No mention of course or program accommodations will be included on a student transcript. Student files or student information of an identifying nature, are not to be removed from the Access Resource Centre without authorization of the Access Coordinator of the Centre.

The Access Resource Centre may compile non-identifying information on persons in order to obtain data related to program planning, service delivery, program evaluation, and research.

Faculty, staff and administration are all responsible for maintaining confidentiality. Any disability related information should be kept in a separate, confidential file and not included with the student's academic record. Personal documentation retained by the Access Resource Centre will be destroyed five years after a student's last registration.

Subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act of British Columbia, the Access Resource Centre will not release any identifying information on students to any parties other than those involved in the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

A student with disabilities may authorize the Access Resource Centre to share relevant information from their file to assist in obtaining access, accommodations or services. This authorization will involve signing a Release of Information Agreement.

A student with a disability may request and authorize a third party to share confidential information with the Access Resource Centre. This authorization will involve signing a Consent for Obtaining Confidential Information Agreement.

14. Review of Policy

The first review of this Policy and Recommended Procedures will be conducted 1 (one) year following official approval. Further reviews will be conducted every 3 (three) years. Such reviews

should include a summary of access changes or accommodations required and made available, accommodations' effectiveness, and satisfaction and support of all relevant parties involved in ensuring access for persons with disabilities.