

Faculty Guidelines on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Counselling & Disability Services (CDS)

NOTE: Academic accommodations are meant to remove barriers faced by students with disabilities in order to “level the playing field” while at the same time maintaining the academic integrity of the program and course curriculum.

1. Letters of Accommodation from CDS

- a) Only students who have been fully assessed by Counseling & Disability Services (CDS) as having a disability will receive a letter requesting academic accommodation. The letter will include the student’s name and student number, the name of a disability counsellor assigned to the student by CDS, and reference the human rights code. The letter will outline the *recommended* classroom, assignment, test and exam accommodations *intended to remove barriers and promote the opportunity for the student to fulfill the academic standards of the course.*
- b) Academic accommodations within the context of a specific course should reasonably reflect (but not extend beyond) what is specified in the official Letter of Accommodation. It is not appropriate for a student to negotiate accommodations beyond those outlined in the letter from CDS. A student’s request for further accommodation must first be assessed through CDS Disability Services and communicated in writing to the Course Director.
- c) Course Directors may also receive a “support letter” from a CDS personal counselor with whom the student has been meeting to deal with any range of issues. **This type of support letter may be given to students with or without disabilities.** This is different from a Letter of Accommodation and has no legal basis. It is intended only to inform course directors (with the student’s consent), that there are extenuating circumstances that might affect the student’s performance in a course. The course director is not obliged to follow any suggestions offered in a support letter; it is for the Course Director to *consider*. Again, this letter is not an “official” Letter of Accommodation. See the document entitled “Letters from Counselling & Disability Services” for more information. It is available by clicking on the link below and scrolling to the bottom of the page.
http://www.yorku.ca/cds/pcs/faculty_staff.html

2. Student Responsibilities

- a) Students registered with CDS are instructed to deliver the letter of accommodation to each of their course directors within the first two weeks of class or as early in the term as reasonably possible thereafter.
- b) It is also the student's responsibility to submit in advance any booking requests for accommodation for each test/exam date to the [Alternate Test/Exam Scheduling Services](#) in the Office of the Registrar.

3. Course Director Responsibilities

- a) If a student has submitted a request for accommodation for a test or exam, course instructors will receive an e-mail notification from the Registrar's Office with a copy to the designated

administrative staff contact in the department. In this notification the course instructor will be requested to respond to the initial e-mail notification to confirm the date, time and duration of the test/exam. Course instructors will be expected to provide the test/exam materials and instructions to the Registrar's Office a minimum of 3 business days prior to the test/exam date (preferred delivery method is via email to altexams@yorku.ca). Do not send exams by internal mail or put them in the Registrar Office drop box in the Bennett Centre.

- b) It is expected that course directors will *maintain confidentiality and respect the students' right to privacy*. This includes respecting the validity of an accommodation letter from CDS. Any further questions regarding the recommended accommodations should be directed to CDS. It precludes course directors, teaching assistants, or staff requesting further personal information from the student (e.g. medical/psychological documentation or further 'proof'). CDS gathers relevant medical and psychological documentation to help in their determination of appropriate academic accommodations. Therefore, students do not have to disclose personal information to faculty members.
- c) Where a dispute arises over the appropriateness of a recommended accommodation, it is the course directors' responsibility to *demonstrate that such accommodation would undermine the academic standards and integrity of the course*. For example, course directors may refuse to waive or substitute a requirement of an oral presentation because they believe it is integral to the standards and integrity of the course that students demonstrate the oral presentation skills. Or, a course director may argue that all students must participate in group-work, and if they can't, they may forfeit the grade for participation. Based on Ontario human rights legislation, the course director must be prepared to support the argument that the requirement in dispute is an *essential, vital, and core requirement of the course and program of study*. Otherwise, the student must be accommodated.
- d) Queries about how to accommodate students fairly should be discussed with the CDS Disability Counsellor named on the official Letter of Accommodation. At times, determining appropriate academic accommodation may require a discussion that includes the student, the Disability Counsellor from CDS, and the course director. *It is strongly advised that course directors not engage directly or exclusively with students on contentious accommodation issues.*
- e) Course Directors should familiarize themselves with the companion document to this one entitled "Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Recommended Protocols for Faculty"

4. The Role of Counselling and Disability Services

- a) Students with or without disabilities should be referred to CDS (Room N110 of the Bennett Centre for Student Services) for confidential personal counseling regarding emotional/psychological issues that may be interfering with their academic performance. See <http://www.yorku.ca/cds/> for details of services and contact information.
- b) Please note that "Personal Counselling Services" within CDS works with all York University students, while the "Disability Services" units within CDS work exclusively with students with diagnosed disabilities and course directors to establish appropriate academic accommodations to meet the students' individual needs.