

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

"The University of Western Ontario is dedicated to the advancement of learning ... and ... seeks to provide an environment of free and creative enquiry.... As part of our commitment to excellence, we seek to recognize and remove the obstacles faced by traditionally under-represented groups in order to facilitate their access to and advancement at Western." (Leadership in Learning, pp.3, 4). The University also accepts that education is defined as a "service" under the Human Rights Code of Ontario (Section 1) which states that: "Every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities, without discrimination because of ... handicap." The University, therefore, recognizes its obligation to provide reasonable academic accommodation to students with disabilities where the accommodation can be implemented without compromising the academic integrity of the course or program.

In its efforts to accommodate disabilities appropriately, the approach adopted by the University is collaborative, involving the student requesting the accommodation, the instructor, department (or school or program where applicable), and/or Faculty which provides the accommodation, and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in the Student Development Centre which coordinates the request for and provision of accommodation.

The Responsibility of the Student: Students seeking accommodation must make timely, formal requests and provide relevant medical or psychological documentation sufficient to allow the University to determine whether they qualify for academic accommodation and what kind of accommodation might be required.

In making formal requests to SSD, students are deemed to consent to the release, by SSD to individual faculty members, of information about the nature of their diagnosed disability. This information should be sufficient to enable faculty to engage in informed discussions with the student and SSD on the manner and extent to which the student's needs, arising out of the diagnosed disability, can and should be accommodated. The student must also be prepared to work with SSD and the instructor in developing an appropriate accommodation.

The Responsibility of the Instructor, Chair, Dean: The decision whether to accept an accommodation suggested by SSD rests with the instructor in the first instance. The instructor, Chair or Dean may reject a suggested accommodation only if it would compromise the academic integrity of the course or program. All those involved in making the decision must recognize their obligation to accommodate where possible, and their obligation to respect both the privacy and dignity of the student, as well as the academic integrity of the programs.

It is the responsibility of the instructor to identify the essential academic requirements of the particular course or program so that the discussions are properly informed. Where possible, it is recommended that instructors provide SSD with a summary of these essential academic requirements prior to or at the beginning of classes. The instructor is responsible for working with SSD to determine the manner and extent to which the student's needs, arising out of the diagnosed disability, can and should be accommodated. It is equally the responsibility of the instructor to question a suggested accommodation if the instructor believes it would compromise the academic integrity of the course or program. In such circumstances, instructors are encouraged to suggest alternative accommodations, where appropriate.