Let's Talk Academic Accommodations

In Accessible Learning Services (ALS) we value the ability to work in partnership with faculty to ensure that we are providing Mohawk College students access to a barrier-free education. In the spirit of continued engagement and collaboration with faculty and staff, ALS would like to share current information relating to our academic accommodations process, the recently revised Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) guidelines and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

This document includes frequently asked questions with answers, a summary of newly instituted OHRC directives, and general UDL information.

# Accommodation-Related Questions

## How do students register with ALS?

To register with ALS:

1. Students contact ALS at 905-575-2211, email accessiblelearningservices@mohawkcollege.ca or visit the Triage Officer (station 1) in The Square at the Fennell Campus, The Square at the IAHS or Room A118 at the Stoney Creek Campus.
2. Students gather their disability-related documentation based on information provided by ALS staff or by following the [Disability Documentation Guide](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/sites/default/files/Accessibile%20Learning/Documentation%20Guide%20revised%20-%20September%201%202016.docx). Students are not required to disclose their disability diagnosis to register for services and access accommodations and support. Focus is on functional limitations as identified through documentation from a Registered Health Care Professional.
3. Students schedule an appointment to have a Confidential Academic Accommodation Plan (CAAP) developed outlining testing and/or classroom accommodations. ALS also provides support for students who may need to request accommodations for pre-admission testing and placement.

## When a disability is suspected, how can students be appropriately referred to ALS?

Faculty may wish to engage in a respectful and confidential discussion regarding the student's past education experience and possible supports.

Referral to Triage Officer (station 1) in The Square at the Fennell Campus, The Square at the IAHS or Room A118 at the Stoney Creek Campus is appropriate.

Using the [Responding to Students in Distress Guide](https://www.mohawkcollege.ca/sites/default/files/Accessibility%20at%20Mohawk/Responding-to-Students-in-Distress-2017.pdf) will provide supportive information regarding referral.

When in doubt, the most important thing to do is connect with ALS so that we can work together to support the student.

## How do students obtain accommodations through ALS?

Under current legislation, Mohawk College has a duty to accommodate students with disabilities.

ALS staff determine appropriate accommodations based on student self-report and review of disability documentation highlighting functional impact of disability in an academic setting and program considerations.

While it is ideal for students to self-identify with ALS early, this is not always the case for a variety of reasons. CAAPs are sometimes issued later in the semester and are revised as students' needs change.

Interim accommodations pending receipt of appropriate documentation will be provided to students who require assistance.

ALS will require updated medical documentation where a disability is identified as temporary or where academic accommodations need to be re-visited over time to ensure that they continue to meet the students’ needs appropriately.

## Who holds responsibility for academic accommodations?

The accommodations process is a partnership between student, faculty, and ALS. The [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities policy](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/sites/default/files/Corporate%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/Academic%20Accommodation%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities.pdf) offers additional information regarding accommodations.

Students are responsible for identifying their accommodation needs to ALS, be active participants in the accommodation process and if they wish to access accommodations, distribute their CAAP to faculty. Students may request that ALS facilitate the distribution of their CAAP to appropriate professors

Faculty are responsible for acknowledging receipt of a student's request for accommodation, providing the approved accommodations included in the CAAP, collaborating with the student and Accessibility Counsellor around accommodation issues, and using their discretion to accommodate beyond the minimum provisions indicated on the CAAP for the benefit of the student.

* For example: A professor may feel that 50% additional time, as indicated on a student's CAAP, is insufficient and offer the student 100% additional time to complete a quiz. Similarly, a professor might choose to utilize Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and allot extra time on tests/quizzes for the entire class.
* For more information on UDL please visit the [universal design for learning webpages](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/employees/centre-for-teaching-learning/universal-design-for-learning).

ALS is responsible for determining appropriate accommodations, supporting the student to use services appropriately, and serve as a resource to students and faculty.

## What if faculty requires clarification of an accommodation?

As it is a legislative requirement for faculty to provide the accommodations outlined in a student’s CAAP, we continue to encourage faculty to connect with the student's Accessibility Counsellor for clarification or specific concerns regarding accommodations. The Accessibility Counsellor’s contact information is located on the student’s CAAP.

We have now included links to the [Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities policy](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/sites/default/files/Corporate%20Policies%20and%20Procedures/Academic%20Accommodation%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities.pdf) and the [accommodation guides](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/student-life/academics/accessible-learning/accessible-learning-services-resources) on the [ALS website](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/student-life/academics/accessible-learning).

## Is ALS a confidential service?

Yes. Under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), ALS is unable to disclose any information without signed consent, except in situations where we are required by law to do so (i.e. known and suspected instances of children who are or may be in need of protection; cases involving imminent risk of physical harm to oneself or another; known instances of inappropriate sexual contact by a regulated health care provider; or when subpoenaed for records or testimony by the courts).

## How should faculty respond to students’ requests for accommodations that are not indicated on their CAAP?

Faculty can:

* Use their discretion regarding if/how to grant such requests.
* Refer the student(s) to meet with their Accessibility Counsellor to discuss the request in light of changing needs, new disability documentation etc.
* Contact the student’s Accessibility Counsellor to clarify the accommodation request.

## How should requests for retroactive accommodations be handled?

Requests for retroactive accommodation will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Key considerations will include:

1. When is the request for accommodation being made?
2. What is the state of knowledge regarding the student’s disability prior to the request being made?

Faculty can refer the student to meet with their Accessibility Counsellor to discuss the request or contact Accessibility Counsellor for consultation regarding student’s accommodation request.

# Academic Accommodation Changes - Ontario Human Rights Commission 2016

## Institutional Requirements

Institutions are required to consider/adopt the following practices in meeting the needs of students with disabilities to ensure access to educational services:

* Under the OHRC, disclosure of a diagnosis is not required in order to access academic accommodations. Students are required to provide information confirming a permanent or temporary disability. Documentation outlining the functional limitations of disability is required.
* All requests for reasonable academic accommodations for students with temporary or permanent disabilities will be considered.
* Assistance will be provided to students who require interim accommodations, pending receipt of appropriate documentation.
* Students may request that ALS facilitate the distribution of their CAAP to appropriate professors
* We recognize that a student’s need for academic accommodation may be identified at any point during the semester or year. Requests for retroactive accommodation will be considered on a case-by-case basis. This means that retroactive academic accommodation requests should be given meaningful consideration and cannot be dismissed outright.
* Students are not required to provide medical documentation directly to their professors to receive academic accommodations.

The preceding guidelines have been incorporated in the recently revised Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Policy and will be available online once approved.

## Remember…We Are Here to Help

Please:

* Consult with ALS, as needed.
* Request presentations to departments on disability issues.
* Request clarification on accommodation issues.
* Connect with us for collaborative intervention and accommodation planning.

In addition, we can facilitate referral to additional College services and supports.

# Universal Design for Learning

UDL is a curriculum design, development and delivery framework used to create accessible and inclusive learning environments.

Universal design for learning has benefits for both learners and faculty. While the greatest benefits of universal design implementation are often felt by students with disabilities, there are numerous reasons to implement universal design for learning principles in a college environment. Universal design can:

* Limit, or proactively remove, learning barriers to improve learning for all students.
* Reduce the need, and time required, to arrange individual accommodations.
* Offer students an opportunity to more fully demonstrate their knowledge.
* Help Mohawk College meet the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act legislative mandate.

## To Learn More

Faculty can review the [UDL webpages](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/employees/centre-for-teaching-learning/universal-design-for-learning/universal-design-for-learning), which contain [general information](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/employees/centre-for-teaching-learning/universal-design-for-learning/universal-design-for-learning), easy to implement [UDL initiatives](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/employees/centre-for-teaching-learning/universal-design-for-learning/universal-design-for-0) and [faculty resources](http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/employees/centre-for-teaching-learning/universal-design-for-learning/universal-design-for-learning).