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## Academic Accommodation and Mount Royal Faculty

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### Applying Accommodations to the Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment

*This handbook has been created to provide faculty with information about implementing academic accommodations for students experiencing disability-related barriers when teaching and delivering course material virtually.*

December 2021  
MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY  
Access and Inclusion Services

Mount Royal University is committed to access, diversity, and equity. Access and Inclusion Services assists the University in creating an accessible learning environment that encourages full participation in academic courses for students experiencing disabilities.

Reasonable accommodations are tailored to the individual, flexible, and are determined by considering the barriers within the unique environment of a post-secondary institution.

Access and Inclusion Services facilitates reasonable academic accommodations for students experiencing disabilities in the academic setting. We encourage student development and partner with MRU faculty to create a more accessible, equitable and inclusive learning environment.

This handbook has been created to provide faculty with information about accommodating students experiencing disability-related barriers. The following pages provide information on:

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For additional information, please visit the “Information for Faculty” page on the Access and Inclusion Services webpage: <https://www.mtroyal.ca/AcademicSupport/ResourcesServices/AccessibilityServices/Professors/index.htm>

# *Academic Accommodations: The Basics*

## *Types of Disabilities*

Students registered with Access and Inclusion Services provide medical or psychological documentation from specialists; that documentation confirms the disability and outlines functional limitations associated with the condition. Disability categories include, but are not limited to hearing, vision, mobility, mental health, learning and attention regulation, autism, concussion, brain injury, and temporary or short-term impairments such as a broken arm or post-surgery limitations.

**Students who register with Access and Inclusion Services must meet the same admission criteria and academic requirements and standards as all students, although the manner in which they meet those standards may vary.**

## *Academic Accommodations*

Academic accommodations are provided when students experience disability-related barriers in demonstrating their knowledge and skills. The accommodations provide equitable access for those students in order for them to have the opportunity to meet the academic standards of their courses and programs.

Students registered with Access and Inclusion Services have the right to utilize their academic accommodations on an as needed basis. For example, some courses may be designed with universal access in mind and therefore, few if any academic accommodations may be required.

Students in professional programs may require unique academic accommodations for field work/practicum placements or other licensing requirements.

## *Essential Requirements*

The provision of accommodations will not change the essential requirements of a course or program curricula.

An appropriate accommodation enables a student to have the opportunity to successfully meet the essential requirements of the program, with no alteration in standards or outcomes, although the manner in which the student demonstrates mastery, knowledge and skills may be altered.

Faculty play a key role in the accommodation process by communicating what a student must know and demonstrate. When necessary, faculty assist with problem-solving based on their academic expertise. The question of fairness often comes up when providing students with alternate ways of performing academic tasks. Accommodations are intended to level the playing field to provide an opportunity for students experiencing disabilities to complete certain tasks differently, while still meeting the essential requirements and components of the curriculum.

Students with accommodations are expected to demonstrate the same knowledge and skill development as their peers.

If you believe that implementing the accommodations listed in a student's Academic Accommodation Letter will compromise academic standards, contact the Access Advisor listed at the bottom of the letter. In some circumstances, the nature and degree of disability-related barriers may mean that no accommodation would enable an individual to meet the essential academic requirements or behavioural expectations of a course or program. In these cases, the University is not required to accommodate. However, efforts must be made to provide all reasonable options.

Mount Royal University has an academic accommodation appeal process outlined in *Policy 0517, Academic Accommodation for Students Experiencing Disabilities*. Generally, faculty who decline to provide an accommodation listed on a student's Academic Accommodation Letter must contact the Access Advisor immediately to discuss the situation. If the appeal goes forward the accommodation remains in place throughout the appeal process. Details regarding the appeal process are available from the student's Access Advisor.

## *Privacy & Confidentiality*

A student's specific diagnosis is considered private medical information under Human Rights Legislation. Under no circumstances should you ask a student to disclose this information.

While some students are willing to talk about their disability, many others might be reluctant to do so. They might fear being denied opportunities or creating unwanted curiosity or concern. Encourage students to talk about the impact of their disability on their learning, rather than their diagnosis.

Because any category of disability contains a wide range of differences in how someone functions, knowing a student's type of disability is not particularly helpful without the more detailed information provided to the Access Advisor during the intake process. This information describes additional challenges due to other conditions, family and social supports, past experiences of learning and areas of strength that can compensate for difficulties.

It is also important to maintain a student's confidentiality in the classroom by not speaking about their accommodations in front of others.

## *Access and Inclusion Services Provides*

- a review of the student's medical documentation and determines the need for, and types of, academic accommodations
- a place for students to discuss their disability-related needs and the appropriate accommodations and/or referrals to other support services on campus or in the wider community
- the development of an effective academic accommodation plan with the student
- ongoing support and problem-solving for disability-related issues that impact a student's academic and co-curricular experience (this frequently requires collaboration with faculty and staff)
- access to financial support (e.g. Canada Student Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities) and referrals to other funding sources
- access to assistive technology and software
- coordination of specialized services such as sign language interpreting and real-time captioning

## *Types of Accommodations*

Accommodations depend on the impact of the disability within a particular program of study. They may include:

### *Classrooms, labs and course work*

- accessible classrooms and labs that are safe and provide appropriate supports
- sign language interpretation, note taking, audio recording
- accessible materials in alternate formats (e.g. braille, large print, digitized text, assisted-hearing devices)

### *Tests and exams*

- writing within a test/exam space in which accommodations may be provided (e.g. fewer distractions, additional time, ability to take breaks or attend to physical needs)
- alternate formats such as large print or braille
- adaptable furniture and equipment (e.g. use of keyboard for writing, adjustable-height table, screen-reading software)

### *Practicum/placement*

- guidance for requesting accommodations during practicum/placement
- development of safe, appropriate accommodations in the academic program and placement site

### *Outside the classroom*

- liaising with Residence Services regarding disability-related needs
- referring students to campus and community resources
- peer mentoring and educational/support groups (e.g. for students experiencing barriers related to ADHD, mental health, and Autism Spectrum Disorder)
- co-curricular programming in partnership with campus partners (e.g. navigating disability and disclosure in the workplace)

# *Roles & Responsibilities: Who Does What?*

Students, staff, and faculty all have responsibilities in the accommodation process and in creating an accessible environment. Each party brings an important perspective: the student has a unique and personal knowledge of their disability, the faculty members have content knowledge and an understanding of the required outcomes, and the Access Advisor has a broad-based knowledge of disabilities and their impact on academic performance. Roles and responsibilities may differ across academic divisions, so please check for specific procedures.

## *Faculty*

- participates, when necessary, in structuring an accommodation plan that meets the essential requirements of the course/program and the needs of the students
- provides accommodations as outlined on the Academic Accommodation Letter, as appropriate, and works with the student and/or Access Advisor to find solutions if issues arise
- directs students to register with Access and Inclusion Services if an accommodation request is made but is not accompanied by an Academic Accommodation Letter
- makes every effort to develop an inclusive learning environment (e.g., provides clear information in the course syllabus and course policies regarding accommodations)

## *Student*

- registers with Access and Inclusion Services once the need for academic accommodation has been determined
- provides appropriate and timely medical documentation to Access and Inclusion Services verifying the need for disability-related accommodation and outlining the restrictions and limitations of functioning within an academic environment
- informs faculty about the need for accommodation by providing an Academic Accommodation Letter for each course for which accommodation is being requested
- fulfills agreed-upon procedures to implement their accommodations, (e.g. informs their faculty and Access Advisor of difficulties in meeting deadlines)

## *Access Advisor*

- verifies that there is a disability-related need that requires accommodation within a particular learning environment (e.g. classroom, lab, practicum setting)
- receives medical documentation from a qualified medical practitioner confirming a

- disability and the student's disability-related academic functional limitations
- uses best practices, input from the student and the medical documentation to develop accommodations
  - supports the facilitation of the accommodation process with the student, faculty and staff
  - works collaboratively with others in the MRU community to develop an accessible environment so that students experiencing disabilities are fully included in all curricular and co-curricular activities

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **GENERAL**

- What should I do if I think a student is experiencing a disability-related barrier?
- One of my students has disclosed their disability to me. What do I do with this information?
- How are academic accommodations determined?
- Am I required to accommodate a student's request?
- What do I do if I disagree with the recommended accommodations?

## **DESIGN & PLANNING**

- How can I create a more accessible learning environment?
- How do I modify a lab or practicum for a student experiencing a disability-related barrier?

## **DELIVERY**

- What is an Academic Accommodation Letter?
- Why don't students provide their Accommodation Letter at the beginning of the semester?
- What should I do if I get a limited illness medical note?
- What information can I share about a student's needs with other students or support staff?
- Why do some students need to use a laptop in the classroom?

## **EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT**

- What is my role in the test & exam process for students with accommodations?
- What do I do when a student asks for an extension on an assignment or other work to be submitted for evaluation in my course?
- How do I handle accommodations for alternatives to class participations?
- What does "Adjustment to attendance policy" mean?
- Why do students experiencing disability-related barriers need extended time?
- What do I do if a student requests a memory aid sheet/cue cards/dictionary?
- What do I do if a student registered with Access and Inclusion Services is not meeting academic expectations?

## GENERAL

### ***What should I do if I think a student is experiencing a disability-related barrier?***

Please invite the student to review on-campus services and to choose a support office/contact to begin a discussion about their concerns. For example, the student may want to book time with Student Learning Services or a Doctor or Counsellor at Wellness Services. Consult the Student Services & Support page on the MRU website:  
<https://www.mtroyal.ca/AcademicSupport/>

Access and Inclusion Services meets with students who are referred to our department from any of the student support services on campus.

### ***One of my students has disclosed their disability to me. What do I do with this information?***

If a student discloses their disability/medical condition to you, this suggests that the student is experiencing enough challenges that they feel the need to seek help. It is reasonable for you to ask the student if they have accessed any of the on-campus services for support.

If the student does not mention Access and Inclusion Services, you can encourage them to contact the office to find out if they may be eligible for specific supports or accommodations.

If the student indicates that they have already registered with Access and Inclusion Services, encourage the student to contact their Access Advisor. If appropriate, you can also offer to contact the Advisor directly in order to address an ongoing situation in the classroom. The student, faculty member and Access Advisor may then collaborate on finding reasonable solutions.

If the student is not interested in working with Access and Inclusion Services (not all students experiencing disabilities are registered with Access and Inclusion Services) then it is reasonable to encourage them to access other campus services. Disability-related accommodations (ongoing or temporary) are not provided unless the student registers with Access and Inclusion Services and provides the necessary medical documentation.

### ***How are academic accommodations determined?***

Students provide documentation from a qualified medical professional that confirms they experience disability-related barriers that require academic accommodations. The Access Advisor reviews this documentation, meets with the student to determine their academic strengths and functional limitations, and considers best practices. When academic programs have specialized accommodation requirements, the Access Advisor consults with the academic program.

***Am I required to accommodate a student's request?***

When Access and Inclusion Services has determined a need for academic accommodation, the student is accommodated unless there is undue hardship. Undue hardship consists of safety to self or others, the preservation of the essential degree requirements, and the cost of the accommodation to the institution. Academic accommodations should reasonably reflect (but not extend beyond) what is specified in the official Academic Accommodation Letter. It is not appropriate for a student to negotiate accommodations beyond those outlined in the letter. If a student requests an academic accommodation that is not previously identified, refer them to their Access Advisor to discuss the request.

***What do I do if I disagree with the recommended accommodations?***

Access and Inclusion Services Access Advisors support both faculty and students in negotiating the accommodation process. If you have questions about the accommodations recommended for a student, contact their Access Advisor. These discussions can be very useful for clarifying misunderstandings and reaching mutually acceptable solutions.

## **DESIGN & PLANNING**

***How can I create a more accessible learning environment?***

In your syllabus, clearly state the knowledge and skills students need to know and demonstrate in your course/program. Include a section addressing disability-related barriers and accommodation, which will signal your openness to discuss student needs. You might say something along the lines of: "Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you experience disability-related barriers that may require accommodation, please feel free to approach me and/or Access and Inclusion Services."

***How do I modify a lab or practicum for a student experiencing a disability-related barrier?***

Students experiencing disabilities may require accommodation in clinical placements, internships, cooperative placements, practicum placements and other experiential-learning courses.

Supports that have been suited to the classroom environment do not necessarily transfer to the placement environment.

Contact the Access Advisor to find a solution if what is being suggested will not work within your practicum/lab setting or could compromise the health and safety of clients, essential requirements, or requisite licensing processes.

## **DELIVERY**

### ***What is an Academic Accommodation Letter?***

The Academic Accommodation Letter informs faculty that the student has registered with Access and Inclusion Services, and it lists academic accommodations to help you support the student in the virtual classroom and through the evaluation process.

The Academic Accommodation Letter is also semester-specific so that faculty know that the student's academic accommodations are current. Faculty are not obligated to provide academic accommodations to a student who provides a letter that is out of date.

A conversation must be had between the faculty member and the student to discuss how the student's accommodations will be applied to the design of the course. The conversation may take place through any virtual means (e.g., email, telephone, Google Meet, etc). Feel free to contact the Access Advisor listed at the bottom of the letter if you have questions or concerns about implementing the recommended accommodations.

Students are required to provide their Academic Accommodation Letter to their faculty members a minimum of seven days in advance of a quiz, test, or midterm exam. Students wanting to use exam accommodations during the final exam period need to provide their Academic Accommodation Letter no later than the deadline indicated by Access and Inclusion Services each semester.

### ***Why don't students provide their Accommodation Letter at the beginning of the semester?***

Students can be diagnosed with a disability at any time, so registration with Access and Inclusion Services continues throughout the academic year.

Some students try to complete their academic work without accommodations until they realize that they are unable to do so. Other students fear the stigma of being known as a student experiencing a disability.

### ***What should I do if I get a limited illness medical note?***

Medical notes may be provided to faculty by students experiencing a time-limited medical condition. If a student has an illness unrelated to their permanent disability (e.g. they get the flu or COVID-19), then a medical note for the flu or COVID-19 is appropriate. Each academic area has its own policies and processes regarding accommodation for illness or injury. Please consult your division for detailed information.

Access and Inclusion Services does not provide academic accommodations to students who are experiencing a short-term illness (e.g., the flu or COVID-19); however, if the illness results in the student experiencing an ongoing or chronic condition, they may be referred to our office for support.

***What information can I share about a student's needs with other students or a support staff?***

Always maintain the confidentiality of a student's registration with Access and Inclusion Services. There may be times when you need to communicate information about a student's accommodations to other staff involved in teaching the course, such as a lab assistant. Share information on a need-to-know basis and preserve the student's private information. When it comes to making decisions regarding accommodations, outline responsibilities for yourself and all course support staff.

***Why do some students need to use a laptop in the classroom?***

Laptops are an effective learning tool and it is appropriate for faculty to create clear messages about the use of laptops in the classroom. For some students, laptops are essential. Allowing the use of an assistive device (e.g. laptop or tablet) can support learning and bypass disability-related challenges to note taking.

Banning laptops for all students except those registered with Access and Inclusion Services is discouraged because it breaks the confidentiality of students registered with the office. Some faculty establish laptop-free zones in certain sections of their classroom to minimize disruption and distraction.

## **EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT**

***What is my role in the test & exam process for students with academic accommodations?***

Test and exam accommodations are frequently required, and faculty members are responsible for keeping track of the students in their course(s) who require exam accommodations.

Students who are enrolled in an online/virtual class, who are registered with Access and Inclusion Services, and who provide their faculty members with a copy of their Academic Accommodation Letter can complete their tests and exams in a virtual environment (just as the other students in the class), or they can complete their accommodated tests and exams on campus in the Accommodated Exam Centre (located in Y201).

It is important for the faculty member and student to discuss, in advance, where the student will complete their exams. Should the student choose to write their exams on campus in the Accommodated Exam Centre, the student must request their exam through Accommodate (the database used by Access and Inclusion Services). If you receive notifications about accommodated test and exam seatings, please review the information for accuracy and respond to these notifications at your earliest opportunity (as soon as possible).

For students who complete their exams in a virtual environment, faculty are responsible for adjusting the exam settings for that specific student to correspond with the extended time on the student's Academic Accommodation Letter (e.g., 1.5x or 2x regular time).

Universal Design for Learning - Faculty members are encouraged to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) wherever possible. When using UDL for exams, the following applies:

-if double time (2x) is being provided to all students, students with an extended time accommodation would not receive additional time since double time is the maximum accommodation allowed.

-if 1.5x regular time is being provided to all students, students with an accommodation of 2x regular time would need to be provided with an additional .5x extension.

***What do I do when a student asks for an extension on an assignment or other work to be submitted for evaluation in my course?***

Access and Inclusion Services does not provide guidelines regarding assignment extensions. Such discussions are to be had with the student directly. Negotiate with the student to find an appropriate date to complete the work, being mindful of the University's deadlines and policies. Usually, students are granted a short extension beyond the deadline, or if at the end of the semester faculty may consider an 'I' grade.

***How do I handle accommodations for alternatives to class participation?***

Clarify how participation may be an essential academic requirement of your course (e.g. language learning courses) and negotiate viable alternatives early in the course to prevent misunderstandings at the end of semester. Consider writing the terms of the agreement on the back side of the student's Academic Accommodation Letter and having both parties sign/date the additional information. Contact the Access Advisor to discuss options if needed.

***What does "Adjustment to attendance policy" mean?***

Although there is an expectation that students will attend most classes, this statement informs you that the student may need to miss class because of their medical condition. Contact the Access Advisor if you need assistance in establishing reasonable expectations for attendance.

***Why do students experiencing disability-related barriers need extended time for exams?***

Students experiencing disabilities often need more time to process the information required for learning or communicating knowledge due to neurological differences, chronic health issues that limit focus and concentration, or physical disabilities that require the use of assistive technology.

***What do I do if a student requests a memory aid sheet/cue cards/dictionary?***

These requests will be outlined in the student's Academic Accommodation Letter and follow stringent criteria. Students requesting a memory aid sheet must have it approved by the faculty member prior to the test/exam. Review the memory aid sheet and either approve it or ask for revisions from the student. If there are issues or concerns, you or the student can contact the Access Advisor.

***What do I do if a student registered with Access and Inclusion Services is not meeting academic expectations?***

Contact the student's Access Advisor if the student is in academic jeopardy as this may indicate that accommodations need to be renegotiated.

## ***Communication & Contact***

### **CONVERSATIONS WITH STUDENTS**

- A conversation with the student is required. Speak privately with the student through email, by phone, or using Google Meet.
- Be straightforward and factual in your approach.
- Outline what you have observed and describe the services available.
- Allow time for the student to think about what you have said.
- Recognize that the student may not know that support for functional limitations within the Canadian context is legally mandated.
- If you think a student may not understand what you're saying, summarize your points in written form.
- Allow time and space for the student to ask questions and to clarify what it is they need to know.

### **REGISTERING WITH ACCESS AND INCLUSION SERVICES**

- Student completes the Public Request Form on the Access and Inclusion Services webpage and uploads their documentation of disability:  
<http://www.mtroyal.ca/accessibility>
- Student meets with an Access Advisor (virtually or in person) for an intake conversation, and they work together moving forward.

## **RESPONDING TO DISTRESSED STUDENTS**

Faculty play an important role in recognizing a student in distress and supporting student wellness. If any student in your class is displaying concerning behaviour, please encourage the student to seek appropriate supports on campus (e.g., Student Counselling, Health Services). You may also wish to refer the student to the MRU Early Support program through the Office of Student Success. If the student is registered with Access and Inclusion Services, you may wish to inform the student's Access Advisor of your observations so that the Access Advisor can follow-up with the student.

### **EMERGENCY**

Follow the MRU protocol:

Security: 403-440-5900

### **NON-EMERGENCY**

Office of Student Success: 403-440-6544

Student Counselling: 403-440-6362

*Language plays a powerful and important role in shaping ideas and perceptions. Sensitivity in how we present information relating to people experiencing disability can go a long way in overcoming the most difficult barriers to full integration and accepting attitudes. For suggestions on how to speak with people experiencing disability, chat with an Access Advisor.*

## *Information to Support Faculty with Accessible Design*

Universal Design is an approach to the design of all products, processes, procedures, systems, structures, and environments. The goal is to make these as usable as possible by as many individuals as possible.

Consider implementing basic universal design for learning principles to make your course accessible for a wide variety of learners in diverse life circumstances. When teaching a student experiencing a disability-related barrier, remember that many of the principles for inclusive design could be considered beneficial to any student. The idea of "universal design" is a method of designing course materials, content and instruction to benefit all learners.

Create learning environments in which students feel free to ask questions and discuss/apply the material to help them integrate their learning.

Consider these 10 tips:

1. Ensure your syllabus clearly articulates the essential course requirements and includes an accessibility statement.
2. Provide handouts (e.g. PowerPoint slides) and any other course information ahead of time and in electronic formats to assist students in preparing for and following the lecture.
3. Include the equivalent text alternative (alt text) for all graphics and images.
4. Use captioned or subtitled video and transcribed audio, where possible.
5. Use colour effectively by providing crisp, high-contrast handouts.
6. Avoid using animated, flickering or flashing content.
7. Use a font that is a sufficient size (i.e., 12 point or larger) and a readable style (e.g. sans serif typefaces such as Arial or Calibri).
8. Repeat student questions and comments out loud to help students follow the discussion.
9. Request electronic versions of textbooks when ordering.
10. If you have a course website make sure that it meets the WCAG 2.0 website guidelines: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/>

MRU's Academic Development Centre (ADC) will provide assistance with implementing Universal Design principles within your courses. Various resources and workshops are available.

## *Acknowledging a Student's Academic Accommodations*

***How do faculty members know if a student is registered with Access and Inclusion Services, and how are the student's academic accommodations acknowledged?***

Faculty members will receive an Academic Accommodation Letter directly from the student via email. The Academic Accommodation Letter indicates that the student has registered with Access and Inclusion Services and that they wish to use their academic accommodations in that specific course. The letter indicates the student's name and MRU ID number, the semester for which the accommodations are valid, and the recommended academic accommodations. The letter also lists the name and contact information of the student's Access Advisor. Faculty members are encouraged to contact the Access Advisor if they have questions or concerns about implementing the recommended accommodations.

The duty to accommodate begins upon receipt of the student's Academic Accommodation Letter. It is the responsibility of the faculty member and the student to have a conversation about how the recommended accommodations will fit with the design of the course. Once that conversation has taken place, the faculty member must "reply all" to the student's initial email and cc [accessibility@mtroyal.ca](mailto:accessibility@mtroyal.ca) stating that they have had a discussion with the student and that they acknowledge the student's accommodations.

*\*Please note that sending an email to Access and Inclusion Services with your acknowledgement of the student's accommodations is now in lieu of signing the Faculty Acknowledgement Form. Paper Faculty Acknowledgement Forms will no longer be used.*

## *Applying Accommodations in a Virtual Context*

A student's Academic Accommodation Letter is generic and not customized to each and every course. When students register with Access and Inclusion Services a suite of recommended accommodations is included on the Academic Accommodation Letter to ensure that the student will be supported regardless of the unique demands and expectations of each course. It is possible that not all of the recommended accommodations will apply in every course. For instance, a student will not need to use their accommodation of a basic calculator if the course does not require students to complete math calculations. Some of the recommended accommodations may not apply in the virtual teaching and learning environment.

Below are guidelines for applying certain accommodations in the virtual teaching and learning environment. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of possible accommodations. Faculty members are encouraged to contact the Access Advisor listed on the bottom of the student's Academic Accommodation Letter should further information and/or clarification be required.

### **EXTENDED TIME FOR QUIZZES, TESTS, MIDTERMS, AND FINAL EXAMS**

Faculty members are responsible for keeping track of the students in their course(s) who require an extended time accommodation.

Students who are enrolled in an online/virtual course may choose whether to complete their exams in a virtual environment (similar to the other students in the class), or if they will complete their exams in the Accommodated Exam Centre on campus in Y201. Depending on the accommodations that the student requires, completing their exams in the Accommodated Exam Centre may help them to better navigate around the specific barriers that they experience.

Should a student choose to write their exams in the Accommodated Exam Centre, the student will be responsible for submitting an exam request through Accommodate. The student's extended exam time (and other required exam accommodations) will be applied by Access and Inclusion Services. Should the student choose to write their exams in a virtual location, it is the responsibility of the faculty member to apply the extended time accommodation by adjusting the exam settings for that specific student.

Faculty members should consider the following options when a student requires extended time for quizzes, tests, midterms, and final exams:

A) Using Universal Design for exams:

The purpose of Universal Design is to provide options to a broad range of students no matter what barriers they experience. Faculty members may choose to use universal design principles and allow all students extra time to complete their exam (e.g., give all students double time). If a faculty member is using universal design principles for all students and providing double time (which is typically the maximum accommodation for extra time allowed), students registered with Access and Inclusion Services would not need to be accommodated since double time is embedded into the design of the exam and is provided to all students. For example, if an exam was originally scheduled for 3 hours, and universal design principles are being applied, then all students would be given 6 hours.

B) Providing extended time for exams for students with that accommodation:

If the faculty member decides that their exams will be held on Blackboard, and the faculty member is not using universal design, they may wish to include the following statement in their course outline:

“Quizzes, tests, midterms, and final exams will be administered through Blackboard. Students who are registered with Access and Inclusion Services are responsible for arranging to have the technology they require to support their exam accommodations. If you have technology needs and do not have access to the equipment that you require at home, you may consider completing your exams in the Accommodate Exam Centre on campus. Please contact Access and Inclusion Services as soon as possible to inquire about options and procedures.”

Please note that there is a way for faculty members to adjust the Blackboard settings to allow for extended exam time for students with that accommodation. For information on how to do so, please contact the MRU Academic Development Centre (ADC).

C) Alternative Assessment:

An additional option for faculty members to consider is to use an alternative method of assessment that is not exam-based.

### **USE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they have access to the assistive technology they require. If a student has one or more assistive technologies listed on their Academic Accommodation Letter, they also have an Assistive Technology Advisor in Access and Inclusion Services. The Assistive Technology Advisor will work with the student to ensure that they have access to the required assistive technology and know how to use the software. If a student contacts their faculty member with questions about their assistive technology accommodation, please refer them to their Assistive Technology Advisor (directly or email [accessibility@mtroyal.ca](mailto:accessibility@mtroyal.ca)). Examples of Assistive Technology that may be listed on a student's Accommodation Letter include, but are not limited to:

- Text-to-speech software (reads words on screen aloud: [Read & Write software](#))
- Dictation software (in [Google Docs](#) or [MS Word](#))
- ZoomText software (magnifies & reads screen aloud)
- JAWS software (screen reader for individuals who experience vision impairment)

### **AUDIO RECORDING AND ACCESS TO CLASS NOTES**

Many students who experience disability-related barriers require more time to read, process, and comprehend new information. Also, many students need assistance getting spoken lecture material into print, to view it later in a format that is accessible to them. Audio recording lectures and having access to class notes are important accommodations to help students obtain and review the information that they need to be successful in their courses.

Faculty members who want to incorporate Universal Design can consider making class notes available to all students in advance of the lecture. Consideration can also be given to using asynchronous lectures and/or audio recording real-time (Google Meet) lectures. These actions will allow all students to access and review the information as many times as they require.

If the faculty member decides to audio record real-time lectures and make the recordings available to all students, it has been suggested by the MRU Legal department and the Copyright Advisor that the following be inserted in the course outline:

### Notice of Recording

Mount Royal University has contracted Google to provide educational technology software for the course [Course Number]; where, the instructor will record lectures using Google Meet and make them available to registered students on Blackboard for up until 10 days after the course is completed. Users, including any recorded student participants, are advised that the personal information collected during the recordings will only be used for educational purposes and is collected under the authority of the FOIP Act – section 33(c) and the Post-Secondary Learning Act in the Province of Alberta.

Users are further advised that the downloading of posted videos other than for the purposes of student personal learning through Blackboard, may violate the copyright of the course instructor or others.

For additional questions regarding the collection, use, disclosure and protection of personal information please contact: [INSERT INFO OF DEPARTMENT'S FOIP CONTACT]  
[Title - Business Unit - 4825 Mount Royal Gate SW - Calgary, AB - T3E 6K6 - PHONE – EMAIL]

Should the faculty member choose not to audio record and/or to provide class notes for all students, the following information applies to students who require those specific academic accommodations:

A) Access to class notes as an accommodation:

Should the faculty member choose to not post class notes for all students, the faculty member and the student will need to discuss the way in which the student can obtain the class notes/lecture outline/power points in advance of the lecture (e.g., will they be posted on Blackboard, emailed, etc.). Please note that the faculty member is not expected to provide a copy of their personal teaching notes, and the student is expected to attend real-time classes.

B) Audio recording as an accommodation:

Should the faculty member choose to not audio record real-time lectures for all students, it is important to be aware that students with audio recording on their Academic Accommodation Letter are able to record the lecture using a personal recording device (not through Google Meet).

What will prevent the student from sharing the information that they record?

- All students who are registered with Access and Inclusion Services must sign the MRU Access and Inclusion Services Accommodation Agreement to access academic accommodations. The agreement states the following:
  - Students who require recording of course materials, or a copy of class notes, overheads, and PowerPoint presentations, as an Academic Accommodation:
    - I understand that any course notes, audio recording or transcription of course material is for my own personal use
    - I agree not to copy, share, or redistribute these materials in any form to any person
    - Failure to comply with this agreement may be considered misconduct
    - I agree to destroy the course notes, audio recordings or transcriptions at the end of the semester in which the course is taken, unless the materials are otherwise required for further study while registered at Mount Royal University, in which case I will destroy the materials at the termination of registration.
- For more information about privacy and copyright, faculty members are invited to visit the “[Information for Professors](#)” section on the MRU Access and Inclusion Services webpage.

### **ARE THERE ANY ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS THAT DO NOT APPLY TO THE VIRTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT?**

The ways in which accommodations are applied depends on the specific learning environment. It is possible that some of a student’s in-class accommodations may look different or may not be applicable to the virtual teaching and learning environment. It should also be kept in mind that a student’s Academic Accommodation Letter is not tailored specifically for the virtual environment. Therefore, it is important for the faculty member and student to be in communication about whether all of the accommodations listed on the Academic Accommodation Letter are required.

#### **A) Accommodations that are not applicable in the virtual environment:**

Some accommodations that may be listed on a student’s Academic Accommodation Letter that will not be applicable in the virtual teaching and learning environment are listed below. Such accommodations are not applicable because they are specific to the on-campus learning environment.

- Type of exam room (e.g., Isolation room, Test room with technology)
- Preferential seating
- Computer/tablet/mobile device for notetaking and/or in-class assignments

B) Accommodations that are required, but accessible to all students:

Some accommodations continue to be required to provide a student with an equitable learning opportunity; however, it can reasonably be assumed that all students in the class would have access to such resources while learning virtually.

- Computer – WordPad or Grammar and Spell Check
- Use of a Basic Calculator
- Use of a Memory Aid
- Listen to commercially recorded CD

C) Accommodations that may be modified for the virtual environment:

Some accommodations may or may not be applicable in the virtual learning environment. Whether or not the accommodations are needed depends on the design of the course.

- *Adjustment to attendance policy* – students who have this accommodation may occasionally have disability-related absences from on-campus classes. This may also be the case for virtual classes that take place in real time; however, the accommodation would not apply for classes being held in asynchronous format.
- *Alternatives to group work* – students who have this accommodation are typically unable to take part in group work. However, there may be some ways in which the student can participate in a group through virtual means (e.g., conduct research, type group responses to questions, etc). Should the student not be able to work with others in a virtual setting, the faculty member and student can discuss alternative ways for the student to participate and demonstrate their knowledge (e.g., completing an assignment alone, completing an alternative paper or assignment, etc.).
- *Alternatives to presentations* – students with certain barriers may be unable to deliver presentations in on-campus, face-to-face courses. However, delivering a presentation through virtual means may be a possibility, and options should be discussed between the faculty member and the student (e.g., one-on-one presentation to the faculty member, pre-recorded presentation). If a virtual presentation is not possible due to disability-related barriers, the faculty member and student can discuss alternative ways for the student to demonstrate their knowledge based on design of the course (e.g., alternative paper or assignment).

- *Assignment extensions* – Access and Inclusion Services offers support to students who experience barriers related to planning, organization, time-management, and assignment completion; however, some students may still occasionally require assignment extensions. Taking part in virtual classes has the potential to exacerbate a student’s disability-related barriers, and therefore, some students may experience increased difficulty keeping on top of assignments as compared to when classes are on-campus. Faculty members and students must discuss reasonable extension parameters in advance of assignment deadlines. Requesting an assignment extension after the assignment deadline has passed, or the day before it was due, is not considered reasonable.

**WHAT IF A STUDENT PROVIDES THEIR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION LETTER TO THE FACULTY MEMBER IN SHORT NOTICE OF AN UPCOMING EXAM?**

Students are required to provide their Academic Accommodation Letter to their faculty members a minimum of seven days in advance of a quiz, test, or midterm exam. Students wanting to use exam accommodations during the final exam period need to provide their Academic Accommodation Letter no later than the deadline indicated by Access and Inclusion Services each semester.

The faculty member may apply the student’s exam accommodations (e.g., extended time) to an upcoming exam with shorter notice, at their own discretion. Last-minute requests for exam accommodations (e.g., the day before) are not considered reasonable.

**WHAT IF A FACULTY MEMBER HAS QUESTIONS ABOUT A SPECIFIC STUDENT WHO IS ALREADY REGISTERED WITH ACCESS AND INCLUSION SERVICES?**

The faculty member should contact the specific student’s Access Advisor. The name and contact information of the Access Advisor is listed at the bottom of the student’s Academic Accommodation Letter. If the faculty member does not have access to the student’s Academic Accommodation Letter and/or does not know who the student’s Access Advisor is, they are welcome to send their question(s) to the main Access and Inclusion Services email at [accessibility@mtroyal.ca](mailto:accessibility@mtroyal.ca) and the Administrative team will forward it to the appropriate individual.

**WHAT IF A FACULTY MEMBER HAS GENERAL INQUIRIES AND/OR QUESTIONS ABOUT CURRENT PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES?**

Faculty members are encouraged to send their questions to the main Access and Inclusion Services email at [accessibility@mtroyal.ca](mailto:accessibility@mtroyal.ca).

## Contact Access and Inclusion Services

Location: Y201

Admin Team: 403-440-6868

Email: [accessibility@mtroyal.ca](mailto:accessibility@mtroyal.ca)

Fax: 403-440-7255

Website: [www.mtroyal.ca/accessibility](http://www.mtroyal.ca/accessibility)

## Additional Resources

The following universal design resources have been grouped into sections on Books and Websites, under each reference is an indicator as to whether the information addresses such topics as Universal Instructional Design (UID), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and/or the level of education the article(s) addresses (e.g., secondary, post-secondary), etc.

More information can be found on the Access and Inclusion Services webpage:

<https://www.mtroyal.ca/AcademicSupport/ResourcesServices/AccessibilityServices/universal-design-for-learning.htm>

### **Books**

Bowe, F. (2000). *Universal Design in Education*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

- UID, K-12, post-secondary, continuing education

Burgstahler, Sheryl E., & Cory, Rebecca C. (Eds.). (2010). *Universal design in higher education*.

- UID, UDL, higher education

Meyer, A., Rose, D.H., & Gordon, D. (2014). *Universal design for learning: Theory and Practice*. Wakefield, MA: CAST Professional Publishing.

- UDL, Guidelines, examples

Thomas, C. A., Bartholomew, C. C., Scott, L. A. (2009). *Universal design for transition: A roadmap for planning and instruction*. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brooks.

- UID for transition, secondary

### **Websites**

ACCESS to Post-secondary Education through Universal Design for Learning

[http://accessproject.colostate.edu/udl/documents/udl\\_quick\\_tips.pdf](http://accessproject.colostate.edu/udl/documents/udl_quick_tips.pdf)

- UDL, post-secondary, Quick Tips graphic

ACCESS How Do You Teach: A UDL Checklist

[http://accessproject.colostate.edu/udl/documents/how\\_do\\_you\\_teach\\_checklist.pdf](http://accessproject.colostate.edu/udl/documents/how_do_you_teach_checklist.pdf)

- UDL, post-secondary, checklist

Alberta Human Rights Commission. (2010, September). Interpretive Bulletin: Duty to accommodate students with disabilities in post-secondary educational institutions. Retrieved from

[http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/bulletins\\_sheets\\_booklets/bulletins/duty\\_to\\_accommodate\\_students.asp](http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/bulletins_sheets_booklets/bulletins/duty_to_accommodate_students.asp)

- Legal responsibilities and principles, BFER's

CAST (2011). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.0. Wakefield, MA: Author.

<http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines/downloads>

- Background, guidelines, checklist, technology

CAST [UDL in Higher Ed](#)

- Curriculum design guide, examples, resources

CAST Toolkit <http://udl-toolkit.cast.org/home>

- Open source software for UDL web-based course curricula and content development

Roberts, B. (2014, December 8). Accommodation vs. Accessibility: A Proactive Approach. [Video file].

Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwxWmTgDNnw>

- UDL, post-secondary

University of Guelph UID Homepage <http://opened.uoguelph.ca/en/students/universal-instructional-design.asp>

- UD, UID, post-secondary

University of Guelph Accessible Instruction <https://www.uoguelph.ca/diversity-human-rights/accessibility/accessible-instruction-resources>

- UID, post-secondary, tip sheets, Educator's Toolkit, UID e-module for educators

University of Guelph Quick Start Implementation Checklist

<http://opened.uoguelph.ca/en/students/resources/uidquickstart-implement.pdf>

- UID, post-secondary, implementation checklist

University of Guelph Faculty Workbook – Face to Face Classes

<http://opened.uoguelph.ca/en/students/resources/uid-workbook-FTF.pdf>

- UID, post-secondary, faculty workbook classroom teaching

University of Guelph Faculty Workbook – Teaching at a Distance

<http://opened.uoguelph.ca/en/students/resources/uid-workbook-DE.pdf>

- UID, post-secondary, workbook for distance education