Guidelines for Academic Accommodations and Accessibility   May 2020

All students at Queen's University have a right to equal access and equal opportunity to participate in the academic experience. This statement is particularly applicable for students with disabilities. It also applies universally, in recognizing the broad diversity of learner needs for successful access, participation, and equal opportunity.

Accommodation planning for remote teaching has the same goal as any other teaching context: ensuring equitable access for all. Students with disabilities, in particular, will continue to need academic accommodation in classes offered by remote instruction and/or online. However, the barriers students face are likely to be different or confounded (e.g., increased anxiety about change, ability to cope, uncertainty about accommodation when not in the usual learning environment etc.). The solutions we employ must be equally responsive and adaptable to this new environment. The following guidelines offer strategies for built-in and automatic accessibility, meeting a diversity of student needs. Further, they elaborate where particular strategies might address a targeted need for accommodation, given identified barriers specific to student disabilities.

Remote instruction is new for most instructors, and the guidelines also offer advice on how to design a course incorporating support for documented student accommodations. Keep in mind that while accommodations may require that the student complete an assessment in a different form or manner, the essential academic requirements of the course must be met, whether these requirements are expressed as learning outcomes, competencies, or other specifications on the course syllabus. In addition, principles of academic integrity continue to apply to assignments adapted to a student's accommodation.

Select technologies with accessibility in mind

Technologies can both reduce barriers and contribute to them. When considering technologies for teaching, technologies must be reviewed for compliance with accessibility standards and compatibility with adaptive technologies. This is particularly important when considering third-party tools that are not institutionally supported. Once a technology is confirmed to broadly meet accessibility standards, an instructor should:

- Limit the number of technological platforms/tools used for a course, judiciously restricting use to a select few tools that meet course needs
- Activate functions afforded by the tool that serve to increase accessibility (i.e. closed captioning, multiple forms of communication)
- Opt for asynchronous forms of engagement whenever possible (see Guiding Principles for Effective Synchronous Teaching)
- List selected course technologies in the syllabus and provide students with information on how they can receive support (i.e. access to support documentation, tutorials, and IT contacts)
- Ensure that any videos used for instruction are closed captioned; otherwise, provide a transcript of the video section required for instruction

Work with your students to understand their needs

It can be helpful to check in with students and work with them as partners in addressing their experiences in the course. Ask students to complete an introductory survey so that you can get to know

a bit more about them. For example, if you have some flexibility with scheduling course activities, you'll benefit from learning what time zone your students are in and when the majority plan to be active in the course. Talk to your students about accessibility, their needs, and explore together how to implement their accommodation. Clarify your role, their role, and the role of other units and supports across campus.

Offer guidance to students and communicate expectations

Prepare students as early as possible for remote instruction. Advanced knowledge of what to expect is the key to success by allowing students time to plan and put their supports in place, thus decreasing anxiety. Strategies include:

- Add a statement in the syllabus providing detail on the required/recommended resources and technologies students will need for successful engagement in the course
- Add a statement in the syllabus providing detail on the types of assessment that will be used in the course
- Offer information, supports, and strategies that students can implement to be successful in a class offered by remote instruction (see *Student Learning during COVID Pandemic: Preparing for Remote Learning*)

Students with disabilities are expected to work with their QSAS advisor to identify potential barriers to their learning and jointly determine the arrangements or accommodations needed to meet their access needs. Students are also expected to communicate with their instructor and their QSAS advisor if their access needs are not met, even with these accommodations or arrangements.

Design and plan courses for accessibility

Incorporate considerations of accessibility into your process of (re)designing your course and planning for course delivery. Many of the above considerations can be readily addressed through a planning process that incorporates elements of accessible pedagogy and universal design for learning. This guideline connects to the next section of seeking support. Through the supports listed below, guidance is available to instructors through a variety of means.

Seek support

Success with academic accommodations and accessibility is a team effort. Instructors, students, and campus support units each play an integral role. The responsibility is never yours alone – supports are available. Suggested strategies include:

- Connect with Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) for detailed supports and additional guidelines, such as the QSAS guidelines for arranging exam accommodations in remote and online instruction classes
- If you have questions about how to implement a student's accommodation, contact the QSAS advisor named on the *Letter of Accommodation* for support
- Take a class/workshop and/or access resources provided by your Faculty/School and the CTL to support action on the abovementioned guidelines.

Campus Units Supporting Academic Accommodation and Accessibility

Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS)

For students with disabilities, Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) Advisors work with students to determine what barriers they are experiencing specific to their disability and what accommodations

would equalize the learning environment for them. Students with accommodations must meet all the academic requirements and standards of their courses, however, it's important to recognize that academic accommodations are put in place to equalize learning opportunities and access to the academic environment for students with disabilities.

Adaptive Technology Centre
The adaptive technology centre provides a range of services, specialized software, computers, and assistive devices for students with disabilities.

Accessibility Hub
The Accessibility Hub is a central online resource for accessibility at Queen's. It serves as an online community for those seeking information on disability and accessibility issues on campus.

Equity and Human Rights Offices
The Equity Office works with other members of the Queen's community to ensure equity and accessibility is achieved throughout the University. The Human Rights Office is mandated to ensure the community's needs in the area of human rights are being addressed adequately.

Library Services for Students with Disabilities
Queen's University Library is committed to providing equal access to its services and collections. Library Services for Students with Disabilities (LSSD) assists students with disabilities with research skill development, library material retrieval, photocopy support and extended loan arrangements, as needed.