

Columbia College

Accommodation Policy for Students with Disabilities

NOTE:

Must; Shall; Will:

Should:

May or Could; Can:

Clarification of Terms

These words or phrases indicate actions or activities that are *essential* or *mandatory*.

This word implies that it is highly desirable to perform certain actions or activities, but not essential or mandatory.

These words imply freedom or liberty to follow an alternative to the action or activity being presented in a document.

INTRODUCTION

The College believes in doing all it can do in supporting all individuals seeking access to education and helping them to participate fully in their educational experience. Our Diversity statement encompasses this direction.

In this regard, we at Columbia College welcome, value, celebrate, and respect individuals of all races, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and religion. We are committed to treating all persons with dignity and respect in an honest, open, fair and friendly manner. (Columbia College - Diversity Statement ADM-P079)

The purpose of this policy is to reflect the College's commitment to providing students with documented disabilities reasonable supports and accommodations, short of undue hardship. It applies to the provision of accommodation in the institution's policies including rules, standards, and procedures.

Accommodations are intended to remove barriers to learning and help students to master course content while maintaining the academic standards and objectives of the course and program of studies. Accommodation does not relieve the student of his/her responsibility to develop the essential skills and competencies expected of all students upon graduation.

The provision of accommodations is based on shared responsibilities between the student and the College and is determined on an individual basis.

GUIDELINES

This policy document is guided by federal and provincial human rights legislation.

Protected grounds:

The Alberta Human Rights Act provides Albertans with protection of their human rights. The act provides protection from discrimination under the following grounds:

Race, religious belief, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, ancestry, age, sexual orientation.

DEFINITIONS

Accessibility refers to the extent to which services and facilities can be used by all regardless of disability.

Accommodation is the process of making alterations to the delivery of services so that those services become accessible to more people, including people with disabilities. In educational environments, the goal of accommodating students with disabilities is to ensure full participation in all aspects of their educational experience.

Assistive Technology consists of equipment or technology that allows a person to complete a task where otherwise the person might not be able to do so or be limited in their access to the task.

Barrier is a structure or design that prevents or impedes a person from accessing a facility or service.

Bona fide occupational requirements (BFOR's) are standards or rules that are integral to carrying out the functions of a specific position or occupation. Thus, there are reasonable and justifiable components of a training program that may limit entry to, or completion of, a training program.

Bona fide educational requirements (BFER's) are important requirements of a training program that may limit entry to, or completion of a training program due to the Bona fide occupational requirements of the specific position or occupation.

Duty to Accommodate refers to the requirement under federal and provincial legislation to make arrangements, adjustments and alterations in the educational environment to ensure that it does not have a discriminatory effect on a student because of the student's disability.

Gender consists of being male, female, or transgender. Also protected under gender are pregnancy and sexual harassment.

Learning Environment is any context that is viewed as an opportunity for education or training. This includes traditional classroom, labs, clinical settings, tutorials, and online courses.

Mental Disability consists of mental disorder, developmental disorder or learning disorder regardless of the cause or duration of the disorder.

Physical Disability consists of any degree of physical disability, deformity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by injury, birth defect or illness. This includes, but is not limited to, epilepsy; paralysis; amputation; lack of physical coordination; visual, hearing and speech impediments; and physical reliance on a guide dog, wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.

Reasonable Accommodation under provincial legislation and the Supreme Court of Canada, refers to the requirements of educational institutions to provide accommodation up to the point of undue hardship, that is, the provision of accommodation to a standard that overcomes a discriminatory effect, but does not require the institution to choose the most expensive or comprehensive level of accommodation. The determination of reasonable accommodations for an individual may vary between courses, including required off campus components of a program, and/or over time depending upon individual circumstances.

Reduced Course Load refers to a person with disabilities taking a minimum of 40 percent of a full course load. The student would be considered as full-time.

Transitory Illness may be considered to be a disability if it is chronic, recurring, impacts a person's ability to carry out life's functions. It is a temporary condition.

Undue Hardship refers to unreasonable or excessive challenge for the institution. Tests for what may be considered "reasonable and justifiable" and what may constitute "undue hardship" are available in the *Interpretive Bulletin for Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in a post-secondary institution*. This document is located on the Alberta Human Rights website.

Universal Design refers to principles that govern the creation of an educational environment that takes into account the needs of students with the widest possible range of abilities in the widest range of situations. This refers to course curriculum, delivery methods, evaluation, methodologies, classroom design and such.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Manager of Student Services is responsible for the overall management of this policy and procedures related to Disability Services
2. The Registrar is responsible for ensuring that the policy is administered as written in its content and spirit, and that the privacy and confidentiality regulations are followed as they affect students with disabilities.
3. Under the supervision of the Manager of Student Services, the Disability Services Lead is responsible for the administration and coordination of Disability Services within the Student Services Department.
4. The Manager of Facilities is responsible for the administration and implementation of accommodations that involve the physical environment of Columbia College's facilities.
5. Admission Advisors are responsible for all regular admissions procedures.
6. Disability Services Advisors act as the primary contact for students with disabilities, coordinate services, and provide other supports as needed.
7. Program Chairs will act as the first contact with their facilitators, review with the facilitators the introductory letter from the Disability Services Advisor, and where possible, assist the facilitators in preparing for the delivery of accommodations.
8. All College Staff are expected to respect the spirit and letter of the Accommodation Policy for Students with Disabilities.
9. Students with disabilities will act in accordance with the policy and are responsible to self identify, if seeking accommodations and support.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students with disabilities who are seeking accommodations or supports will be expected to:

1. Meet the admissions requirements of the program to which they have applied.
2. Review Columbia College's Accommodation Policy for Students with Disabilities and its Handbook for Students with Disabilities.
3. Disclose the disability and request accommodations as early as possible in the admission process. The Columbia College application provides an opportunity to self-identify at the point of application. When the student chooses to reveal his or her disability, the student is not required to reveal the specific details of the disability to anyone other than the Disability Services department.
4. Register with Disability Services by filling out a Disability Services Registration/Consent for Services form.
5. Provide as much lead time as possible to arrange accommodations as it may take several months to arrange accommodations, specialized technology and services prior to starting classes. Approximately, four to six months notice is recommended.

6. Sign necessary information release forms.
7. Work collaboratively with the Disability services staff and others as appropriate to create a written accommodation plan.
8. Cooperate with the Disability Services Advisor and other personnel by keeping them informed, submitting any necessary paper work, and providing feedback in a timely manner.
9. Provide all medical and/or other formal professional documentation regarding the disability as requested.
10. Demonstrate appropriate use of necessary accommodations and supports to ensure academic success.
11. Attend appointments with the Disability Services Advisor and Program Chair/designate to review the success of the accommodation on a regular basis. Request timely assistance if there are difficulties with the accommodation plan/support.
12. Keep a written record of the accommodation procedure for the student's own records.
13. Demonstrate and practice appropriate self-advocacy.

DOCUMENTATION OF A DISABILITY

1. Documentation in support of a request for accommodation must meet the following general guidelines: (See specific documentation requirements in Appendix A)
 - be obtained from a licensed professional with specific training and expertise in the diagnosis and description of the condition(s) for which accommodation is being requested
 - describe the nature of the disability and provide an explanation of the functional impact(s) of the disability
 - describe the student's current functioning
 - may provide recommendations for accommodations and supports
2. New or updated information may be requested when a new or returning student's functional abilities have shown significant change or when the accommodation requests have changed significantly over the course of studies.
3. A recent high school Individualized Program Plan (IPP) may be presented as documentation if the document answers the needs for accommodations. If funding is required, this document cannot be used. It is at the discretion of the College as to the acceptance of an IPP for documentation. Acceptance of an IPP as documentation must be approved by the Manager Student Services.
4. All information obtained by the College will be treated as confidential and according to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act and according to the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA). Personal documentation will be destroyed consistent with the institution's Records Management Policy.

COLLEGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Within the limits set out in the policy statement, and in a timely manner, the College will be expected to:

1. Maintain an organization-wide policy that reflects current trends in accommodation and information regarding students with disabilities.
2. Ensure that the principles and spirit of the Accommodation Policy for Students with Disabilities are upheld.
3. Provide students with access to the Accommodation Policy for Students with Disabilities and other related documents.
4. Accommodate students with disabilities up to the point of undue hardship. There is no duty to provide instant or perfect accommodation.
5. If a student reveals a disability after being enrolled in a program or after the program has begun, the College will provide those accommodations that are granted once the process for accommodations has been completed, and all arrangements for accommodations have been made. If accommodations are dependent on funding or referral for other services, accommodations will take place once this part of the process is complete.
6. Consult with the student to clarify the request for accommodations and/or supports.
7. Review supporting documentation and recommendation and/or requests for accommodation and/or supports in a timely manner.
8. Use a consultative process between the student and the Disability Services Advisor, and where necessary, the appropriate academic personnel, and other professional sources, in order to determine the appropriate reasonable accommodations.
9. Provide the student with a response in writing as to the request for accommodation, normally within 15 school operating days. Response time may vary if there is a need to secure external advice or information. If a student is denied an accommodation and/or support, reasons for the denial will be provided in writing at this time
10. Inform the student how to appeal the denial of a request for accommodation.
11. The College may deny a student with a disability, a clinical or practicum placement because of concerns about safety. The College will assess the risk to safety posed by an individual student to themselves and to others. The risk to safety must outweigh the negative impact of discrimination. The College will consider ways to reduce risk or consider other placements that present less of a safety risk. Safety risks must not contravene statutory occupational health and safety and workers' compensation requirements.
12. Inform the student who is seeking accommodation about potential issues he/she may face when applying for professional license. Licensing and professional bodies are responsible to reasonably accommodate the student.
13. Develop a written accommodation plan outlining the approved accommodations and supports based on collaboration with the student. With the student's permission, faculty and staff who are integral to the process may be involved in the creation of the accommodation plan.
14. Assist in preparing an application for funding to cover costs of accommodation and/or supports. Refer the student to funding agencies as appropriate.

15. Assist the student in accessing support with regard to using appropriate academic accommodations.
16. With the student's informed consent, communicate necessary information regarding the disability and request for accommodation and/or support with stakeholders such as the Program Chair, faculty and staff, funding agencies, and internal and external support services.
17. Upon request by the student, initiate and review the accommodation plan with the student within the first few weeks of classes.
18. Collaborate with all stakeholders regarding accommodations and services, and provide advice and support to faculty and other staff about how to provide accommodations.
19. Document the process of accommodation throughout the student's program at the institution.
20. Keep the details of the student's disability confidential. Staff and faculty will be provided with a letter describing only the details of the accommodations required by the student. A copy of the letter will be provided to the student. Faculty will keep all information about the student and accommodations confidential.
21. Keep all disability records confidential. Disability documents (medical information, etc.) will be placed in a separate file from the student's regular file and stored by the Registrar's department.
22. Provide staff and faculty with disability awareness training and information about the duty to accommodate students with disabilities and services available to students, faculty and staff.
23. Promote student self-advocacy.
24. Consider and implement Universal Design principles in all aspects of education and facilities as possible.

DECISIONS REGARDING RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATIONS

1. Students wishing to appeal matters pertaining to this policy will be referred to the Columbia College Student Appeals policy (ADM-P177).
2. If a facilitator does not agree with the accommodations required, he or she will communicate this disagreement to the Program Chair. If a resolution cannot be reached, the matter should be referred to the Disability Services Advisor in an attempt to reach a resolution that meets the duty to accommodate. Other sources of assistance are the Unit Supervisor Career Services – Disability Services Lead and the Manager Student Services.
3. If a resolution is not reached in #2 above, the matter will be referred to a committee consisting of the Registrar, Manager of Student Services, Program Chair, and one other Program Chair, not associated with the student's program. It may be necessary to seek legal and/or human rights counsel to facilitate a resolution that meets the duty to accommodate.

ACCOMMODATIONS IN CLINICAL AND PRACTICUM PLACEMENTS

Columbia College is responsible for facilitating accommodations in clinical and practicum placements. The organization providing the placement is viewed as an agent of the institution for the purposes of providing the service. However, both the College and the practicum provider share the responsibility of finding a reasonable accommodation.

APPENDIX A – A student requesting documentation from a medical professional may find it useful to show the professional the following information.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR STUDENTS WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER (ADD) OR ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

1. Student Responsibility for Documentation – It is the responsibility of the student to provide a comprehensive evaluation that verifies the diagnosis. Documentation must be current (usually within the last three years).
2. Assessment – Diagnosis of ADD/ADHD must be made by a registered psychologist and a physician. A physician’s assessment is usually not sufficient for receipt of funding and services. The clinicians must be neutral, unrelated and non-biased professionals. They should also be competent in assessing attention difficulties in adults.
3. Assessment Documentation – This documentation should contain the following:
 - Clinician’s name, title, phone number, and address and date(s) of assessment.
 - A clear statement of the disability, including summary of present functioning and concerns.
 - Information on assessment procedures and evaluation instruments used to make the diagnosis and assessment results, including standardized or percentile scores.
 - Specific recommendations for strategies, academic accommodations, assistive technology and other supports needed.
 - Medical information relating to the student’s needs, including the impact of medication on the student’s ability to meet the demands of college attendance and program requirements.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR EMOTIONAL AND/OR PSYCHOLOGICAL DISABILITIES

1. Student Responsibility for Documentation – It is the responsibility of the student to provide a written, comprehensive psychological and/or medical evaluation that verifies the diagnosis. Document must be current.
2. Assessment – Emotional and/or psychological disabilities require a diagnosis by a registered psychologist, psychiatrist, licensed mental health professional, or neurologist. The clinicians must be neutral, unrelated and non-biased professionals.
3. Assessment Documentation – This documentation should contain the following:
 - Clinician’s name, title, phone number, and address and date(s) of assessment.
 - A clear statement of the disability, including summary of present function and concerns.
 - Information on assessment procedures and evaluation instruments used to make the diagnosis and assessment results, including standardized or percentile scores.

- Specific recommendations for strategies, academic accommodations, assistive technology and other supports needed.
- Medical information relating to the student's needs, including the impact of medication on the student's ability to meet the demands of college attendance and program requirements

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR A LEARNING DISABILITY

1. Student Responsibility for Documentation – It is the responsibility of the student to provide a written, comprehensive psychological evaluation that verifies the diagnosis. Documentation of a learning disability must be current (usually within the last 3 years).
2. Assessment – Diagnosis of learning disability must be made by a registered psychologist. The psychologist must be a neutral, unrelated, and non-biased professional. He/she would also be competent in assessing learning difficulties in adults.
3. Assessment Documentation – This documentation should contain the following:
 - Clinician's name, title, phone number, and address and date(s) of assessment.
 - A clear statement of the disability, including current functioning and any concerns.
 - Information on assessment procedures and evaluation instruments used to make the diagnosis and assessment results, including standardized or percentile scores.
 - Specific recommendations for strategies, academic accommodations, assistive technology and other supports needed.
 - Medical information relating to the student's needs, including the impact of medication on the student's ability to meet the demands of college attendance and program requirements.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR PHYSICAL DISABILITIES AND/OR CHRONIC ILLNESSES

1. Student Responsibility for Documentation – It is the responsibility of the student to provide a written, comprehensive medical evaluation verifying the diagnosis.
2. Assessment – Physical disabilities and chronic illnesses require the expertise of a physician such as a neurologist, psychiatrist, or other medical specialist with expertise in the area of the disability or illness. The clinician must be neutral, unrelated, and non-biased professional.
3. Assessment Documentation – This documentation should include the following:
 - Clinician's name, title, phone number, and address and date(s) of examination.
 - A clear statement of the disability, current functioning, and a statement of treatment, if applicable. Where relevant, a description of the severity, longevity, and or expected progression or stability of the disability.
 - Medical information needs to include the impact of medication on the student's ability to meet the demands of college attendance and program requirements.

- A description of how the disability and treatment, if applicable, may impact the student's functioning in an academic setting.
- Suggestions for specific types of accommodations.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR STUDENTS WITH TRANSITORY (TEMPORARY OR REOCCURRING) ILLNESS OR IMPAIRMENT

1. **Student Responsibility for Documentation.** It is the responsibility of the student to provide proof of the transitory (temporary or recurring) illness from his/her doctor. This could be information on a doctor's note pad, a prescription from a pharmacy that outlines side effects of medication and other useful information. The information should indicate how long the accommodation is required. The College may request further documentation as needed, requiring the student's medical professional to fill out the following form: Documentation on Temporary Medical Condition or Impairment

REFERENCES

Alberta Human Rights Commission (Sept. 2010), Interpretive Bulletin: "Duty to accommodate student with disabilities in post-secondary education." - Alberta Human Rights website

Alberta Human Rights Act – Alberta Human Rights website

Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

RELATED COLUMBIA COLLEGE POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS/FORMS

- ADM-P151 – Attendance Policy
- ADM P079 – Diversity Statement
- ADM-P014 – Document Control Policy & Procedures
- ADM-P177 – Student Appeals Policy
- ADM-F030 – Student Roles and Responsibilities

Other:

Academic Accommodations Requested (form)

Accommodation Plan (form)

Audio-Recording Agreement (form)

Disability Services Registration/Consent for Service (form)

Documentation on Temporary Medical Condition or Impairment (form)

Handbook for Students with Disabilities

Request for Alternate Format Materials (form)

Request for Testing Accommodations (form)

Student Conduct Regarding Tests and Exams Agreement (form)