Academic Accommodations – Guide to Support Faculty

An Academic Accommodation Guide to Support Faculty

Introduction

Seneca is one of Canada's leading polytechnical institutions. With over 30,000 full time and 60,000 part time students, Seneca has been at the forefront of post-secondary school education for over 56 years. The phrase "challenge accepted", featured in a recent ad campaign entices students to study at Seneca.

Together, as Senecans, we can continue to accept the challenge to ensure relevant academic supports and services are in place for all students.

This guide is to support you as you work with students registered with Accessibility Services. It is based on the High-Quality Framework to support providing an exceptional educational experience at Seneca. In addition to meeting accessibility requirements to students with academic accommodations, many of the suggestions noted in this guide also follow the principles of Universal Design for Learning thereby providing access to all students. In the interest of brevity there are links to further information throughout.

Accommodations

Accommodations is a term used to refer to academic supports put in place for students with a diagnosis or disability that might affect their academics. Accommodations should not be viewed as modifications. Accommodations should allow a student to demonstrate competency for the learning outcomes for your course. How they do so maybe a little different but demonstrating competency is crucial.

Students must provide documentation from a registered health care practitioner to be granted accommodations for their courses. In some situations, temporary accommodations are provided to a student who requires initial or updated documentation to support accommodations sought.

A letter of consideration is issued to a student by a Counsellor or an Accessibility Counsellor when unforeseen circumstances have occurred. Some of these situations could be homelessness, financial crisis, family or relationship issues, other mental health concerns, etc. that are not associated with a diagnosis/disability.

A letter of consideration asks a professor to be considerate of the student's situation and know that, with some additional support in place, the student might be able to navigate and complete their coursework.

If you're unsure about supports that a student might need you can always contact the Counsellor or Accessibility Counsellor noted in the letter of accommodation/consideration.If you have questions regarding accommodations, you can email the Counsellor identified on the student's accommodation letter. Please also add senecacnas@senecapolytechnic.ca to the email in case the identified counselor is not available. You may also call 416.764.9700 and ask to speak with the student's counsellor if they are available.

At Seneca Students are issued Accommodations Letters that indicate the academic accommodations they have. Students distribute to the faculty for their courses. The Faculty Portal allows you to access the accommodation letters for your students.

You may wish to read the Code of Commitments for an idea of the agreements between a student, Accessible Learning Services and their professors to better grasp the collaborative expectations of the Accommodation process.

Reaching Out

Students new to the post-secondary school system may need some encouragement to connect and engage in the accommodation process. Familiarize yourself with the approved academic accommodations received for students. In the first or second class, an announcement can be made offering students the opportunity to schedule a time to connect for any concerns or questions they may have. The announcement could also be posted on the course website.

Here is an example of an announcement:

"Students who have academic accommodations are welcome to contact me directly to schedule a time to discuss. We will work together, along with the supports you receive from Accessibility Services, to apply your academic accommodations to my course".

Orientation to Your Course

Communicate how you will run the course and invite conversation on any perceived issues in

your Learn@Seneca course. This information can be posted in your faculty information section of your course. Phone, email, online discussions, or virtual office hours are all accessible options. See Communicating and Collaborating Articles for Blackboard Ultra for some how to set up this information.

Explain how students can connect with you. Email, online discussions, or virtual office hours are all accessible options. See Communicating and Collaborating Articles for Blackboard Ultra for some how to set up this information.

Familiarize yourself with Test Centre procedures if using traditional assessments in your course.

Provide guidance for navigation to your course. Providing a screen capture recording of how to navigate your course can be invaluable as students encounter different courses and their content. Consult this article and refer to the screen casting section for more details: Using Microsoft Stream in Your Course: Captioning Lectures, Collecting Student Video Projects, Screencasting, and more!

Some Course Design Considerations

There are a few tips to consider when adding content to your Learn@Seneca course that will further support students in accessing your materials.

Labelling of Content

Instead of labeling an item or hyperlink as something like "read this" or "Week 9", use labels that help students know what they are navigating to. For example: "Introduction: History and Reasoning Behind UDL; Week 1", helps students know that the topics covered include both a historical perspective and the reasons why UDL should be considered. This supports all students to more readily find materials and is even more critical for students with vision loss who are using screen reading software. If you are curious about what a screenreader experience is like explore this video: Screenreader Simulation.

Accessing Content

Content should be posted with the idea of always allowing for asynchronous access. Time zones, intermittent internet connectivity, etc. can be barriers to learning if content is delivered only synchronously.

Considering providing different alternatives to content posted. For example, post a video, podcast, website, articles, and textbook chapter, etc. About the same concept. Lindsay Masland explains this concept here: Universal Design for Learning: Multiple Means of Representation.

It is important to include auditory information or alternative material for information portrayed in a visual format (For example, explain graphs, pictures, charts). In addition, we need to understand that images can be rather ambiguous for students encountering information for the first time.

Check that documents provided are not scanned images but accessible text. A quick check to see if you can select the text in the document. If you can, it is probably accessible. This is important for students who may choose to listen to the content in an article etc.

For further details on creating accessible documents and material consult CNIB (2017), Clear print accessibility guidelines. You can also register for Creating Assessable documents on MyPD.

A checklist of teaching/activities/assignments to be completed each week/module can be extremely beneficial to students.

Connecting Accessible Learning Services to Your Courses

There are some special services and technology that students with academic accommodations may need to access.

Educational Assistant/Interpreter/and/or Professional /AI Note Taker

Some students require the presence of a professional who will also attend your classes. This might mean that if the student turns on their camera you might note the presence of another person nearby or they may be physically present in your classroom. You should receive information regarding this via the student's accommodation letter. You also may receive communications from the Support Services Officer while services are being put in place.

Access to Online Classes:

For students using an educational assistant/interpreter/and/or professional/AI note taker, access to your class as a guest and recordings of classes are important. Access to your course will be arranged through the Accessible Learning Services Service Advisor.

These resources should help you set up access for them for online classes:

- Guest Access for Synchronous Class Platforms

- How to invite a guest for Big Blue Button

- How to invite a guest to MS Teams

- How to invite a guest for Zoom. A note about Zoom for classes; make sure your students are accessing their Seneca Zoom account. Direct them to the Seneca Zoom Website

- [How to invite a guest for Webex](#)

AI Notetaking Services:

You may notice a participant called "OtterAI" coming to your online course. OtterAI is a notetaking service that a student with accommodations for notetaking is using. Please allow access for this service. For more information about the use of Otter AI as a note taking service please read [Notetaking Accommodation Information for Faculty](#).

Some students may use a live professional notetaker/closed captioner to provide closed captions in a synchronous online classroom. Use this guide to set them up:

- [Assigning a Professional Computerized Note Taker as Captioner for Synchronous Classes](#)

If a student reports that their educational assistant/interpreter/and/or professional notetaker cannot access the course to preview materials as preparation for their role have the student contact serviceadvisor.cnas@senecacollege.ca.

Using Closed Captioning

Closed Captioning provides additional ways to access information other than through listening. In UDL, the principle of Multiple Means of Representation encourages such alternatives. For synchronous online, flex or hybrid courses Zoom and MS Teams use AI to autogenerate Closed Captions. You can direct your students on how to turn on Closed Captions in those platforms.

- How to turn on [Closed Captions in a Zoom Meeting](#)
- How to turn on [Closed Captions in a Teams meeting](#)

As of when this was posted WebEx and Big Blue Button do not use AI to autogenerate closed captions, they have to be provided by a third party closed captioner.

If you are teaching in an in-person class and using PowerPoint or Google slides you can turn on the closed captioning tools:

- [PowerPoint Closed Captions](#)
- [Google Slides Captions (YouTube Video)](#)

Microsoft Office 365 offers students an opportunity to view PowerPoints in languages other than English. See [Microsoft Translate](#).

Adding Closed Captioning:

If you have created a video for use in your class or recorded you class adding closed captioning supports student who require or benefit from them.

- How to add Closed Captioning to a video or recorded class (Youtube)
- How to add Closed Captioning to a video or recorded class via MS Streams. Note that the closed captions are only viewable if the video remains on Streams.

Recording Your Classes

Students may not be able to attend a class for a number of reasons; transportation difficulties, internet connections, for personal reasons such as illness, etc. Having the capacity to revisit your teaching can be supportive to many students. Whether online or face to face you can still allow students to the class by recording. One way to do that for face-to-face classes is to still use Big Blue Button, MS Teams or Zoom on the classroom podium and record.

- How to Record a session in Big Blue Button
- How to download a Big Blue Button recording
- How to record in Microsoft Teams. A recorded MS Teams session will appear in the Activity Stream for that session. You can then download it, save it, and then share in on SharePoint or One Drive.
- How to record a session in Webex
- How to make a recorded session in WebEx downloadable
- How to record in Zoom
- How to download a Zoom recorded session
- You may want to remind students of the Recording Lectures and Educational Activities Policy for when they download recordings.

Sharing Recordings

Universal Design for Learning encourages the provision of course content via Multiple Means of Representation. Regardless of whether a student has accommodations or not, access to recordings of the class can be extremely helpful. Once you have a copy of the recorded session you will want to provide it to students. Due to the file size restrictions on Learn@Seneca the best way to share the files is to share a link to a Share Point or OneDrive location.

- Sharing a file from SharePoint
- Sharing a file from OneDrive

Assessment Accommodations

Note: Students with accommodations, that require the use of Assistive Technology, and are writing licensing exams being virtually proctored exam with Respondus, may need alternatives. Email the Counsellor and copy: senecacnas@senecacollege.ca should you have questions. Note that the use of Respondus must be Chair approved.

Extensions for Assignments:

Some students experience difficulties with executive functioning or may experience episodic exacerbation of symptoms resulting in the need for a due date extension. These dates, as noted in the Accommodation Letter, should be negotiated in advance of the due date when possible. Unfortunately, in some situations, the student may not be able to predict the impact of their disability/diagnosis and so may need an empathetic response to a late request. Students should discuss with you the proposed new date. Usually a week's extension is reasonable, however in some circumstances this may not be possible. If you are unsure how to arrange accommodations for assessments done through Learn@Snecac Blackboard Ultra look at Setting up Accommodations. Feel free to contact both the student and the Accessible Learning Services Counsellor noted on the accommodation letter to discuss further.

Test Centre/Alternative Testing Space:

Some students require a test space that has reduced distractions. The Test Centre has various options based on availability.

Tests need to be submitted to the Test Centre using Register Blast. Here are instructions for how to Access the RegisterBlast Portal. There is more information in the Professor New Enrollment Guide. You need to submit the tests through RegisterBlast 72 hours before the test.

Here is how to Submit a Test Using RegisterBlast. You could also watch this video: Professor Submission Guide (video).

For a deferred or supplemental test if the course has ended follow the instructions on RegisterBlast Access and Deferred Supplemental Exam Submission.

Once the student has finished writing you will want to retrieve their assessment. Here are the steps for Retrieving Testing Document.

The RegisterBlast process is either new or a change for students. You can support them via your Learn@Seneca Course. Consider adding a course link to the RegisterBlast Portal for students to your course. You will want the course link to go to: Student Portal for

RegisterBlast. If you are not sure how to a course link that head to Creating a course link in Blackboard Ultra.

Please consult the Test Centre's website for further information. You can also discuss options with the student and their Accessible Learning Services Counsellor if you have questions.

Group Projects and Assignments for Students with Accommodations

A meeting with the professor can be helpful to determine if an extended due date will negatively impact other group members. Depending on course outcomes, it might be determined that working with a group is not a bona fide requirement. Another strategy to support students in a group where there has been an extension granted is to have the group members submit work completed up to the time of the due date to support them with processing towards completion. Learn@Seneca Blackboard Ultra allows for the addition of an exception for all students in a group with a student who requires an extension. See How to Add an Exception for a student in Blackboard Ultra.

Memory Aids

Memory Aids are appropriate in rare cases where the student has provided specific documentation demonstrating they have extreme difficulties spontaneously retrieving stored information given the specific nature of their memory deficits. If the student does not know the course material, a memory aid will not be beneficial. For further information regarding the creation and approval of a memory aid please see this Memory Aid Guideline.

Supporting Executive Functioning

Have you received a call/text recently to remind you of an upcoming appointment. Similarly, students will benefit from reminders of the tools within their course to support keeping on track for course assessments. In Learn@Seneca, these tools include Calendar, Date Due, and the Gradebook where all assessment items created in Blackboard will appear.

Other Assessment Considerations:

In previous face to face test situations students may have previewed an entire test, started with sections that they were most confident in, and returned to attempt questions initially deferred or edit an answer. Options on Learn@Seneca tests such as "backtracking" and "show questions on one page" need to be considered carefully. If testing is being done online intermittent internet connections may mean a student is disconnected and will need to have access to another attempt.

Consider breaking larger projects up into sections that students may achieve grades for as opposed to one assessment worth a high percentage of marks. This provides scaffolding to

projects and allows students to revise their work. For other assessment ideas consult Teaching & Learning Centre's Assessment website.

Supporting Students With Connections To Other Resources

Seneca has a plethora of supports and services to assist students.

- Housing

- Financial

- Health

- Academic

- Academic Supports

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