

Academic Accommodations: An Update and Some Reminders

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In September 2016, as the result of a directive from the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), there were a number of changes in processes that needed to be implemented by all post-secondary institutions in Ontario with regards to academic accommodations. Given that we are now 2 years into the new processes, we wanted to provide an update as well as some key reminders related to the changes that were required.

It is important to start with the purpose of academic accommodations as outlined by OHRC:

The aim of accommodation is the inclusion and full participation of students with disabilities in educational life. Education providers must make efforts to build or adapt educational services to accommodate students with disabilities in a way that promotes their full participation. Barriers must be prevented or removed so that students with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities to access and benefit from their environment and face the same duties and requirements as everyone else, with dignity and without impediment.

In short, academic accommodations are intended to provide students who have a documented disability with the supports necessary to remove barriers and “level the playing field” given the impacts of their disability.

The Counselling and Accessibility Services department (CnAS) will continue to work with students to determine if they are eligible for academic accommodations based on confirmation of a disability and the functional limitations that result.

An Update:

A major change was required in the distribution of accommodation letters. Prior to September 2016, students would be given copies of their accommodation letter and encouraged to have a conversation with their professors. However, that was determined to

be an obstacle by OHRC for some students and it is now an institutional responsibility for CnAS to distribute the accommodation letters as directed by the student.

Beginning in September 2018, CnAS implemented an electronic distribution of accommodation letters. When requested by the student, the Accommodation Letter is sent to faculty, the program chair, co-ordinator, and student adviser. Faculty will receive an email such as:

*The following student is registered with **Counselling and Accessibility Services**.*

Please review their academic accommodations letter (see below after signature).

In addition, you may view a list of students with accommodations in your courses using this Online Portal for Faculty:

<https://cnas.senecacollege.ca/clockwork/user/instructor/default.aspx>.

Should you have questions, please check the Frequently Asked Questions section:

<https://www.senecacollege.ca/student-services-and-support/support-services/counselling/faq.html>.

It is important to highlight a couple points in this email:

- By logging into the Online Portal link in the email, Faculty will be provided with a list of students with Accommodation letters in each of their courses.
 - It is possible that some accommodation letters were sent out prior to full implementation of our Electronic Distribution System, so there may be a few accommodation letters that are not included in the Faculty Online Portal. This should not occur in future semesters.
- Chairs, co-ordinators, and student advisers will also receive a copy of a student's accommodation letter sent to their Seneca email accounts. In fact, chairs, co-ordinators, and advisers will receive an accommodation letter for **each** course the student is enrolled in.
 - For example, if a student is taking four courses, chairs, co-ordinators, and advisers would receive four emails.
 - Please note that it is possible for chairs, co-ordinators, and advisers to set up an Outlook email rule to automatically move accommodation letters to a folder within their email box. This would send the accommodation letters to a location where they could be retrieved when necessary, but would not clutter up the main Outlook inbox. The [FAQ section in the portal](#) provides directions in setting up this Outlook email rule. If you should encounter any problems, please contact ITS.

Reminders:

Academic Accommodations for Tests/Exams/Quizzes:

- Students are no longer required to inform faculty if they are going to write an evaluation in class or in the Test Centre. As a result, faculty should ensure that there are enough Tests/Exams/Quizzes for all students registered in their class to write in the classroom. In addition, faculty are required to provide a copy of the Test/Exam/Quiz to the **Test Centre** for each accommodated student registered in the course.
- Faculty should familiarize themselves with the approved academic accommodations for students registered within their class. In the first or second class, an announcement can be made offering students the opportunity to meet during office hours for any concerns or questions they may have. Here is an example of an announcement:
 - *Students are encouraged to arrange meetings with me during my office hours if you have any questions or concerns. Students who have academic accommodations are welcome to come to the office if you would like to discuss any of your academic accommodations in this course. Your tests/exams will be placed in the Test Centre whenever they are scheduled.*

Thank you for being such a valued partner in working with students with disabilities. Your help and support doesn't go unnoticed, and it allows students who have faced many obstacles and barriers to walk across the stage at graduation with their head held high cloaked in the respect and dignity that you have provided.

View the [December 2018 issue of the Academic Newsletter](#).

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