

Supporting Students with
Disabilities in BC Post-Secondary
WORKSHOP 1-4 CURRICULUM



OUR GOAL

We want to provide an effective learning environment where all students feel welcome, can access learning and can show what they know. A campus environment where students feel comfortable being themselves and where they feel that their instructors and college staff are there to help them learn – providing an inclusive campus.

Students with disabilities have the capacity to succeed. However, they may need to pursue their studies in somewhat modified ways, or may need to access particular supports in order to remove barriers to their learning.

WHAT IS THIS BOOKLET FOR?

This booklet is a companion resource to the *Supporting Students with Disabilities in BC Postsecondary Workshop Series*.

This booklet provides an introduction to:

- » Approaches to supporting students with disabilities and creating inclusive learning environments on our campuses (Introductory Workshop)
- » The range of disabilities and their potential impacts on learning (Lesson 1)
- » Our legal duty to accommodate and how the accommodation process works (Lesson 2)
- » Practical tools that you can use in your classroom to support students with disabilities' learning and full participation (Lesson 3)
- » A guide to help you set personal goals towards creating inclusive learning environments for your students (Lesson 4)

Full workshops are available online at:

To schedule a face-to-face version, please contact:

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Personal Goals	Next Steps	Completion Date	Resources Needed
In order to be achievable, goals should be specific and realistic. Now that you have completed this course, what are some practical changes that you would like to make in your own practice, to make your classroom as accessible as possible for all students?	Once you have identified some goals, think about some practical steps that you could take over the next three to six months in order to achieve those goals.	Try to put a completion date next to each step, to indicate a time when it could realistically be achieved.	Finally, think about any further information, supports or resources that you will need to achieve your goal. Where could you find these resources? What do you need from your institution or colleagues to move forward?

NOTES (GOALS & NEXT STEPS)

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WORKSHOP 4: WORKING TOGETHER

Creating Inclusive Environments – How does it feel to be a student with a disability in your institution?

What does an inclusive campus look like?

- » **A safe, respectful environment** where diverse students feel welcome. An environment where students feel comfortable being themselves and where they feel that their instructors and college staff are there to help them learn. This can be achieved through open lines of communication between staff and students, both in person and online. Staff hold high expectations for all students, including students with disabilities, and work together to meet the diverse needs of students.
- » **Academic accommodations and supports** that help to level the playing field for students with disabilities. These accommodations do not change any of the essential requirements of the program, but remove barriers to learning.
- » **Creating inclusive learning environments and campus communities.** The campus environment and the courses offered are designed from the outset to be accessible to as many people as possible. The physical space is accessible. Courses offer flexibility and choice, so that all students can learn and demonstrate their knowledge in different ways.
- » Staff and students use a **team-based approaches with ongoing communication and collaboration.** Students feel confident discussing their learning needs as soon as they enter the program, rather than waiting until they are already having difficulties. Disability Services staff and Instructors work together to make sure that accommodations do not interfere with the essential learning outcomes of the course. Instructors can seek support at any time for help with assistive technology or concerns about students with disabilities in their classes.

An inclusive campus is a safe, respectful environment where diverse students feel welcome

Creating inclusive campuses is a shared responsibility and a collaborative process. The Accessibility Service Coordinator on your campus is here to help!

Ask if you would like more information about certain types of disabilities

Ask for advice or to collaborate around challenging situations

Ask if you have questions or concerns about the accommodation process

Ask for resources or information if you would like to modify your teaching practices to help enhance your learning environment for students with disabilities

Accessibility/Disability Services Coordinator(s)

NAME

EMAIL

PHONE

DISABILITY

A physical or mental disability related to seeing, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain, learning, development, psychological/mental disorders or memory

(STATISTICS CANADA, 2014).

1. Studies have shown that educational attainment has significant benefits in terms of employment rates for people with disabilities (Statistics Canada, 2014)

2. Most students with disabilities are pursuing education with the goal of employment

3. As with all students, students with disabilities have varied educational backgrounds, life experiences, interests, &

learning preferences, in addition to the impact of their disability, resulting in great diversity among these students as well as great diversity in how they will approach learning.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

1. Speed of information processing when studying course materials, listening to lectures, completing assignments
2. Environmental Barriers on Campus: physical access, access to learning materials, the way the learning environment is organized
3. Barriers during assessment: format of assessment, length of time to complete test or exam

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Physical environments designed to meet the needs of a diverse range of people with varying abilities and preferences. The outcome often is that these flexible environments not only provide benefits to those with unique characteristics or exceptional needs, but also benefit everyone.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

Presenting material through a range of mediums, providing various options for expressing and assessing knowledge and skills.

BENEFITS OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

1. Reduces or eliminates the need for individual accommodations
2. Can help focus attention on concrete and specific course outcomes
3. Takes into account many types of diversity, not only differences related to a disability

IMPLEMENTING UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

- » Empathy: More impactful to students than any other accommodation or support; students more likely to seek support, and to feel a part of the classroom community when instructors demonstrate empathy for their situation.
- » Clear Course Goals: It is essential that instructors have a clear and concrete understanding of essential learning outcomes for their course and the skills and knowledge required of students to achieve these outcomes

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » Multiple Means of Representation: Consider how students access information in your course and whether they are able to use this information effectively to learn. Consider teaching practices in the course; are these practices effective and fully accessible to all students?
- » Multiple Means of Expression: Consider providing students with options around how they demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of course content. Consider providing a range of alternative tools or ways to support student learning in your class.
- » Multiple Means of Engagement: Consider providing several ways for students to apply what they are learning. Take into account that students can have very different emotional and attitudinal backgrounds and dispositions around learning.

WORKSHOP 3: INSTRUCTOR TOOLKIT

CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Students have a responsibility to come forward and ask for assistance. However, instructors have a responsibility to create an environment where diversity of learning is accepted and students feel comfortable asking for help.

ELEMENTS OF ACCESSIBILITY IN THE CLASSROOM TO CONSIDER

- » Attitudinal Barriers: Behaviors, perceptions and assumptions that discriminate against persons with disabilities.
- » Organizational Barriers: Policies, procedures or practices that unfairly discriminate and can prevent individuals from participating fully in a situation.
- » Architectural or Physical Barriers: Elements of buildings or outdoor spaces that create barriers to persons with disabilities.
- » Information or Communications Barriers: Relate to both the sending and receiving of information.
- » Technology Barriers: Often related to information and communications barriers

HOW DO WE WORK TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THESE BARRIERS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES?

Provision of Reasonable Academic Accommodations (See Lesson 2) - Changes in the learning or assessment environment made on an individual basis to remove barriers for a particular student with a disability (eg. allowance to record lectures, extra time on exams)

Through Universal Design for Learning (see Lesson 3) - Increasing the range of options available to all students in how course content is delivered and how learning is assessed in recognition of the diversity of learners. This approach has the potential to benefit all students including those with disabilities.

QUICK TIPS FOR INTERACTING WITH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

1. Recognize that students with disabilities, even with the same disability, are not alike. Treat each student as an individual.
2. If you think that something may be helpful for a particular student with a disability, ask, but respect their choice if this is not the case.
3. Try to see the student's perspective on the situation at hand remembering that their experience of the world is different than yours – ie. empathy, what is it like in their shoes?
4. Recognize that you don't need to have all the answers that the student will likely have some, and that other campus resources, such as the Accessibility Services Office, may be able to help with ideas also. This is a collaborative effort.

WORKSHOP 1: UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

DISABILITY – a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric, or learning impairment that impacts a person’s ability to complete the activities of daily living.

- » Disability is also considered as a complex phenomenon involving the interaction of the person with their physical and social environment
- » 14% of Canadians report having a disability that impacts their ability to complete tasks of daily living in some way. This represents the largest minority group in Canada.

INTEGRATED MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

- » Values the information provided through assessment
- » Recognizes the impact of environment and collective responsibility to work to remove both environmental and attitudinal barriers
- » Recognizes the importance of individual’s experience and understanding of their disability



ACCESSIBILITY SERVICE COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- » Review documentation of disability
- » Determine reasonable accommodations
- » Provide accommodation form to student & instructors
- » Assist in implementing academic accommodations and supports
- » Provide consultation and support in collaboration with other college staff in implementing accommodations
- » Provide support and guidance in working through disability-related challenges collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff

EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

- » Classroom - recording lectures, use of a notetaker, sign language interpreter
- » Course materials - books in audio format, tactile version of graphics, tutoring support
- » Course assignments - assistance in accessing adaptive software & other technology, flexibility on assignment timelines when required
- » Assessment - extra time for tests, a quiet writing environment, use of computer to complete tests
- » Program - reduced course load

DETERMINATION OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION A PARTNERSHIP

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- » Self-disclose disability
- » Provide appropriate documentation to Accessibility Services
- » Request accommodations in a timely manner
- » Inform Accessibility Services and/or instructors when disability-related problems arise in a timely manner

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- » Review accommodation forms from students carefully
- » Bring any concerns regarding recommended accommodations to Accessibility Coordinator at the start of the term
- » Provide exams and related information to Accessibility Services staff in a timely manner
- » Talk with Disability Service Coordinator as soon as possible if students with disabilities are struggling to help ensure a proactive approach
- » Assist in implementing accommodations as required



TYPES OF DISABILITIES STUDENTS MAY HAVE IN YOUR CLASS

VISIBLE DISABILITIES - physical disabilities such as paralysis, some neurological conditions, blindness

INVISIBLE DISABILITIES - mental health conditions, chronic health conditions, learning or attentional disabilities, brain injury, autism spectrum disorders, sensory impairments such as deafness or hard of hearing, or partial vision loss

Some ideas to promote a welcoming classroom & promote student success for students with disabilities & all students

- » Provide all assignments and deadlines at the start of the term, so that students can plan their time.
- » Provide choices of assignments.
- » Create a classroom environment that reduces stress, promotes safety, and enhances cooperation rather than competition.
- » Have open lines of communication with students, so that concerns can be raised early, before they become serious.
- » Supporting students with disabilities transition to employment: What can you do to support this transition?
- » Teach problem-solving skills and creative thinking. Students with disabilities may need to be creative in finding their own methods to complete tasks
- » Give students a balanced view of their abilities and help them to capitalize on their strengths in a variety of settings
- » Encourage students to self-advocate, so that they can explain what works for them to get the job done.
- » Provide realistic tasks and allow students to try out different tools to find out what works best for them. They can then apply those tools in the workplace
- » Provide clear expectations of the skills and knowledge that students need to develop
- » Give constructive feedback on performance
- » Recognize that disclosing a disability in the workplace can be a difficult decision for students with invisible disabilities, who may face discrimination if they choose to disclose. This is a personal choice.
- » Want to learn more about specific disabilities & their impact on learning? Check out the resource website at:

WORKSHOP 2: HOW TO ACCOMMODATE

Accommodating students with disabilities

- » Most are straightforward to implement
- » Academic accommodations do not provide an advantage, instead they are designed to provide “a level playing field” by removing barriers to access and participation
- » Students with disabilities must meet all essential outcomes of a course or program even with accommodation

“DUTY TO ACCOMMODATE” - Postsecondary institutions have a legal obligation to ensure access to and remove barriers to participation experienced by persons with disabilities

“REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION” - Refers to changes in the allocation of institution resources or in teaching or evaluation procedures which are designed to meet the particular needs of a student with a disability.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS MUST:

1. Be based on documented individual needs.
2. Allow most integrated experience possible.
3. Not compromise essential requirements of a course or program.
4. Not pose a threat to public or personal safety
5. Not impose an undue hardship or administrative burden.
6. Not be of a personal nature.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- » Students provide documentation of their disability to the Accessibility Service Coordinator
- » Students provide their express consent before any information is shared about their disability
- » Instructors receive information about the functional impacts of the disability & a student’s eligible accommodations; however, the diagnosis and documentation of disability remain confidential
- » Any requests for further information should be directed to the Accessibility Service Coordinator first

HOW TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

- » Ensure that discussions regarding disability accommodations take place in a private setting and are handled with discretion if in public
- » Avoid asking questions about the nature or cause of a student’s disability
- » Recognize that a student may not identify if she/he is uncomfortable in discussing their disability
- » Ask a student in what ways you can help them to be successful in your class, or ask if certain approaches would be helpful

IMPLICATION OF CHOOSING NOT TO DISCLOSE A DISABILITY

To access academic accommodations, a student needs to disclose that they have a disability. If a student chooses not to disclose a disability, they will be treated in the same way as any student.