
Abilities Management Policy

Department Policy Number

120 012

Effective Date

July 01, 2004

Definitions

AUFA	Athabasca University Faculty Association
AUPE	Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, Local 069
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3911
Academic/Professional Staff	Permanent, term and casual Academic and Professional staff who are members of AUFA
Excluded Contract Staff	Executive, management, and professional staff who are exempt from the AUFA agreement
Support Staff	Permanent, temporary and casual staff who are members of AUPE, Local 069
Excluded Support Staff	Support, temporary and casual staff who are exempt from the AUPE agreement

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of the abilities management program is to assist an employee who has been on leave due to illness or injury to return to work in a safe and successful manner through a collaborative approach. The main focus of this program is on an employee's ability to make a continued contribution to the workplace. In order to fulfill this purpose, Athabasca University will:

- 1.1 Include the employee, front-line supervisors, Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator/Human Resources, union/bargaining unit, insurance carriers, WCB and medical professionals in the recovery and accommodation process.



- 1.2 Identify and minimize any barriers for a safe and successful return to work.
- 1.3 Ensure that modified work duties are meaningful (not make work) to the employee and maximize the use of the employees' competencies valued by Athabasca University.
- 1.4 Clearly define expectations of the various stakeholders involved.
- 1.5 Provide a transparent and fair process to ensure that treatment of all employees is consistent both within the employees own department and across the University.
- 1.6 Abide by current policies and procedures (eg. FOIPP, legislation).

Internal and external job candidates who have a disability will be covered by the employment equity and recruitment policies.

2.0 Eligibility

- 2.1 Permanent, term and casual Academic/Professional (AUFA) and Excluded Contract employees.
- 2.2 Permanent, temporary and casual Support (AUPE) and Excluded Support employees.
- 2.3 Term, temporary and casual employees are eligible under this policy until their employment contract end date.
- 2.4 CUPE employees are not eligible.

3.0 Background to the Meaning of Accommodation for the Purpose of this Policy

Disability is a protected ground of discrimination within human rights legislation. Employers are required to make every reasonable effort, short of undue hardship, to accommodate a current employee who has a disability.

4.0 Policy

Athabasca University will assist its employees who have experienced an illness/injury to stay at work or to return to work, as medically determined, through the following hierarchy of accommodation methods:

- 4.1 Modification of work, hours, office furniture/equipment and/or place of work.
- 4.2 Gradual return to work through temporarily modifying an employee's hours and/or duties within their own job (bundling of duties).
- 4.3 Permanent accommodation within their own job which could include organizing the job duties differently.



4.4 Temporary accommodation in an alternate job.

4.5 Permanent accommodation in an alternate job.

Human Resources will pay for all health care provider costs as they relate to the providing of information for the purpose of this policy.

5.0 Financial Concerns

Athabasca University recognizes that an individual department may require financial assistance in order to accommodate the needs of a given employee who is affected by this policy document. The University will determine a funding mechanism for the purpose of such accommodations, and departments may, in conjunction with Human Resources, apply for funds that are necessary to fully implement an accommodation, for an employee, in the department.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Rights of the Employee

There are certain rights that an employee has while on medical leave during the accommodation process.

6.1.1 Right to privacy in regards to medical information.

6.1.2 Right to access all information supplied to Athabasca University.

6.1.3 Right to contact their supervisor and Athabasca University as required.

6.1.4 Right to meaningful work.

6.2 Rights of Athabasca University

6.2.1 To determine appropriate and meaningful work for the organization.

6.2.2 To satisfy requirements of Human Rights under Duty to Accommodation legislation.

6.3 Role of the Employee

6.3.1 Maintains regular contact with their supervisor and the Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator/ Human Resources and provides updated contact information (phone/address) they can be reached at during prolonged illness leave.

6.3.2 Follows a prescribed medical program.

6.3.3 Provide Athabasca University with the authorization for release of information form either allowing the Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator/Human Resources to communicate



with their health care provider or the employee may obtain the information directly from their health care provider regarding their abilities, solely for the purpose of developing a return to work plan.

6.3.4 Cooperates with Athabasca University in the accommodation process.

6.3.5 Where possible, aids the doctor in understanding what job duties are performed on a daily basis through the Job Demands Analysis process.

6.4 Role of the Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator/Human Resources

The Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator/Human Resources is the key contact for the disabled employee.

6.4.1 Contacts the employee during illness leave and the accommodation process, as needed, to process benefits and obtain information for a return to work accommodation.

6.4.2 Assists the front-line supervisor in completing the Job Demands Analysis form.

6.4.3 Involves the union/bargaining unit in complex return to work accommodations or as requested by the employee.

6.4.4 Liaises with insurance carriers (Sun Life, WCB, etc), health care providers and Athabasca University's Human Resource Professionals regarding the rehabilitation aspect of the accommodation process, to ensure seamless benefit administration to the employee and a safe and timely return to work.

6.4.5 Complies with the employee's rights with regard to Human Rights legislation, WCB, Collective Agreements, FOIPP, and other relevant legislation as applicable.

6.4.6 Educates, trains and assists front-line supervisors and co-workers on accommodations.

6.4.7 Communicates the benefits of Athabasca University's commitment to workplace accommodation.

6.4.8 Refers to other resources available (eg. EFAP).

6.4.9 Develops and communicates the approved accommodation plan to stakeholders.

6.5 Role of the Health Care Provider

The Health Care Provider provides the information required for the development of the accommodation plan.

6.5.1 Provides the leave commencement date and expected return date of illness leave and/or a schedule of follow-up visits.



- 6.5.2 Completes the Assessment of Work Abilities form taking into consideration the information provided from the Job Demands Analysis form and the employee's job description.
- 6.5.3 Approves the final accommodation plan (Workers Compensation approves their own accommodation plans).

6.6 Role of the Front-line Supervisors

- 6.6.1 Encouraged to act as advocate on behalf of the disabled employee.
- 6.6.2 Informs the Return to Work and Benefits Coordinator of any reported absence that extends beyond 5 working days as soon as it is known.
- 6.6.3 Participates in the development of the accommodation plan.
- 6.6.4 Completes the Job Demands Analysis form with the assistance of the Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator/Human Resources and attaches the employee's job description.
- 6.6.5 Works positively with co-workers regarding an employee returning to work; is supportive and ensures respect to an accommodated employee.
- 6.6.6 Participates with stakeholders to monitor success on an ongoing basis.
- 6.6.7 Reports any problems/concerns to Human Resources.
- 6.6.8 Participates in necessary training to understand legislation of legal obligations to accommodate and educates other employees in their department.

7.0 Process

7.1 Notification is received indicating employee is off work for medical reasons

- 7.1.1 The Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator/Human Resources will send a letter to the employee once notification is received regarding illness/injury when there is an extended period of absence requested by the health care provider. The letter outlines the responsibilities of all stakeholders involved along with the following forms to be completed. The process outlined below may also occur when there is no absence or shorter absences if the nature of the injury/illness indicates that accommodation may be likely. All medical files and information will be stored in confidential files with the Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator/Human Resources. These files are kept separate from the employee's personnel file.

Authorization for Release of Information form: To be completed by the employee. This form authorizes the Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator, Human Resources to



communicate with their health care provider for the purpose of developing a return to work plan or the employee may obtain the information themselves.

Job Demands Analysis form: To be completed by the front-line supervisor. This form will assist the health care provider to understand the employee's job duties from the supervisor's perspective. The employee will have an opportunity to add comments to this supervisor's analysis.

Assessment of Work Abilities form: To be completed by the health care provider. This form will identify the employee's abilities and any limitations or restrictions by taking into consideration the information provided on the Job Demands Analysis form.

7.2 Review Employee's Abilities

Once the need for accommodation has been identified by the health care provider, the process for bringing an employee back to work in a safe and timely manner depends on achieving a successful balance between the demands of the job and the employee's ability to meet these demands. The employee, front-line supervisor, union/bargaining unit representative and Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator/Human Resources will meet to review the employee's abilities with the job demands and identify accommodations. Discussions will involve the following in order:

- 7.2.1 Temporary accommodation with the prognosis of working to return to full regular duties is the first step.
- 7.2.2 Can we modify current job duties (eg. same job with reduced hours; less time on a specific task, different location)?
- 7.2.3 Alternative job duties (eg. re-training or replacement of specific tasks requires union involvement).
- 7.2.4 Alternative work in different unit.

Final approval needs to be obtained from the health care provider prior to implementation of an accommodation plan.

7.3 Review of Accommodation Barriers

Potential barriers to accommodation such as, structural barriers, co-workers, benefit entitlements, employee interests, training/education plans, specific provisions of the collective agreements and other issues that may be of a concern need to be identified and determination made of how to deal with them.



7.4 Develop the Accommodation Plan

The accommodation plan should include the following information:

- 7.4.1 Employee's abilities.
- 7.4.2 Type of accommodation plan (full, modified, alternate).
- 7.4.3 Number of hours per day / number of days per week / increase at what intervals.
- 7.4.4 Duties and duration.
- 7.4.5 Roles and expectations of stakeholders.
- 7.4.6 Evaluation.
- 7.4.7 Time required for medical treatment.
- 7.4.8 Consent and approval from stakeholders (union/bargaining unit, insurance carriers).

Once the accommodation plan has been developed, the Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator, Human Resources will forward to the health care provider for final approval.

7.5 Permanent Accommodation

When it becomes clear that an employee needs permanent accommodation, Athabasca University's ability to accommodate is determined with the departments involved and the applicable union/association. Permanent accommodation, which may be evident from the onset of illness/disability, could include in order of preference:

- 7.5.1 Modified hours or duties within regular job.
- 7.5.2 Alternative job duties within the same work unit at the same classification or at an alternate classification.
- 7.5.3 Alternative job duties in another work unit at the same classification or at an alternate classification.

In the event the employee is unable to return to work in any accommodated position through the above process, Human Resources, along with the union/association, will meet with the employee to discuss the options available.

Approved by

President, June 2004



Amended Date/Motion No.

Related References, Policies, and Procedures

[AUPE Collective Agreement](#)

[AUFA/The Governors of Athabasca University \(the Board\) Terms and Conditions](#)

Applicable Legislation/Regulation

[Human Resources Development Canada](#)

[Alberta Human Rights & Citizenship Commissions](#)

[Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

[The Workers' Compensation Act](#)

[Personal Information Protection Act](#)

Responsible Position/Department

This policy is maintained and administered by Human Resources. For further information, please contact the Return to Work & Benefits Coordinator (Human Resources).

Keywords