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## Policy for Students with Disabilities

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**Effective Date:**

November 1, 1989

**Revised:**

November 1996

**Revised:**

November 1, 2000

**Purpose**

Athabasca University has a long-standing tradition of encouraging individuals with disabilities to seek admission to courses and programs. In keeping with our mission statement, Athabasca University is committed to provide students who have sensory, learning, cognitive, physical, neurological, psychological, and temporary disabilities with reasonable accommodations and support services to attempt to facilitate complete access to University services and facilities and the successful completion of programs and courses. In assisting students with disabilities, the University's criteria for academic excellence will not be compromised.

**Definitions****For the purpose of defining the parameters of the population that this policy seeks to serve:**

Students with disabilities refer to those individuals who are disadvantaged by reason of any verifiable and persistent physical, learning, cognitive, sensory, psychological, neurological, or temporary impairment that may affect their academic progress. (Modified from current definitions of the World Health Organization)

**Policy**

To achieve its goal of attracting and retaining qualified students with disabilities, Athabasca University will:

1. Make all reasonable efforts to ensure that persons with disabilities are considered for admission to any programs or courses for which they possess any identified prerequisites; and will take reasonable steps to ensure that admission protocol and policy reflects a



willingness to mitigate criteria and procedural barriers to courses or programs providing the University's criteria for academic excellence are not compromised.

2. To take reasonable steps where appropriate to modify program course load (number of credits a student is enrolled in within a semester), examination procedures, course and other academic requirements to permit students with disabilities to complete their studies without compromising academic standards by establishing alternative routes or methods by which learning objectives or core program requirements can be achieved. In determining any special circumstances that warrant the modification of a requirement, consultation will take place between Accessibility Services and the Office of the Registrar, Program Directors or Centre Chairs, Course Coordinators, Academics or their designates (The level at which consultation occurs may be dependent upon the nature of the modification required). In the event of any outstanding concerns regarding accommodation or service, the Provost and Vice-President Academic and the Vice-President of Student Services will be requested to render a final decision in regard to any such matter.
3. Where appropriate, individuals and committees responsible for appeal decisions will take disability related factors into account. A student with a disability who is making an appeal may request advocacy from Accessibility Services.
4. Take reasonable steps to remove barriers that affect the wide range of students with disabilities. Where parking is available to all students, special parking may be made available to students with disabilities at AU facilities in keeping with city and provincial standards.
5. Any or all information gathered under this policy will fall under the protection of the FOIP.

Accessibility Services will make other such recommendations to the University and its staff and carry out such other initiatives as may be appropriate to ensure the goals and objectives of the Policy are met.

## **Regulations**

Although the primary responsibility for the provision of services rests with Accessibility Services, the provision of a supportive and responsive academic, social and physical environment is the responsibility of the entire University. Such commitment on behalf of the University, however, does not defer students with disabilities from being active participants in their ultimate success. Students with disabilities must take the initiative to inform the institution of their needs; pursue their studies with the same diligence required of all students; and accept responsibility for the role that they play in their success or failure. Within this context, Accessibility Services will necessarily assume responsibility to adjudicate the identified needs and concerns of individual students with disabilities to ensure an academic environment that is fair to all students and Athabasca University.



## Procedure

Students who request accommodations or services will be required to provide verification of their impairment from a medical, educational, psychological/psychiatric professional or other appropriate individual. AU's responsibility to provide accommodation and support services will begin when a student has provided the Accessibility Services office with verification of the presence of a permanent or temporary disability or condition. Those individuals who identify themselves as having a learning disability or cognitive impairment due to an acquired or traumatic brain injury, or neurological disorder will be requested or required (in accordance with documentation requirements for Government assistance programs to fund support services) to provide or obtain a current (within government, sponsorship, educational or medical guidelines) neuro-psychological or learning disability assessment that is appropriate for the educational environment. Such documentation helps to ensure the appropriate delivery of accommodations and services necessary to facilitate an individual student's success.

In consultation with appropriate University Programs and Services, Student Funding Programs, Community Agencies and contracted service providers, Accessibility Services will provide the following:

- information
- assessment of academic and technological accommodations and support requirements
- educational and career counselling as it pertains to disability
- referrals to additional services or agencies
- program planning as it pertains to disability
- time management assistance (respective to disability)
- monitoring of progress in course work
- registration assistance
- information and assistance with applications for funding
- assistance to obtain alternate format materials if materials cannot be produced on campus
- support service (tutoring, academic strategist, interpreting, aide, reader, scribe, etc.)
- arrangements
- exam accommodations
- time extensions for courses
- advocacy
- liaison with departments and faculties
- available volunteer assistance including: note taking, exam writing assistance, mobility assistance,
- taping of readings, library research help, study help, tutoring, special project help.
- assistance and consultation to University staff who have a disability

To ensure the resources are available to provide support services, Accessibility Services will establish a fee structure for specific services that either have to be contracted or demand extensive time from the staff of Accessibility Services. Such service fees are commonplace and are included in student funding or grant applications. Services will be extended in whole or in part, when financially feasible, to students with disabilities who do not have the economic resources or funding sponsorship.



If future evidence supports the need to modify or amplify the aforementioned services, such changes will be assessed and acted upon within the parameters posed by the University's available resources.

### **Approved By**

Athabasca University Academic Council, October 26, 1989 - Motion No. 76.3  
Amended Date/Motion No., November 1996 - Terminology Updated  
Athabasca University Academic Council, November 1, 2000 - Motion No. 159-8

### **Related References, Policies, and Procedures**

1989 Policy Title - Disabled Student Policy  
1996 Policy Title - Students With Disabilities Policy

### **Applicable Legislation/Regulation**

*Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (1995)*  
*Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship, and Multiculturalism Act (1996)*  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982)  
United Nations Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993)

### **For Further Information**

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