

Appendix

Academic Accommodations for Learners with Disabilities

PREAMBLE

Bow Valley College is committed to an inclusive, barrier-free learning environment in which all learners, including learners with disabilities, have equal access to education and where all learners feel included and valued.

Policy statement

Bow Valley College's goal is to ensure fair and consistent treatment of all learners. Bow Valley College will provide reasonable academic accommodations to learners in accordance with the *Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Exceptions may include but are not limited to:

- Accommodations that would cause undue hardship to the College
- Reducing academic or non-academic performance standards of a course or program in order to accommodate a learner
- Reducing minimum entrance or completion requirements of a program
- Relieving the learner of the responsibility to develop the essential skills and competencies expected of all learners

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Reflect Bow Valley College's commitment to a learning environment that is free of discrimination and harassment on the grounds of disability
 - Ensure that Bow Valley College meets its legal obligations under Alberta and Canadian law and is consistent with fundamental Alberta and Canadian legal principles
 - Outline the shared responsibilities of the college and the learner in the duty to accommodate

Guidelines

Bow Valley College follows the legal requirements for educational accommodations as they relate to the *The Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* and interpretive bulletins available through the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission, especially the *Duty to accommodate students with disabilities in post-secondary educational institutions*. ([Publications and Resources - Alberta Human Rights & Citizenship Commission](#))

The Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission is responsible for human rights legislation in Alberta. The *Act* covers services provided by the post-secondary education sector in section 4. It states, “that no person shall:

- (a) deny to any person or class of persons any goods, services, accommodation or facilities customarily available to the public, or
- (b) discriminate against any person or class of persons with respect to any goods, services, accommodation or facilities that are customarily available to the public, because of the race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income or family status of that person or class of persons or of any other person or class of persons.” (Sexual orientation has also been “read in” to the *Act* as a protected ground.)

The provision of academic accommodation is based on shared responsibilities between the Learner and the College, determined on an individual basis.

Bow Valley College recognizes the legal concepts of Bona Fide Occupational Requirements (BFOR) and by implication, Bona Fide Educational Requirements (BFER) in this policy.

DEFINITIONS

Learners - includes both prospective and current students.

Learning Environment – is any context that offers opportunity for education or training. Learning environments could include a variety of components, including but not exclusive to an enabling context, resources, a set of tools, and scaffolds (Hannafin, Land, & Oliver, 1999). **SEE <http://www.edtech.vt.edu/edtech/id/models/powerpoint/environs.pdf>**

Examples:

- traditional classroom with instructor (enabling context), text, internet (resources), communication, organization (tools), directions (scaffolds)
- clinical setting (enabling context), theory prep (resources) clinical supervision and feedback (tools) clinical evaluation (scaffold)
- online course taken at home (enabling context); text, WebCT, internet (resources), information seeking, researching skills (tools), directions, metacognitive review (scaffolds)

Academic Accommodation - The process of making alteration to delivery of services so that those services become accessible to more people, including people with disabilities. It should include the leading methods for ensuring that persons with disabilities have equal access to post-secondary education. Reasonable academic accommodations include those modifications to the learning environment that provide fair and equitable access to learning.

Bona fide occupational requirements (BFOR's) - those requirements that are a reasonable and justifiable component of an occupation and that may limit entry to an occupation.

Bona fide educational requirements (BFER's) - Those requirements that are a reasonable and justifiable component of a training program that may limit entry to, or completion of, a training program.

Undue Hardship – unreasonable or excessive challenge for an institution. As examples, the challenges could be financially excessive, or could compromise academic standards or safety requirements. The tests for “reasonable and justifiable” and “undue hardship” are available in the Interpretive Bulletin for Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in post-secondary institutions (http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/Bull_duty_to_accom_students.asp).

Assistive Technology – equipment or technology that allows persons to complete a task who might otherwise be limited or unable to do so.

Disability - any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being and resulting from a psychological, physiological or anatomical structure loss or abnormality

- May be long term or short term
- Based on current need. A disability in the past does not necessarily demand accommodation/supports in the present.
- May or may not require accommodations or support in order for a person to function at certain activities. For example, a Deaf learner might not require any accommodations to work at certain computer activities, but they might require an American Sign Language Interpreter for a classroom activity.

Barrier - structure or design that prevents or impedes a person from accessing a facility or service.

Protected grounds - those aspects of persons that are legally protected from harassment/discrimination: race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, **physical disability, mental disability**, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income or family status of that person or class of persons or of any other person or class of persons. (Sexual orientation has also been “read in” to the *Act* as a protected ground.) For further information please review the *Act* and interpretive bulletins that have been developed by the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission.

PROCEDURES

LEARNER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Learners with disabilities who require accommodations or supports will be expected to:

- Meet the admissions requirements of the program to which they have applied and have been accepted
 - At the earliest point possible, decide whether to disclose the disability that requires accommodation. This could be prior to admission to a program.
 - Provide medical and/or other professional documentation of a disability
 - Provide the college with as much advance notice as possible to arrange the accommodation, specialized technology and services prior to starting classes. Four months notice is recommended.
 - Contact the appropriate learner support services department to discuss assessment and documentation
 - Explore and access support services and programs that may provide assistance
 - Actively participate with the College in the coordination of the appropriate and required accommodations and supports with
 - Academic departments
 - Support services within the college
 - Support services outside the college
 - Funding agencies
 - Demonstrate appropriate use of necessary accommodations and supports to ensure academic success
 - Demonstrate and practice appropriate self-advocacy skills
 - Seek timely assistance if the academic accommodations/supports are proving difficult or unacceptable
 - Sign release of information form as necessary/appropriate
 - **Plan and research before asking for help in accommodating specific disabilities**
 - Review the institution's policy for accommodating learners with disabilities
 - Keep a written record of the efforts made to receive accommodation.

COLLEGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Within the limits set out in the foregoing policy statement, and in a timely fashion, the College will be expected to:

- Maintain an organization-wide policy that reflects current trends in Academic Accommodations
- Provide learners with access to the Academic Accommodations Policy
- Consult with the learners to review the request for academic accommodations and supports

- Consult with learners who may have a suspected disability in accessing appropriate support services
- Review supporting documentation outlining diagnoses and recommendations for accommodations/supports
- Determine the appropriate academic accommodations and supports that will be provided and review these with the learners
- Assist with application and documentation necessary to access available funding to cover costs of accommodations/supports
- Assist the learners when possible in acquiring and using appropriate academic accommodations
- Communicate, with the learner's informed consent, necessary information about disability and assist the learner with coordination of appropriate and required accommodations/supports with
 - Academic departments
 - Support services within the college
 - Support services outside the college
 - Funding agencies
- Review requests for modifications of accommodations and supports
- Assist with the modifications if necessary and appropriate
- Respect confidentiality of learners
- Promote and develop self-advocacy skills in the learners
- Provide disability awareness training and information about services available to Faculty and Staff
- Monitor and evaluate provision/services/technology
- Inform the appropriate student support services office if request will be or has been denied
- Provide written reasons for denying a learner's request for accommodation. Explain why the accommodation would cause undue hardship
- Inform the learners of how to appeal the denial of a request for the accommodation.