

Accessibility Supports and Disability Services

Instructor Handbook

2018-2019

Grande Prairie Regional College



GRANDE PRAIRIE CAMPUS

10726 – 106 Ave, Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4C4

Phone: (780) 539-2017

Fax: (780) 539-2888

E-mail: asds@gprc.ab.ca

FAIRVIEW CAMPUS

11235 – 98 Ave, Fairview, AB T0H 1L0

Phone: (780) 835-6625

Fax: (780) 835-6788

Toll-Free: 1 (888) 539-GPRC

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The Accessibility Supports and Disability Services Handbook is an official document of the Grande Prairie Regional College. Grande Prairie Regional College expects that students registered with Accessibility Supports and Disability Services read this information carefully to ensure you will know the College policies and regulations, standards and requirements. The information in this handbook is accurate and valid as of June 2018. Grande Prairie Regional College reserves the right to alter, add, and/or delete the information contained in this handbook as required.

Grande Prairie Regional College acts in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Revised and altered with permission from Accessibility Services at Okanagan College

Department of Student Services
Grande Prairie Regional College
10726 – 106 Ave
Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 4C4

What We Do	4
Definition of Disability.....	5
Definition of Accommodation.....	5
Types of Accommodation.....	7
Exam Accommodations	7
Class Accommodations	7
Documentation Requirements.....	8
Confidentiality	8
Professors/Instructors and the Accommodation Process	9
Summary of Disability Documentation.....	11

ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORTS AND DISABILITY SERVICES

What We Do

Accessibility Supports and Disability Services is part of the Student Services team at GPRC. We are responsible for reviewing documentation and recommending reasonable academic accommodations in order to ensure equal access to education for students with disabilities and/or accessibility concerns.

GPRC strives to ensure a fair, equitable, and accessible environment for students with disabilities or medical conditions. The goal of providing academic accommodations is to establish an equitable playing field for all students within the post-secondary environment.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Section 15(1) states:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

The Alberta Human Rights Commission defines accommodation in the Duty to Accommodate as: “the process of making alterations to the delivery of services so that those services become accessible to more people, including persons with disabilities. Accommodation **does not**:

1. require that post-secondary institutions lower academic or non-academic standards to accommodate students with disabilities.
2. relieve the student of the responsibility to develop the essential skills and competencies expected of all students.” (2010, p. 3)

Accommodations for students are intended to be **reasonable**, and may not be perfect or exactly what the student requests. Reasonable accommodations allows students to access the post-secondary environment, and does not make coursework less challenging or lower the quality of academic rigor required.

GPRC has a duty to accommodate students with both/either documented physical or mental disabilities to enable equitable access to the learning environment. The Accessibility Supports and Disability Services office is tasked with acquiring the necessary medical information, designing an accommodation plan, documenting the accommodation process, and providing information and assistance to students, professors/instructors and staff.

Definition of Disability

The Alberta Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on physical and mental disabilities.

A **physical disability** is defined in the Alberta Human Rights Act as “any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness.” This may include, but is not limited to, the following conditions: “epilepsy; paralysis; amputation; lack of physical coordination; visual, hearing, or speech impediments; or physical reliance on a guide dog, service dog, or wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.

A **mental disability** is defined as any mental disorder, developmental disorder or learning disorder, regardless of the cause or duration of the disorder” (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2018).

Definition of Accommodation

When a physician or medical professional has made a diagnosis of disability that affects a student’s ability to function in learning environments, they also indicate what adjustments can reasonably be made to the environment in order to promote equitable access in learning.

Participation in a classroom environment may involve several tasks (often simultaneously) including:

- listening and concentrating
- sustained focus
- meeting deadlines
- continuous typing or writing
- reading and visual scanning from various distances and mediums
- engaging in class discussions
- consistent sitting and/or standing
- use of gross and fine motor movement

The presence of a disability may or may not impact an individual’s ability to participate in the classroom environment. However, some students require accommodations to mitigate mental, intellectual, physical or sensory impairments that create barriers to participation and learning.

Accommodations are adjustments made to the academic environment to remove or reduce disability-related barriers without impacting essential outcomes of the learning process.

If a student has accommodations, professors and instructors can log onto our Accessibility data management portal, Clockwork, and view the accommodation requirements for each student they teach. The goal of reasonable accommodation is to provide unhindered, equal class participation opportunities and assessment methods without undermining or reducing the academic requirements.

Academic institutions in Alberta are legally required to accommodate students up to the point of *undue hardship*. The Alberta Human Rights Commission defines *undue hardship* as the creation of onerous conditions for an employer or service provider, such as intolerable financial costs or serious disruption to business caused by the accommodation. "Some hardship may be necessary in making an accommodation; only when there is 'undue' hardship can the employer or service provider claim that they have tried all the accommodation available." (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2018)

There are a few key points to consider when establishing accommodations:

- accommodations do not need to be instant nor perfect
- accommodations are a legal obligation
- it is a shared responsibility among students, professors/instructors, and staff
- ask questions if you are unsure of how to implement an accommodation in your course
- a student can initiate the accommodation process at any time
- when possible, be proactive rather than reactive

Types of Accommodation

There are two main types of accommodations: *exam accommodations* and *class accommodations*.

Exam Accommodations

This type of accommodation involves changes to the exam environment and/or exam format for quizzes, exams, midterms, and finals. Some examples of exam accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- time extensions
- private or distraction-free room
- adjustable tables
- digital form of test
- use of a computer, reader, scribe, spell-check, dictionary, or calculator

Class Accommodations

These accommodations pertain to the physical environment of the classroom, methods of assessment, and format of course materials. Some examples of class accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- recording lectures
- providing a copy of lecture notes
- preferred seating
- closed captioning
- note takers
- alternate format of textbooks
- time extensions on assignments
- alternate assignments to presentations
- use of FM systems for students with hearing impairments
- ability to leave class
- ability to stand in class for period of time
- use of sign language interpreters

Documentation Requirements

The documentation provided by the student must be completed by a qualified, registered medical professional, and include a diagnosis, an explanation of the functional impact in an educational setting, and a description and assessment of the severity of the symptoms. The documentation aids in developing an accommodation plan for the student. While knowledge of the diagnosis is helpful, it is the information pertaining to the academic, disability-related barriers the student experiences that is required to formulate an accommodation plan.

If the documentation supports the need for academic accommodations, GPRC must accommodate the student to the point of undue hardship.

Confidentiality

Accessibility Supports and Disability Services at GPRC is bound to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act when a student registers with our office. The name of a student cannot be disclosed to professors and instructors without consent from the student. Information such as diagnosis, specific medical information, or medical documents will not be shared with faculty, professors, instructors, or staff.

Information cannot be released to a third party without written consent. The student is the client working with Accessibility Supports and Disability Services. As such, communication and educational decisions are communicated and conducted directly with the student. The student is permitted to invite (an)other individual(s) to meetings with their Accessibility Advisor to listen to information.

Students are encouraged to discuss their learning needs with their professors/instructors. It is always the student's decision and up to their discretion how much they choose to share with their professors/instructors regarding their disability. It is important when discussing accommodations with students to do so in a private setting to ensure a student's right to privacy.

Professors/Instructors and the Accommodation Process

It is the joint responsibility of students, professors/instructors, and staff at GPRC to work together to ensure reasonable accommodation to allow equitable participation in the classroom environment up to the point of undue hardship. It is the student's responsibility to initiate the accommodation process with Accessibility Supports and Disability Services, and communicate the accommodations with their professors/instructors regarding their accommodations.

The rights and responsibilities pertaining to professors/instructors and the duty to accommodate are as follows:

Professors/instructors have the right to:

- determine course content and general methods of teaching
- ensure essential course outcomes and standards are not lowered or compromised
- ensure that a student has demonstrated mastery of the essential learning outcomes of your course in order to obtain an appropriate grade
- make informed decisions about how best to adapt your teaching and assessment methods to accommodate all students
- fail students who do not meet the course requirements
- determine, through consultation with knowledgeable professionals, the most appropriate way to adapt your course to the needs of a particular student
- ask for clarification on specific accommodations, if needed

Professors/instructors do not have the right to:

- refuse to provide an approved accommodation for a documented disability
- challenge the legitimacy of a student's disability
- review a student's documentation, including diagnostic data

Professors/instructors have the responsibility to:

- understand GPRC guidelines for accommodating students with disabilities
- provide a classroom atmosphere that is harassment-free, inclusive, and non-discriminatory
- respect the students with disabilities' rights to attend post-secondary, as outlined in the Duty to Accommodate by the *Alberta Human Rights Commission* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- encourage students with disabilities to identify themselves privately to the instructor
- cooperate with ASDS in providing authorized academic accommodations
- cooperate with Test Accommodation procedures by providing test details and the test in a timely manner
- access "Clockwork" to view students' Letters of Accommodation and online accommodated test requests
- provide accommodations and academic adjustments outlined in the student's accommodation letter
- contact Accessibility Supports and Disability Services if a concern, question, or problem arises
- keep information regarding a student's disability confidential
- provide a safe environment for students to discuss their accommodation needs
- assist students with certain accommodations
- permit course materials to be converted and used in an accessible format, this may

include allowing students with disabilities to record lectures when such recording is necessary to compensate for difficulties due to the disability (the student is required to sign an agreement protecting copyright by the instructor)

- provide instructional materials and power point presentations when such resources are necessary to compensate for difficulties due to the disability (the student will be required to sign an agreement to ensure accountability of proper use of materials)

As an instructor, you should know:

- what recognized disabilities are, and what they are not
- accommodation requests are based on appropriate documentation of a student's disability
- some students with disabilities have academic or behavioural challenges unrelated to their disability – you are not obliged to treat such problems any differently than you would for a student who does not have a disability

If faculty, instructors, professors, and/or staff have questions about their rights or responsibilities, please feel free to get in touch with our staff.

Summary of Disability Documentation

Type of Disability	Documentation requirements	Notes about special issues/situations
Deaf, Hearing Impaired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audiologist report, or • Letter from physician with an explanation of the degree of hearing loss 	
Blind, Visually Impaired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist's report, or • Letter from physician with a description of the functional limitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of a CNIB card is not sufficient, as this does not help us understand the degree of impairment and how the requested supports relate to the disability
Learning Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycho-Educational report from a Psychologist, or • Neuro-psychological report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment should be no older than 3 years. Exceptions may be made depending on situation and level of detail • A physician's diagnosis of LD is not acceptable
Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech language pathologist's report 	
Mobility Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist's report, or • Letter from physician with explanation of nature of disability as functional limitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A functional assessment is ideal, as this would describe the degree of functional limitation and appropriate supports, but this is often difficult to get
ADD/ADHD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychologist's report, or • Neuropsychological report, or • Letter from a psychiatrist, or • Letter from a physician with details about the diagnosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details from a physician to include a description of how the diagnosis was arrived at, demonstrating childhood history, differential diagnosis, etc.
Psychiatric or Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychologist's report with DSM diagnosis or • Letter from a psychiatrist with DSM diagnosis or • Letter from a physician with details about diagnosis including DSM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A physician's letter needs to include a detailed description of the diagnosis, how the diagnosis was arrived at, functional limitations, and detailed information about history
Autism, Asperger, Rett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychologist's report or • Letter from a psychiatrist 	
Brain Injury/Cognitive Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neuro-psychological report, or • Brain Injury/cognitive impairment report/assessment 	
Examples of other Permanent Disabilities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic Fatigue: detailed letter from physician • Irlen Syndrome: assessment report from a Certified Irlen Screener 	