



THE ATLANTIC CENTRE
FOR STUDENTS
WITH DISABILITIES

Faculty Handbook

Dear Faculty Member,

It is my pleasure to provide you with a copy of our Faculty Handbook, which has been developed to support your efforts to accommodate students with disabilities. We have attempted to anticipate and discuss the expectations and demands you might experience in making your class more accessible.

Perhaps more importantly, I would like to convey that our staff of trained professionals is here to help. Should the handbook not supply the information you need or answer your questions, please feel free to call/email me or any of the Atlantic Centre staff directly. Telephone numbers and email addresses are located on page 2 of the Handbook.

Warm regards and all the best in the coming year,

David Leitch, Ph.D.
Director
Atlantic Centre

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1 Introduction

Partnership: Students, Faculty and The Atlantic Centre

Since 1985, the Atlantic Centre has provided a wide range of services to students with disabilities. The Atlantic Centre of Support for Students with Disabilities is located on the third floor of the O'Donnell-Hennessey Student Centre at Saint Mary's University.

The Atlantic Centre provides support services for students who present relevant and recent documentation of a disability. We offer academic, disability related counselling, advisement, and supports. We work with students to decide on appropriate class accommodations and help facilitate their proper implementation on your behalf, when needed.

Faculty support is essential since professors are the people who have the most direct contact with students. Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation are responsible for initiating first contact with professors. To confirm Atlantic Centre client status, students are responsible for contacting their Atlantic Centre counsellor to request an accommodation letter. This letter outlines the students request for appropriate academic accommodations. Professors are encouraged to contact us with any concerns regarding accommodations, or with questions regarding Atlantic Centre procedures or background information. A close working relationship with the Atlantic Centre fosters better understanding of the educational implications surrounding students with disabilities. Students have the right not to disclose information about their disability, and respect for their privacy is paramount. While some disabilities are more apparent than others, it still remains the student's right to discuss it or not. Although not an absolute guide, this handbook contains many strategies that have been found to be helpful for inclusive instruction, student learning, and resources that might, inform, support and foster a more accessible environment at Saint Mary's University.

Counsellors practice an approach that promotes independence and self-advocacy skills. A student's responsibilities include:

1. Contacting the Atlantic Centre for any information and support services he/she may require.
2. Providing relevant and recent documentation regarding her/his diagnosis and/or the nature of the disability.
3. Providing his/her Atlantic Centre counsellor with a list of courses and professors for the semester and discuss accommodations that may be required.
4. Making the initial contact with instructors to discuss any requests for accommodations and to clarify any issues or concerns that may arise throughout the semester.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact a member of the Centre's staff:

Dr. David Leitch, *Director*

Telephone: 420-5449 Email: david.leitch@smu.ca

Administrative Assistant

Telephone: 420-5452 Email: atlantic.centre@smu.ca

Barry Abbott, *Counsellor*

Telephone: 496-8742 Email: barry.abbott@smu.ca

Megan Adams, *Exam Coordinator*

Telephone: 496-8775 Email: megan.adams@smu.ca

Jane Bagnall, *Counsellor*

Telephone: 420-5452 Email: jane.bagnall@smu.ca

Sarah Roberts, *Counsellor*

Telephone: 420-5837 Email: sarah.roberts@smu.ca

Kim Penny, *Disability Resource Facilitator*

Telephone: 491-8617 kim.penny@smu.ca

Kris Seibert, *ASL/English Interpreter/Coordinator*

Telephone: 496-8740 Email: kris.seibert@smu.ca

Mailing address

Saint Mary's University
Atlantic Centre of Research, Access, and Support for Students with Disabilities
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada
B3H 3C3
Telephone: 902.420.5452
Fax: 902.496.8122

Web address

<http://www.smu.ca/administration/studentservices/atlcentr/welcome.html>

2 Accommodations and Supports

Academic & Disability-Related Counselling

Students can take advantage of individualized counselling sessions offered to all Atlantic Centre clients. These sessions form the basis of our support program and a student can work with their counsellor to establish an individualized support program.

Assistive Technology

The Atlantic Centre has a number of computers with adaptive programs, designed to facilitate use of computer technology by students with a variety of disabilities. Specialized workstations include both adaptive hardware and software, improving access for students with disabilities.

Examination Accommodation

The purpose of examination accommodations is to maintain the validity of tests and examinations while allowing students to access the support needed to accommodate their specific disabilities. Due to the nature of a disability some students may need extended time and/or alternative methods for completing tests. Atlantic Centre counsellors work with students to determine appropriate accommodations based on medical histories, prior academic records, and professional recommendations. When requested by a student, requests for exam accommodations will be outlined in an accommodation letter from the student's Atlantic Centre counsellor to you.

Students may take exams either in their regular classroom or at the Atlantic Centre in the presence of an invigilator. This choice depends upon the exam conditions and specific accommodations requested. Students are required to submit an exam/test request form to the exam coordinator with at least one weeks' prior notice, and, in the case of exams during the final examination periods, two weeks' notice. These deadlines exist so that arrangements for a room, invigilator and (in some cases) transcription for disk, audio, or Braille can be arranged.

Added Time

The time allowed for writing examinations varies from person to person depending on the nature of a student's disability. For most students who need additional time, this amounts to time and a half, or double the amount of the scheduled exam or test time.

Oral Examinations

Some students with learning disabilities or those who are blind or have low-vision find it useful to hear their exams. The exam coordinator can either read the exam to the student or use adaptive technology to dictate an exam. In this latter circumstance, exams may be:

- Pre-recorded into audio format
- Recorded onto a computer disk with a digital recorder.
- Dictated by a stand-alone reading system, which scans and reads the hard copy material.
- Scanned and dictated by a PC-based OCR reading system and/or screen reading software, such as JAWS, Text-Help or Kurzweil 3000

For these purposes, the Atlantic Centre may request that an exam be saved and sent on disk (PC formatted) rather than on a paper copy, in order to maximize staff and equipment availability.

Sign Language Interpreting

Students who are deaf and supported by the Atlantic Centre may take their exams in the classroom or at the Centre, depending on the need for interpreting.

Scribes

Some students who have mobility impairments or difficulties with typed or written output may request a scribe, provided by the Atlantic Centre. Scribes will write only what the students dictate. Scribes and students are aware of Saint Mary's University's academic policies regarding examinations, and that the Atlantic Centre strictly adheres to these regulations.

Storage

Examinations and tests received by the Atlantic Centre remain secure. All original exams are returned to the instructors and any duplicates are destroyed. Exams written by students using computers are saved onto disks provided by the Centre. Any exam files are deleted from the disks once the instructors have received the students' exams,

Note Taking

Students with many types of disabilities find note taking services to be an invaluable aid during their course of study. Students that need this accommodation benefit from volunteer note takers, note taking technology, or obtaining class notes directly from their professor. The Centre supplies no-carbon-required duplicate copy paper that the student provides to the volunteer note taker and the student retains copies of the notes.

3 Learning Implications and Strategies for Instruction

FOR ONE AND ALL

Many of the suggestions outlined in this handbook may benefit all students in your class. Inclusive teaching means practicing instruction methods that do not exclude students from learning opportunities.

Summary of suggestions for universal instruction methods:

- It is helpful when the instructor verbally announces to the class his or her willingness to assist students with disabilities and offers to meet with these students to discuss their needs.
- Include a statement on the syllabus regarding the availability of accommodations and support for students with disabilities.
- Start each session with an outline of material to be covered.
- Review previously presented material at the beginning of class, and summarize important points at the end.
- To encourage participation in class, students should have available, and be made aware of, any material to be covered before each lecture.
- Emphasize important terminology or key concepts (providing vocabulary lists is beneficial).
- Complement an oral presentation with relevant visual information (power points, handouts). Additionally, reading aloud notes from an overhead or board is reinforcing for all the class.
- Slightly slowing down the pace of communication helps all students assimilate information.
- If there is some difficulty in getting an idea across, rephrase the thought rather than repeat exactly the same words.
- Repeat those questions that come from the back of the room and provide enough time for review and questions and answers.
- Allow students to do an audio recording of the lecture.
- Announce reading assignments well in advance for students who are using recorded materials. It takes an average of six weeks to get a book digitally recorded.
- If possible, select a textbook with a study guide for optional student use.
- Provide study questions for exams that show both the format and the content of the test, and explain what makes a good answer and why.
- If necessary, allow students to demonstrate mastery of course material using alternative methods (i.e. alternate format to multiple choices, oral exam).

A Summary of Specific Disabilities – Implications and Strategies

ATTENTION DEFICIT/ HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Learning Implications

According to the DSM-IV-TR (the diagnostic manual used by physicians), AD/HD can occur in three forms: the **inattentive type of attention deficit** (some examples are trouble organizing activities, forgetfulness, difficulty sustaining attention for long periods), the **hyperactive-impulsive type of attention deficit** (some examples are excessive talking, constant motion, restlessness, appears impatient, interrupts others) and the **combined type, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder** (examples include a mix of the above symptoms).

Other difficulties experienced by students with an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder lie in the area of organization and time management that can affect both academic and social functioning. Getting started on a task, organizing and planning the activity, and persisting with the task to completion is often a challenge. Missing deadlines on assignments, forgetting test schedules, coming to class on the wrong day or missing appointments are quite common.

Children diagnosed with these deficits may experience enduring symptoms that persist in adulthood that can affect academic, social, and occupational functioning. It is treatable through a combination of medical intervention, compensatory strategies and accommodations that will manage the symptoms.

Accommodations and Supports

- Note taking support and/or permission to record lectures
- Exam accommodation (access to a computer to organize and edit, extra time, quiet space)
- Short breaks to help the student refocus attention (testing situations included)
- Time extensions on assignments (to be negotiated ahead of time between student and professor)

Instructional Strategies

- Clear guidelines and expectations about the course, including time-lines.
- Encourage the use of student planners so that everything is written down and the student is not relying on oral instructions.
- Combine lectures with classroom demonstration, visuals, and videos.
- Provide reminders about homework, assignment and test dates.
- Minimize room distractions.

AUTISM / AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

Learning Implications

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurological disorder that affects how the brain processes information. It is characterized by qualitative differences in the development of language (verbal/non-verbal communication), cognition, and social interactions. ASD varies in degrees of severity, but will have an effect on an individual's social development, behavior, and language depending on his or her abilities and personality.

Autism Spectrum Disorder is increasingly becoming the term that is used when defining autism and other closely related disabilities that share many of the characteristics of autism. These include: Asperger Syndrome, a neurobiological disorder with characteristics of autism but with no significant delay in language development, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified, a disorder that resembles a number of characteristics of autism, but may not be as extensive or severe.

Accommodations and Supports

- Exam Accommodations
- Technology
- Organizational Tools
- Note takers

Instructional Strategies

- Give advance notice for changes in schedules.
- Be as concrete as possible when presenting new concepts and abstract material.
- Be clear with instructions and expectations.
- Use multi-modal instruction/examples.
- Outlines of course materials.
- Minimize classroom background noise.
- Predictability and structure in classroom activities and instruction.
- Provide direct instruction and modeling if possible.

DEAFNESS AND HEARING LOSS

Learning Implications

The impact of hearing loss on deaf or hard of hearing students' receptive and expressive communication methods depends on certain factors such as degree and age of onset. These students may use Sign Language (including working with interpreters), lip-reading and speech, various assistive listening devices, or a combination of these.

It is helpful to realize that hearing aids amplify all sounds, some of which (overhead projector motors), may be very distracting to the student. As well, persons who lip-read must do a certain amount of guessing. For these reasons, persons with a hearing loss rely more heavily on visual cues and visual presentation of information.

Accommodations and Supports

- Note taking
- Exam Accommodations i.e. extra time or provision of an interpreter
- Sign language interpreters for classes, labs, meetings etc.
- Personal FM systems

Instructional Strategies

- Ensure that course information is made available on paper (or online, if applicable). Include the syllabus, notices of exams, schedule changes, etc.
- Use captioned films when possible, and remember to leave some lights on if you have an interpreter.
- Always speak directly to deaf or hard of hearing students in one-on-one situations.
- If the student relies on lip-reading, repeat comments made by other students in a class discussion to ensure that the student receives equal information.
- When lecturing to hard of hearing students, try to avoid unnecessary pacing and speaking while writing on the board.
- Hard of hearing students with FM systems may provide professors with a small microphone so that lectures can be amplified and heard in a hearing aid.

If you have an interpreter in your class

Interpreters are part of the educational team, facilitating communication between instructors and students. Professional interpreters follow a code of ethics that stresses confidentiality, impartiality and integrity.

- Speak at your regular pace, but be aware that interpreting requires a few seconds of delay. Occasionally, interpreters might ask professors for clarification.
- Interpreters will situate themselves discreetly and unobtrusively at the front of the classroom along a line of sight where the deaf students can see them clearly.

LEARNING DISABILITIES

Learning Implications

Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and occur across the life span. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other disabling conditions, for example ADHD or depression and anxiety, or with extrinsic influences, they are not the result of those conditions or influences. (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities)

Academic skills that can be affected include reading (decoding and comprehension), written language (both conceptual and the mechanics of writing), oral language (listening, speaking and understanding instructions), math (concepts and computation) and organization/planning skills. Other types of learning disabilities may affect spatial or mechanical abilities, as well as socially-based non-verbal deficits (missing social cues).

Accommodations and Supports

- Exam/test accommodations (indicate the format of possible exam questions, access to a word processor with spell check, thesaurus, grammar check, extra time, use of memory aids or formula cards, supplementary oral exams, scribed, clarification of questions on tests/exams, use of a calculator on tests/exams)
- Alternative methods of evaluation (point form responses rather than full sentences)
- Reduced course load
- Note Taking
- Use of tape recorders in class (although students must seek permission before doing so)
- Access to alternative format materials such as books on tape

Instructional Strategies

- A learning disability is invisible and many students with learning disabilities will not wish to be singled out in class.
- Please refer to the strategies list on page 5.

MEDICAL DISABILITIES

Learning Implications

Some specific, medically oriented knowledge can be very helpful in understanding a student's needs and learning patterns. It is important, however, that faculty approach medical information about a student from an educational, and not from a diagnostic point of view.

A common problem to students with medical disabilities is fatigue and pain. They may have to expend more energy for the routines of daily living and so consideration should be given to their expenditure of energy in the classroom and surrounding environment. Pain and the adverse side effects of medication can be significant detractors to learning.

Accommodations and Supports

- Use of memory aids such as formula cards during tests
- Allowance of break periods as needed for rest and taking medication
- Ergonomically designed seating/furnishings
- Adjusted course grades for medical reasons (i.e. no penalty for late withdrawals)
- Alternative methods of evaluation
- Note taking support and/or permission to record lectures
- Exam accommodations
- Flexibility for absences for medical reasons (i.e. rescheduling of tests or exams).

Instructional Strategies

- Locate equipment and supplies in close proximity to the student.
- Pre-arrange a cue to refocus attention.
- If the classroom is in a remote location request a change.
- Be aware of procedures if there is a medical emergency.
- Be prepared to meet with the student and the Atlantic Centre for contingency planning.

MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES/DISORDERS

Learning Implications

A health condition that is characterized by changes/disturbances in behavior, thinking or emotions (can be a combination of these areas). These changes may limit or impair the individual's ability to participate in their life activities, engage in positive relations, their ability to adapt to change and manage difficulties.

The types of disorders include Anxiety Disorders (ex. panic disorders, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post traumatic stress disorder), Mood Disorders (ex. Major depressive, bipolar), Personality Disorders (ex. Dependant, schizoid, paranoid) and eating Disorders (ex. Anorexia, Bulimia Disorders). As faculty, providing a supportive learning environment and working closely with the Atlantic Centre will be key factors to the success of students with mental health disabilities.

Accommodations and Supports

- Exam accommodations
- Note takers
- Technology

Instructional Strategies

- Minimize classroom distractions
- Provide explicit instructions for assignments
- Allow student to leave the room if anxiety becomes unmanageable.
- Notify class/student of any changes in routine ahead of time.
- Allow break periods as needed for rest and taking medication
- Refer student to the Atlantic Centre or Counselling Services if you are concerned about their mental health.

MILD ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY

Learning Implications

Mild ABI is characterized by moderate changes in one, or all, of an individual's level of cognitive (ex. Memory, organizational skills, attention, concentration communication), emotional, behavioral, or physiological (ex. Fatigue, motor control, pain) functioning.

A mild ABI can be the result of a number of causes. For example, a brain tumor, a stroke or aneurisms, seizure activity, infectious disease, a loss of oxygen to the brain, or substance abuse. However, the most common cause of ABI is a traumatic injury to the brain as a result of either a blow to the head or a violent whipping action of the neck. There is no such thing as a "typical" ABI; similar injuries may produce different effects in different people.

Accommodations and Supports

- Exam accommodations
- Note takers
- Assistive Technology

Instructional Strategies

- Use of memory aids such as formula cards during tests.
- Provision of written, step by step instructions when assigning work.
- Time extensions for in-class assignments.
- Priority seating to facilitate attention.
- Allow break periods as needed for rest and taking medications.
- Use a multi-sensory approach to instruction.
- Summarize the information that is being taught.
- Atlantic Centre counselors can assist with organizational and other necessary skills.

MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS

Learning Implications

Some specific, medically oriented knowledge can be very helpful in understanding a student's needs and learning patterns. It is important, however, that faculty approach medical information about a student from an educational, and not from a diagnostic point of view.

Common problems for students with mobility impairments are fatigue, pain, and adverse side effects of medication which can be serious detractors to learning. They may have to expend more energy for the routines of daily living and so consideration should be given to their expenditure of energy in the classroom and surrounding environment.

Accommodations and Supports

- If the classroom is inaccessible or in a remote location request a change
- Note taking support and/or recorded lectures
- Allowance of break periods as needed for rest, taking medication and toileting
- Use of adaptive equipment e.g. computers with speech synthesizers, adapted keyboards and keyboard guards, tape recorders, specialized software.
- Advance book/reading lists
- Exam and Assignment Accommodation (i.e. use of adaptive technology, assistive devices and/or a scribe, extra time, take home exams)
- Punctuality should not be penalized where mobility is a factor
- A Student-Aide or Student Assistant may sometimes accompany a mobility-impaired student into the classroom. His/her duties may involve: placement of books, note taking, retrieval of research material, and feeding and personal care needs during class time.
- Advance notice of texts and readings in order to allow time for scanning.

Instructional Strategies

- If the student uses an attendant, speak to the student, not the attendant.
- Choose field trips and activities that are accessible to the student with a mobility impairment.
- Be aware of the fire evacuation procedures for students with mobility impairments.
- When interacting with persons who use wheelchairs remember they may experience fatigue with looking up for long periods of time. So when possible try to find ways to make eye contact on the same level by perhaps sitting instead of standing while talking to them.

VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Learning Implications

The term “visually impaired” refers to persons who are blind or have low vision. Although many students who are blind are easily recognizable by their guide dogs or white canes, others who have low vision move about and function without evident impairment.

Accommodations and Supports

- Note taking
- Exam Accommodations i.e. extra time and use of a computer
- Assistive Technology

Instructional Strategies

- It is helpful to remember that the student who is blind cannot see your body language and visual clues, and must rely upon the tone and content of your speech.
- If you allow students with low vision to hand-write their assignments, it may be unreasonable to expect such individuals to write as small as a person with normal vision, but neat writing should not be a problem if motor co-ordination is normal.
- Outline lessons at the beginning of class and provide sequential instructions; repeat important information
- Use familiar objects when making comparisons and drawing analogies; use specific descriptions rather than words such as “here, there, it, this”.
- Read aloud any print material being presented to the class, and verbally describe visuals such as slides or overheads, or when writing on a board.
- Respond to non-verbal signs of confusion.
- During classroom discussions ensure that only one person speaks at a time.
- Encourage teaming with a peer (e.g., during a film) to describe what is happening.
- Make reference readings and texts available prior to the commencement of classes, so they can be digitally recorded, scanned or brailled (preparing materials in alternative format may take several months).
- If in doubt about protocol or issues of etiquette, ask the student. For example, never pet a guide dog without the permission of the owner.
- Students who are blind or visually impaired may use adaptive equipment. It is not necessary for faculty to have an in depth knowledge of this equipment as the student is the expert. Common pieces of equipment include: portable brailler, Braille equipment, talking calculators and watches, thermographic pen and paper, screen readers, and portable note takers.
- A student with a visual impairment may ask their instructors’ permission to record their classes. This is particularly useful for those students who do not use Braille or large print as their working medium or for those students who cannot easily see the board or other class materials.

4 Internet Resources

AD / HD

<http://www.chadd.org> www.totallyadd.com

Autism Spectrum Disorder / Aspergers

<http://www.autismsocietycanada.ca> www.provincialautismcentre.ca

Deafness and Hearing Loss

<http://www.cad.ca> <http://www.chha.ca> <http://www.chs.ca/>

Learning Disabilities

<http://ldans.nsnet.org> <http://ldac-taac.ca>

Mental Health Disabilities/Disorders

<http://www.cmha.ca> <http://www.camh.net>

Mild Acquired Brain Injury

<http://biac-aclc.ca/en/> <http://www.biausa.org/>

Mobility Impairments

<http://canparaplegic.org> <http://www.csro.com/>

Visual Impairments

<http://www.cnib.ca>