The University of Winnipeg Instructor's Accessibility Guide

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Introduction

This UWinnipeg Instructor's Accessibility Guide was created by Library Services to support UWinnipeg faculty and contract instructors in teaching and supporting students with disabilities to achieve success in their courses.

The long-term goal of UWinnipeg is that our facilities, services, and courses are accessible and inclusive. Much of the information included in this Guide and available through Accessibility Services (AS) will be helpful for instructors in creating an inclusive learning environment for all.

Many of the resources and teaching strategies mentioned in this Guide are premised on the principles of universal design for learning (UDL). When learning materials and teaching strategies are designed and delivered with accessibility and inclusion in mind, there is less need to offer individual accommodations or modifications.

This Guide includes an overview of:

- Accessibility and human rights legislation related to compliance requirements for UWinnipeg;
- UWinnipeg accessibility and related policies, procedures, and training;
- Background information about various types of disabilities;
- Best practices for universal design for learning (UDL) and accessible and inclusive education;
- Procedures related to UWinnipeg academic accommodations; and
- Accessibility resources and services available on campus for faculty and for students.

We welcome your feedback, comments, and questions regarding the contents of this Instructor's Accessibility Guide. Please contact 204.988.7508 or hrdo@uwinnipeg.ca to submit feedback.

Manitoba Accessibility and Human Rights Legislation

The *Accessibility for Manitobans Act* (AMA) requires that organizations comply with its regulations and standards. This includes requirements to provide accessibility policies, plans, procedures, training, accommodations, and supports for persons with disabilities.

The UWinnipeg Accessibility Policy documents how UWinnipeg meets the AMA Standards for Customer Service, Information and Communication, and Employment.

UWinnipeg has policies and procedures in place to help identify, remove, and prevent barriers to the university's services and resources. Accessibility Services and Library Services have additional resources to assist students and instructors.

Instructors should ensure that they complete mandatory AMA and accessibility training and be aware of and follow UWinnipeg accessibility procedures.

Accessibility Best Practices

The following practices will help ensure that UWinnipeg is compliant with AMA standards and guidelines:

- Inform students, in writing and orally, that resources are available using communication supports or in alternate formats, upon request;
- Inform students that accommodations are available to ensure courses are accessible and that instructors are available to meet with students and/or their accessibility advisors to ensure that accommodations are effective;
- Consider accessible format, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and UWinnipeg documentation guidelines when creating course content; and
- Consider accessibility when procuring, purchasing, or requesting resources.

UWinnipeg Statement of Commitment to Accessibility

The University of Winnipeg is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all members of its community, with equal access and participation for everyone. We are committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to full participation in society that may be experienced by persons with disabilities, so as to maintain their dignity and independence to the extent possible. The University of Winnipeg will comply fully with the Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

UWinnipeg Accessibility and Related Policies

- [Accessibility Policy](#)
- [Service Animals on Campus Policy](#)
- [Respectful Working and Learning Environment Policy](#)
- [Employment Equity and Diversity Policy](#)

Required and Recommended Accessibility Training

Mandatory

- The Accessibility for Manitobans Act – [Customer Service Training](#)
- AMA Employment Standard Training – accessed via your Nexus account
- AMA Information and Communications Standard Training – accessed via your Nexus account

Recommended

- Creating Accessible Learning Experiences for Students
  (formerly Accommodating Learning (and Other) Disabilities in the Classroom)
  – contact the HRDO at hrdo@uwinnipeg.ca or 204.988.7508. Training opportunities are also advertised in the *Your UWinnipeg* Newsletter.

- See also *AMA Information and Communication Additional Resources* on the HRDO website for other available accessibility training and resources.

Improving Accessibility in Courses

When designing courses to consider and include accessibility and flexibility, course developers and instructors need to:

- Clarify the goals that are set to challenge students through the course;
- Consider the learning objectives of the course; and
- Think creatively about the different ways in which students can achieve them.

Universal Design for Learning priorities

Accessible course content and instruction can be accomplished by applying Universal Design for Learning priorities and principles. These include:

- Multiple means of representation (e.g., text, audio, video, online);
- Multiple means of engagement (e.g., individual, group, in person, online); and
- Multiple means of expression (e.g., written, oral, video, poster).

Developing course content

When developing content, consider different ways that students could acquire the key concepts, theories, and principles of the course. For example:

- Integrate a variety of instructional strategies (e.g., lectures, activities, group work, and independent study);
- Present material in various formats (e.g., orally, visually, in print, online);
- Sequence information so that new material can be linked to and build upon prior learning; and
- Prepare course content, outlines, and study guides in advance to help students structure, review, and prepare their learning process and to organize information during class and throughout the course.

Where possible, provide a detailed course outline several weeks before the beginning of the course. Ensure that the outline describes the course goals and expectations, topics, reading list, technical vocabulary, and evaluation procedures. As the term progresses, notify students, orally and in writing, of any changes in the course content, scheduling, or deadlines.

Providing course materials and alternate formats of information

Instructors can help students gain access to the course materials in a variety of ways. When requests for alternate formats occur, ensure that you understand which format works best for each student. Some other actions to consider when providing course content include:

- Design course content using a variety of media (e.g., text, images or graphics applying accessible design standards, such as high-contrast graphics and images with alt-text descriptions, and video with captions);
- Create a course web site that meets accessibility standards and provides a place for students to obtain links to accessible course materials;
- Provide all materials in digital and plain text format where possible; and
- Work with Accessibility Services to provide course content in accessible or alternate formats, upon request.

Ensuring assessment and evaluation methods are inclusive

Consider different ways that students can demonstrate their understanding of the material, both orally and in written form. The goal is to enable all students to demonstrate learning by applying their strengths and abilities and by accommodating any functional limitations and requests. Some methods and options for accessible assessment and evaluation include:

- Throughout the course, provide quizzes, exercises, and other self-assessment mechanisms that don't impact grades, for students to assess their own understanding of the material and seek help where needed;
- Offer choices of assignment formats (e.g., oral or written summaries, videos, concept maps, posters);
- Provide options when presenting test material and test questions (e.g., using different forms of questions, offering digital format to allow for conversion to screenreaders); and
- Allow for variations in how students record test responses (e.g., orally, handwritten, digitally, with the assistance of a support person or note taker).

Departmental Accessibility Audits

Instructors are encouraged to participate in completing UWinnipeg's bi-annual departmental accessibility audits. These audits assist in identifying accessibility barriers of all types. Audit results contribute to creating goals in UWinnipeg's Accessibility Plan, a document intended as a multi-year plan focused on identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers.

Understanding Disabilities

While some students might be comfortable discussing their disability, many others might not be. It's important for instructors to understand that students with disabilities are not required to disclose details about their disability or medical condition to instructors. Instructors must not question students or ask for details about their diagnosis, disability, or condition.

If an instructor is involved in providing accommodations, respectful discussion is encouraged on how to provide accommodations or support accessible learning, without questions about a student's disability or diagnosis.

Instructor queries can relate to functional limitations that students may be experiencing when accessing or understanding course content, understanding or completing current assignments, or completing different types of assessment or evaluation.

Students may require accommodations related to many types of disabilities or conditions. "According to the 2018 report of the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS), among students with disabilities, the NEADS report found 32.2% of students with disabilities require some kind of accommodation on campus… The most commonly experienced disability among students is pain (with related mobility and flexibility impairments), followed closely by mental health conditions." (UWinnipeg Library Accessibility, International and Extended Library Services Workplan, 2022)

The following information provides general background on different types of disabilities and potential accommodations that may be requested by students. Individual accommodations may vary and are unique to each student.

- Learning
- Memory
- Mental Health (psychological, emotional, or psychiatric conditions)
- Hearing (D/deaf or hard of hearing)
- Seeing (visual impairments)
- Physical (including mobility, agility, dexterity)
- Communication (difficulty communicating or receiving information)
- Cognitive or developmental
- Chronic illness or chronic pain
- Temporary, recurring, or episodic conditions
- Acquired Brain Injuries

Reasonable and Appropriate Accommodations

The University does not expect course instructors to modify curriculum or expectations for students with disabilities to the extent that academic integrity would be compromised or that a new course is designed for the student.

Legally, "reasonable and appropriate accommodations" are modifications or alternate ways of providing services that are reasonable and do not cause "undue hardship" to the service provider. For UWinnipeg instructors, what constitutes reasonable and appropriate accommodations will vary in each situation.

Different types of disabilities and different individuals require different accommodations. Each student must be assessed on an individual basis in the context of a particular course and its academic requirements.

Instruction-related accommodations could include:

- Providing reading lists and other course materials early to allow for alternate format provision or a longer period for processing information;

- Alternate scheduling, additional time, or reasonable extensions for the completion of assignments, tests, or exams;
- Use of assistive devices in the classroom (or in the lab, for field work), such as access to a computer with adaptive software;
- Permission to record or videotape lectures;
- Use of sign language interpreters or note takers in the classroom (or in the lab, for field work);
- Modified seating (e.g., moveable tables, location with clear sight lines); and
- Adjustments to lighting.

A student must be able, with reasonable accommodations, to fulfill the essential requirements of the course curriculum, with no modification of those essential requirements. The purpose of accommodation is to remove those barriers to learning which students with disabilities might experience as a result of their functional limitations, but *not* to relieve them from the responsibility to develop the essential skills and competencies expected of all students.

It is important that course instructors not conclude that a student is incapable of performing essential requirements until and unless reasonable and appropriate accommodation has first been provided.

Appropriate accommodations shouldn't lead to diminished academic expectations. Contact the student's Accessibility Advisor if the student is in academic jeopardy, as this might indicate that their accommodations needs to be modified or the student might benefit from different supports and resources.

In some circumstances, the nature and degree of functional limitation may mean that no accommodation would enable an individual to meet the essential academic requirements or expectations of a course or program. In these cases, the University is not required to accommodate. However, instructors are expected to work with Accessibility Services and the Human Rights and Diversity Office to ensure that all efforts are made to provide reasonable options before determining that accommodation needs cannot be met.

Accessibility Services at UWinnipeg

The University of Winnipeg Accessibility Services (AS) and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) is located on the main floor of Manitoba Hall, Room 1M35.

In collaboration with the students, faculty, and staff at the University of Winnipeg, Accessibility Services (AS) facilitates and promotes the ongoing development of an accessible learning environment. This helps provide students with disabilities or medical conditions the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of campus life.

Some of the services offered by AS and DHHS include:

- Academic accommodations
- Letters of Accommodations to faculty
- Regular meetings with accessibility advisors

- Referrals to tutoring services
- Alternative formats of print or paper course materials
- Assistance with Manitoba Student Aid and other funding programs

Instructors are encouraged to reach out to AS with any questions or concerns. AS offers annual orientation sessions to incoming students each September. They also provide a computer lab and space for students to study or write exams.

The UWinnipeg Library Accessibility Coordinator is available weekly at AS to provide accessibility support and one-on-one instruction on academic research.

For more information on AS, including information for instructors and access to the faculty portal, visit https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/accessibility-services/. Faculty are also welcome to visit AS on campus in 1M35 or call 204.786.9771.

Instructor Responsibilities for AS Accommodations

Providing accommodations is a collaborative process between students, instructors, and Accessibility Services (AS).

- Students have a unique and personal knowledge of their disability and its impact on their day-to-day functioning and the barriers that impact them.
- Instructors have knowledge about the content and format of the course and its required goals and outcomes.
- AS advisors have a general knowledge of disabilities, possible impact on academic performance, and accessibility services and supports available.

Information shared by students with disabilities with AS accessibility advisors cannot be disclosed to anyone without the student's consent. If a student is registered with AS and has requested accommodations for a course, then that student's instructors or others may be notified if they are involved in providing accommodations.

- At the beginning of each semester, AS students must log into the AS Student Portal to request a Letter of Accommodation for instructors which outlines the types of accommodations the student may require for the course.
- After an accommodation is requested, an automatic notification will be sent to instructors with instructions for accessing the Letter of Accommodation. The notification outlines the accommodations the student may require for the course.
- The student and instructor will also have the option to view and download a copy of the letter for their own records. Students are encouraged to speak to their instructors directly to discuss how accommodations might apply to the course requirements.
- If you are a PACE instructor, a Letter of Accommodation will be provided to your student and the student's Program Coordinator. Students are responsible for providing each new instructor with a copy of the letter.
- Instructors are responsible for following up with each student regarding how best to provide accommodations (e.g., periodic absences, extensions on

assignments or submission of assignments in alternate formats, provision of course content in advance or in alternate format).

- If you believe that implementing requested accommodations described in a student's Letter of Accommodation will compromise academic standards, contact the Accessibility Advisor listed on the Letter of Accommodation.

Instructors can also contact AS to discuss any questions or concerns about specific accommodation needs with regards to course requirements.

Test and Exam Bookings

AS and DHHS students must submit their test and exam booking requests in advance using the online Student Portal.

- Test bookings must be arranged at least two weeks in advance. Test cancellations must take place at least one week in advance.
- December or April final exam bookings must be arranged at least four weeks before the start of exam period (deadline is the business day after the final voluntary withdrawal dates for each period).
- After test or exam bookings are arranged, instructors will receive an automated notice seven (7) days in advance and two (2) days in advance of the text or exam. The automated notice will confirm the student's time extension or applicable accommodation arrangements.
- Students receive an automated notice three (3) days before their test or exam.
- For online courses, instructors will need to adjust students' writing time accordingly through the online Nexus testing platform.
- Some students may require a copy of the test or exam in an alternate format (e.g., digital, large print, printed on coloured paper, etc.), in which case you may be asked to provide a copy to AS in basic MS Word format for conversion.
- When providing test or exam material to AS, upload a copy of the test or exam and any supplementary material (e.g., tables, formula sheets, reference documents). In addition, provide any specific instructions for the test or exams (e.g., if it is closed book, whether calculators allowed, if the student must return all materials).

Step-by-step tutorial for University of Winnipeg undergraduate/graduate faculty

Step-by-step tutorial for Professional, Applied, and Continuing Education (PACE) instructors

AS/DHHS Faculty Portal Information - Online Services

Students registered with AS/DHHS and their instructors can access the portal links from our department's website and use their WebAdvisor account's username and password to log in. To access the Faculty Portal, instructors must use their

WebAdvisor username and password. If you do not know this information or need to reset your password, contact the Technology Service Desk for assistance.

When you log into the portal to submit a copy of the test or exam and add the particulars, you can also request for the test package to be delivered to your Department Assistant. Delivery can take up to two days during busy exam periods.

Test Packages

Test packages can also be scanned and emailed or sent by courier to an off-campus workplace upon request (e.g., if you are sessional staff or have an off-campus office).

Once complete, your student's test response package is automatically filed for pickup from the AS front desk (room 1M35) between 8:30 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. Monday to Friday.

Alternatively, you may arrange for either your department assistant or TA to pick up the package on your behalf. If so, please e-mail us in advance with the full name of these individuals so that we may ensure the release of the exam to the proper person.

If you prefer your tests or exams to be delivered to your department, that information must be noted on the Particulars Test form.

For security reasons, tests and exams will not be sent through interdepartmental mail.

Questions?

Common questions from instructors include: "Who do I contact if a student mentions they're having some functional challenges in class? What if a student discloses a disability, either directly or indirectly? What if I think a student may have a disability that is impacting their academic performance?"

It is important that any discussion with a student is conducted in a completely private and confidential setting. There may be several explanations for a student's academic performance. This subject may be a sensitive one so it must be handled with care and discretion. At the same time, it is important to refer students to campus resources that they may not otherwise be aware of. It is appropriate for instructors to refer students to AS.

If you have any questions or concerns related to student accessibility or disability, please contact Accessibility Services at 204.786.9771 or accessibility@uwinnipeg.ca.