

# Student Accommodations - Information for Instructors

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## 1. Accommodating the needs of students with disabilities

The University of Waterloo has a [duty to accommodate people with disabilities](#) under the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2016) *Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability*.

Please review information on the [responsibilities of course instructors and faculty members](#) for accommodating students' accessibility needs.

### Existing accommodation plans

If a student has an existing accommodation plan and the student activates that plan at the start of the term, the instructor will receive a [notification](#) email from AccessAbility Services that explains the student's accommodation needs. AAS also provides instructors with an [online dashboard](#) that conveniently lists all of the students in their course with a registered accommodation plan. It is strongly recommended that instructors review the [brief video tutorial](#) explaining how to use the AAS faculty module. While students are strongly encouraged to activate their existing accommodation plans at the start of the term to optimize their accommodation arrangements, instructors are responsible for working with the student and AccessAbility staff to accommodate students' needs whenever their accommodation plans are activated. This may include [retroactive accommodations](#).

### Emergent accommodation plans

A student may identify or develop an accommodation need after the start of the term. For example, a student may experience an injury that impacts their coursework, or a student may discover an accommodation need of which they were previously unaware of. In such cases, the student will submit an online application and submit relevant documentation to AAS. The AAS office will arrange an interim accommodation plan for the student and help them to activate that plan. Once the student activates their accommodation plan the instructor receives a notification email from AAS about the student's accommodation needs. Instructors are responsible for working with the student and AAS to provide reasonable accommodations for these emergent needs. These accommodation needs may include [retroactive accommodations](#) for components of the course that have already occurred – e.g., additional

time to complete an assignment after the original submission deadline has passed, or a make-up session or alternative assignment for a quiz/test/exam that was missed.

## Retroactive accommodation process

If a student approaches you with a request for [retroactive accommodation](#) during or after the course, then you should let them know that this request will be given thoughtful consideration and that AAS will need to be consulted to make arrangements. More information can be found at the AAS site's [resources for faculty and staff](#). It is important that instructors follow the retroactive accommodation process.

## Referring students to AAS

Instructors can play a very valuable role in helping students to seek out needed accommodations. AAS provides a set of [tips and scripts for referring students](#) to seek support from their office. These include suggestions for responding when a student discloses a disability or condition as well as suggestions for how to refer students when you observe them struggling academically and believe they may require accommodations.

## Facilitating student accommodations

In order to accommodate students' needs instructors may be required to provide relevant information or materials to AAS, such as a testing agreement, copies of tests, and course materials for alternate format production. The AAS office will inform instructors about what is needed to arrange relevant accommodations for a student. To be prepared, please consult the [timeline](#) for providing needed resources to AAS.

## Respecting students' privacy

In providing accommodations it is vital to [respect the privacy](#) of students' medical information. Instructors may not require or request that students provide them with medical documents. Also, while instructors may inquire about the student's needs and accommodation plans they should not seek information about the student's underlying condition. Instructors should not disclose information about students' accommodation needs to others unless those others have a specific need to know in order to arrange the accommodations. Please remember that disclosure can be inadvertent; for example, if an instructor prohibits the use of internet-connected devices in class or portions of classes, a student with an accommodation that requires use of such a device will be identifiable by classmates as having an accommodation.

## Resources for accessible planning in course design

The Centre for Teaching Excellence provides valuable information for [accessible course planning](#) and [universal course design principles](#).

## 2. Accommodating students' religious and spiritual observances

The University of Waterloo has a duty to accommodate religious and spiritual observances and other creed-based beliefs and practices under the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2015) *Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed*. Available at: <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-creed>

Currently the procedure for requesting creed-related accommodations involves the student notifying the instructor that they have an accommodation need and the instructor then working with the student to provide reasonable accommodations to meet the need. For example, an instructor might arrange a make-up test date when a student notifies them of a conflict with a religious observance on the original date, or an instructor may permit a student's temporary absence from a class in order for the student to observe their daily prayer obligations.

When a student presents an instructor with a need for a creed-based accommodation the instructor should: 1) accept the request in good faith, 2) only request information that is needed by the instructor to understand how to make the accommodation, and 3) maintain confidentiality about the student's accommodation need, sharing it only with those who need to know in order to arrange the accommodation (OHRC, 2015, p. 5). Instructors should not require students to provide documentation from religious authorities to support such requests.

The University of Waterloo's Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-racism provides a termly list of [religious and spiritual days of observance](#). Please note that this list includes commonly-observed dates and is not an exhaustive list. It is provided to instructors for proactive, inclusive planning purposes to help them schedule the dates of class activities to avoid potential conflicts. An instructor should not deny a student's accommodation request just because it does not appear on this list of dates.

Students may request accommodations for temporary absences from classes or other course-related activities to engage in prayer or other daily spiritual practices. The University of Waterloo has a number of [multi-faith spaces](#) that students can use for faith-based practices.

It is recommended that in the course outline instructors should describe the general approach that they will use to accommodate missed work.

## 3. Accommodating absences due to verified illness

For absences that are not pandemic-related, students submit a [Verification of Illness Form](#) (VIF) form electronically to the Arts Undergraduate Office (AUO). The VIF indicates the determination by a care provider (normally a physician) of the degree of incapacitation for a given period of time. The Arts Undergraduate Office will review and approve the VIF form. Typically, the AUO will process a student's request within 2 working days.

When a student's VIF has been approved all of the student's instructors will receive an email notifying them of the student's absence, the severity of the illness, and the dates that are covered. To arrange accommodations, it is the student's responsibility to get in touch with the instructor before or within 24 hours of the date of any missed course component, or as soon as the student is able to given their health condition. The instructor is then expected to attempt to come to an agreement with the student regarding how any missed mandatory class, lab, assignment, test or exam will be addressed.

To accommodate absences due to student illness, instructors are expected to provide reasonable accommodations such as extensions on assignment deadlines, make-up dates for missed tests/quizzes, or dropping the missed component and shifting the weight to other components.

Students should not submit their VIF to their instructor. If a student attempts to submit a VIF to their instructor then the instructor should direct the student to follow the [process](#) for submitting their VIF to the AUO. Students should not submit detailed medical documents or private health information such as a physician's letter to their instructors. If a student attempts to give private medical documents to an instructor the instructor should not view or accept those documents, nor should they pass those documents on to any third parties. Please see guidelines on [protecting student's privacy rights](#). If a student discloses a disability or health condition then instructors can use some of the recommended [tips and scripts for referring students](#) to AccessAbility Services for support.

It is recommended that in the course outline instructors should describe the general approach that they will use to accommodate missed work.

#### **4. Absences for other extenuating circumstances (e.g., bereavement)**

For absences due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., bereavement, serious family illness), students submit [a request for absence due to extenuating circumstances](#) to the Arts Undergraduate Office (AUO). Students use the AUO form to submit supporting documentation, which will be considered in a similar manner to a VIF. Official documentation is necessary before any action can be taken. Examples are: plane/train/bus tickets, court documents, police reports, death certificates/obituaries/letters from funeral directors. Typically, the AUO will process a student's request within 2 working days.

When a student's absence due to extenuating circumstances has been approved, all of the student's instructors will receive an email notifying them of the student's absence. The notification email also includes a link that takes the instructor to [the VIF system homepage](#). This VIF homepage lists all of the recorded absence types for students in that instructor's courses. The records can be reviewed in list view or calendar view. The listings are updated regularly as new absences are registered during the term.

To make arrangements for accommodations, it is then the student's responsibility to get in touch with the instructor before or within 24 hours of the date of any missed course component, or as soon as possible. The instructor is then expected to attempt to come to an agreement with the student regarding how any missed mandatory class, lab, assignment, test or exam will be addressed.

To accommodate absences due to extenuating circumstances, instructors are expected to provide reasonable accommodations such as extensions on assignment deadlines, make-up dates for missed tests/quizzes, or dropping the missed component and shifting the weight to other components.

It is recommended that in the course outline instructors should describe the general approach that they will use to accommodate missed work.

## 5. Self-declared absence (pandemic-related)

Students can [self-declare](#) an absence on Quest due to COVID-related illness or a requirement to self-isolate. A self-declared COVID absence covers up to 10 days and no documentation is required. No in person course activity is permitted during the period of a self-declared COVID absence. Participation in on-line components is permitted but should not be required if the student notifies the instructor that they are too ill to participate in the online work.

When a student declares a COVID-related absence, instructors receive a notification email which includes information on the dates covered and a link to the record for that student's absence. The notification email also includes a link that takes the instructor to [the VIF system homepage](#). This VIF homepage lists all of the recorded absence types for students in that instructor's courses. The records can be reviewed in list view or calendar view. The listings are updated regularly as new absences are registered during the term.

It is the student's responsibility to get in touch with their instructors within the first 24 hours after submitting their self-declaration of absence, or as soon as they are well enough, in order to discuss possible accommodations for missed course components. Instructors are expected to provide reasonable accommodations for any missed course components. Examples of accommodations include, extensions on assignment deadlines, make-up dates for test/quizzes, or dropping the missed assessment and shifting the weight to other assessments. It is recommended that instructors describe in the course outline how they will accommodate missed work.

It is recommended that in the course outline instructors should describe the general approach that they will use to accommodate missed work.

## 6. Self-declared short-term absence (for any reason)

Students can [self-declare](#) one short-term absence per term on Quest for any reason. A short-term absence covers two calendar days and no documentation is required. The student has only one self-declared short-term absence per term and this absence can only be used during the formal lecture period. Self-declared absences cannot be applied to Laboratory (LAB) and Clinic (CLN) course components.

When a student declares a short-term absence, instructors receive a notification email which includes information on the dates covered and a link to the record for that student's absence. The notification email also includes a link that takes the instructor to [the VIF system homepage](#). Which lists all of the recorded absence types for students in that instructor's courses, including short-term absences, VIF absences, self-

declared COVID absences, and extenuating circumstances. The records can be reviewed in list view or calendar view. The listings are updated regularly as new absences are registered during the term.

It is the student's responsibility to get in touch with their instructors within the first 24 hours after submitting their self-declaration to discuss possible accommodations for missed course components. Instructors are expected to provide reasonable accommodations for any missed course components. Examples of accommodations include extensions on assignment deadlines, make-up dates for test/quizzes, or dropping the missed assessment and shifting the weight to other assessments.

It is recommended that in the course outline instructors should describe the general approach that they will use to accommodate missed work.

## 7. Absences for varsity athletic activities

The Faculty of Arts is committed to supporting varsity athletics at the University of Waterloo. Accordingly, instructors are strongly encouraged to provide reasonable accommodations for quizzes, tests, and other course components that student athletes need to miss due to travel for team games/events. Students are responsible for notifying instructors as soon as possible when they become aware of scheduling conflicts. The instructor is then expected to work with the student and the staff of Varsity Athletics to make appropriate arrangements.

When possible, the Wellness Coordinator at Varsity Athletics will proctor the test or quiz. In cases where the student's team is on the road, then one of the coaches will proctor. The Wellness Coordinator will still usually pick up and drop off the test materials and provide the instructions to their coaches.

If the student athlete has specific AccessAbility accommodation needs the Varsity Athletics proctors will implement those accommodations.

Varsity Athletics strives to have the student athlete write the exam at the same time as the class whenever this is possible. If the timing does not work they will arrange for the student athlete to write the exam in a time block as soon as is athletically possible. They ensure that if a student athlete is writing before or after a test/quiz is scheduled that they secure their cell phones and laptops until such a time as the conflict is over.

The staff of Varsity Athletics understand and strongly respect the need for academic integrity. They observe the principles of academic integrity in arranging and implementing accommodations for student athletes.