

# Guidelines for learners in the Faculty of Medicine requiring academic accommodations or other guidance from the Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD)

## Preamble

The Faculty of Medicine (Ingram School of Nursing, Physical and Occupational Therapy, School of Communication Sciences and Disorder, Undergraduate Medicine and Postgraduate Medicine) is committed to offer accessible learning environments and to work in collaboration with students and the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities in order to reduce barriers students may experience in their academic or clinical learning environments. All accommodations must respect the bona fide academic requirements of the corresponding academic program and are not intended to alter or compromise core skills or requirements of the academic program. Students are still expected to acquire and demonstrate mastery of essential skills and other bona fide academic requirements of the program. (Student should consult with their specific program for more information about required core skills and competencies).

Outlined below are some guiding principles and processes for students from the Faculty of Medicine who have a documented disability or experience barriers in their academic courses or clinical placements and have identified a need for academic accommodations.

## Who is eligible to receive academic accommodations?

Students with documented disabilities are eligible to receive reasonable academic accommodations. A disability may be permanent, such as a long-term physical, mental, learning, chronic or sensory impairment, or temporary in nature, such as a traumatic brain injury (concussion) or medical diagnosis where a recovery is expected. To be eligible for accommodation, the student's functioning in an academic or clinical setting must be impacted by their condition; a diagnosis alone is not sufficient grounds by which to grant accommodation. Not all impairments are visible, for example depression or a learning disability are invisible. Some impairments may only be acquired while at University such as multiple sclerosis, mental health impairments or concussions. The Office for Students with Disabilities encourages all students who experience barriers they feel may hinder their academic performance, to explore whether they qualify for academic accommodations.

## Who should I contact if I am experiencing barriers in my learning environment?

Students experiencing barriers in their learning environment should contact the OSD [via phone](tel:514-398-6009) (514-398-6009), [email](mailto:disabilities.students@mcgill.ca) (disabilities.students@mcgill.ca) or in person, to schedule an initial meeting. Each student who has identified the need for accommodation, is required to have those needs assessed by the OSD. An individual accommodation plan (IAP), that is consistent with the academic unit's essential skills and competencies, is then developed following this assessment.

Students from the Faculty of Medicine will need to request an appointment with Teri Phillips (Director, OSD) or Tanja Beck (Associate Director – Advising and Accommodations). The contact information for the OSD can be found at the bottom of this document.

## What happens during the meeting?

The initial meeting serves to identify the barriers the student is experiencing in their learning environment and to create an Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP) which will outline the student's approved academic accommodations. The process for determining reasonable accommodations is a collaborative one and is based on the student's self-report of the barriers they experience in the educational setting, medical documentation, a history of previous accommodations, if applicable, and best practices in the field of disability services. Students can request accommodations for their academic environment (e.g. exams, in-class) or for their clerkships/stages and clinical placements. Depending on the accommodations requested the final decision whether an accommodation is reasonable and feasible to implement will be taken in collaboration with the relevant academic authorities from the Faculty of Medicine. For particularly complex cases, an Accommodation Planning Committee will be struck, including an appropriate member of the Faculty of Medicine, an OSD staff member, and the student.

## Do I need medical documentation?

Medical documentation is not required for the initial appointment, however, in order to obtain access to academic accommodations students require third party, verifiable documentation. If you do have medical documentation, please bring it to the initial appointment. Please note that OSD registration and all medical documentation that is being submitted to OSD is confidential, and will not be disclosed or shared with other McGill internal or external units without the student's written consent. For students who are experiencing barriers that hinder their academic performance but have not obtained a diagnosis or third party documentation, the OSD can offer support in finding appropriate resources as to where this type of documentation may be obtained.

## What are the recommended actions and time frame?

It is the student's responsibility to self-identify in a timely fashion to the Office for Students with Disabilities in order to receive appropriate accommodation. Students with documented disabilities who have a history of accommodations are strongly encouraged to register with the OSD at the beginning of the semester, or earlier. This advanced planning will help ensure that students are provided with appropriate accommodations to access their learning environments. Need for more complex accommodations will require advanced notice, as such, students are encouraged to be in touch with the OSD as early as possible to ensure there is no gap in the availability of the necessary support. Students who obtain their first diagnosis or experience the onset of an illness while at University should contact the OSD as soon as possible to find out about available supports and services.

Course instructors, Program Directors or student Advisers may refer students to the OSD if a need for accommodation has been determined or if there is an imminent/urgent need.

An accommodation plan is designed to allow the student to meet program requirements, however, it does not guarantee successful completion of the program.

Accommodations for written exams are organized directly by the OSD. Students who wish to be accommodated during a clinical placement or who require accommodations for a practical exam should consult with the OSD. The OSD will then facilitate a dialogue between all three parties (student, OSD, faculty) to determine how to best reduce barriers.

Efforts will be made to ensure that student accommodation needs are met as they progress through their program. However, it should be recognized that students must also take an active role in the accommodation process. This mutual responsibility will help ensure that the students' accommodation needs are being addressed during the diverse educational activities both on and off campus, and throughout the varied student evaluations.

If a student does not contact the OSD in a timely manner, it may not be possible to provide the student with the required reasonable accommodations. If withdrawal or cancellation of the course is necessary, the student's progression in the program could be delayed, as many courses must be taken sequentially. Students who experience extenuating circumstances such as an emergency or a sudden onset of an illness should contact the OSD as they might be eligible to receive emergency accommodations.

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