

# ACADEMIC ACCOMODATION AND ACCESS POLICY

This policy is the responsibility of the Registrar. It was approved by Faculty Senate on December 7, 2018, was revised by the Academic Planning Committee on June 29, 2020, and was revised by Faculty Senate on October 14, 2022.

## POLICY OVERVIEW

This policy provides guidelines for the provision of academic accommodation and access to ensure that students with disabilities are treated with dignity and have equal opportunity in their pursuit of academic success and personal development at Briercrest College and Seminary.

Disabilities are defined according to section 2(1)(d.1) of *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* and can include any of the following conditions:

- physical disabilities
- blindness or visual impediments
- deafness or hearing impediments
- muteness or speech impediments
- intellectual disabilities or impairments
- learning disabilities or dysfunctions
- documented mental disorder
- documented chronic medical condition

*Academic Accommodation* refers to any adaptation of academic policies, procedures, or the educational environment that afford a student with a disability equal opportunity without compromising the academic integrity of a course based on its *essential requirements*. Reasonable accommodations are to be made up to the point of *undue hardship*.

Examples of academic accommodations available may include, but are not limited to:

- early provision of reading lists and text for alternate format options
- use of assistive technology in the classroom
- use of audio recording for lectures
- examination supports (extra time and/or alternate scheduling, distraction free space, use of assistive technology)
- lecture notes or other materials (i.e., presentation slides) provided to the student
- alternate scheduling of assignments in consultation with course instructors
- an assignment substitution
- excused absences (when medically necessary)

*Essential requirements* are the activities and skills that are core to the particular outcomes of a course or program, determined in conjunction with the faculty member. This also includes regular class attendance.

*Undue hardship* will be determined based on financial costs to the institution, the ability of a student to meet the requirements for entry or completion of a course or program, significant interference with the rights of other students, and health and safety concerns for any student or service provider.<sup>1</sup> For faculty, it is considered undue hardship to provide materials that are not presentable or immediately available.

## PRINCIPLES

This policy is guided by the principles of dignity, fairness and academic integrity.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to students with disabilities, faculty, staff, and senior administrators of Briercrest College and Seminary who are involved in matters related to academic accommodations.

## POLICY STATEMENT

Briercrest College and Seminary will provide suitable academic accommodations up to the point of undue hardship. Provision of these academic accommodations will affirm student dignity, fairness and uphold academic integrity and essential requirements.

This policy ensures compliance with the responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations and to prevent any discriminatory practices based on disability that would hinder an individual from having "an opportunity equal with other individuals" (*Canadian Human Rights Act*, 2). It is a step towards ensuring education equity that "all students receive equality of educational benefit; and all students experience a supportive, inclusive learning environment" (*Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission*, 2018).

In accordance with *The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and Briercrest's Privacy Policy, personal information related to disability collected by the institution will be kept confidential and used only for the informed purpose, for purposes where consent is given by the person, and/or when otherwise required.

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<sup>1</sup> From *Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in post-secondary educational institutions*, published by the Alberta Human Rights Commission.

### *Core understandings*

Students with disabilities should be affirmed in their self-advocacy and must not to be presumed incapable of performing the essential requirements of a course/program unless an effort has been made to canvass all reasonable options for accommodation.

Students with disabilities are required to meet the same academic requirements and standards as all students, although the manner in which students with disabilities meet these may vary. Academic integrity will be upheld by those providing and receiving academic accommodations.<sup>2</sup>

### *Provision and limitations of academic accommodations*

Academic accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis according to the student's need, the course/program requirements, and available resources. The responsibility is shared between the student, the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator, and course instructors.

Current and relevant documentation verifying a student's disability or need is required from a qualified professional (i.e., medical doctor, registered psychologist) to determine eligibility for accessing academic accommodations. For some conditions, documentation should specify if the condition is temporary or permanent. Every effort must be made to provide the approved accommodations while preserving academic integrity up to the point of undue hardship.

In the event that an accommodation is refused, it is the institution's responsibility to demonstrate that provision of that accommodation would result in undue hardship or violate the academic integrity of a course or program.

### *Admission responsibilities*

Briercrest College and Seminary encourages applications from students with disabilities.

Upon application, students with disabilities will be encouraged to:

- declare that they have a need for accommodations based on the limitations of their disabilities and seek assistance from the Academic Resource Centre.
- choose programs of study that are appropriate for their skills, interests, abilities and career goals (this applies to all applicants).
- supply current and relevant documentation of their disability to the Registrar, or their designate, prior to arrival on campus.

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<sup>2</sup> See also The University of Saskatchewan's policy: "Students with Disabilities: Academic Accommodation and Access" Section 4.1 Reasonable Academic Accommodations (<http://policies.usask.ca/policies/student-affairs-and-activities/students-with-disabilities.php>)

In some circumstances, the nature and degree of the disability may mean that no reasonable accommodation would enable an individual to perform the essential requirements of a course/program. Where no reasonable accommodation can be provided, Briercrest may refuse admission to the program or accommodations in order to uphold the essential requirements of a course/program<sup>3</sup> (see also Procedures).

### *Student responsibilities*

- provide current and relevant documentation of their disability from a licensed professional.
- register with the Academic Resource Centre at the beginning of each semester to develop an appropriate accommodations plan.
- collaborate with faculty about specific accommodations when necessary (e.g., accessing lecture notes or slides); the Academic Resource Centre can also provide support.
- follow procedures in registering for testing accommodations in a timely matter.
- use academic accommodations for the purpose in which they were intended (e.g., use access to lecture notes as a support rather than as a reason to not take notes).

### *Coordinator of the Academic Resource Centre responsibilities*

The Coordinator of the Academic Resource Centre is tasked with providing support for all students, including those with disabilities. The Academic Resource Centre Coordinator is responsible to:

- encourage students with disabilities to register
- advise students without appropriate documentation who would like to access accommodations.
- approve appropriate accommodations with consideration of the student's documentation, available resources, and academic integrity. Individual faculty members may be consulted in unusual circumstances.
- communicate with faculty regarding individual student accommodations to ensure all are supported and accommodations are being met in such a way that academic integrity is being preserved.
- work with students with disabilities in determining grant eligibility and other financial considerations (i.e., implications of reduced course loads).
- provide advice and assistance for students with disabilities and faculty as needed.
- provide appropriate and necessary exam accommodations when requested by students.

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<sup>3</sup> See also The University of Saskatchewan's policy: "Students with Disabilities: Academic Accommodation and Access" Section 4.1 Reasonable Academic Accommodations (<http://policies.usask.ca/policies/student-affairs-and-activities/students-with-disabilities.php>)

- ensure all student documentation is kept confidential, unless student consent is given for specific purposes.
- participate in the ongoing education of Briercrest College and Seminary administrators, faculty, and staff regarding issues surrounding disability and the rights and responsibilities of each individual under this policy.

### *Faculty responsibilities*

Faculty as well as adjunct instructors have a responsibility to provide students with necessary accommodations. Faculty are responsible to:

- encourage students with disabilities in their courses to register with the Academic Resource Centre.
- include information about accessibility services on all course syllabi.
- treat all students with respect and maintain confidentiality and privacy. This includes respecting students that may register for accommodations but not engage with faculty directly.
- when requested, identify the essential requirements of a course.
- implement any approved accommodation that does not infringe on the essential requirements of a particular course or program.  
confer with the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator to discuss alternative ways of accommodation within a course.

### *Dean responsibilities*

Faculty Deans are responsible to:

- ensure that all faculty and adjuncts are familiar with this policy.
- collaborate with faculty and program coordinators in determining the essential requirements of a course or program when requested to do so.
- ensure that faculty have the needed resources and training to design courses that foster a productive learning environment for a diversity of students.

### *Dispute Resolution*

Student Disputes:

- Requested Accommodations not Approved: If a student wishes to appeal a decision by the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator, the student must submit an appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee, including any relevant documentation. The Academic Appeals Committee will consider the reasonableness of the requested accommodation, the essential course

requirements, and academic policies. Denied requests can be appealed a second time to the Deans Council. The Deans Council has final decision-making authority.

- Approved Accommodations not being Provided: If a student's approved accommodations are not being provided in a course, the student is first encouraged to meet with the faculty member. If further discussion is needed, both the faculty member and the student should communicate with the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator. In cases in which the student comes directly to the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator, the Coordinator will contact the faculty member. If no resolution is reached, the Coordinator and/or the faculty member may involve the appropriate college Dean. Unresolved cases will be decided by the Deans Council.

#### Faculty Disputes:

If a faculty member feels that an approved accommodation violates the academic integrity of a course, unduly disrupts other students, constitutes undue hardship, or is being misused by a student, the faculty member should:

- Contact the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator with the concern.
- If it is a case of academic integrity, provide rationale as to how the accommodation violates the integrity of the course. This should be done in consultation with the appropriate Dean.
- Collaborate with the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator and the appropriate Dean to come up with a more appropriate accommodation.
- If no consensus can be reached, the Deans Council will make the final decision.

## PROCEDURES

### *Establishing Accommodations*

1. Once the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator is made aware that a student has a disability (through an admission advisor, faculty, the student, other staff, etc.), the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator will initiate communication with the student. Communication will include what resources are available at Briercrest, what documentation is required to access accommodations, what forms need to be completed, and if applicable, financial aid for students with disabilities.
  - In some cases, a student may not yet have appropriate documentation or be able to procure appropriate documentation for a bona fide disability. In these circumstances, the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator can provisionally determine academic accommodations on the basis of other forms of verification. This can include

information received from previous schools, former teachers, or other individuals (not related to the student) who are familiar with the student's case.

2. After documentation has been received, the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator will arrange a meeting with the student to:
  - review the student's academic history (as reported by the student).
  - review the student's medical documentation or psycho-educational report and recommendations included.
  - determine which accommodation recommendations verified by documentation and requested by the student can be reasonably accommodated.
  - review the student's responsibilities.
3. In some cases, the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator, in consultation with the Registrar, course instructor, program coordinators, and/or the Dean of the College, may determine based on student documentation, the nature and degree of the student's disability may mean that no reasonable accommodation would enable the individual to perform the essential requirements of a course/program.
  - If the student has not yet registered in the course/program, Briercrest may refuse admission to the course/program in order to uphold the essential requirements of a course/program. The Dean of the College will send a letter to the student, which will be kept in the student's permanent file.
4. If the student has an accommodation but has not been able to complete course requirements or objectives, including attendance requirements, and no reasonable accommodation can be made that does not violate the academic integrity of the course the matter will be turned over to the Registrar's office.
5. The Academic Resource Centre Coordinator, with the student's consent, will process accommodation letters at the beginning of the semester for students with accommodations to distribute to faculty. The letters will inform faculty that the student has registered for accommodations and which accommodations have been approved.
6. Students with disabilities are advised to make an appointment with each of their course instructors at the beginning of the term to review their accommodations. This step is not required for receiving accommodations but is highly recommended. During this appointment, faculty may not ask the student to disclose the reason for academic accommodations. This is confidential information. The student may voluntarily share this information, but it must not be requested. Discussing specific learning needs and accommodations is far more helpful. If an approved accommodation violates the academic integrity of the course or cannot be reasonably implemented due to the format or content of the course, the instructor may discuss this with the student.

7. The Academic Resource Centre Coordinator will follow-up with students to review whether accommodation needs are being met and/or address any questions, concerns, etc. Academic Resource Centre Coordinator and College Deans are also available to support faculty in meeting any required classroom accommodations.
8. Students who consistently abuse an approved accommodation are at risk of having that accommodation revoked for a set period of time. This decision will be made by the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator in consultation with faculty members and relevant Deans.

*Exam Accommodations*

1. The Academic Resource Centre Coordinator will notify students when Exam Accommodations Requests need to be submitted.
2. After the student has submitted the Exam Accommodations Request, the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator will communicate with instructors regarding exam accommodations.
3. The Academic Resource Centre Coordinator will ensure that rooms and proctors are arranged. Every effort will be made to ensure that exams are taken concurrently with the rest of the class. Exceptions will be made if a student’s accommodations call for not taking more than one final per day. Times and locations will be communicated with the students by the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator.
4. The Academic Resource Centre Coordinator or designated proctor will ensure that all electronic devices and unauthorized materials are kept out of the testing room.
5. Completed exams will placed in faculty mail boxes on the day of the exam.

**APPENDIX A**

Related Procedures/Resources	“Faculty Guide to Academic Accommodations” Academic Appeals Policy
Where is this policy published	Faculty Handbook College Academic Calendar
Contact Information	Academic Resource Centre Coordinator

