

Centre for Accessibility (CfA) – Faculty FAQ

What is the Centre for Accessibility (CfA)?

The CfA operates under UBC Policy LR7 to support students with disabilities at UBC Vancouver. It determines eligibility for accommodations, assists in implementing accommodations and provides expertise on disability policy and best practices in postsecondary education.

The CfA ensures:

- Confidentiality of students' personal medical information as it relates to disability;
- Consistency of assessment of disability accommodation across campus; and
- Support to instructors and faculties for accommodations that require a high level of expertise to implement or would otherwise be impractical for a single instructor or department to implement.

What is the duty to accommodate?

The duty to accommodate is a legal obligation under [federal](#) and [provincial](#) human rights law. It requires public institutions, like universities, to remove barriers that prevent individuals with disabilities from fully participating in education, services, and employment through the process of accommodation.

What is an accommodation?

An accommodation is a reasonable adjustment to existing services, processes, physical spaces and sometimes policies that reduces or removes disability-related barriers. Accommodations are:

- Individually assessed;
- Based on functional impacts, not diagnosis alone; and
- Designed to support access while maintaining academic standards and essential learning outcomes.

What role does Policy LR7 play?

At UBC, student accommodations are governed by [Policy LR7: Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#), which was developed in consultation with the Office of the University Counsel and is grounded in the BC Human Rights Code and relevant case law.

LR7 ensures equitable access to UBC courses, programs, and activities for students with disabilities. It applies to:

- All students with disabilities participating in UBC courses or programs; and
- Faculty and staff supporting student accommodations.

Policy LR7 also defines “disability” for the purposes of accommodation and delegates responsibilities for assessment and implementation of accommodation.

How does Policy LR7 define “disability” for accommodation purposes?

Under LR7, a “disability” is a **significant and persistent** impairment (including mental health conditions) that:

- Limits a range of life activities; and
- Results in environmental or attitudinal **barriers to participation** in university life.

Accommodation entitlement is based on functional limitation and impact of a disability, not diagnosis alone.

LR7 does **not** apply to temporary health issues (e.g., acute illness or injury expected to resolve within one academic term), compassionate grounds, or pregnancy. These situations are addressed through the [Senate Regulation on Academic Concession](#).

What are my responsibilities in implementing accommodations?

Accommodation is a **shared responsibility** at UBC and Policy LR7 delegates responsibilities as follows:

The Centre for Accessibility (CfA) is responsible for:

- Determining disability-based accommodations and the grounds for disability-based concessions;

- Supporting instructors in implementing accommodations; and
- Providing accommodations that cannot reasonably be implemented at the program level.

Instructors are responsible for:

- Implementing accommodations approved by the CfA;
- Maintaining academic standards; and
- Working with the CfA to ensure accommodations are effective in the course context.

Students are responsible for:

- Registering with the CfA and providing documentation as early as possible;
- Sharing Letters of Accommodation with instructors in a timely way;
- Following accommodation procedures; and
- Meeting essential academic requirements.

Once an instructor receives a Letter of Accommodation, there is a legal duty to implement the accommodation to the point of **undue hardship**.

What is “undue hardship” in the academic setting?

Undue hardship is the legal limit on accommodation. In an academic setting, it may exist if an accommodation:

- Creates serious health or safety risks;
- Prevents a student from meeting essential course requirements; or
- Causes major financial or logistical challenges that would undermine the course or program.

Undue hardship is assessed at the **institutional level**, not at the level of an individual course or instructor. Instructor workload, teaching preferences, or frustration typically do **not** meet the standard for undue hardship.

What are “essential course requirements”?

Essential course requirements are the core academic tasks or standards that students must meet in order to pass a course or program. They must be:

- Clearly connected to learning outcomes;
- Required in good faith; and
- Necessary for successful completion.

If an accommodation compromises an essential requirement, it may constitute undue hardship.

What should I do if I believe an accommodation creates undue hardship?

If you feel that an accommodation undermines an essential course requirement or creates undue hardship, refer to the procedure in Policy LR7. Do not alter or refuse the accommodation yourself, and do not raise the issue directly with the student. Instead, contact the student's Accessibility Advisor, whose name can be found on the student's accommodation letter, and discuss the issue. You can use the form linked [here] to assist you in framing the issue.

If no resolution is reached, LR7 allows the issue to be referred to:

- The Registrar (for academic accommodations); or
- The Administrative Head of Unit (for nonacademic accommodations).

Note that Policy LR7 provides that the accommodation **must still be implemented** during the process of review for undue hardship.

How do I know if a student has accommodations?

You will receive an email from info.accessibility@ubc.ca notifying you that a **Letter of Accommodation** is available in the ClockWork portal. Letters are sent individually and only after students activate their accommodations. Note that you are not required to consider or implement accommodations that are not listed in the student's letter. If a student requests an accommodation that is not on the letter, please refer them back to their Accessibility Advisor.

Do students have to tell me about their disability?

No. Students are not required to disclose or explain their disability. If you have questions, please connect with the student's Accessibility Advisor. Under privacy regulations, Accessibility Advisors cannot provide specific medical information about a student's disability but are

permitted to share information about the impact of the disability to the extent necessary to implement accommodations.

Can I talk to a student about their accommodations?

Yes, you may discuss how an accommodation will work in your course. However, it is not appropriate to:

- Ask why the student needs the accommodation,
- Refuse an approved accommodation, or
- Suggest alternatives without consulting the Accessibility Advisor (conversely, if a student requests an accommodation that is not on their letter, please refer them back to their Accessibility Advisor).
- Draw attention to or single out a student for their registration status with the CfA or as a student who has an accommodation in front of the class and/or others.
- Complain or air personal frustrations with accommodating a student in front of the student and/or other students.

If a student requests modifications or exceptions to classroom policy or practice beyond what is on their letter of accommodation or for reasons unrelated to disability, you can respond as you would to any other concession request from a student or r

What is the difference between an academic accommodation and an academic concession?

- Academic **accommodations** are legally-required supports for disability-related barriers. These are determined by the CfA under [Policy LR7](#) to address ongoing accessibility issues that a student may experience due to the nature of their disability. Once an accommodation has been determined by the CfA, it must be implemented to the point of undue hardship (see above).
- Academic **concessions** are academic remedies that provide short-term flexibility for unforeseen circumstances. Academic concessions are determined on a case-by-case basis by instructors and/or Academic Advising offices in accordance with the [Senate Regulation on Academic Concession](#).

Are there situations where disability and academic concessions overlap?

Yes. In some circumstances, a student's ongoing disability can cause an unforeseen medical circumstance that provides grounds for an academic concession. For those circumstances, the CfA will confirm the eligible grounds for the concession based on the student's medical information. The instructor or academic advising office will then determine what kind of concession the student is eligible for as guided by the [Senate Regulation on Academic Concession](#).

Where can I get help or more information?

Disability accessibility is a university-wide responsibility encompassing many aspects of university life and not every disability-related inquiry is best directed at or referred to the CfA. The following list can help you narrow down where best to direct your inquiry or refer someone to:

- **CfA Student-specific questions:** Accessibility Advisor listed on the Letter of Accommodation
- **Accommodation or accommodation procedure questions not related to a specific student:** The CfA (info.accessibility@ubc.ca)
- **Concessions - policy, and procedures:** Your faculty academic advising office.
- **Department-specific guidance:** Your department or faculty office
- **Instructor workplace accommodations:** [Centre for Workplace Accessibility](#) (CW)
- **Issues regarding disability-based discrimination:** [Equity and Inclusion Office](#) (EIO) or [Investigations Office](#) (IO).
- **Student referrals for therapeutic support:** [Student Counselling](#) or [Student Health Service](#).
- **Student conduct or safety issues:** [Campus Security](#) or Student Conduct and Safety
- **Pedagogical Accessibility and Universal Design:** [Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology](#) (CTLT).
- **Reporting Students in Distress:** [Early Assist](#).
- **Student Health Crisis and Emergencies:** 911 and/or [Campus Security](#)