Academic Accommodations
Student Guide for Dalhousie University, Truro Campus
What is the application process for academic accommodations at DAL AC (Truro)?

- Connect in-person or by email at accessac@dal.ca
- Student shares requested documentation
- Meet to finalize an accommodation plan
- Student reviews emailed Letter of Notification to professor(s)
- Student shares testing schedule for each course in advance
- Student checks Dal email for test notices
- NS students apply for student assistance disability funding
- The Coordinator can assist with funding requests
- Extra meetings may be needed

What is Dalhousie’s Student Accommodation Policy?

The Student Accommodation Policy forms part of a broader, ongoing commitment to create a fully accessible university community, and acknowledges that, through dialogue, the university can better understand the nature and extent of campus barriers to accessibility. It is the responsibility of every member of the Dalhousie University community to be knowledgeable on institutional policies related to prohibited grounds for discriminatory practices and accessibility.

Pursuant to our obligations under human rights legislation, the purpose of this Policy is to affirm that Dalhousie University will make reasonable efforts to provide accommodations, up to the point of undue hardship, for students experiencing a barrier due to a characteristic protected by human rights legislation, and to establish a framework for managing requests by students for accommodation in an appropriate and timely manner.
Accommodations are intended to reduce or eliminate barriers to participation in academic and student life experienced by individual students due to characteristics protected under human rights legislation.

The full academic accommodation policy is available at: http://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/student-accommodation-policy-wef-sep--1--2014.html

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Act and additional information can be found at: http://humanrights.gov.ns.ca/

**What is an academic accommodation?**

An academic accommodation is put into place to support a student who is experiencing a barrier related to a protected characteristic under Nova Scotia human rights legislation. An accommodation can be anything from extra time for writing tests/exams to assistive technology for reading and writing.

Academic accommodations vary by student. They are intended to reduce or eliminate disadvantage as a result of a protected characteristic. Students receiving accommodations are still expected to meet the learning outcomes for their courses and programs.

**Is self-disclosure necessary for academic accommodation?**

Yes. To receive academic accommodations, self-disclosure of a disability to the Coordinator of Access Supports is required.

We recognize the decision to self-disclose is a personal one which involves courage and trust. Some students are new to self-advocacy, perhaps having received a recent diagnosis. Others have been self-advocating in one form or another for some time.

Whichever your situation, we want you to know your information is maintained privately and confidentially. Communication with professors is limited to the accommodations you are receiving. Your disability or protected characteristic is not shared. Further, parents/guardians are not provided updates about your accommodations or your progress, unless your written consent is received.
Can you tell me more about confidentiality at Dalhousie, Truro Campus?

Student Success Centre staff maintain the standards of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPOP). FOIPOP governs a student’s right to protection of privacy of their personal information.

Both hard and electronic records are secured during your time of study at Dalhousie University. These records are destroyed once an “expiry” date is reached.

How do I know if I am eligible for academic accommodations?

You are eligible for academic accommodations if experiencing a barrier due to...

- Acquired Brain Injury
- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum
- Chronic Health
- Learning Disability
- Mental Health
- Mobility
- Reduced Processing Speed
- Sensory Impairment (such as hearing loss, blindness, or low vision)
- and/or any other characteristic protected by NS Human Rights legislation

And

It is part of your Academic Accommodation Plan, as arranged ONLY by the Coordinator of Access Supports and;

It is stated in requested documentation that you have a disability or another protected characteristic and;

The requested documentation also states that you require accommodations.

Parents/guardians are only provided updates with your written consent. Students are responsible for their academic accommodations.
What documentation is needed to apply for academic accommodations?

For reason of disability, two types of documentation are required to apply for academic accommodations.

The first of these is the Dalhousie, Truro Campus Accommodation Request form. This involves your personal statement regarding your disability as well as the barriers to learning encountered as a result of disability. The form is available from the Student Success Centre (Dairy Building) and also online at:


Should you prefer to complete this paperwork with assistance, please schedule an appointment with the Coordinator of Access Support (accessac@dal.ca).

The second type of required documentation is disability-specific. It involves information about your disability from the psychologist or physician responsible for your diagnosis and/or follow-up.

If you have a learning disability, a copy of a current (within the past five years) psycho-educational assessment completed by a registered psychologist is required. This document typically includes: a diagnosis, year of diagnosis, a listing of diagnostic tools used, background history, evidence of impairment in various settings, and recommendations for overcoming barriers to your learning. Any additional documentation related to your learning (such as from high school) is also beneficial. However, it is considered supplemental.

All other students applying for academic accommodations for reason of disability are required to have the Dalhousie, Truro Campus, Medical Assessment form completed. The medical assessment provides opportunity for your physician to state your disability, identify impacts to learning, and offer accommodation suggestions. This form is available at the Student Success Centre or online at:

http://www.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/about/agricultural-campus/Student%20Services/DALAC%20Medical%20Assessment%20Form2015.pdf

To apply for academic accommodation for a protected characteristic other than disability (such as religious obligation), please contact the Coordinator of Access Supports directly.
How is an accommodation decision made?

The information from your personal statement as well as other requested documentation helps to inform the process for academic accommodations. After these documents are received at the Student Success Centre, the Coordinator of Access Supports will be in touch to arrange an appointment. This meeting represents an important part of the accommodation process.

An accommodations plan will be developed taking into consideration the context of learning environments encountered at university and the learning outcomes of specific courses/programs. Recommendations from physicians, psychologists or other health-care practitioners are only one source of information amongst many considered in the development of an accommodation plan.

Once a protected characteristic is identified, the focus shifts to how can we reduce or eliminate the barrier? From time to time, we need to consult with others such as our colleagues at the Advising and Access Centre or the Office of Human Rights and Equity Services (both on the Halifax Campus) when reviewing an accommodation request.

How is an accommodation decision communicated to me and my instructors?

You and your professors will receive details of the accommodations plan by email. This plan is known as the Letter of Notification. Your disability/protected characteristic is kept confidential and is not shared with your professors, unless you choose to share with them yourself. Please take time to review your Letter of Notification to ensure familiarity with its content.

Would it be helpful to meet with my instructors about my accommodations?

Yes, it would. Instructors have specialized knowledge of the courses they teach as well as the workload flow during the semester. Meeting about your accommodation needs directly and having a plan to handle challenges that may arise in advance of them happening is important. Please refer to additional information about self-advocacy later in this booklet.
If I want to use my testing accommodations, how do I go about that?

To use your accommodations for a test, please notify the Coordinator of Access Supports of your testing schedule by email or in-person. Advance notice is strongly recommended, such as upon receipt of course outlines/syllabi at the start of each semester.

We appreciate that some courses involve shorter notice for tests. As such, a minimum of seven working days’ notice (for example, Thursday, the week before a Friday test) is required for test accommodations.

When and where do I go on testing day?

Tests start at the regular testing time, unless other arrangements have been made in advance with your professor and communicated to the Coordinator of Access Supports.

The Coordinator will send you an email notification via Microsoft Outlook of the test time and location. For your testing notice to show accurately, ensure your calendar/clock is set to Atlantic Time. Please come to the Student Success Centre for your test, unless other arrangements have been made.

What if I am sick and cannot write my test?

If sick and unable to write your test, notify your instructor along with the Coordinator of Access Supports right away. It is the instructor’s decision whether or not the test can be rescheduled. If rescheduling is permitted by the instructor, please then contact the Coordinator to make alternate test arrangements.

How often do I need to complete a request for academic accommodation?

Students are required to complete the request for academic accommodation form once each semester, and more frequently if requesting a change in accommodation.
**What is self-advocacy?**

Self-advocacy involves taking an active role when communicating, problem-solving, and decision-making about issues important to you. Effective self-advocates understand their disability, learning strengths and challenges. They are prepared to speak for themselves, ask and negotiate for what they need, as well as make use of available resources.

**Why is self-advocacy at university important?**

Self-advocacy is an important part of transitioning into adulthood. It is also a component of student success that has been shown to lead to improved quality of life and positive adult outcomes.

Speaking to instructors early in the semester demonstrates you are being responsible when it comes to your learning goals and progress. This helps create a positive foundation should you need to speak with your instructor in the future.

**What are some questions to consider about my readiness to self-advocate?**

- Do I know my learning strengths (what I do well)?
- Do I know my learning challenges and how I overcome or reduce them?
- Do I know my rights and responsibilities regarding accommodation?
- Am I comfortable communicating my needs to others?
- Have I received practice and coaching about effective self-advocacy?
- Where can I go for help with self-advocacy and learning strategies?

The Student Success Centre has resources to help you discover more about your learning style, strengths and challenges, as well as strategies to help improve your academic experience. Access Supports is also where you can learn more about effective self-advocacy and receive some coaching.
Is self-disclosure of disability to my instructors required?

No. Disclosure of your disability to your instructors remains a personal choice.

Some students find it helpful to meet with some or all their instructors and describe the types of learning strengths and challenges they experience, even if they do not disclose their specific disability.

What if I am still uncomfortable with self-disclosure to my instructors?

Self-disclosure to your instructors is not required to receive academic accommodations.

If you are new to self-advocacy, take small steps. Start by self-disclosing with supportive people you already know. Consider following up with the Coordinator of Access Supports to gain some additional strategies for self-advocacy. Some suggestions for effective communication with instructors can be found on the following page of this booklet.

What if I didn’t disclose my disability before – but I want to do so now?

It is okay to change your mind!

The Student Success Centre is open year-round to support students in various ways including arranging academic accommodations. Remember, however, it takes time to arrange academic accommodations. There are also deadlines for disability-related funding.

Please give as much notice as possible so these processes can work for you.
What are some suggestions for meeting with my instructor(s)?

Before meeting:

• Understand and know how to discuss your strengths and challenges.
• Prepare in advance for the meeting.
• Find an appropriate time and place. Consider scheduling an appointment during an instructor’s office hours. Do not try to explain your needs as an instructor is entering or leaving class.
• Ask to meet with your instructor(s) within the first few weeks of class or as soon as possible after a barrier to your learning is identified.

At the meeting:

• Go to the meeting with a positive attitude.
• Be on time.
• State the reason for the meeting.
• Be as specific as possible about your accommodation needs.
• Take turns talking. Speak and listen without interrupting.
• For understanding, repeat in your own words what you think is being said.
• Bring notes and/or your Letter of Notification to guide the conversation.
• Ask to meet again if you have further concerns, questions, or need support.
• End the meeting with a “thank you.”

After meeting:

• Give the instructor time to meet your requests.
• Work together to find solutions should future challenges arise.
• If you have followed the suggestions for meeting with instructors and you still have concerns, ask to meet with the instructor again and contact the Coordinator of Access Supports at accessac@dal.ca.
This booklet is intended to support communication that will take place between you and the Coordinator of Access Supports at Dalhousie University, Truro Campus. Whether making inquiries or moving forward with academic accommodations, Student Success Centre staff is here to help.

If questions arise, please contact the Coordinator by email at accessac@dal.ca, by phone (902)896-2463, or in person at Dalhousie University, Truro Campus, Dairy Building, 11 Sipu Awti, Truro, Nova Scotia.

Feedback about this document is welcome and appreciated. Please forward your comments to the Coordinator at accessac@dal.ca.