

MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

POLICY

1. Commitment

Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) is committed to creating the best university experience for all members of our community. The University supports academically qualified students with appropriately documented physical, mental and learning disabilities to participate as fully as reasonably possible in university programs (see Section 6). The University is dedicated to adapting the academic environment for students with disabilities to provide them with equal access to opportunities for learning, while maintaining the academic standards of the University. The academic accommodations provided shall be consistent with and supportive of the academic standards of the course, program and the University.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Outline the commitment and responsibilities of the University to provide academic accommodations to students with disabilities;
- Outline the role and responsibilities incumbent on the student requiring academic accommodations;
- Provide guidance and standards for the implementation of this Policy in light of the fact that accommodation has to be determined on an individual basis;
- Promote an understanding of the shared responsibility of finding reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to all students with documented disabilities enrolled at MSVU in full-time, part-time, undergraduate and graduate programs of study. The University has adopted the meaning of disability as established in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*, as amended from time to time, which includes physical, sensory, mobility, communication, learning, emotional, psychiatric and other non-visible impairments and disabilities. See Appendix A for the definition of “disabilities” according to section 3 (1) of the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*.

4. Obligations

MSVU recognizes its legal obligations with respect to the protection of human rights. The Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms establish the principles that individuals are equal before and under the law and should not be discriminated against in the provision of services (such as post secondary education) as a result of a physical, mental or learning disability. MSVU takes this responsibility seriously and makes its services available in a manner that does not discriminate. This obligation includes accommodations as may reasonably be required to address disadvantages to students resulting from a rule, practice, or physical barrier that has an adverse impact on a student with a disability. It is the obligation of a student with a disability who is seeking accommodations to cooperate with the University in developing accommodations.

5. Academic Standards

Academic accommodations are reasonable modifications or adjustments to instructional methods, curriculum, and/or evaluation designed to minimize the impact of the disability on a student's performance. These accommodations are designed to provide equitable opportunities without lowering academic standards or compromising the integrity of the course or program. Accommodations are determined on an individual basis having regard to the individual student's particular circumstances (see Appendix B for examples of academic accommodations). Variations from generally approved accommodations may be considered with approval from the Vice President (Academic) and the Registrar.

6. Documentation

A student with a disability must register with Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations. The University requires written documentation that is relevant with respect to the disability. This documentation must be current and from a competent and qualified professional in the area of the disability. Such a professional may include: registered psychologist, psychiatrist, medical doctor, or other medical specialist. For a learning disability, documentation should include a psycho-educational assessment and report from a registered psychologist. Documentation should contain a diagnosis, impact of disability on the student's learning and behaviour, and the types of accommodations recommended.

7. Consultation and Shared Responsibility

As previously noted, the accommodation process is a shared responsibility between the student and the University. Those involved in the accommodation process need to collaborate to find an appropriate means of meeting the student's requirements, which may involve ongoing consultation with the student, Coordinator of Disability Services, faculty, staff, service providers and health professionals (as necessary). Students who have difficulty advocating for their own needs are encouraged to develop self-advocacy skills, and gradually assume more responsibility for advocating for their own needs.

8. Confidentiality

The University is committed to maintaining confidentiality to the greatest extent reasonably possible when providing academic accommodations and related support services to students; however, the University needs sufficient information to evaluate and respond appropriately to a request for accommodation. Consequently, it may be necessary for the student or Disability Services to disclose information about the nature of the disability to staff and/or faculty in order for the accommodation request to be considered and implemented. Disability Services will discuss the need for the disclosure with the student and obtain written consent from her/him prior to the release of any information.

9. Admissions

MSVU accepts applications from students with disabilities and admits academically qualified applicants in accordance with the University's admissions policy. Upon acceptance, students must contact the Coordinator of Disability Services as soon as possible in order to ensure they receive accommodations in a timely manner.

- Senate approved on April 28, 2008

Appendix A
NS Human Rights Code

In section 3. (l) of the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*, R.S., c.214 amended 1991c.12 defines physical and mental disabilities as follows:

3.(l) “physical disability or mental disability” means an actual or perceived

(i) loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function,

(ii) restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity,

(iii) physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement, including, but not limited to, epilepsy and any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, deafness, hardness of hearing or hearing impediment, blindness or visual impediment, speech impairment or impediment or reliance on a hearing-ear dog, a guide dog, a wheelchair or a remedial appliance or device,

(iv) learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,

(v) condition of being mentally handicapped or impaired,

(vi) mental disorder, or

(vii) dependency on drugs or alcohol;

Appendix B

Types of Academic Accommodations

Accommodations are determined on an individual basis taking into consideration the needs of the student and the academic integrity of the course or program.

The following list contains some of the accommodations provided to students and is included here for illustrative purposes only. However, other requests may be considered on an individual basis:

Classroom Accommodations

- Note takers
- Tape recorders
- Laptops
- Accessible seating and mobility assistance

Test/Exam Accommodations

- Extended time
- Separate, reduced distraction location
- Modified test format
- Oral, scribed and dictated tests
- Use of computer, spell check, calculator, dictionary

Assistive Technology

- Kurzweil 3000
- Dragon Naturally Speaking
- TextHELP Read and Write
- Quicktionary Pen
- Digital Voice Recorder
- CCTV

Other Accommodations

- Study skills
- Counselling

Service Accommodations

- Academic advising regarding course selection is available through the Office of the Academic Deans in consultation with the CDS
- Counselling is offered to students with disabilities through Counselling and Psychological Services
- Accessible parking
- Information on scholarships, bursaries and awards
- Food allergies or dietary requirements accommodation
- Physical accessibility to most buildings, classes, residences, labs, elevators
- Limited transportation on and off campus