

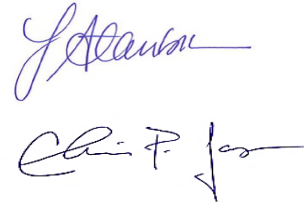
MEMO

DATE: January 8th, 2024

TO: College Community

FROM: Laura Stanbra, Vice President, Student Services
Chris Janzen, Senior Vice President, Academic

SUBJECT: Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC)
Directives on Student Academic Accommodation



This memo is issued each term as a reminder to the College community regarding policies, procedures, and practices concerning academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure equitable access to educational services.

This practice was put in place following receipt of direction from the [Ontario Human Rights Commission \(OHRC\)](#) in March 2016, asking the college to implement new guidelines to remove potential barriers that may be experienced by students with disabilities, including mental health disabilities. Revisions were made to medical documentation guidelines, medical documentation forms, and procedures overseen by the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) and the Academic Area.

A summary of the major changes in practice that were implemented at the College in 2016-17 to comply with the OHRC directive are outlined below in **Appendix A**. The college also maintains a set of policies related to providing an accessible learning environment for students, including:

- [AC 01: Students with Disabilities](#)
- [AC 02: Client Services Standards for Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [AC 03: AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards Integration Regulation](#)
- [AC 04: Notification of Service Disruption for Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [AC 05: Use of Authorized Animals on Campus](#)

Over the past year, the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) and the college have made several updates related to how the college communicates and delivers academic accommodations for students with disabilities, as well as information resources for Faculty. These updates include:

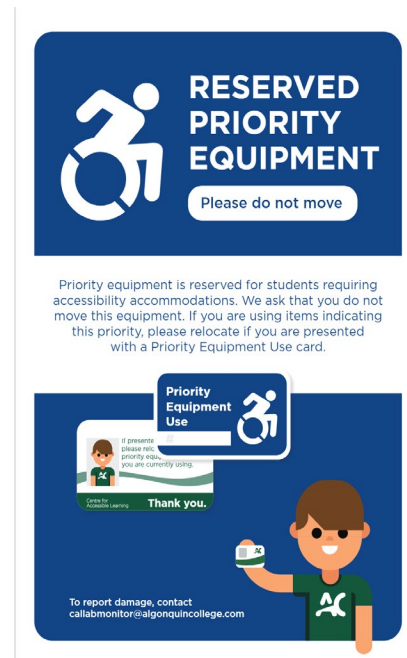
- 1. Student Letters of Accommodation (LOA):** In the Fall/22 term, CAL launched a new function on the [CAL Faculty Portal](#) that allows students to share their Letter of Accommodation (LOA) with each professor. This function also allows Faculty to more easily locate and review student LOA's.

A few important points of guidance from CAL for Faculty to keep in mind include with respect to receiving and accessing student LOA's:

- Faculty can expect to receive a student's LOA through the [CAL Faculty Portal](#) at **any time** throughout the semester. Students are entitled to request accommodations at any time during their course of study.
- Faculty may receive more than one LOA per student/per semester. Students are permitted to request updates or modifications to their accommodations. Please reference the most recent LOA when providing accommodations.
- If a student provides their LOA via email, we recommend that you accept it but request that they use [CAL Portal](#) moving forward.

2. Priority Equipment in Classrooms:

There are several students enrolled at Algonquin who require the use of a specific piece of equipment or furniture as an accommodation for a specific functional limitation. Over the past few terms, you may have noticed these blue decals on some desks, chairs or other pieces of equipment in classrooms. This indicates that this furniture or equipment is in place to accommodate the approved functional needs of specific students. These students identify themselves and their equipment needs to Faculty through their LOA. They can also identify their need to other students by presenting a Priority Equipment Use card provided by CAL. CAL has created a [helpful video](#) on the use of priority equipment in classrooms.



A couple of important points for Faculty to note about the priority equipment in their classroom:

- Please do not remove or disconnect this equipment. It's installation and placement in the classroom are often a part of accommodating a student's specific need (e.g., a student may need a motorized height adjustable desk installed specifically at the front of the room).
- Please assist any student who is approved to use the priority equipment in your

classroom to address simple barriers to accessing the equipment (e.g., the route to the equipment is blocked or another student is occupying the equipment).

3. Updated Retroactive Academic Accommodation Procedures:

Although Algonquin College asks that students submit all requests for academic accommodation to CAL as soon as possible, ideally in advance of each term, the OHRC has advised that a student's need for academic accommodation must be considered at any point throughout the term or academic year. As a result, "retroactive" requests for academic accommodations for disability-related reasons should be given meaningful consideration and cannot be dismissed outright.

The college installed an updated set of retroactive accommodation procedures within policy [AC 01: Students with Disabilities – Appendix 5](#). This appendix is designed to more clearly guide students, Faculty and CAL through the process of requesting, reviewing and providing retroactive accommodations when appropriate.

4. CAL Knowledge Centre for Faculty:

In Fall/21, CAL launched the [Knowledge Centre for Student Academic Accommodation](#) as a new resource to help Faculty apply the Student Academic Accommodation process. The Knowledge Centre is a collection of information, directions, processes and best practices about student academic accommodations for faculty and employees. Additional resources for students and faculty is also available on the [CAL website](#) or through the menu on the top banner in Brightspace.

CAL is committed to provide a foundation of learning that will help Algonquin be a fully accessible and inclusive learning environment.

Appendix A

Summary of major changes in practice implemented in 2016-17 to comply with the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) directive

The following points summarize the major changes in practices that were implemented as of 2016-17 in order to comply with the revisions to the Ontario Human Rights Commissions directive:

- a. Students will not have to disclose a diagnosis to access or receive support from CAL. They will be asked to provide documentation that describes the nature of their functional limitation.
- b. Students may request interim accommodations pending receipt of medical documentation.
- c. Students are not required to provide medical documentation directly to their teachers to receive academic accommodations. This is intended to ensure the confidentiality of the student's personal medical/psychological information. Any necessary medical documentation should be directed to CAL.
- d. All requests for reasonable academic accommodation for students with temporary or permanent disabilities will be considered by the College.
- e. Requests for a retroactive accommodation, after a scheduled evaluation (e.g. test, examination or assignment) has taken place and where the student has failed to meet performance expectations due to a disruption in their mental health or other disability, will be **meaningfully considered**. College employees are not to state (in writing or verbally) or imply that requests for accommodation after a deadline, assignment, test, examination or course completion (i.e. retroactive accommodation) will not be considered. NOTE: The process for retroactive accommodations is outlined in the body of this memo above.
- f. This information is to be clearly communicated to all students, faculty and staff. There are training opportunities and resources available through CAL and Centre for Organizational Learning (COL).

The duty to accommodate is informed by three principles: respect for dignity, individualization, and integration and full participation. The College is bound to the duty to accommodate unless the accommodation creates undue hardship for the institution or violates the bona fide course requirements and/or academic integrity.