

Access and Inclusion Bulletin

A Guide For Professors



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Student Success is committed to nurturing a culture designed to include, engage and support all students





TOP 10 QUESTIONS

To help increase access and inclusion at GBC

1. What are academic accommodations?

Academic accommodations are supports which reduce or eliminate barriers to learning for students with disabilities. Accommodations, determined by **Accessible Learning Services (ALS)**, do not modify learning outcomes or change the core requirements of a course or program. Students with accommodations may have one or more disabilities related to physical, sensory, chronic illness/medical conditions, learning disabilities or psychological/mental health concerns. Every year approximately 10-15% of the student population at George Brown registers with ALS to access accommodation plans. This is a percentage that is consistent across the Ontario College system.

2. How is the accommodation plan determined?

An Accessibility Consultant (AC), skilled in determining accommodation plans, meets with the student to determine appropriate accommodations based on the student's specific disability and related functional limitations, academic experiences, medical documentation, and the requirements of the academic program. The student accommodation plan is prepared in compliance with the **Ontario Human Rights Code** and the **George Brown College Accessible Learning Services policy**.

3. What if I have questions or concerns about a student's accommodation plan?

Sometimes professors have questions about how best to implement an accommodation or concerns about the accommodation compromising learning outcomes. The AC can guide you in understanding accommodations and are always looking for your feedback to better understand your program and the requirements. Please contact the AC for your department to discuss an accommodation or share feedback at any time.

Welcome Message

Susan Toews
Director, Academic and Student Affairs

Welcome to our first issue of the Access and Inclusion Bulletin! One of our goals in creating this guide is to provide more support for teaching faculty in understanding and implementing accommodations. With 3,400 students registered with Accessible Learning Services (ALS) at George Brown College, it is critical that teaching faculty understand and are supported through the academic accommodations process.

Since last fall, we have been piloting a new role in Student Affairs: Access and Inclusion Coach. You can learn about this role, filled by Ravinder Brar, on page 6. Ravinder works collaboratively with the ALS team to help academic departments understand and provide accommodations. In addition, she provides guidance regarding Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies in collaboration with Faculty Development (TLX) and Academic Excellence. Faculty can access one-on-one coaching, workshops, presentations and UDL Circles. Ravinder is also working collaboratively with UDL coaches at other colleges across the province to share resources and explore solutions to ongoing access and inclusion challenges and will be presenting at the 3rd Pan-Canadian UDL Conference in BC along with Valeri Scovill (CPLS) and Nicki Monahan (TLX).

GBC's Strategy 2022 commitments and Vision 2030 include a focus on "next-generation teaching and learning methods" and "personalized models for learning experiences". As we continue to value diversity and inclusion, and as we strive toward providing optimal learner experiences, UDL can be a vehicle to a differentiated and highly engaged learning environment, with GBC playing a leadership role. Please read through this bulletin, connect with Ravinder, contact your Accessibility Consultant, and learn about UDL. Together, across all campuses, we can make real progress on widening access and increasing inclusion at GBC.



4. Can the accommodation plan change throughout the academic school year?

Yes, the accommodations may need to be reviewed or revised depending on the demands of specific courses, field placements and other factors related to the student's disability. The Accessibility Consultant (AC) will discuss changes with the student and the faculty will be notified via email. If there are any concerns about the changes, please contact the AC.

5. Will I receive accommodation plans halfway through the semester or at the end of the semester?

Yes, you might receive accommodation plans at any time throughout the semester. Although ALS encourages students to register early, and begin the registration process for September in the spring, students sometimes register midway or late in the semester, for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Stigma around having an accommodation plan
- Fear of disclosing their disability
- Unaware of their right to accommodations in college
- Misperception that accommodations will be automatically transferred from high school
- Not sure if they need an accommodation plan
- Sudden and unexpected disability-related concern, e.g. mental health crisis

6. What information can/cannot be shared with a professor?

The professor will receive information on the recommended accommodations. If the accommodation plan is unclear, professors are encouraged to reach out to the AC for further consultation. Disability diagnoses and disability-related information, however, is not shared, as it is confidential. Professors are asked to refrain from asking a student about a disability, including questions about a diagnosis. It is most helpful to focus on understanding functional limitations and barriers experienced by the student, and how to widen access to learning by reducing barriers. Be discrete and consider the student's right to privacy when discussing details of the accommodation, particularly when other students are present.

7. What is my responsibility as a professor?

It is your responsibility as a professor to follow the accommodation plan. If you have questions and/or need support, contact your AC to work together to find solutions. Refer to the **ALS Faculty Guide** for more detailed guidance on accommodations.

Be proactive by ensuring that your students have the information they need to register with ALS. If an accommodation request is made by a student who does not have an accommodation plan, direct them to the ALS Office on your campus. Provide clear information in course outlines about course policies regarding accommodations. Do not refuse to allow or provide an accommodation. If you have questions or concerns, talk to the AC who has recommended the accommodation, and work collaboratively to find solutions.



8. How do I support test accommodations?

Test accommodations are the most common accommodations for students with disabilities. There are many reasons why a test accommodation might be recommended. A student may be dealing with issues that impact the testing experience, interfering with the demonstration of learning. These may be related to anxiety, depression, ADHD, learning disabilities, or any number of physical and/or sensory issues.

Examples of test accommodations include extra time, quiet space, frequent breaks, adjustable tables, specialized lighting, a scribe, a reader, and/or adaptive technology software. Students with test accommodations may choose to write their test in the Assessment Centre sometimes and at other times, to write the test along with the class in the classroom. If you have provided extra time for all students writing the test as one of your UDL strategies, keep in mind that extra time may not cover all of the accommodations that the student needs and that they may still choose to write the test in the Assessment Centre.



Students with test accommodations will need their test dates well in advance in order to book tests following Assessment Centre booking timelines. Providing students with test dates at the beginning of a course will allow them to book early.

You will receive an automatic email reminder to drop off or upload your test four days before the test date.

Make sure that you drop off or upload the test on time and pick up all completed tests promptly.

9. What about notetaking?

Many students have disability-related barriers to being able to take notes in class, such as working memory or attention/focus challenges, or hearing, dexterity, or mobility issues. Recording the class digitally provides them access to accurate notes following the class (through a service provided by ALS). In addition, many students benefit from replaying the recording in private to review what they may have missed, due to their disability-related challenges.

Students with an accommodation requiring digital recording sign a form agreeing to comply with expectations for appropriate and private use of the recording. You can review the form by contacting your AC.



"If you do not intentionally, deliberately and proactively include, you will unintentionally exclude"

- Joe Gerstandt

10. As a professor, what can I do to reduce the need for accommodations in the classroom?

There are many things you can do to widen access and increase inclusion in your classroom:

- Use accessible digital materials whenever possible (e.g.: e-text). Please refer to ***Caption Media and E-text Policy***
- Use Blackboard & post all class materials in advance
- Share content in a variety of ways (e.g.: captioned videos, audio, print, digital)
- Offer choices for how students demonstrate their learning
- Make class notes accessible to ALL students
- Ensure materials are captioned. Contact **Anne Villahermosa**, GBC caption media expert, at avillahe@georgebrown.ca
- Learn More About Universal Design for Learning (UDL): UDL is an effective way to widen access, ensure inclusion, and increase engagement in your courses. At the same time, implementing UDL strategies does not guarantee that no accommodations will be needed in your course. Follow the accommodation plan and check with your AC if you have any questions related to UDL and accommodations.

Service Provision, Accessible Learning Services

Hello everyone. My department coordinates a variety of accommodations, such as American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, computerized notetaking, digital notetaking, and tutoring. We encourage faculty to explore the many options involved in digital notetaking to provide open access for everyone in their classes. Last year, a group of faculty participated in a pilot to explore the use of automated live streaming for real time notetaking purposes. We look forward to continuing to explore ways to widen access and increase inclusion at George Brown. I also coordinate the Peerconnect Community Wellbeing program and have several initiatives for increasing access and inclusion, led by the Peer Coaches. Keep an eye out for the purple t-shirts across all campuses!

Janet Foster
 Manager, Service Provision Accessible Learning Services
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Accessible Learning Services (ALS)

A warm hello GBC faculty!

Accessibility staff have been busy all summer ushering in new students so that we can get accommodations set up early. The first batch of accommodation plans went out on September 3rd at 6 pm. There are still more to come as students continue to get registered.

Please follow the link on the email to read the accommodation plans. Feel free to contact the Accessibility Consultant listed on the accommodation plan if you have any questions.

We look forward to working with you for another school year!

Anne Moore
 Manager, Accessible Learning Services
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Spotlight on Ravinder Brar!



Hello, I am your Access and Inclusion Coach here at GBC!

My role was created as a pilot through Student Affairs to work collaboratively with Accessibility Consultants to widen access and increase inclusion at GBC. I provide extra guidance and support to faculty as they navigate the implementation of academic accommodations and explore Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to reduce barriers and create inclusive learning spaces for our diverse learners here at GBC.

My 12 plus years of experience working in the fields of mental health and developmental disabilities and my involvement in curriculum development and teaching in the post-secondary environment, both in the classroom and online, have provided me with varied experience and multiple lenses on best practices regarding access and inclusion. I provide faculty guidance on UDL, which is a framework of curriculum design, development and delivery used to create accessible and inclusive learning environments. UDL is based on the belief that there is no “average” learner; learners have diverse learning needs, and so offering multiple pathways and varied options will engage and enhance the learning experience. The UDL Learning Circles, workshops and One-on-One coaching sessions that I lead explore how to address potential barriers to learning before students encounter them. This proactive model provides guidelines that faculty can use to optimize the experience for all learners by adopting an inclusive approach to educational design.

Reach out to me for the following:

1

ONE-ON-ONE Faculty UDL Coaching

Book a UDL coaching session where you can explore flexible learning options to examine the way student access and engage with course content and assessments. These sessions are individualized to explore UDL teaching strategies, which provide tailored guidance for implementing best practices with the aim to reduce barriers and increase accessibility.

2

UDL Learning Circles

Ravinder Brar (Student Success) and Lazaros Simeon (TLX) lead monthly UDL Faculty Learning Circles which examine the fundamentals of UDL and provide tips and resources on how you can apply these principles to your own teaching practice. Register for these workshops through *My Learning (Cornerstone)*.

3

Tailored Workshops for your Department/Team

Ravinder will individualize and tailor a workshop for your team about inclusive practices, UDL and the accommodation process.

4

UDL Resource Support

- *Designing for inclusion- UDL at GBC*
- *UDL GBC faculty Guide –GBC Library Learning Commons*
- *UDL Faculty Connect Videos*
- *UDL on Campus* and *Cast.org* to learn more about Universal Design for learning in Higher Education

For more information email me at Ravinder.Brar@georgebrown.ca -

I look forward to meeting with you to support access and inclusion at GBC.

Ravinder Brar, M.S. | Access and Inclusion Coach, Academic and Student Affairs | Ext. 3279

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