Vision Loss

Vision loss ranges from total blindness to partial or low vision that cannot be corrected fully with lenses. Persons with vision loss may have reduced acuity or a restricted field of vision, and experience difficulties with depth perception, night vision, and seeing colours and contrasts.

- Don't assume the person cannot see you.
- Take the student on a tour of the classroom or lab before or after the first class.
- Ask the student in which format she would like to receive information.
- Feel comfortable using words such as "see", "read" or "look".
- Describe verbally any visual aids.
- In labs use plastic where possible.
- Allow extra time to transcribe and process test questions.
- Consider allowing students to submit exams electronically.

Speech or Language Disabilities

- Some persons have problems expressing themselves, or understanding written or spoken language.
- Don't assume that a person who has difficulty speaking also has an intellectual or developmental disability.
- Allow the student to complete what he is saying without interruptions.
- If you don't understand, ask the student to repeat the information.
- Use email to communicate between classes and keep a writing pad handy during class.

SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY

In most cases, faculty members will receive information from the LU Accessibility Office regarding the student's need, including any recommended accommodations.

The following suggestions may help you provide the recommended accommodation and help you make your teaching accessible in other ways for students with disabilities.

1. Most importantly: Ask the student with a disability how you can help meet his/her needs.
2. Consider including on the course Syllabus a note about:
   - LU's Accessibility Services Office (http://www.laurentian.ca/content/accessibility-services).

- Your own method for alerting students about a class cancellation or disruption in the services used to access your classroom or lab—to save persons with disabilities the effort required to get to class.
- Your own expectations, e.g. if you disallow laptops, exempt students who require laptops for disability-related reasons. To protect students' privacy, communicate the exemption in a broad manner that encompasses more than disability-related reasons, e.g., "Students must have a good reason to use laptops and must request permission from me during my office hours or through email."

3. Describe in words what is being depicted in any visual format, moving in a logical spatial pattern from detail to detail, to orient students with vision loss.
4. Keep your face in the light and adjust position and posture for maximum visibility, e.g. to assist lip reading.
5. Use the voice projection system in the classroom, to assist students with hearing loss.
6. Repeat students' questions and allow only one person to speak at a time, to reduce auditory stimuli that can confuse students with mental health and learning disabilities, as well as vision and hearing loss.
7. Emphasize the main points in lectures and the links among concepts, using repetition, various audio-visual reinforcements, and a variety of learning methods, to assist students with hearing loss, learning disabilities, and other disabilities.
8. Respect and protect a person's privacy. When you inquire about students' needs, don't ask for details about their disability. Use respectful terminology, e.g., "disability," not "handicapped" or "impaired," or, "person with a learning disability" rather than "learning disabled." Put the person first.
9. Use flexibility, creativity, and a collaborative approach to find alternate ways for students with disabilities to achieve the required course outcomes when the usual mode presents a barrier.
10. Consider using Course Management Products, e.g. D2L, to post handouts, in both formatted and plain text versions. Electronic posting enables students with vision loss and students with learning or physical disabilities to convert the material into accessible alternate formats.

NOTE: ACCESSIBLE ALTERNATE FORMATS

Using alternate formats means making information available in ways other than the original format. Some students may be able to access information through their own computer software (e.g. translate into audio or enlarged text).

- In addition to the original format, offer plain text electronic versions of lecture notes, email attachments, presentation material. To do this, save files using the option with the .txt extension. Html, pdf, .rtf versions are more difficult to work with.
- Design web content in an accessible format.
- If you have questions related to web accessibility or how to make electronic information accessible, visit the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services Make Information Accessible website: http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/

NOTE: EVENT HOSTING

When hosting a class reception or conference, add a standard line to invitations such as "Please contact (name) if you require information in an alternate format, or if any other arrangements can make this event accessible to you."

In the invitation, describe the location of ramps, automatic doors, elevators, etc.

Thank you for learning about and contributing to increased Accessibility in Teaching at Thorneloe University and the University of Sudbury!

Thank you to the Disability Services Office at Trent University who gave us permission to use the content of a similar brochure produced by them!

HOW CAN I HELP A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY WHO IS HAVING DIFFICULTY?

Ask the student how you may best help him or her.

Connect and seek help from the LU Accessibility Services Office (see below).
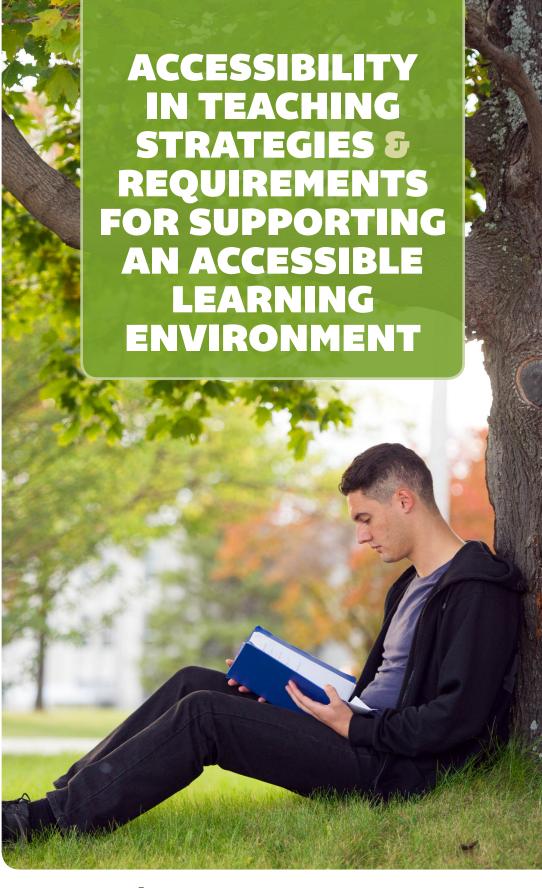
RESOURCES:

Accessibility Services
Parker Building, Room L-210
935 Ramsey Lake Road
Sudbury ON P3E 2C6
Tel: 705.675.1151 ext. 3324   Fax: 705.675.4807
accessibilityservicesinfo@laurentian.ca
http://www.thorneloe.ca/about-us/policies-and-procedures/aoda

ACCESSIBILITY IN TEACHING STRATEGIES & REQUIREMENTS FOR SUPPORTING AN ACCESSIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Thorneloe
A University of the Anglican Communion

UNIVERSITÉ de SUDBURY
UNIVERSITY of SUDBURY
SINCE/DEPUIS 1913

THORNELOE UNIVERSITY/THE UNIVERSITY OF SUDBURY COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY

Thorneloe University and the University of Sudbury welcome and celebrate diversity and are committed to increasing accessibility for those who come to learn, work, or visit. By using relevant teaching strategies, some of which are described in this document, faculty and teaching assistants can help increase the accessibility of the teaching/learning experience for students with disabilities. By law, each person who interacts with students, alumni, visitors, retirees or other members of the public is required to know and follow Ontario's accessibility legislation.

The strategies presented in this document support the principles and requirements named in the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) (2005). In interacting with students, for example, we are to make reasonable efforts to ensure we respect four principles:

1. **Dignity** (students are able to maintain their self-respect and the respect of others)
2. **Independence** (students are able to do things on their own without unnecessary help)
3. **Integration** (students are able to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar ways as others)
4. **Equal Opportunity** (qualified students are able to have the same opportunity as others to benefit from the way we conduct the learning experience)

Requirements Include: Welcoming assistive devices, service animals, and support persons; giving notice of temporary service disruptions (e.g., class cancellations); inviting feedback on accessibility; documenting special accessibility measures in your area; learning about the AODA; keeping training records; and, most importantly, taking disabilities into account when communicating with persons with disabilities.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
SAMPLE CASES TO DISCUSS WITH COLLEAGUES:

Case 1: Andrew is in your class; he's intense, focused, and doesn't interact much with other students. You start your lecture and Andrew immediately raises his hand, with a sense of urgency. When you acknowledge him, he asks a series of very detailed questions about points you plan to cover in due course. (What you don't know is that while Andrew is a bright student, he has Asperger syndrome, a mild form of Autism that is characterized by social skill deficits, such as understanding social give and take.) What do you do?

Case 2: You've really improved your course with great visuals and a couple of lively videos. On day one, Caleb arrives; he uses a cane, wears dark glasses, and is accompanied by an older person whom he introduces to you as his note taker. You wonder what you can do to ensure Caleb can benefit from all the enhancements you've made to your course delivery. What do you do?

Case 3: Emma is a student in one of your large lecture classes. She uses a wheelchair and wears a hearing aid. You use the sound amplification system in the classroom, and assume that this practice will be sufficient to make your teaching accessible. You see that Emma also brings a recording device to the class, something you'd prefer students not use. (What you don't know is that Emma also has dysgraphia- problems with writing and fine motor skills). What do you do?

Case 4: One of your students, Abigail, has high marks so far on a surprise quiz and on her first essay (for which she asked and received an extension). She is a lively and intelligent participant in class discussions, but her attendance is a bit erratic. On a couple of occasions, you've seen her eyes close and head drop, as if in sleep. You are a bit annoyed when she shows up after a few absences and asks for another deadline extension. (What you don't know is that Abigail has a chronic illness that flares up from time to time). What do you say? The strategies that follow will help you meet your obligations under Ontario's accessibility legislation

AODA REQUIREMENTS AND WAYS TO IMPLEMENT THEM

Requirement: Assistive Devices

Assistive devices include wheelchairs, walkers, canes, hearing aids, listening devices (FM systems), laptops with screen-reading software, etc. Allow students to use their assistive devices unless this use compromises academic integrity.

- The assistive device is an extension of the person's personal space – touch only if asked to, and don't move it out of the person's reach.
- If your department provides special assistive devices for classes, labs or field work, know how the devices work and communicate their availability.

Requirement: Service Animals

Service animals include guide dogs, hearing alert animals, and animals who help calm anxiety or alert their owner to oncoming seizures. The owner is responsible for the care and control of the animal.

- Allow the service animal in your teaching venues, except where prohibited by law (e.g. health and safety reasons).
- If, by law, the animal is not allowed, work with the student to find an alternative way to provide assistance.
- Avoid touching or distracting a service animal – it is working and has to pay attention at all times.

Requirement: Support Persons

A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member or friend who provides physical assistance, personal care, interpretation, note taking, or other services to the person with a disability.

- Welcome and allow access to support persons provided that the interaction does not compromise academic integrity.
- Speak directly with the person with a disability, not the support person.
- Plan for support persons; save space for them and provide both parties with handouts or lecture materials.
- If you charge a fee for an event, a field trip, or a conference, consider waiving the fee for the support person. If you must charge a fee, publicize this fact in advance.

Requirement: Service Disruptions

Disruptions in service are to be communicated for services/facilities usually used by persons with disabilities.

- Notify students of local disruptions (e.g. a cancelled class or department closure), directly via email, signage, and department websites. By law, notices must indicate: 1) the reason for the disruption (e.g. faculty member unavailable); 2) the expected duration; 3) a description of alternate facilities or services, if available.

Note: post broad public disruptions in physical facilities (e.g. elevators, buildings). By request, disruptions for a department can be posted on the university websites, Facebook pages, or Twitter if the disruption will affect a large number of people.

Requirement: Accessibility Feedback

Continue to receive direct feedback as you would for any aspect of your teaching.

Requirements: Learning

Learning about Accessibility is required for (a) all faculty, staff members, contractors, volunteers and others who interact with members of the public and (b) every person involved in the development of policies, practices, and procedures regarding goods and services (including education). Our public includes students, alumni, visitors, retirees and others.

Learning is to take place for each person as soon as practicable after duties have been assigned and must occur on an ongoing basis in connection with changes to policies, practices, and procedures.

Training Records are to be kept. Thorneloe University and the University of Sudbury are tracking and reporting compliance with AODA Customer Service Training.

Requirement: Communicate Effectively

Communicate with a student with a disability in a way that takes the disability into account—in both written and interpersonal communication. In many cases, the Accessibility Services Office at Laurentian University will recommend to faculty ways to help make courses more accessible to the student.

WAYS TO INTERACT EFFECTIVELY WITH STUDENTS WITH VARIOUS DISABILITIES:

Learning Disabilities

Examples include dyslexia (problems reading and language-based learning); dyscalculia (problems with mathematics); and dysgraphia (problems with writing and fine motor skills). Having a learning disability does not mean a person is incapable of learning. Rather, it means she learns in a different way.

The following are examples of ways in which learning disabilities can be supported in our educational environment:

- Do not make assumptions about the limits of what the student is able to do.
- Communicate with the student and the LU Accessibility Office to better understand how various assistive technologies work and to ensure solutions meet academic requirements.
- Provide seating at front of room to reduce distractions.
- Ensure periodic breaks.
- Provide visual and tactile demonstrations.
- Provide a class or lab partner.
- Demonstrate procedures and provide time for hands-on practice.
- Allow extra time for the student to set up and complete lab or field work.
- Allow time for the students to express their thoughts.

Mental Health Disabilities

Mental health disabilities can cause changes in a person's thinking, emotional state, and behaviour and can disrupt the person's ability to work. These changes may also affect the way the person interacts with others. With most mental health problems, the symptoms are not static and can improve or worsen over time.

These disabilities are often invisible.

- Use a flexible approach to assignments and assessments.
- If the student is being abrupt, acknowledge the request without commenting; redirect and refocus.
- Permit assistance with note taking, e.g. a peer note-taker, taping of the lecture, etc.
- Permit the student a beverage if medication causes thirst.
- Avoid assuming a therapeutic role. If you are concerned about a student's mental health or emotional wellbeing, refer the student to the appropriate service.
- If a student is in extreme crisis and his or her safety is compromised, call Laurentian Security (705-673-6562) and 911 for medical or other assistance, as needed.

Physical Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities. Some people may use assistive devices. Others may have conditions such as arthritis, or heart or lung conditions and may have difficulty with moving, standing, or sitting for long periods.

- Offer assistance if requested or if the need is urgent.
- Arrange information and handouts so they can be picked up without undue bending and turning.
- In a lab, locate equipment within reach; replace glass with plastic where possible.
- Arrange for a lab partner if assistance with fine motor manipulations is required.
- Ensure that you are familiar with the building's emergency exit and safety procedures for persons who cannot use stairs.

Hearing Loss

There are different types of hearing loss. Commonly used terms are hard of hearing, deafened, deaf and Deaf. Persons who are deafened or hard of hearing may use devices such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, or FM systems; they may rely on lip reading. A person with little or no functional hearing may use sign language.

- Use the audio system in the room and keep your face visible to enable lip reading. If the student is using an interpreter, speak directly to the student, not to the interpreter.
- Speak clearly, precisely, at a good but not exaggerated volume; pace your speech and pauses normally.
- Turn OFF audiovisual equipment when not in use, to reduce background noise.
- Summarize discussion or group work visually (chalkboard, projected image, etc.).
- When communicating directly, get the student's attention before speaking by saying his name and gently touching his arm or providing some visual cue.
- Ask the student if one ear hears better than the other and position yourself accordingly.
- Use gestures as you instruct - they enhance understanding.
- Avoid talking during a film or video.
- Avoid pacing or excessive movement – this interferes with voice transmission.