PROCEDURE TITLE: Student Accommodations

RELATED POLICY: NC800 Student Accommodations

A. Background and Definitions

Niagara College endorses fair and equal access to education for students with disabilities. Niagara College’s commitment to the provision of accommodation, short of undue hardship, is far-reaching and includes, when necessary, program/course accommodation and any such variety of services that will enhance the opportunities of each student to successfully access his or her program/course of choice.

A student with disabilities is a person who has or has had, or is believed to have had any of the following:

a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, including diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a dog guide or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;

b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;

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

d) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; (“handicap”).

Undue Hardship is otherwise recognized when it can be proved objectively that in the interest of safety or cost, if deemed to be significant, the benefits of equality are outweighed. Analysis of cost and safety, as pertains to “undue hardship”, is realized according to high standards. Assumptions or presumptions based on documented history; unsubstantiated opinion or preferences of third parties do not constitute “undue hardship.”

B. Procedure Purpose

Respectful of its obligation to students with disabilities, Niagara College adheres in spirit and practice to the Ontario Human Rights Code. Niagara College is committed to providing access to an educational environment that fosters a climate of mutual respect, fairness, dignity and equitable treatment, and to extend to students opportunities to exercise their worth and potential.
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In keeping with Niagara College’s obligations under, and commitments to, the Ontario Human Rights Code, accommodations will be arranged as needed, short of undue hardship.

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the steps that students with disabilities follow in order to access and receive disability-related academic and service accommodations at Niagara College.

C. Procedure Statements

1. Applicants with disabilities desiring to understand accommodations for different programs will be referred to Accessibility Services by the Admissions Office, academic advisors, parents, secondary school resource teachers or community agencies, or may be self-referred.

2. Applicants with disabilities who require assistance are strongly encouraged to self-identify in the college admissions process. Where assistance is appropriate or necessary, it is recommended that students with disabilities contact the Accessibility Services Office well in advance of entering a new semester or program in order to avoid delays in the accommodation process and so as to provide sufficient time to offer information, arrange an assessment and establish accommodations.

3. Students with disabilities who are already enrolled in Niagara College may choose to seek out the supports of Accessibility Services on their own, or may be referred by program coordinators, faculty, academic advisors or counsellors of the college.

4. When a student is referred to Accessibility Services, an appointment is arranged for the initial interview, after which, assessment of the student’s disability is determined and/or confirmed.

5. It is the student’s obligation to provide necessary and sufficient documentation in order to confirm their disability and receive accommodations. The Accessibility Services Office may request additional documentation for further understanding and/or clarification of a student’s accommodation needs. If additional information is needed by the Accessibility Services Office from a student’s health care practitioner in order to make an accommodation, the student will be asked to provide express and voluntary consent prior to Niagara College’s Accessibility Services Office requesting such information.
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6. Students are not required to disclose their disability diagnosis to register for accessibility services and access accommodations and supports. A diagnosis will only be requested in rare circumstances such as where a person’s needs are complex, challenging or unclear and more information is needed or where the information clearly relates to the accommodation being sought. Students may need to consent to providing a diagnosis if applying to certain federally or provincially-funded bursaries or grants and privately-funded external scholarships or financial awards.

7. Once established, and having regard to the essential program or course requirements, appropriate accommodations and referrals are provided according to the assessed nature of the disability, limitations and/or restrictions and these accommodations are arranged from that point forward.

8. Students may require accommodations on an interim basis, as appropriate, and for a reasonable period of time, pending receipt of medical documentation. Once established and confirmed by Accessibility Services, interim accommodations based on documentation and/or functional limitations are arranged on a case-by-case basis by Accessibility Services.

9. Students may require temporary accommodations which will be arranged for the period of time that the disability and related limitations and/or restrictions are evident. Once established, temporary accommodations are arranged on a case-by-case basis, according to documented recommendations and/or functional limitations.

10. If students with accommodations feel additional or different accommodations are required, they are required to book an appointment with the Centre for Students with Disabilities to discuss the potential support any new accommodations.

11. Any requests for retroactive accommodations will be meaningfully considered by the Accessibility Services Office on a case-by-case basis.

12. All students seeking accommodations will sign a consent form, under the auspices of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, for Accessibility Services to communicate the nature, type and duration of accommodation requirements to all staff within the College who are required to know of the information to meet the College’s obligations. Accessibility Services will use such forms and letters as developed by Accessibility Services.
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13. Students may choose not to provide consent to Accessibility Services to communicate information, on their behalf, about the nature, type and duration of their accommodations. In such cases, the student assumes responsibility for establishing and communicating their accommodation needs directly, using the confirmed accommodation plan developed by Accessibility Services, with Niagara College faculty and other individuals who facilitate the implementation of the accommodations.

D. Related Documents

Forms: Functional Limitations Form for Post-Secondary Students with a Disability Expectation of Students/Consent to Release Information Form