CANADIAN JOURNAL OF
Disability Studies
Published by the Canadian Disability Studies Association | Association canadienne d'études sur le handicap

Canadian Journal of Disability Studies

Published by the Canadian Disability Studies Association
Association canadienne d'études sur le handicap

Hosted by The University of Waterloo

www.cjds.uwaterloo.ca

Student Perceptions on Academic Accommodations: Needs and Barriers for Support

Perceptions étudiantes à l'égard des accommodements scolaires : besoins et obstacles au soutien

Will J. Craine
Undergraduate Student in Faculty of Sustainable Design Engineering
University of Prince Edward Island
wjcraine@upei.ca

Sierrah Laybolt
Undergraduate Student in Faculty of Sustainable Design Engineering
University of Prince Edward Island
slaybolt@upei.ca

Libby Osgood, Ph.D. P. Eng
Associate Professor of Sustainable Design Engineering
University of Prince Edward Island
eosgood@upei.ca

Christopher Power, Ph. D.
Professor of Mathematical and Computational Science
University of Prince Edward Island
cdpower@upei.ca

Abstract

Substantial numbers of students with sensory, physical, and other disabilities encounter systemic, social and institutional barriers that create distinct obstacles in their pursuit of higher education. This study investigates student academic accommodation needs at a small university in Atlantic Canada to determine whether undergraduate and graduate students who require academic accommodations are receiving necessary supports and to identify any barriers. Surveying 74 students across disciplines and years of study, 58 participants self-identified as requiring academic accommodations and 48 were registered with the university's accessibility office. Participants identified the following barriers: the registration process, testing accommodations, and unsupportive instructors and staff. Additionally, participants spoke about stigmatization and the necessity to self-advocate. Administrative and behavioural tensions are discussed, and five vignettes instructors

based on their level of support, compliance with policies, and engagement. This article amplifies the voices of students with disabilities, and it models the necessity to investigate whether students' accessibility needs are being met at all institutions across Canada.

Résumé

Un nombre important d'étudiantes et étudiants ayant des handicaps sensoriels, physiques ou autres se heurtent à des obstacles systémiques, sociaux et institutionnels qui compliquent l'accès aux études postsecondaires. Cette étude examine les besoins d'accommodements scolaires dans une petite université du Canada atlantique afin d'évaluer si les étudiantes et étudiants de premier cycle et des cycles supérieurs qui en ont besoin reçoivent le soutien requis et d'identifier les obstacles persistants. Parmi les 74 personnes sondées, issues de diverses disciplines et années d'études, 58 se sont auto-identifiées comme ayant besoin d'accommodements et 48 étaient inscrites au bureau d'accessibilité de l'université. Les participantes et participants ont relevé plusieurs obstacles : le processus d'inscription, les accommodements aux examens et le manque de soutien de certaines enseignantes, enseignants et membres du personnel. Elles et ils ont aussi évoqué la stigmatisation et la nécessité constante de faire valoir leurs droits. L'article analyse les tensions administratives et comportementales observées et présente cinq vignettes illustrant différents profils d'enseignantes et enseignants selon leur niveau de soutien, leur respect des politiques et leur engagement. Ce travail met en valeur les voix des étudiantes et étudiants handicapés et souligne l'importance de vérifier, dans toutes les institutions canadiennes, si les besoins en accessibilité sont réellement pris en compte.

Keywords

Accessibility; Inclusive learning; Barriers to learning; Disabled students

Introduction

Post-secondary institutions play a pivotal role in supporting students with disabilities. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students influence how inclusive learning environments are and whether there is equitable access for students with disabilities. In Canada, the rate of disability among youth aged 15–24 rose from 13% in 2017 to 20% in 2022 (Statistics Canada, 2023), indicating a need for universities to develop effective strategies to support this growing group of learners. Though the increase could be due to a variety of reasons such as greater attention to earlier diagnosis, universities must be prepared to respond. The challenge for universities is complicated by the broad spectrum of disabilities, each requiring diverse types of support. The Accessible Canada Act (Minister of Justice, 2019) defines disability as functional limitations or "physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment…[that] hinders a person's full and equal participation in society." Research articles such as Parsons et al. (2021) classify disabilities as learning disabilities (such as dyslexia and dyscalculia), psychiatric disabilities (such as mental illness, autism spectrum disorder, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder), and physical disabilities (such as cerebral palsy, Crohn's disease, and visual impairment). In all of these cases, it is the notion that the systems and structures designed within a society are mismatched with the relative minority of those with disabilities, creating barriers to full participation. These barriers then necessitate that the effected individuals seek methods to alleviate their symptoms within a system created without consideration of their needs.

Attempting to address the diverse support needs, universities establish accessibility offices to provide individualized academic and physical accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Saltes (2020) explains that because "perceptions of access may differ," accommodations are a 'means to fill access gaps' on a case-by-case basis (p. 56). Though provincial and federal disability legislation guarantees freedom from discrimination, the documents also contain exceptions for undue hardship if a particular accommodation is financially burdensome (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982; PEI Human Rights Act, 2024).

Research by Parsons et al. (2021) demonstrated an association between disability and GPA in first-year university students, where students with disabilities scored 11.25% lower on average compared to their non-disabled peers. To compensate for this disadvantage, Lovett and Harrison (2021) describe how academic accommodations provide the same educational content while changing how assessment and instruction occur. Examples include additional time for tests, access to technology, and note-takers. Römhild and Hollederer (2024) describes the benefits of test accommodations as instruments "adapting examination conditions to their need" (p. 148).

Opponents of academic accommodations attest that they create an unfair advantage, such as using memory aids on an exam, and can hinder skill development, such as how to manage anxiety (Lovett and Harrison, 2021). However, these concerns are outweighed by a desire to support students in their academic pursuits. Becker and Paladino (2016) report that students with disabilities who do not feel supported by their

institution have higher dropout rates, Thus, providing academic accommodations can help both by supporting students and improving retention rates for students with disabilities.

Despite universities' attempts to provide accessible learning spaces, students with disabilities face distinct barriers in their pursuit of higher education. Some of the barriers to receiving support highlighted by the literature include: student hesitation to disclose their disability due to stigma, lack of awareness of available supports, a need for active self-advocacy without the experience, expertise or confidence, complex registration processes, inaccessible websites, unsupportive instructors, and inadequate provision of accommodations (Edwards et al., 2022; Prema and Dhand, 2019; Wilkinson and Martens, 2024).

Given the large number of potential barriers, universities have a responsibility to ensure that accessibility needs are being met. This study, approved by an institutional ethics review board, documents one such investigation: to explore student perceptions on academic accommodations and to determine whether needs are being met for students with disabilities at a small university in Atlantic Canada. The four research questions are as follows:

> (1) What are the academic accommodation needs for our institution?
> (2) Are the academic accommodation needs being met?
> (3) What are the barriers to receiving support? And
> (4) What patterns of behaviour recur in our educational setting that could be mitigated?

Research has the ability to amplify the voices of students with disabilities, empowering them as partners in their education. Instead of making assumptions about students'

needs, this article contributes to the growing body of research consulting students with disabilities on their experiences (Bartolo et al., 2025; Witham and Brewer, 2024). Asking these questions at a small university in Atlantic Canada provides a snapshot at one institution while encouraging other institutions to perform similar investigations to ensure the actual needs of students with disabilities are known and being addressed. As each institution's policies and people are unique, the localized needs and barriers for students with disabilities should be investigated.

This research was performed Mi'kmaqi, the traditional, unceded, and unsurrendered territory of the Mi'kmaq people, under the Treaties of Peace and Friendship. The investigation was initiated by an engineering student, the primary author, who was asked to be on a committee to revise the academic accommodations policy for the university, and he wanted to ensure that he accurately represented student opinions. He credits his academic success to entering university with documentation of his neurodivergences, which provided access to necessary academic accommodations. The four authors are in STEM fields, are of European descent, and have personal experience with various forms of neurodivergence and disabilities.

Literature Review

This review examines the social, systemic, and institutional challenges faced by students with disabilities and proposes ways to address the barriers such as frameworks that aim to foster inclusivity.

Social, Systemic, and Institutional Challenges

Stigma remains a significant social barrier for students with disabilities, both real and perceived. Some students report feeling like a burden to instructors if they seek accommodations (El-Shebiny et al., 2024). Disclosing the need for accommodations can lead to resistance from professors, reinforcing feelings of judgement and isolation (Mullins and Preyde, 2013). Many students avoid seeking the accommodations they need to "pass" as a non-disabled student, not wanting to be perceived as lazy or unintelligent (Couzens et al., 2015; Krause and Ueno, 2021). Many of those who do utilize their accommodations believe they are receiving unfair, discriminatory treatment and feel like imposters in their classes (Bruce and Aylward, 2021; Mullins and Preyde, 2013). Students, then, are less able to integrate into learning communities as they feel less welcome and unsupported by instructors, which directly impacts retention (Saxe and Razavinia, 2024). Thus, in addition to feeling social stigmatization from staff, instructors, family, and friends, students experience self-stigmatization as well (Condra, 2015).

Next, students with disabilities face systemic barriers to be able to access accommodations. Extending beyond institutional processes into health domains, students are often required to obtain medical documentation during the registration process (Witham and Brewer, 2024). After navigating complex social systems to access healthcare, students encounter complicated institutional processes to register and access accommodations (Bartolo et al., 2025).. These requirements often deter students from seeking help, particularly for those with undiagnosed or invisible disabilities (Couzens et

al., 2015). According to Blasey et al. (2023), "The majority of eligible college students with disabilities do not register with their campus disability service to receive accommodations or supports" (p. 1891). Further, students who eventually register wait an average of 2.4 semesters, potentially due to "stigma, a desire for independence, and a lack of knowledge about one's disability or how to access college services" (Blasey et al., 2023, p. 1903). This system solely relies on students to disclose their disability and advocate for their accommodations, placing a significant burden on the student (Bruce and Aylward, 2021). Self-advocacy can be particularly difficult for students who struggle with social interactions (Delp, 2021) or have intersectional identities due to their race or gender (Pfeifer et al., 2021). Further, intersectionality increases systemic barriers in cultural domains as research shows that racialized and female students register for accommodations later than their peers (Blasey et al., 2023), and racialized students receive less support than their peers (Sagar et al., 2024). Bain De Los Santos et al. (2019) identified the need for social support networks but found that less than half of the 122 participants felt like they had support within the community.

In addition to social and systemic barriers, there are institutional barriers, such as standardized teaching and assessment methods. This "one-size-fits-all" approach to teaching does not encourage or account for diverse learning needs, systematically excluding the needs of students with disabilities (Mullins and Preyde, 2013). Furthermore, the implementation of accommodations is often left to the discretion of individual instructors. This causes large discrepancies in the degree and types of accommodation available to students and is dependent on the receptiveness of the individual professor

(Bruce and Aylward, 2021). Some instructors express lower expectations of students with disabilities, and students report negative experiences of non-accommodating, unapproachable, and dismissive instructors (Becker and Palladino, 2016; Pfeifer et al., 2021). Even when well-intentioned, instructors can damage students' confidence by downplaying the need for accommodations (Becker and Palladino, 2016), violating student privacy in front of their peers (Pfeifer et al., 2021), or being uninformed about accessible instructional strategies (Bartolo et al., 2025). Sadly, Wilkinson and Martens (2024) reports that only 28% of Canadian universities have a complaint system, leaving students few options to negotiate with unsupportive instructors.

Proposed Ways to Addresses Challenges

Though academic accommodations like extended exam times and note-taking services are helpful, they are insufficient in overcoming the social, systemic, and institutional barriers. Universities must adopt systemic changes, including equity-focused policies and diversified curricula to ensure long-term success for students (Bruce and Aylward, 2021). Instructors can be partners in this effort, as Edwards et al. (2022) describes instructors as change agents for more inclusive practices. Individual instructors can increase students' feeling of inclusion, and students report receiving significant informal support from instructors (Condra et al., 2015). Also, increasing awareness of invisible disabilities, described by Mullins and Preyde (2013) as disabilities without a physical manifestation, can increase comfort, reduce stigma, and promote advocacy (Dusek, 2024). In particular, there is evidence that instructor-supported mentorship

programs and support from peers can improve academic success for students with disabilities (Römhild and Hollederer, 2024).

According to Prema and Dhand (2019, p. 135), "Given the dearth of fully accessible and inclusive STEM learning environments, educators will often have the opportunity to create innovative and creative solutions themselves," highlighting STEM instructor efforts such as Etkin's "Making Chemistry Inclusive" (2016). Additionally, education conferences promote inclusive pedagogy as in Garcia Gonzalez (2017) and El-Shebiny et al. (2024).

Assistive technologies, including adaptive learning platforms and accessible materials, are essential for reducing barriers to academic participation. Institutional funding for students and faculty training are necessary to implement assistive tools effectively (Becker and Palladino, 2016; Blasey et al., 2023; Fleet and Kondrashov, 2019).

Inclusive frameworks and practices have been proposed, such as the Activity Diamond (Hedvall 2009), I-Course framework (Chrysochoou et al., 2021), or more notably, Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL seeks to create environments and systems accessible to all, regardless of age, ability, or experience, and it is based on seven core principles: equitable use, flexibility, intuitive design, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and supportive instructional climate (Roberts et al., 2010). Instead of providing individual accommodations only to students with medical documentation, all students would have access to a wider range of learning strategies and supports, such as diverse assessment methods, lecture recordings, and accessible course materials to minimize reliance on individualized accommodations. UDL aims to

alleviate the barriers students encounter while acquiring accommodations and to reduce associated stigma (Edwards et al., 2022).

In interviews by Bartolo et al. (2025), students identified a need for faculty and staff to receive training in inclusive teaching methods. In some studies, instructors appear to be receptive to UDL, but few of them implement it in their classrooms due to lack of time, training resources, or administrative support (Dallas et al., 2016). Additionally, while the flexibility of the model is beneficial in addressing needs, the non-traditional pedagogical techniques can be more difficult to assess (Fleet & Kondrashov, 2019). Finally, while training in inclusive teaching methods is a laudable aim, before someone can engage they must be receptive to the idea that disability is something that requires adaptation in their classroom. If an instructor has a lack of receptiveness (Bruce and Aylward, 2021) or is dismissive of disability needs (Becker and Palladino, 2016; Pfeifer et al., 2021), then no amount of recommended training in inclusive teaching methods such as UDL is likely to improve the situation, and instead other types of education and awareness activities would be needed instead.

Method

Employing an exploratory, mixed-methods methodology, all undergraduate and graduate students across the university were invited through email and posters to participate in an anonymous, online survey on academic accommodations. Survey questions were developed to address the four research questions after performing an immersive review of foundational disability studies literature. Based on their responses,

participants (n_{TOT}=74) were divided into the four groups shown in Table 1 to determine whether they need academic accommodations or have registered with the accessibility office. This branching of participants tailored the survey so participants could respond to relevant questions. For example, the fourth group of participants who do not need academic accommodations would not be asked what support their need or what barriers to receiving support are, however their perspective on accommodations could help inform attitudes towards stigma of receiving academic accommodations. As shown in Table 1, each group responded to a different number of questions. One participant did not complete enough questions to be placed in a participant group, though they identified as having multiple disabilities. Data was analyzed using descriptive quantitative statistics and qualitative thematic analysis per Braun and Clark (2006).

Table 1. Participant groups and number of items answered.

Group Num.	Descriptor of participant group	Num. of participants	Percent of total participants (n_{TOT}=74)	Num. items in instrument
1	Need academic accommodations & registered with accessibility office	n_1 = 48	65%	30 items
2	Need academic accommodations & NOT registered with accessibility office	n_2 = 5	7%	21 items
3	Need academic accommodations & have not tried to register with accessibility office	n_3 = 5	7%	16 items
4	Do not need academic accommodations	n_4 = 15	20%	11 items
N/A	Not enough information to assess	$n_{N/A}$ = 1	1%	

Participant demographics (n_{TOT}=74) are shown in Table 2. The largest participant groups in the sample do not identify as racialized persons (82%), were studying science (38%), and were from within the province (55%). There was a disproportionate number of women (73%) than is representative of the university population. The sample contained primarily undergraduate students (89%), who are distributed across four years and some graduate students (11%) from various faculties.

Table 2. Participant demographics.

Category	Percentage
Gender	
Woman	73% (n=54)
Man	16% (n=12)
Non-binary	10% (n=7)
Prefer not to answer	1% (n=1)
Best described by (multiple selections possible)	
From within province	55% (n=41)
From other province/territory	31% (n=23)
From Indigenous community	1% (n=1)
From outside Canada	19% (n=14)
Degree field	
Arts	22% (n=16)
Business	5% (n=4)
Education	3% (n=2)
Engineering	22% (n=16)
Nursing	5% (n=4)
Science	36% (n=27)
Veterinary	7% (n=5)

Category	Percentage
Identify as a racialized person	
Yes	11% (n=8)
No	82% (n=61)
Prefer not to answer	7% (n=5)
Year of study	
Undergraduate 1st year	16% (n=12)
Undergraduate 2nd year	24% (n=18)
Undergraduate 3rd year	22% (n=16)
Undergraduate 4th year +	27% (n=20)
Graduate student	11% (n=8)
Disability (multiple selections possible)	
ADHD	51% (n=38)
Anxiety	60% (n=44)
Depression	47% (n=35)
Learning disability	18% (n=13)
OCD	20% (n=15)
Other mental disorder	12% (n=10)
Physical disability	8% (n=6)
Other medical condition	5% (n=4)
No diagnosis	16% (n=12)

Findings

The findings are presented in the order of the first three research questions, with data compiled from multiple survey questions and organized thematically. The fourth research question is addressed in the discussion.

1. What Are the Academic Accommodation Needs For Our Institution?

Identifying the academic accommodation needs for undergraduate and graduate students is the central research question, and all findings address this over-arching question. Focusing on specific academic accommodations, Table 3 shows the accommodations that registered participants currently receive ($n_1 = 48$). Most participants receive exam support (92%, $n_1 = 48$) and are allowed to audio or video record their lectures (56%). The items shown under "Adaptation" in the table were originally written in as "Other" but were reclassified. One participant wrote that they "haven't received accommodations yet," despite being registered.

Table 3. Academic accommodations.

Type of accommodation		Num. participants	Percentage ($n_1 = 48$)
Exam support		44	92%
Additional time	*Access to technology*		
Distraction-reduced environment, One exam in a 24-hour period	*Equations sheets* *Headphones*		
Use of audio or video recording of lectures		27	56%
Assistive technology		20	42%
Adaptation to a component of a program or alternative forms of evaluation		10	21%
Extended deadlines	*Frequent breaks*		
Alternative form of presentation	*Missing class due to illness*		
Oral or visual interpreters, educational attendants, and/or note-takers		9	19%

Special seating or accessible tables	6	13%
Other	1	2%

To determine the participants' receptivity of academic accommodations, they were asked whether every university student should receive accommodations. In response, 43% of participants (n_{TOT}=74) felt that all students should receive accommodations, whether or not they have accessibility needs. Focusing on the participants who do not identify as needing accommodations (n_4 = 15), 60% replied that all students should receive accommodations, emphasizing the perceived benefit that accommodations provide to learning. When asked to explain, the most common response, brought up by 28% of all responses (n_{TOT}=74), was that accommodations should be provided based on a person's needs. One participant summarizes the purpose of accommodations:

> Accommodations are meant to level the field to allow those who otherwise couldn't succeed in university to be brought up to a level where they can attend university with the same capability for success as individuals who don't need them.

Another common sentiment stated by 15% of all respondents was that those who do not need accommodations would "take advantage" of having access to them, which matches the findings of Lovett and Harrison (2021) and reinforces the stigmatization. The last sentiment of interest, brought up by 9% of responses, is that providing accommodations to everyone would lead to nobody having accommodations.

When asked about if they feel there is a negative perception of students who seek accommodations, 72% (n_{TOT}=74) responded "yes," 22% replied "no," and 6% did not reply. The most common explanation for why participants responded this way is participants'

fear of being perceived as lazy, confirming findings in the literature (Couzens et al., 2015; Krause and Ueno, 2021). As one participant described, "It's always seen as 'having it easy' even though I have to work just as hard."

The negative perception for seeking accommodations was higher at 74% for participants who required accommodations ($n_{1–3}$ = 58) as compared to 67% for participants who do not require accommodations (n_4 = 15). Though both groups indicate a stigmatization towards receiving accommodations, this suggests a heightened effect of self-stigmatization for students with disabilities. Unfortunately, the data affirms the literature that states that there is a negative perception of people who receive accommodations (Condra et al., 2015; Mullins and Preyde, 2013). Thus, one of the academic accommodation needs identified by the data is to address the stigmatization of students with disabilities.

Participant groups 1 and 2 exemplify how many students overcome this stigma and register for accommodations (or try to), despite the negative perceptions they encounter. However, the belief of a negative perception could cause some students to not pursue registering for accommodations, such as participant group 3, confirming the findings in Blasey et al. (2023).

2. Are the Academic Accommodation Needs Being Met?

Of the 58 participants who identified that they have accessibility needs that could be helped with accommodations ($n_{1–3}$), 26% felt they were receiving "sufficient accommodations to support my needs." Though 24% of the 58 participants left the

question blank, 50% felt that their learning would benefit from additional accommodations.

For exams, participants felt they would benefit from private rooms and being able to wear headphones to listen to music "because silence doesn't work for me." They requested adaptations to course instruction and evaluation, such as colored paper for printed materials, extended deadlines, access to the instructor's notes, and frequent breaks. One participant desired physical accommodations:

> Although, I do feel most of my accommodation needs are being met as best as possible when it comes to tests and assignments. However, I do feel I would benefit from additional accommodations in laboratories as I struggle a lot in this type of learning environment.

In a question that was asked only to registered students ($n_1 = 48$), 79% of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the services provided by the accessibility office. One participant explained, "They are always very helpful if I need anything and if they can't help directly they are quick to help me find a source who can assist me."

Only 2 participants (4%, $n_1 = 48$) were very dissatisfied, as one of them stated, "My case manager did not care to listen to my needs in terms of accommodations, and only granted approval to those that are unnecessary/provide no benefit to myself."

The other participant felt the testing space didn't meet their physical accommodations and was distracting. They explained,

> Writing in a room with a bunch of other people to the point that the room is full negates the point of writing in a separate room to begin with. Having staff walking in and out of the exam room and talking constantly as well as other

> students coming into and going out of the room are major distractions. It is extremely difficult to contact accessibilities, especially in person.

Additionally, academic accommodation needs are not being met for the participants who were not registered with the accessibility office ($n_2 = 5$) or had not tried to register ($n_3 = 5$), as they indicated that they would benefit from accommodations but were not receiving support. Nine of the ten participants in these two groups (n_2, n_3) have documented diagnoses, and the tenth participant, who had not tried to register, cited a physical accommodation requiring food breaks during three-hour lectures. Four of the participants received accommodations in high school, but had not tried or were unable to register in university. Table 4 shows the reasons participants in these groups are not registered with the accessibility office, introducing barriers that are discussed in the next section.

Table 4. Participants who have academic accommodation needs but are not registered with the accessibility office (n_2) or who have never tried to register (n_3).

Num. Participants	Status	Reasons cited for not being registered
5	Have not tried	I don't feel my issues would be considered serious enough to receive formal accommodations, and even if they were I'm not sure how exactly the accommodations would be set up.
		Needing time to go to the new doctor.
		Politics in the department. Everyone rather stay quiet and not raise an issue for fear of victimization.
		Many professors do not want to add supports because they want their courses to remain difficult.
2	Did not complete registration	Medical documentation [despite having a physical diagnosis].
2	Denied access	Not having a person that is familiar with my disability (or at least how it affects me in my path of study).
1	In process	

3. What are the Barriers to Receiving Support?

This section presents the most common barriers identified by participants who have academic accommodation needs ($n_1 = 48$). Compiling data across multiple survey questions, the primary barriers are shown in Table 5 and include: the registration process, test accommodations, and unsupportive instructors and staff. One participant bleakly summarized the barriers as "too many to name," and another explained, "The disconnect between faculties and students. The disconnect between support services and students. A bandaid cannot fix a bullet wound."

Barrier 1: The ***Registration Process.*** For registered participants ($n_1 = 48$), 29% did so when they enrolled in the university, and 35% took less than a month to register. A further 27% of participants took between a month and a semester to register, and 8% took more than one semester. Thus, once 35% of the registered students recognized the need for accommodations, they were not able to receive support in their courses for a few months to multiple semesters.

More than half of the participants who identified requiring an accommodation (57%, $n_{1–3} = 58$) said the registration process was a barrier to receiving support, and 45% specifically identified diagnosis of their disability as a barrier. In order to receive accommodations, students must first register with the accessibility office, which requires documentation of a diagnosed disability. Three participants noted that they were charged $30 - $40 by the university Health Centre to have a healthcare provider fill out forms.

Although all three of these participants had a pre-existing documented diagnosis, they were required to have new paperwork completed.

Table 5. Barriers to receiving support.

Barriers	Num. participants	Percentage (n_{1-3} = 58)
Registration process	33	57%
Obtaining a diagnosis	*26*	*45%*
Confusion about the process	*20*	*34%*
Wait times	*8*	*14%*
Test accommodations	6	10%
Unsupportive instructors and staff	6	10%
Stigma	3	5%
No significant barriers	7	12%
Other	6	10%
"More staff"	*1*	*2%*
"They have nothing for what I need"	*1*	*2%*
"The university does not care enough"	*1*	*2%*
"Too many to name"	*1*	*2%*
Difficulty obtaining grant funding for technology	*1*	*2%*
Learning the need to ask for help	*1*	*2%*
Blank	3	6%

For some diagnoses, the documentation must be obtained from a doctor or psychologist, which can cost thousands of dollars "in a province with limited doctors," as one participant identified and "takes years to obtain," another participant pointed out. By not having access to a doctor, students may have an excessively long waiting time between when they recognize their academic difficulties and when they are able to receive support. Wait time to speak to university staff and see the doctor was identified by 14% of participants (n_{1-3} = 58). Expecting more of the university, one participant explained, "If a

diagnosis is the way to decide who gets accommodations and who doesn't, there should be more known supports on campus to help with diagnoses." One participant had a suggestion that could alleviate students of this extra step:

> If there was a way to have students applying to [the accessibility office] sign a consent form stating that [the accessibility office] can request for medical documents relating to their application from the doctor that gave the diagnosis. This could potentially allow for more students to have access to accommodations.

Of the 58 respondents ($n_{1–3}$), 34% were confused about how to register with the accessibility office, as one participant described "without proper instructions or information." The frustration is further exemplified by this participant:

> You have to … go through all of the trouble of applying for [the accessibility office] with no explanation of how to do it really. Which for some people it might be incredibly difficult to jump through all the hoops just to have their supports to learn properly like everyone else.

Additionally, the process to register can affect mental health, as this participant described the steps to register as, "Many steps, from dealing with medical professionals, staying in the hospital for 2 weeks for my mental health, and crying over forms I didn't know how to complete for days at a time."

The impact on this participant's mental health speaks to the amount of responsibility that the university puts on students to advocate for themselves. Further, some students are seeking support for the same skills that are needed to be able to register in the first place. In other words, it could be more difficult for these students to be able to register, thus reinforcing the need for accommodations.

Barrier 2: Test Accommodations. Once students are officially registered, 10% of participants who require accommodations ($n_{1–3} = 58$) reported testing accommodations as a barrier, noting the complexity of the test-booking process and inadequacy of the testing environment. Focusing first on the process, each semester students request for instructors to be informed of their accommodations through an exam booking software which was introduced the semester before this survey was conducted. The software requires instructors to "create an exam" within the software before students can book their exams, and a policy requires this to occur seven days before the exam. If instructors don't create an exam prior to the seven-day deadline, students will not have access to their testing accommodations. One participant stated: "Last semester I only had one professor that would communicate with [the accessibility office] to get the test ready in time before the 7 day cutoff."

Another participant relayed their confusion with the test booking system:

> Needing to check back on the booking system frequently until professors post the assignments results in missing assignment scheduling windows, and generally makes the process more confusing.

Requiring time-management skills that are difficult for some students, the testing software and process could be considered inaccessible.

As mentioned previously, the testing environment is described by participants as over-crowded. When a student arrives at the accessibility office for a test, they are assigned to a desk in a room with either four desks or eight desks, all of which may have a student assigned to them. All other people in the room are potentially making noise, and

even small sounds can be distracting for some students. One participant relayed their frustration with these testing rooms:

> I stopped taking exams in [the accessibility office] despite it being helpful, because the room was still crowded with students, just doing different exams, which was almost more distracting.

Though private space is a possible accommodation, it must be denoted in the diagnosis documentation and can only be provided if a room is available. Additionally, being in a separate location from the instructor can inhibit the student from hearing pertinent information about the exam or asking questions. One participant explains: "When you are away from the professor, there is a significant disadvantage when asking questions, which has impacted my grades."

Students in this environment are not proximal to their instructor, and while they can contact their instructor through a proctor, but there are often delays because the instructor is administering the exam for the rest of the students taking the test.

Barrier 3: Unsupportive Instructors and Staff. Ten percent of participants with accommodation needs ($n_{1-3} = 58$) identified unsupportive instructors and staff as a barrier. At the start of each semester, instructors are informed about each student's specific accommodations, but for privacy, the students' diagnoses are not disclosed. Despite acknowledging the students' accommodations in the test-booking software and human rights legislation that requires providing accommodations (PEI Human Rights Commission, 2024, 2019), participants relayed that instructors have denied their request for

accommodations. One participant noted that their instructors were unwilling to provide extra time on assignments:

> Most of my courses require only 3 papers written to make up my entire grade. I am meant to be granted extra time for these assignments, yet no professor will provide them as 'that's already enough time.'

Instructors hold the power in these situations, impacting whether the students can perform optimally on exams, as identified in Bruce and Aylward (2021). In later questions asking registered participants ($n_1 = 48$) to describe a positive and negative experience with an instructor, 41% described a negative experience, 29% only provided positive experiences, and 29% left the questions blank. The participants cited negative examples of instructors refusing accommodations, not booking exams within the allotted time-frame, and being dismissive of the need for accommodations, matching findings from the literature (Becker and Palladino, 2016; Pfeifer et al., 2021). As one participant relayed: "[I] Was told my accommodations meant nothing because of the way the courses are structured." In this case, the instructor was dismissive of the student's accessibility needs.

In an extreme display of dehumanizing treatment, two participants described negative experiences of being locked in a room because of the perceived chance of misconduct. One of them explained,

> For 2.25 hours prior to exam so the first two groups wouldn't tell us the answer. [We] were not allowed to eat or drink that whole time. Had to ask for special permission to even use bathroom. Wrote exam extremely dehydrated with a massive headache and brain fog.

The instructor provided the requisite academic accommodations but added conditions that may have impaired the students' performances. These types of negative experiences are relayed from one student to another. Three participants described negative experiences that suggest that instructors' reputations can precede them. They heard about professors who were not supportive of accommodations and as a result, one participant indicated their unwillingness to seek accommodations. Alternatively, in some of the positive experiences, participants relayed situations that were minimally supportive, demonstrating how low their expectations are for receiving support. For example, one participant described,

> When I suddenly felt ill and was hospitalized, professor [name] worked with my case worker and allowed me to pause my work that was due during my hospitalization and I picked up, when I was home and well again. Very accommodating.

In this case, the student categorized the experience as positive instead of being a reasonable expectation. Demonstrating similarly low expectations of supportive behaviour, a participant described a positive experience when their instructor contacted the accessibility office during the exam to correct an error in the test booklet. The student recalled the experience as positive because they had access to the same information as all of the other students. This demonstrates how grateful students can be for the smallest gestures of support.

Another participant explained: "I feel professors are not open to having students approach them about accommodations and that they tell you just to get to [the accessibility office]." This response indicates the instructor's lack of knowledge about

accommodations or inclusive frameworks, such as Universal Design for Learning, which matches the literature (Bartolo et al., 2025; Becker and Palladino, 2016). Instructors are not required to be trained in how to provide accommodations, which creates a disconnect as the university is required to provide accommodations for students with documented disabilities. One participant suggested that students should not have to go through instructors who may not have knowledge and/or skills on how to properly provide academic accommodations:

> Students shouldn't have to go through professors untrained in EDI [Equity Diversity Inclusion], they act like we all should be able to succeed when many are struggling with everything [from] finances, to mental health issues, to family problems; requiring those students to hit the same markers as students without issues and not giving them accommodations is atrocious for student life.

Although students do not have to request accommodations directly from their instructors, they do rely on instructors to follow the process.

> I feel that the accessibilities I do have are extremely helpful, but the way I have to go about exercising my accommodations are very difficult. Having to ask teachers to allow me to use accommodations can be ostracizing, and when educators don't have proper understanding of EDI, it can be frustrating to have to advocate for myself about everything.

Just as instructors expect their students to learn, perhaps students can expect their instructors to be informed about common accessibility techniques to prevent further stigmatization. Standing behind the shield of academic freedom negates acknowledging the worth of the student who is attempting to learn and their right to do so.

How instructors choose to respond to academic accommodation requests directly impacts students' ability to succeed. For example, one participant stated that while they were working through the registration process, "One of my professors allowed me to write at a separate time by myself and I passed that exam." That instructor prioritized the student's learning by understanding the importance of the student's perceived need for an accommodation and trusted that the request was legitimate. In a different course, the same student explained how the lack of accommodations led them to fail two exams and ultimately the course. Because the student was not yet registered with the accessibility office, the instructors did not have to provide accommodations. However, the differing responses directly impacted the student's success in each course.

Students are attentive to instructors' attitudes, as some students praised their instructors for initiating conversations to acknowledge their accessibility needs. One student described,

> I really appreciate when a professor will reach out to me before an assignment or at the start of the semester acknowledging my accommodations and that i will have extra time on an assignment, and giving me the date mine will be due.

Alternatively, instructor attitudes can deter students from advocating for their accommodation needs, as one participant shared their concern:

> I am allowed to have extra time during exams… [but] I'm too worried to remind my teachers of my accommodations on test days because I don't want to draw attention. So far only one teacher has remembered my time and a half accommodation during in-class tests.

Though they fear stigmatization, students are required to advocate for themselves (Bruce and Aylward, 2021). In these situations, there is a further mismatch between the student, the assessment, and the understanding and/or opinion of the instructors. Currently, the default is that the instructor makes the choice for the student. However, instructors do not necessarily know the extent of the students' needs, so advocacy becomes vitally important.

Of the students who require accommodations ($n_{1–3}$ = 58), 26% identified that they do not have an advocate, though one participant listed themself as their own, self-empowered advocate. This finding is more promising than in Bain De Los Santos et al. (2019), in which 55% of participants did not have a support network. Additional advocates are shown in Table 6.

For students, one benefit of registering with the accessibility office is having access to a caseworker to advocate to instructors on their behalf. Of the 48 registered participants (n_1), 19% listed their caseworker as their only advocate. That is a staggering responsibility for caseworkers. An additional 41% of registered participants (n_1 = 48) identified their caseworker as one of their advocates. That means that 40% of registered participants (n_1 = 48) did not perceive their caseworker as an advocate, as exemplified in the following statement:

> Anytime I contacted my case worker, I was met with rigid following of the rules, very little support, and rude responses. So I only ever contact [the accessibility office] directly, and sometimes I get nice, helpful answers.

Table 6. Advocates.

Advocate	Num. participants	Percentage ($n_{1–3}$ = 58)
University caseworker	30	52%
Parent/guardian/close relative	26	45%
Friend/partner	19	33%
Do not have an advocate	15	26%
Other	3	5%
Therapist/family doctor		
Self		
Supervisors/professors		
Blank	0	

The participant's response indicates that some staff are helpful, while others are not. Another participant explained a scenario where they sought support from their caseworker but were left to advocate for themselves:

> I have 2 classes back to back, and both have midterms on the same day, so if I wanted to use my extra time for tests, I would miss another classes midterm. I asked to switch the time, but was told that only applies to Final exams, and was told to sort it out with my professor myself.

This participant did not receive the support they sought and had to self-advocate. Though these are negative examples, there were ten participants (21%, n_1 = 48), who described positive experiences, one of whom described the staff as "a great support to me in my studies."

Discussion

The students in this survey shared their experiences, accessibility needs, and barriers to accessing accommodations in remarkable detail. From an institutional perspective, these findings present a picture of recurring tensions between students' rights, needs,

expectations, and the university's response. Institutions navigate between providing individualized support and maintaining a standardization of expectations and procedure. These tensions recur throughout the students' educational journeys. The following three discussion points on administrative tensions, behavioural tensions, and instructor vignettes offer insights and strategies to address the rich student experiences documented in the results, in order to address the fourth research objective: *What patterns of behaviour recur in our educational setting that could be mitigated?*

Administrative Tensions

Universities that require a diagnosis before providing academic accommodations create a uniform standard that responds to the desire to only allow students in need of accommodations to receive them. A standard to restrict access to accommodations may be perceived as necessary due to constrained resources and the social perception that only those in true need should receive them. However, requiring diagnoses may disadvantage students depending on their socio-economic status, access to medical professionals, and cultural perspectives on disability. The implications of these different lived experiences means that certain groups of students have access to help, while barriers persist for other students. This creates an inequitable system resulting from dimensions beyond disability. Accessibility offices can lessen the inequality by providing support in the diagnosis process for all inquiring students.

After receiving permission for accommodations, students have inconsistent experiences with their caseworkers. While caseworkers are acknowledged by students to

be largely student-centered, rigid application of procedures comes across as enforcement of norms as opposed to supportive advocacy. Thus, cases that do not fit the existing process result in a student being unsupported. An example of this is the student who was told by a caseworker to find their own solution to a scheduling conflict when two midterms overlapped. The solution provided by existing processes did not meet the students' constraints outside the classroom. Positing that the student's time could have been constrained due to legitimate reasons such as religious observances, work schedules, or home-care responsibilities, ultimately the caseworker did not provide support, and the student was not able to access their testing accommodations.

The standardization of testing accommodations manifests its own set of new tensions. While trying to provide for one set of accommodations such as extra time, students write tests in spaces where their other needs, such as quiet spaces without distractions, are not met. However, the allocation of private testing space necessitates additional employees to proctor exams over longer hours. Thus, universities must balance students' needs with constrained time, space, and personnel resources. However, while the vast majority of people who work in accessibility spaces want to help, the increase of students needing support (Statistics Canada, 2023) has put pressures on the accessibility office provided at this university in particular. An example of this is as noted by students regarding no longer having individual rooms in which to have quiet spaces but instead having to share spaces removing the effectiveness of the accommodation. Additionally, circumstances can change quickly on a university campus. In Canada, and specifically in Prince Edward Island, there is a well-documented lack of medical professionals who can

do the types of diagnoses needed for accommodation processes combined with swelling student numbers can quickly overwhelm the resources available, leaving students and arguably accessibility staff to deal with the consequences of an already strained system (Medical Society of Prince Edward Island, 2023).

Behavioural Tensions

Beyond administrative tensions, there is another, more challenging tension that cuts across the data. Any system of accommodations is highly dependent on the strength and authenticity of relationships between a student and, as mentioned most frequently in the data, their instructors, caseworkers, and peers. From the descriptions provided by students, there are three dimensions that help describe the behaviour of other people who support students around their accommodations.

An axis of supportiveness is evident in the behaviours that help students get the right accommodations at the right time. For example, instructors can be very supportive of their students, where they are student-centered, work to understand their needs and preferences in relation to adaptations to their learning, have a flexibility of approach and assume that students are working in good faith to learn. For example, the student who described being allowed to write their exam privately before they were officially registered with the accessibility office demonstrates a supportive instructor. However, in other cases instructors can be unsupportive, where there is a lack of empathy, interest or belief in the adaptations that are needed by a student for their learning. For example, the student who described not having more time to submit their assignments for multiple classes despite

having the specific accommodation to do so demonstrates unsupportive and resistant instructors. Beyond instructors, this is apparent in peers responding to the survey that people getting accommodations they are not "entitled" to amounts to an unfair advantage.

Then, there is an axis of whether people supporting a student are participating in compliance with the standards and regulations provided through the university accommodation office. Instructors might be actively compliant with rules and regulations, ensuring that students always have what they need. In the data, students reported cases where caseworkers were strictly compliant with procedures to the detriment of the students' experiences because there was so little flexibility in the system. On the other hand, someone might be negligent in their compliance, where they do not do what is necessary for a student to get their accommodations. An example of this is the instructors who fail to consistently put tests into the booking system. Of course, this could be due to the instructor not being supportive of students with disabilities, or it could be the usability of the reminder system or the booking system itself.

Finally, there is an axis of engagement in relation to student accessibility needs. As described by students, engaged people at one end of the axis are those who actively seek out information about what a student needs. They work ahead of time to create plans and points of flexibility for individuals in standardized systems, for example the instructor who emailed the student to inform them of their individualized deadlines. They are proactive. In comparison, disengaged people fail to anticipate the needs of individuals, even when presented with notifications about accommodations for students, such as the student who described how their instructor would not upload tests within the specified duration for

the student to utilize their accommodations. These instructors may not act when presented with issues, tending to put responsibility on the student or others. Different from being unsupportive, these instructors are disengaged from the educational process, withdrawn, and arguably apathetic.

Instructor Vignettes

Separately, the three axes of supportiveness, compliance, and engagement demonstrate different dimensions of behaviour to support students with their accessibility needs. Responding to the call for more improved teaching practices (Bartolo et al., 2025), instructors can use the axes to reflect on their openness to providing academic accommodations.

Collectively examining the three axes produces the following broad patterns of behaviours of how instructors relate to their students' accessibility needs. We propose these vignettes, assembled from a qualitative consideration of the data, to demonstrate how supportive, compliant, or negligent instructors were to the participants in this study. We offer this synthesis of the students' experiences to constructively reduce barriers to receiving support. These vignettes can be presented to faculty for reflection, potentially providing motivation to seek further training and become more supportive.

Actively Supportive: These are the instructors who proactively work with students to find solutions to complex learning needs and often are highly compliant with university procedures. Students put them in the role of the hero, like the professor who went above and beyond and arranged separate testing that helped a student pass their course,

meeting the needs of the student and compliance with their accommodations. They are characterized by being highly engaged, very supportive, and compliant.

Passively compliant: These instructors will do the minimum of what is needed according to accommodation reports they receive through the university system but ultimately will pass responsibility back to the accessibility office. They perceive that it is the unit's responsibility to serve the student, even when faced with immediate problems. Incredibly, students' expectations are so low, that even this level of support is lauded by students, for example the student who was grateful to be allowed to wait until they were discharged from the hospital to submit an assignment. These instructors are characterized by being disengaged, not particularly supportive but not necessarily unsupportive as they are maintaining compliance.

Administratively Negligent: These instructors are those whose behaviour is disengaged and lacking compliance with the system. Examples include those who fail to put tests into the testing system. These instructors can be reactive to problems and want to help (disengaged but supportive), resistant to solving problems (disengaged but unsupportive) or simply not act due to a perception that it is not their responsibility (disengaged but negligent).

***Actively Resistant*:** These instructors are those who directly refuse accommodations such as the instructor who told students that their accommodations meant nothing because of the way the courses are structured. They are disengaged, negligent, and unsupportive.

***Actively Dehumanizing*:** At worst, these instructors can be actively working against students and removing their rights, such as the students who were locked in a room because of the perceived chance of academic dishonesty. This conduct can be disingenuously compliant. The instructors are negligent, unconcerned with the inflexibility of the system, punishing students for their accommodations, unsupportive, disengaged, and uninterested in understanding how to support students with disabilities in their learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The challenges faced by students with disabilities in post-secondary education underscore the need for broad systemic change. Social stigma, complex institutional processes, and inconsistent implementation of accommodations create significant barriers.

This study addressed four research questions. First, investigating the academic accommodation needs at our institution, we found that 92% of participants registered with the accessibility office ($n_1 = 48$) receive testing accommodations, and 72% of participants ($n_{TOT}=74$) feel there is a negative perception toward those seeking accommodations. Second, 79% of registered participants ($n_1 = 48$) were satisfied or very satisfied with the accessibility office, though only 26% of participants who require academic accommodations ($n_{1–3} = 58$) are satisfied with the accommodations they receive. Fifty-percent of the 58 participants ($n_{1–3}$) would like additional accommodations. Third, participants identified the following barriers to students' receiving academic accommodations: 1) a complex, unclear, and lengthy registration process, 2) an

inaccessible test-scheduling software, test environment, and processes to receive accommodations, and 3) unsupportive instructors and staff. Additionally, 26% of participants with accommodation needs ($n_{1–3} = 58$) do not feel they have an advocate to support them, and 35% of registered participants ($n_1 = 48$) took longer than a month to multiple semesters to complete the registration process. Fourth, patterns of behaviour that recur were identified along three axes: supportiveness, compliance, and engagement. Then instructor vignettes were proposed for faculty reflection and training.

Student experiences of academic accommodations have been documented through this study, in the students' own words. For a subject that is often obscured by stigmatization, lack of awareness, and negative perceptions, amplifying the voices of students with disabilities is an act of empowerment and advocacy. This paper reflects on the tensions that students identify in the system, including administrative and behavioural tensions that can influence the success of providing accommodations.

There are specific improvements that can be taken immediately to improve support for students. Simplify the registration process. Provide clear directions for students on how to apply and access their accommodations. Help instructors navigate existing systems to be more compliant with regulations. Motivate instructors to seek training on inclusive teaching and assessment practices.

More complex problems, such as the resource needed to support growing populations of students in higher education and flexibility in process to allow caseworkers to individualize supports and advocate for students, along with more private testing spaces

and accommodations for students with physical disabilities will require meaningful investment over time.

There is a temptation to recommend a shift to an inclusive pedagogy, away from an accommodation model, and to provide training for instructors. However, inclusive pedagogy such as universal design for learning (UDL) requires supportive instructors who are engaged with finding solutions, and, in a perfect world, proactively compliant with university regulations and policies that are proven to help.

Actively supportive instructors have the potential to shift their pedagogical approach towards something like UDL. Less engaged, passively compliant instructors may be less likely to adopt UDL practices. Perhaps this could be due to a lack of understanding or time to engage. These instructors likely want to do better, but do not know how. In each of these situations it points to potentially different interventions that would be required to help move instructors towards more active or supportive behaviour.

However, there is a group of classroom instructors who are described in a much darker way by students, where their behaviours are actively negligent or, worse, actively dehumanizing. These encounters in the walls of a higher education institution have a chilling effect on the student population. Actively resistant or dehumanizing instructors gain a reputation among the students for not caring about students with disabilities, as supported by three of the negative experiences relayed by participants. In cases where students can avoid them, they do. This, in turn, can impact on the units they are in, and may reflect badly on the institution itself. A simple recommendation of awareness raising or advocacy is insufficient. A concerted effort to change culture is required for these

environments that are poisoned by resistant and dehumanizing instructors who create hostility across the academy.

However, we believe these individuals to be in the minority of instructors. Reading the data closely, there are many stories of "hero faculty" who go above and beyond in identifying what their students need and engage with them to ensure they have good experiences. Likewise, many students discuss the passion of their caseworkers and recall that 79% of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the accessibility office. While it may not be possible to meet all of their accessibility needs, students feel that the systems are there to try to support them.

In order to foster a more inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities, a first step could be to honour supportive staff and faculty, rewarding them for their passion and dedication, and promoting them as role-models to the rest of the academic community. This could make a difference in shifting the culture of an institution to reduce stigmatization and provide a meaningful educational experience for students with disabilities.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the participants for their time and care in sharing their experiences and for the support of our institution to investigate whether student needs are being met.

References

Bain De Los Santos, S., Kupczynski, L., Mundy, M-A. (2019). Determining academic success in students with disabilities in Higher Education. *International Journal of Higher Education, 8*(2), 16–38. https://doi:10.5430/ijhe.v8n2p16

Bartolo, P. A., Borg, M., Callus, A.-M., Camilleri, L., De Gaetano, A., Mangiafico, M., Mazzacano D'Amato, E., Sammut, C., Vidal, R.V. & Vincent, J. (2025). Students with disabilities in higher education call for personal empowerment, equitable inclusive systems, and individualized accommodations. *Frontiers in Education, 10(*1432682). https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1432682

Becker, S., & Palladino, J. (2016). Assessing faculty perspectives about teaching and working with students with disabilities. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 29*(1), 65–82. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1107476

Blasey, J., Wang, C., & Blasey, R. (2023). Accommodation use and academic outcomes for college students with disabilities. *Psychological Reports, 126*(4), 1891–1909. https://doi.org/10.1177/00332941221078011

Braun V., & Clarke V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bruce, C., & Aylward, M. L. (2021). Accommodating disability at university. *Disability Studies Quarterly, 41*(2). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v41i2.6973

Department of Justice Canada. (1982). Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s 2, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982. https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-12.html

Chrysochoou, M., Zaghi, A. E., Syharat, C. M., Motaref, S., Jang, S., Bagtzoglou, A., & Wakeman, C. A. (2021). Redesigning engineering education for neurodiversity: New Standards for inclusive courses. *Proceedings of the 2021 American Society of Engineering Education Virtual Annual Conference, Virtual Conference*. https://doi.org/10.18260/1-2--37647

Condra, M., Condra, E., Dineen, M., Gauthier, S., Gills, H., & Jack-Davies, A. (2015). Academic accommodations for postsecondary students with mental health disabilities in Ontario, Canada: A review of the literature and reflections on emerging issues. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 28*(3), 277–291. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1083849

Couzens, D., Poed, S., Kataoka, M., Brandon, A., Hartley, J., & Keen, D. (2015). Support for students with hidden disabilities in universities: A case study. *International Journal*

of Disability, Development and Education, *62*(1), 24–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2014.984592

Dallas, B., Sprong, M., & Kluesner, B. (2016). Multiuniversity comparison of faculty attitudes and use of universal design instructional techniques. *Rehabilitation Research, Policy, and Education*. *30*(2), 148–160. https://doi.org/10.1891/2168-6653.30.2.148

Delp, D. R. (2021). Work in progress: Practical applications for students with autism spectrum disorders in the freshman engineering curriculum. *Proceedings of the 2021 American Society of Engineering Education Virtual Annual Conference, Virtual Conference*. https://doi.org/10.18260/1-2--38094

Dusek, J., Faas, D., Ferrier, E., Goodner, R., Sarang-Sieminski, A. L., Waranyuwat, A., & Wood, A. (2018). Proactive inclusion of neurodiverse learning styles in project-based learning: A call for action. *Proceedings of the 2018 American Society of Engineering Education Annual Conference & Exposition, Salt Lake City, Utah*. https://doi.org/10.18260/1-2--30891

Edwards, M., Poed, S., Al-Nawab, H., & Penna, O. (2022). Academic accommodations for university students living with disability and the potential of universal design to address their needs. *Higher Education, 84*, 779–799. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00800-w

El-Shebiny, R., Alsop, O., & Newland, F. (2024). Cas2e study – from student engaged educational design to learner led educational design. *Proceedings of the 2024 Canadian Engineering Education Association, Canada*. https://doi.org/10.24908/pceea.2023.17113

Etkin, N., Amour, M-A., Franz-Odendaal, T., Rayner-Canham, G., Rayner-Canham, M., Al-Abadleh, H. A., & Jones, K. (Eds.). (2016). *Making chemistry inclusive: Proceedings of the CSC Symposium on Equity and Diversity in Chemistry*. Hayden-McNeil Macmillan Learning.

Fleet, C, & Kondrashov, O. (2019). Universal design on university campuses: A literature review. *Exceptionality Education International, 29*(1), 136–148. https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/eei/article/view/11125

Garcia Gonzalez, F. (2017). The impacts of active learning on learning disabled students. *Proceedings of the 2017 American Society of Engineering Education Annual Conference & Exposition, Columbus, Ohio*. https://doi.org/10.18260/1-2--28979

Hedvall, P.-O. (2009). *The activity diamond: Modeling an enhanced accessibility.* [Doctoral dissertation, Certec, Institutionen för designvetenskaper, LTH]. https://lup.lub.lu.se/record/1502239

Lovett, B. J., & Harrison, A. G. (2021). De-implementing inappropriate accommodations practices. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 36*(2), 115–126. https://doi.org/10.1177/0829573520972556

Krause, A., & Ueno, K. (2021). Disparities between adolescents with and without disabilities in the transition to adulthood. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 41(2).

Medical Society of Prince Edward Island. (2023). *PEI doctors call for urgent action to stop healthcare system collapse*. https://mspei.org/news-post/pei-doctors-call-for-urgent-action-to-stop-healthcare-system-collapse/

Minister of Justice. (2019) *Accessible Canada Act* [Online]. https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-0.6/FullText.html

Mullins, L., & Preyde, M. (2013). The lived experience of students with an invisible disability at a Canadian University. *Disability & Society*, 28(2), 147–160.

Parsons, J., McColl, M. A., Martin, A., & Rynard, D. (2021). Accommodations and academic performance: First-year university students with disabilities. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 51*(1), 41–56. https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.vi0.188985

Pfeifer, M. A., Reiter, E. M., Cordero, J. J., & Stanton, J. D. (2021). Inside and out: Factors that support and hinder the self-advocacy of undergraduates with ADHD and/or specific learning disabilities in STEM. *CBE—Life Sciences Education, 20*(2). https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.20-06-0107

Prema, D., & Dhand, R. (2019). Inclusion and accessibility in STEM education: Navigating the duty to accommodate and disability rights. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies, 8*(3), 121–141. https://doi.org/10.15353/cjds.v8i3.510

PEI Human Rights Commission. (2024). *Prince Edward Island Human Rights Act*. https://www.peihumanrights.ca/prince-edward-island-human-rights-act

Rao, S. & Gartin, B. C. (2003). Attitudes of university faculty toward accommodations to students with disabilities. *Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, 25*(2-3), 47-54. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ854908

Roberts, K. D., Park, H. J., Brown, S., & Cook, B. (2010). Universal design for instruction in postsecondary education: A systematic review of empirically based articles. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 24*(1), 5–15. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ941728

Römhild, A., & Hollederer, A. (2024). Effects of disability-related services, accommodations, and integration on academic success of students with disabilities in higher education. A scoping review. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 39*(1), 143–166. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2023.2195074

Sagar, S., Freer, J., Ornstein, T., & Miller, C. (2024). Equal access? Comparing accommodation and treatment experiences of racialized university students with attention problems and their white peers. *Journal Of Critical Race, Indigeneity, and Decolonization, 1*(1), 40–58. https://doi.org/10.22329/jcrid.v1i1.8400

Saltes, N. (2020). Disability barriers in academia: An analysis of disability accommodation policies for faculty at Canadian universities. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies, 9*(1), 53–90. https://doi.org/10.15353/cjds.v9i1.596

Saxe, A., Koseoglu, A., & Razavinia, N. (2024). Enhancing accessibility and inclusion in engineering education. *Proceedings of the 2024 Canadian Engineering Education Association (CEEA), Canada*. https://doi.org/10.24908/pceea.2023.17138

Statistics Canada. (2023). *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231201/dq231201b-eng.htm

Wilkinson, A., & Martens, J. P. (2024). Not overly accessible: Accessibility services at universities across Canada. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies, 13*(3), 194–225. https://cjds.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cjds/article/view/1166

Witham, B., & Brewer, G. (2024). "*Giving the people who use the service a voice*": Student experiences of university disability services. *Disabilities*, *4*(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.3390/disabilities4010001