

Tips for Accessibility When Moving to Online Course Delivery – Accommodation Considerations

While there are many advantages to online course delivery, including potential improvements to accessibility, there are also some notable risks. Both the institution as a whole and individual instructors are considered “educational service providers” under the Ontario Human Rights Code and are required to provide equitable access for students with disabilities. The duty to accommodate persists so long as teaching, learning and assessment continues - even in the face of disruptions due to severe weather, outbreaks of communicable illnesses, and labour unrest.

Key Principles:

1. Everyone has to come at inclusion and accommodation in good faith – students, faculty and staff
2. We all need to make appropriate efforts to find reasonable solutions, given there are circumstances beyond everyone’s control.
3. In meeting the duty to accommodate, one size may not fit all, and flexibility and creative thinking on that part of all involved is critical
4. Our goal is reasonable and appropriate, not perfect; ideal outcomes are desirable, but not always realistic in continuity planning

Moving to On-Line Testing in the Moodle Environment

Many students’ accommodation needs will be met automatically by moving to an on-line environment with additional time.

When moving to using the testing feature in Moodle, the instructor can increase length of a test individually for those students accessing accommodations. Instructors can do this themselves by following instructions on : <https://lthelp.yorku.ca/quizzing/how-to-give-particular-students-extra-time-in-a-quiz> . They can also reach out to [LTS](#) (Learning Technology Services) to support them in extending timelines for specific students.

There will be some students who will require more than the on-line environment with extra time will provide. In those cases, the instructor should reach out to the student to see what barriers this new format might unintentionally create. Students and instructors are welcome to connect directly with a student’s Accessibility Counsellor or with Student Accessibility Services sasinfo@yorku.ca to discuss how to put other accommodations in place. The Alternate Test and Exam Centre is not able to change a student’s accommodation.

New Software

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requires that web content meets specific standards, which is something the University considers when selecting online tools.

1. Instructors are encouraged to use platforms that are endorsed by the University.

2. If you are considering a new Web-based platform or software, ensure it meets the WCAG 2.0 web accessibility standards.

Videos or Live Streaming

3. If you are posting video content for your class, captioning is usually required. A transcript of the video is also considered best practice (see “resources” below).
4. If you are live streaming lectures, continue to have your class at the same time as when it was originally scheduled. Keep in mind that some students are only able to function effectively at certain times of the day, and they have built their schedules around those medical needs.
5. If you have a student who normally uses a Sign Language Interpreter or captioning service, you may receive an email about next steps for content that is live streamed.
6. If you have students who use our note taking service, we may still use note takers for lectures that are live streamed. This service is intended for students who are participating in class to supplement their learning when they are unable to efficiently take notes for themselves. It is not a suitable replacement for attending class (either in person or online).
 - a. When there are note takers in the class who are not registered students, they might require access to course Moodle sites to view lectures and materials to produce notes for the students who require them

Virtual Proctoring/Testing

7. You may be asked to adjust time limits according to students’ individualized accommodations and you might require the support of LTS to do this if using the Moodle platform.
8. If using Moodle for on-line testing, ensure that students can do a “dry run” of a test – a mock or pre-test if your class has never used on-line testing before as many students will be anxious using new technology and having to write an exam.
9. If using Moodle, can you be available on-line for questions or concerns that the students encounter while they are writing?
10. Be prepared for the possibility that some virtual proctoring software may present problems for students who use adaptive software. If a student contacts you to say they cannot access the test or exam because of a software issue, offer a make-up opportunity once there has been time to find an appropriate solution.

Assigned Readings

11. Some students with disabilities use “alternate format material” in order to access their readings using technology. If there are new readings assigned during the semester, it may be necessary to have the text converted to an appropriate format (see “resources” below).

Scheduling and Timeliness

12. Provide students with time to adapt when making changes to the delivery of a course. A minimum of 24-hours notice (preferably more) is essential. Keep in mind that students may need to make changes to their living environment in order to participate online (e.g. children who need attention, access to a suitable computer, a quiet place to work, etc.)
13. If there is a disruption that causes the University to close, there will initially be a period of time when many students are in transition as they move home. During this time, they may have limited capacity to participate in online learning.
14. Summarize all of the changes to the delivery of the course in one place. To the extent possible, avoid additional or ongoing changes as this can be very difficult for students with disabilities that affect executive functioning.
15. Consider offering virtual office hours - a time when you will be online (or available by telephone) and available to chat with students in your course(s). If this is not possible, let students know how long it will normally take you to respond to email (e.g. next business day).
16. To the extent possible, establish deadlines that fall during the normal academic day. This helps to promote healthy boundaries for students' overall wellbeing.
17. Develop a plan for how you can be flexible around deadlines. Can you allow for a couple of days buffer in your plans for marking in case some students need some additional time to finish an assignment? If a student approaches you with reasonable explanation about the need for extra time, can you accept their request in good faith without asking for additional documentation?

New Requests for Accommodation

18. Many forms of academic accommodation are specific to both the individual's abilities and the **requirements of the academic environment**. When there are changes in teaching, learning and assessments, inevitably **there will be new requests for accommodation**. If there are a lot of changes all across the institution in a short period of time, it may take a while to work through the accommodation process.

Integrity of Learning Outcomes

19. Do not waive essential learning outcomes of your course(s). These are the indispensable academic requirements, without which, the very nature of the course would be fundamentally altered. It is better to defer an essential requirement than to waive it all together. Clearly outlining the deferral process will be important,

Consultation about Disability-related Concerns

20. Some students might experience a flare in their condition and take more time than other students to recover and engage with course material. Consider how you might address a flare in a student's condition which prevents them from submitting material in a timely way over this period.

21. If you are asked to provide an accommodation that might jeopardize the integrity of your course, or you are not sure about what to do, consult with Student Accessibility Services. You may ask the student for the name of their Student Accessibility Services Counsellor , and explain that you would like to consult to ensure you are following the appropriate protocol.

Resources & Contact Information

- Alternate format material: [Library Accessibility Services](#)
- [Universal Instructional Design](#)
- [Student Accessibility Services](#)
 - General Inquiries: sasinfo@yorku.ca or ext. 55755