

LAURIER

Accessible Learning Centre

MYTHS & FACTS

The **Accessible Learning Centre** is committed to assisting students with disabilities in reaching their full academic potential. Offering a range of services, delivered in a respectful, confidential and professional manner, the centre supports and encourages independence and self-determination. Students are accommodated to remove barriers that would otherwise impede participation and success in their academic experience.

The **Accessible Learning Centre** works collaboratively with students, faculty and the campus community at large to determine and implement effective and appropriate academic supports to enhance student success.

The following myths and facts were compiled to assist with broadening the understanding of the **Accessible Learning Centre**, its mandate and the standards that guide the work of the centre

1. MYTH: *Any student can access an accommodation they desire based on self identified need with no formal documentation.*

FACT: Verification of a disability must be made by an accredited practitioner qualified to diagnose the condition and registered under the Regulated Health Professions Act and the Medical Examiners Act. Documentation should include a diagnostic statement and a description of the functional limitations, in particular those that have an impact on performance in a university environment. Interim accommodations can be put into place based on “screening” tools and/or information from physiotherapists or psychotherapists. Formal documentation that communicates a diagnosis is required for further accommodation.

2. MYTH: *Once accommodations are put into place, they remain static and are in place forever.*

FACT: Accommodation planning is an individualized, facilitated process based on current and relevant documentation and an understanding of the student’s disability. Plans are reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis and refined based on progress and overall student development. Exam time may decrease over time, reflecting the student’s application of learned strategies and progress.

3. MYTH: *All requests for any extensions in course work, petitions and/or deferrals are approved by the Accessible Learning Centre.*

FACT: Faculty approve these requests. Consultants and students have open dialogue about progress and impact the disability barriers are having on academic performance. Accommodations are implemented to address the disability, not the student's level of preparedness. Consultants will actively review with the students what they have done to meet course requirements in order to legitimize/support the request/need.

4. MYTH: *Students registered with the Accessible Learning Centre receive an unfair advantage with the accommodations they are granted.*

FACT: Accommodation does not remove academic requirements, rather it helps students with disabilities to carry out the essential requirements of an academic course and to fulfill their responsibility in meeting these requirements. Leveling the playing field does not involve reducing the standards. The approach to meeting some course requirements may vary depending on the student's disability.

5. MYTH: *Students with disabilities are not expected to meet the same academic requirements as other students.*

FACT: This is a stereotype that stigmatizes students with disabilities. For example, students with learning disabilities are intelligent and have abilities to learn, despite difficulties with processing information. Students with other types of disabilities, such as physical, medical conditions, mental health or sensory, are also not affected intellectually but often face functional barriers in the learning environment. Students with disabilities can and do succeed when solid coping skills and strategies are developed and assistive technology made available.

6 MYTH: *Students who have note takers are not expected to attend class.*

FACT: Note takers are not a replacement for class attendance. A monitoring system is in place to ensure accountability; students who do not attend class are required to meet with their consultant. Failure to do so may result in loss of access to the note taking program.

7 MYTH: *All students with the Accessible Learning Centre can pick and choose when to write their exams.*

FACT: To ensure an equitable process, students must have specific documentation that supports the need to alter the scheduling and writing of their exams. Consultants have no influence over the scheduling of deferrals and students cannot pick and choose which exam they wish to defer (if this is an issue). Students must pick the next scheduled/available time slot for the exam.

8. MYTH: *Students who have access to a computer to assist with exam writing also have access to the Internet.*

FACT: Students use only the computers available through the Accessible Learning Centre that do not have access to the Internet.

9. MYTH: *Exams invigilated through the Accessible Learning Centre do not adhere to the same standards as Examinations through the Registrar's Office.*

FACT: The same standards and regulations are followed for exams invigilated with the Accessible Learning Centre.

10. MYTH: *There is greater opportunity to cheat on your exams if you write with the Accessible Learning Centre.*

FACT: Standards and guidelines are practiced and adhered to with the same diligence and reporting of irregularities. Electronic devices are not allowed and students write in smaller groups with close and consistent proctoring.

11. MYTH: *Students who need to reschedule exams (due to conflicts or disability related barrier) can find out what is on the exam.*

FACT: The process for rescheduled exams is no different than a deferred exam.

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