

**LAURIER**  
**Accessible Learning Centre**

**Note-taking Program  
Handbook**

2010-2011

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## **Welcome!**

Congratulations! You are joining a team of committed volunteers in a very important program at WLU. We want you to be successful and to enjoy yourself. This handbook should help prepare you to have a good experience this semester.

## **Introduction to the Accessible Learning Centre:**

Wilfrid Laurier University's Accessible Learning Centre (ALC) is committed to assisting students with disabilities to achieve their academic goals while acknowledging the impact of their disabilities. By offering a variety of programs and services, delivered in a respectful, confidential and professional manner, the office supports and encourages students' independence and self-determination. Based on a student's specific needs, staff put in place an individualized set of accommodations. Because maintaining academic integrity is paramount, accommodations recommended by consultants are made without compromising the key components of courses.

As of April 2007, 832 students with a wide variety of disabilities were registered with the department. Some of the disabilities our students have involve hearing, sight, mobility, learning, head injuries, chronic pain, and/or medical, psychological, or psychiatric conditions. In order to address the academic needs of our students, a range of services are offered including adaptive technology instruction, alternate testing accommodations, tutoring contacts, alternate format materials, and volunteer programs (including the note-taking program).



**Thank you for your interest in volunteering  
with the Note-taking Program!**

## Frequently asked Questions

### Why is there a Note-Taking Program?

The Accessible Learning Centre provides a note-taking service for registered students with disabilities who have been approved for this classroom accommodation. These disabilities often make it difficult for students to take comprehensive written notes in class. This means that without note-takers, these students would be at a disadvantage in their classes.



### Who will I be assisting?

Each student using the Note-taking Program has unique learning issues. The need for a note-taker might be temporary or permanent. Reasons that a student may need a note-taker include that the student may:

- Be physically unable to take his/her own notes;
- Have a visual or hearing impairment;
- Have a learning disability (or ADD/ADHD) and need to receive the information by auditory means without being distracted by taking notes; or
- Have a medical issue that complicates regular class attendance.

Regardless of the reason, your notes will allow another student to benefit more from class and obtain a complete set of notes.

### What do note-takers do?

The great thing about being a note-taker is that you don't have to do anything more than you already do: go to class and take great notes. We ask you to commit to attending all your lectures and sharing the notes within three days of each class. After class upload your notes to MyLearningSpace through the discussion board. The ALC note-taking office will grant note-takers access to the course folders they have registered for, allowing note-takers to upload notes and note receivers to download notes.

### How do I become a note-taker?

New and returning note-takers are encouraged to complete the self-registration application form on their mylearningspace home page: for more information go to <http://www.wlu.ca/alnotes>

Selected note-takers will be contacted in the first month of the term. **To save resources and increase efficiency, preference will be given to students who are willing to type their notes.**

### How do I benefit?

Thank you very much for your interest and support! We hope that as a note-taker you

will also feel rewarded. Over 450 note-takers surveyed in the last four years said that they benefited from having complete notes to share and attending all their classes.

Other benefits include:

- Your own notes will improve. Note-takers often report that their own notes, and in turn grades, improve in those courses in which they take notes for another student;
- You will gain valuable experience in the helping role and become more sensitive to the needs of students with disabilities;
- You will receive a letter of reference regarding your work as a note-taker; and
- You will gain experience to include on your resume and Wilfrid Laurier's Co-curricular Record

## Note-taking Guidelines

### Sharing your notes

There is 2 main methods for sharing your notes:

#### 1. Typing notes for MyLearningSpace

Note-takers are encouraged to use their own laptop or borrow a portable note-taking machine. Note-takers may also choose to handwrite their lecture notes and type them after class. By providing typed notes in these electronic methods, they can be immediately uploaded to the respective course folders via mylearningspace for the student note-receivers to access. **This is the preferred method for sharing your notes.**



We ask you to upload the notes to the respective course folders on mylearningspace within 3 days of the lecture.

### Uploading notes to Mylearningspace

The ALC note-taking office has granted you access to the course folders you have registered for, allowing note-takers to upload notes and note receivers to download notes.

1. Click on the discussion tab on the top left hand side of the page.
2. Access your course(s) folder you would like to upload notes to.
3. Click the compose button, you may want to write a message to your note receivers updating them on in class announcement, due dates and other course related news.
4. Attach notes with the add file bottom on the bottom of the screen.
5. Click upload

## 2. If you hand write your notes

The note-taker is responsible for scanning the notes into a computer and then uploading them on to mylearningspace for their students. There is a scanning station in Room 1C9 Arts building for this very purpose. (See uploading instructions above)

### Confidentiality

Maintain the confidentiality of student and disability-related information at all times. This includes the student's name or the nature of service being provided. For example, if you contact a student by phone and are asked to leave a message, leave only your name and phone number. Do not say that you are a note-taker for the student.

### Communication

#### Making Contact:

As a note-taker, you are responsible for communicating with the student note-receiver(s). You can do this by posting on the course discussion board informing the student(s) there is a note-taker for the course. If you do not get a response from your student(s) it's safe to say they received your message, and begin/continue posting the notes.

#### Maintaining contact:

It is your shared responsibility (with the student note-receivers) to maintain contact throughout the term. You can do this when necessary through the course discussion board. If you have any concerns regarding communication, please report to [alnotes@wlu.ca](mailto:alnotes@wlu.ca). Please note that some students prefer to remain anonymous and will not communicate with their note-taker.

#### Notes exchange:

Note-receivers need the notes as soon as possible after the lecture. This might depend on the course, but generally, please upload the notes **within three days of the class**. If the notes are converted to another format (i.e., Braille or e-text), they will need to be received by the Transcription and Technology Co-ordinator within 24 hours following the class. You will be informed of this requirement before you agree to become the note-taker. Prompt delivery of your notes is **critical** to the success of the Note-taking Program.

#### Feedback:

**Solicit feedback** from your note-receiver(s) on the suitability of your notes. Ask specific questions about the notes you are taking, or ask another classmate if you can compare notes. You may also give the instructor a copy of your notes for his or her feedback. If you feel that you are not supporting a student appropriately, let the student or the ALC

know so we can make alternative arrangements. Informal feedback from you and the note-receiver(s) is requested throughout the term. Formal feedback is requested each semester before co-curricular credit is given.

## **Attendance**

### If you miss class:

It is the note-taker responsibility to attend class on a regular basis and **provide notes for every lecture**. We understand that sometimes missing class is unavoidable. Please borrow suitable notes from another student immediately and upload the notes for the student note receiver as you normally would. Excessive absences and/or tardiness will result in termination as a note-taker and no compensation will be provided.

### If the note-receiver misses class:

**Note-receivers must still attend class and take their own notes.** There are disability related reasons that lead to a student not attending, and the ALC will address these issues. It is not your responsibility to take attendance, but if you notice that a student misses two classes, please bring this matter to the note-taking office attention. We will follow-up with the student. Students who miss class without a legitimate reason will not receive notes from the Note-taking Program.

## **Boundaries**

You are NOT responsible for tutoring, typing papers, or giving rides, etc. If note-receivers approach you for this assistance, please decline respectfully and refer them back to the ALC.

## **Conflict of Interest Policy**

Persons who are in a familial, sexual, marital or financial relationship\* with an ALC registered student may not act as a tutor, proctor or note-taker for that student. \* University Policy 8.1

Should a student begin such a relationship with their tutor, proctor or note-taker, the ALC should be informed immediately and alternative arrangements for tutoring, proctoring or note-taking will be made by the staff at the centre.

## **Note-taking Tips!**

### **Format of notes**

- **Always include the course code, date and page number on each page;**
- Use abbreviations carefully. Make a summary list of what they represent, e.g., because= b/c; RBC= red blood cell; and
- When uploading notes, communicate with your note-receivers to ensure that they have the application to open the attachment. Otherwise, please offer the notes in a format that can be opened by a number of applications (i.e., .txt or .rtf). As well,

please ensure that your file name always includes the course code and date of every lecture attached.

### Organization of content

- Look for and follow the organization of the lecture;
- Indent information under related headings;
- Leave blanks when unsure and get clarification after class;
- **Do not cram information.** Use space freely rather than in cramming information.
- Circle or star assignments and announcements such as test dates and due dates;
- Include notes from slides, videos, guests and/or presentations that contain information that may be evaluated (verify with the note-receivers and/or instructor if you're unsure);
- **If notes are not given on a particular class meeting, please post on the discussion board the following: "No notes for the class meeting on MM/DD/YYYY"**. If known, please write the reason that no notes were provided (e.g., class was cancelled due to weather)

### Additional Tips

- Sit close to the instructor and remove distractions;
- Use correct spelling or, if unsure, write (sp?) and correct it later (check textbook);
- Focus on the key points of the lecture and avoid adding your personal opinion
- Listen until the end of the lecture as the instructor may use the last five minutes to explain important details not covered;
- Read the course text(s) and review your notes before class. This will improve your understanding of the lecture;
- **Avoid omission of information.** Something that may seem redundant to you as a note-taker may be new information to the student receiving the notes.



If you want to learn more about note-taking skills, check out the resources from Learning Services' **Study Skills Centre**. They have useful books, handouts, workshops and online tutorials about note-taking skills and other study skills. **It's all free for you as a WLU student!**

<http://www.wlu.ca/studyskills>

## **Types of Disabilities**

This basic information about common types of disabilities is condensed from the Accessible Learning Centre's "Guidelines for Faculty in Assisting Students with Disabilities." It is intended to inform you about the variety of disabilities that students may have on our campus and to inform you in your role as a note-taker. Remember a person with a disability is not defined by their condition; each person is a unique individual, but a good place to start is an understanding of types of disabilities and possible their impact on WLU students.

### **Learning Disabilities**

Students who have been diagnosed as having a Learning Disability have deficits which interfere with their ability to process information. These deficits affect the student's performance in one or more areas involving thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling and/or doing mathematical calculations.

A Learning Disability is not an intellectual deficit; in fact, most learning disabled individuals have average to above-average intelligence. Nor is the disability an emotional problem or weakness. Learning Disabilities are intrinsic to a particular individual and may differ in nature from person to person. Although no one cause of Learning Disabilities is accepted, possible precipitators are genetic predisposition, trauma before or after birth, environmental toxins, allergies or medical factors. It is estimated that up to 10% of a university population has some form or degree of Learning Disability.

### **Attention- Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD)**

AD/HD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) is the term which includes three subtypes (Predominantly Inattentive Type, Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type and Combined Type). While the student with the inattentive form may have problems sustaining attention for long periods of time and is prone to daydreaming, the student with the hyperactive-impulsive form may be easily distracted and "hyper." Impulsivity affects both student's carefulness and attention to detail, causing them to rush through work and fail to proofread for errors. This impulsivity also affects the student's ability to manage time.

The exact nature and severity of AD/HD symptoms varies from person to person. Approximately one-third of people with AD/HD do not have the hyperactive or overactive behaviour component, for example.

### **Physical or Mobility Impairments**

The range of physical impairments is broad--from limited manual dexterity to paralysis. Illness, injury or birth trauma may be the cause. In the case of students with limited dexterity, the disability may be "invisible" in the classroom setting. Students with more profound disabilities may use wheelchairs, crutches, or canes.

### **Medical Disabilities**

Medical disabilities, a major group of “invisible disabilities” on our campus, include, but are not limited to: asthma, cancer, Crohn’s Disease, diabetes, environmental allergies, epilepsy, fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome, sleep disorders, including sleep apnea or narcolepsy, and acquired immune deficiencies.

For many students with medical conditions, pain and fatigue often affect their performance in the classroom and during evaluations. Many students with medical conditions require medication, and side effects such as dizziness, nausea, fatigue and loss of concentration may also cause difficulties. Depending on the condition, the student's mobility, vision and hearing may also be affected. Absenteeism may also be a concern.

### **Psychological/Psychiatric Disabilities**

Psychological disabilities may be chronic or short-term, moderate or severe, and affect students in various ways. Psychological/ psychiatric disabilities are true “invisible disabilities.” however, the impact on the student is as severe as that for more visibly disabled individuals.

Psychological/psychiatric disabilities cover a broad spectrum and describe (but are not limited to) those with severe anxiety, bipolar disorder (manic-depressive illness), clinical depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), schizophrenia, alcohol or drug addiction, suicidal tendencies, eating disorders and personality disorders or phobias. While students with other lifelong disorders may have “come to terms” with their disability and are able to discuss its impact on themselves and their learning, most psychological disorders (notably schizophrenia and bipolar disorder) are often diagnosed in the late teens and early twenties. With this late diagnosis, students have not had sufficient time to accept or truly understand their illness, and may be unwilling or unable to discuss it.

Many students with diagnosed disorders are on medications which may have side effects such as drowsiness, headaches or lethargy.

### **Acquired Brain Injury**

Acquired Brain Injuries (ABI) can be a result of birth difficulties, serious illness or accident. Depending on the area of the brain that has been injured, symptoms may vary from loss of the ability to speak to disabilities in memory, language, attention or emotions. There are, however, several outcomes that are common for all students who have acquired brain injury. These are memory loss, lack of concentration and impairment in recognizing relevant information. Many students with ABI (especially those who have been in motor vehicle accidents) also suffer from chronic pain.

## Visual Impairments

The definition of legal blindness is a broad one. It ranges from visual acuity of 20/200 (10% vision) to no sight. Depending on the severity of disability, a student may be accommodated in a number of ways—from sitting at the front of the classroom, to relying on Braille, note -takers or tape recorders.

People who are classified as “legally blind” may be better described as having “low vision,” but even that term is not a generic one. Some are able to read the blackboard or textbook with magnifying glasses, others can only discern colours or shapes.

Although most sighted people associate Braille with visual impairment, not all visually impaired students are proficient with Braille. Most use adaptive equipment such as taped books, scanners or screen-reading computer systems in lieu of Braille.

## Hearing Impairments

As with visual disabilities, there is a wide range of severity of loss in people who are hearing impaired. Hearing loss may range from mild to profound, and, as such, people with hearing disabilities are either deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing.

Some people with hearing disabilities are able to read lips; others rely on sign language to communicate. Still others rely on gestures, writing or interpreters. If students have some residual hearing, they may be able to use a hearing device to amplify sounds. This may take the form of hearing aids and may necessitate the instructor wearing FM-transmitters to direct sound exclusively to the student. Students who were deaf at birth or deafened at an early age may have speech impairments, making their speech difficult to understand.

**ENJOY YOURSELF!** This is not only a great time to meet and help other students, but also to improve your own note-taking skills. Remember, these are your notes too; paying careful attention to details will give you an excellent study tool. Quality shared notes are a very important contribution to the success of the student with a disability. The student and Accessible Learning Centre are sincerely grateful. **THANK YOU!**

