

# **Policy and Guidelines on Students with Special Needs**

## **A. PREAMBLE**

In light of the Ontario Human Rights Code (1981) post-secondary institutions must answer to the needs of academically qualified, special needs students so that they can fully benefit from their educational experiences. The Ontario Human Rights Commission does provide guidelines for assessing reasonable accommodations in order to assist institutions in their endeavors in providing reasonable accommodations.

Since the spring of 1989, the Special Needs Committee has been looking into the question of the accessibility of Laurentian University for students with special needs. The committee has consulted with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the university's legal counsel, employee groups, the office of the Registrar and with the academic sector through the faculty councils. The following definitions and guidelines are to assist in the process of integrating students with special needs into the university community.

## **B. STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Laurentian University is committed to undertake reasonable efforts to provide an academic environment which is fully accessible to people with disabilities and where access is consistent with the individual's right to dignity and self-esteem. The university will make reasonable efforts in adaptations to its academic programmes, physical surroundings and services so as to allow full access and participation for students with special needs. The underlying principle of these measures is to provide students with special needs with equitable opportunities to meet academic standards and comply with academic regulations that are applicable to all students of the university.

## **C. POLICY**

1. Every student attending Laurentian University has the right to inform the university as to her or his special need(s). Only registered students who identify themselves, as described in section D, I, 1. can be assured of the full protection and support outlined in this document. A student with special needs is a student who is considered disabled under the definition determined by the Ontario Human Rights Code. (See appendix C.)
2. A student with special needs has the right to attempt all university courses, programmes and activities provided that he/she meets normal academic requirements, and that such participation does not present a danger to him or herself or others. He or she also has the right to appeal exclusion from a course, a course activity or a programme, on the grounds of disability.

3. The university will make reasonable efforts to adapt academic courses, programmes and activities to allow for access and full participation by eligible students who have special needs.
4. The university undertakes to make reasonable adaptations to all its facilities in order to accommodate all students who have special needs.
5. The university will endeavor to make reasonable efforts to make its services and offices accessible to students who have special needs.
6. All employees of the university must respect the rights and needs of those students who have disabilities.

## **D. GUIDELINES**

### **1. IDENTIFICATION**

**Note:** Voluntary identification is proposed in order to ensure that students with special needs maintain independent control of their education and circumstances.

When a student asks for accommodations or other measures to address a disability, he/she shall present a letter from an appropriate individual, such as a qualified medical practitioner or registered psychologist depending upon the nature of the student's condition. The university may require additional assessments or documentation which may include psychological or physiological testing. The letter will explain the disability and the special need(s) to be met. The student is encouraged to provide all information that is readily available to him/her. The university may require confirmation through additional testing. This information will be handled with the strictest standards of confidentiality, and will be used only to implement or to facilitate the accommodation of the student.

### **II. ADAPTATIONS TO COURSES, PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES**

All adaptations to courses, programmes and activities will be done in consultation with the faculty, lab technologist and staff before implementation. In the event of a dispute as a result of accommodations between faculty, lab technologist or employees and student then the case will be arbitrated by the dean of the programme in which the student is registered. All accommodations for student with special needs will be made on an individual basis.

The following are examples of adaptations which may be made to meet the course and programme requirements of students with special needs. This list is by no means exhaustive and, for further suggestions and assistance, one may contact the Special Needs Office.

- a) Adaptations in the classroom and laboratories: These are changes the professor or technologist or teaching assistant, if applicable, may initiate to make his/her courses more accessible.
  - b) Adapting teaching techniques to meet the particular needs of the student (eg. The use of overhead transparencies for hearing impaired students)
  - c) Preparation of course material ahead of time (eg. giving course notes and a list of textbooks to a visually impaired student within a reasonable amount of time before classes begin so that the student may have them taped).
  - d) Establishing evaluation procedures for students with special needs so that they are not disadvantaged (eg. extending exam time, offering oral exam). Procedures concerning the arrangements for special examinations are available through the Special Needs Office.
  - e) Holding regular meetings with students with special needs in order to monitor these needs and to ensure that they are being met.
2. Adaptations to courses, programmes and activities: These would be modifications made with the approval of the appropriate body within the university, which would provide students who have special needs with equitable opportunities to meet academic standards (e.g. A student with mobility impairment might satisfy the requirements for the Physical Education program without participating in physical activities).
  3. Adaptations to the physical environment: These would include changes in the construction and physical arrangement of learning areas and/or the provision of technical aids used in the teaching process. Where accessibility is hindered by physical circumstances, an alternative location will be provided.

### **III. ACCESSIBILITY TO BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS**

Reasonable adaptations that may be needed to make the university physically accessible to students with special needs might include but is not limited to the following:

1. The provision of suitable equipment and devices to provide accessibility for those who have special needs.
2. The continued maintenance of all areas and facilities to ensure accessibility (e.g., keeping passageways, corridors etc., free of hindrances and by replacing defective lighting equipment and devices).
3. The establishment and communication of safety procedures for all locations and buildings for those with special needs.

4. Reasonable adaptations to buildings and grounds to ensure full accessibility for those with mobility impairments.
5. Reasonable adaptations to on-campus lighting and signage to assist people with visual impairment.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **SPECIAL NEEDS OFFICE:**

The Special Needs Office functions as the university's administrative office for special needs services for students. Responsibilities of the office include:

- 1) Providing information to disabled students.
- 2) Promoting self-identification and ensuring that the needs of students with disabilities are met, while recognizing their right to dignity and self-esteem.
- 3) Facilitating access to services at Laurentian and in the community at large.
- 4) Communicating with academic and administrative departments, to effect positive change in procedures, services, instructional techniques and evaluation procedures, in order to maintain the inherent qualities of a university education.
- 5) Maintaining and monitoring up-to-date guidelines and procedures for students who have special needs, with consultation as appropriate.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **SPECIAL NEEDS COMMITTEE:**

#### **Mandate:**

- 1) To review and make recommendations concerning facilities, services and policies for students who have special needs.
- 2) To increase the awareness of the Laurentian community regarding the needs of those with disabilities

#### **Composition:**

The committee may be composed of, but not limited to the following:

- One Coordinator of Special Needs
- One Coordinator of Education and Employment Equity
- One Director or designate of the Division of Physical Education
- One Personal Counsellor
- One Director or designate of Health Services
- One Representative of Library
- Two Faculty members (one appointed by each Dean in consultation with L.U.F.A)
- Five Students with Special Needs (full or part-time)
- Five students with Special Needs from each of the five student associations
- One Director or designate of Student Affairs
- Two L.U.S.U. Representatives (appointed by the L.U.S.U. executive
- One Representative or designate of Physical Plant
- One Representative of Continuing Education

Other members whose expertise or constituency is deemed appropriate may be added by the committee. Normally, representatives of employee associations will serve a term of at least two years and representatives of the student associations will serve a one year term

## APPENDIX C

The terms disability and persons with a disability and special needs are used throughout this document instead of “handicap” or “handicapped” person. Although the term “handicap” is used in the Code, many people with disabilities prefer the term “disability.”

When determining handicap the following must be considered. The handicap: a) Must limit ability to carry out one of life’s important functions, b) Cannot be common place, c) Cannot be transitory in nature.

### **Handicap**

Discrimination “because of handicap” is prohibited in all areas protected by the Human Rights Code, 1981.

“Because of Handicap” means for the reason that the person has or has had, or is believed to have or have had:

- 1) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, including diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, and degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, and physical reliance on a guide dog, a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or devices,
- 2) a condition of mental retardation or impairment;
- 3) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- 4) a mental disorder, or
- 5) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the Workers’ Compensation Act.