



April 9, 2020

RE: UPDATE Duty to Accommodate Requirements: COVID-19 Continuity Planning

Dear Campus Partners:

I am writing to inform you the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) recently released [a policy and actions consistent with a human rights-based approach to managing the COVID-19 pandemic](#), which include expectations for the education sector.


We appreciate that we are all working under extraordinary circumstances, which have resulted in very quick changes to exam delivery options with very tight timelines. While the university has rapidly converted to online assessments, we continue to have a responsibility to ensure we are mitigating potential impacts on a student's rights to accessibility and accommodation.

I would ask that you implement the following actions to ensure students with disabilities are not disadvantaged during this transition to online exams and take-home assessments.

1. Faculty can mitigate issues for all students by running a practice exam on Quercus before the scheduled final exam.

A practice exam will allow students to navigate the exam module before the actual exam. This will reduce the risk of students experiencing errors during the final exam, especially with the use of assistive technology, different hardware, operating systems and web browsers. We also anticipate the practice exam will alleviate anxiety for students, as they will know how their accommodations will be applied and what to expect the day of the exam.

The practice exam does not need to be an onerous process. The practice online exam requires only a few timed questions. In the case of a practice take-home exam, we recommend the instructor set up the mock exam for students to submit/upload a document.

For setting up the practice and final exam with additional accommodated time, please see the [Quercus Quizzes: Allowing a student more time](#) 

If possible, allow students to have free navigation in Quercus to allow the students to return to questions during the exam.

For Quercus technical support and 1:1, online consults contact quercus@utsc.utoronto.ca.

2. Extra time accommodations for evening exams **must be applied to the front end of the exam** to ensure that students are able to complete their exams by 10PM in their local time zone. We must not further disadvantage students with disabilities by requiring them to write outside of normal exam hours, and during a period when IT support will not be available (e.g. after 10PM). Requiring students to write late at night can be a challenge for any student, and we must be mindful of the fact that in some cases disability-related symptoms affect fatigue and concentration levels.
3. Many faculty are applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles when assigning take home exams by advising students that an exam should take approximately X hours of actual writing time but students are permitted X hours/days to complete the exam/assignment (e.g., 3 hours of writing time but students are given 48 hours to submit).

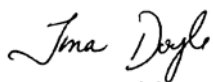
We encourage faculty to apply the principles of UDL to their take home exam. When doing so, please clearly indicate to the students that the expected actual writing time will be X but students have X number of hours/days to complete the exam in recognition of varying learning styles, disability-related needs or other personal circumstances.

In some cases, due to disability related needs, students may still require extra time accommodations for take-home exams even when UDL principles have been applied. This may be the case for take-home exams that include extensive written work or where there is a conflict with multiple take-home or online exams. In these cases, students with disabilities can be referred to AccessAbility Services at ability@utsc.utoronto.ca.

4. Posted material for the exams must be accessible. For more information on creating accessible documents, please go to the [UofT AODA office](#) page.
5. Instructors are encouraged to review the material on accessibility and accommodation posted on the [UTSC Academic Continuity 2020](#) site.
6. AccessAbility Services posted a list of [frequently asked questions on accessibility and accommodation for faculty](#). If you have any further questions, concerns or require support, we can be reached at ability@utsc.utoronto.ca or 416-287-7560.

Thank you again for your continued support of students with disabilities, and our office. All of us at AccessAbility Services deeply appreciate it.

With best regards,



Tina Doyle
Director
AccessAbility Services