



St. Thomas
UNIVERSITY

**Student Accessibility Services
Handbook**

Welcome to Student Accessibility Services at St. Thomas University!

St. Thomas University is committed to creating an equitable environment by ensuring that all members of our community have access to the full range of university life. This means supporting students with disabilities in their full participation in the educational, social and cultural life of our university. Sharing responsibility with each student for their success, our accessibility program is consistent with our academic standards as we strive to make reasonable and appropriate accommodations to allow students to enjoy the benefits of higher education.

St. Thomas welcomes students with disabilities and commits itself to work with each student to develop a program which will allow individual learning needs to be met.

Student Accessibility Services Office

The Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Office is located on the first floor of George Martin Hall, room 104. You can visit us in person, Monday through Friday from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm. You can also reach us by email at accessibility@stu.ca with questions or concerns. There are two full-time staff members that work in the office:

Rick Sharpe
Coordinator for Student Accessibility
506-453-7207

Kelly Hogg
Student Accessibility Advisor
506-453-7216

What do we do?

Student Accessibility Services provides academic accommodations and support to students who provide documentation for such a need from a licensed health or mental health care professional in order to reduce barriers to education. Accommodations do not give an 'unfair advantage' to students who use our services, nor do they modify the University's academic standards. Students with disabilities are only given the accommodations necessary to equalize their chances of learning success with the students who do not require such accommodations.

Why do we do this?

At St. Thomas University, we believe that every student should have equal opportunities to succeed academically. Moreover, the duty to accommodate is a legal principle and a requirement dictated by Canadian Human Rights legislation. It is the University's legal obligation to provide academic accommodations when these accommodations are required and documented by a licensed health or mental health care professional.

Which students qualify for our services?

Any student at St. Thomas University may qualify for accommodations, as long as they have documentation proving a disability from licensed health or mental health care professionals, such as a:

- Physician, Medical specialist, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Speech/Language Pathologist or Audiologist

Documentation provided must validate the disability and be no older than five years. Documentation older than five years is at the discretion of the Student Accessibility Services Office.

What are some examples of eligible disabilities/diagnoses?

There are many disabilities/diagnoses which may allow students to take advantage of services and/or academic accommodation. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Acquired Brain Injury
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum
- Deaf, Deafened, Hard of Hearing, or Hearing Impaired
- Language Processing Disorders
- Learning Disabilities
- Low Vision, Blindness, Visually Impaired
- Certain Chronic Medical Conditions
- Mental Health Conditions
- Mobility/Functional (includes physical, mobility and neurological disabilities)

What are some of the accommodations we provide?

Student Accessibility Services provides students with a wide array of individualized learning accommodations and services in order to help reduce students' barriers to education. Accommodations are delivered and facilitated in collaboration with course professors. Not all accommodations are offered to every student; students are only offered the specific accommodations which they require due to their disability and supporting documentation.

These accommodations and services may include, but are not limited to:

- Access to assistive technologies
- Access to large print, taped or braille materials
- FM system to support hearing impaired students
- Sign language interpreters (provided by Deaf and Hard of Hearing Association, NB)
- Assistance with applications for Canada Study Grants for Students with Disabilities
- In-class note takers
- Test/midterm/exam accommodations (writing environment, extra time, scribe, etc.)
- Tutors for general academic success (separate from course-specific peer tutors)
- Use of our distraction-reduced computer lab
- Time management skills training
- Other individually tailored accommodations as required and reasonably attainable

Receiving academic accommodation does not modify course standards or lower academic performance expectations on the part of the professors. Because of this unified approach to all students, no records of students' accommodations will appear on their diplomas or transcripts.

Temporary Accommodations

Students may register with Student Accessibility Services to receive accommodations for a temporary disability. Documentation supporting the need for temporary accommodations must come from a licensed health or mental health professional and include information pertaining to the duration of the disability. Students requiring temporary accommodations will be required to return to the SAS each semester to provide updated documentation and to have their accommodations reviewed and reinstated if required.

Registration Process

- Students who believe that they may be eligible for academic accommodations should make contact with Student Accessibility Services **as soon as possible**. If you are planning to attend STU in September, please contact us during the spring or summer before your arrival. This will allow you adequate time to gather the necessary documentation.
- You will need to provide Student Accessibility Services with documentation of a disability from a licensed health or mental health care professional.
- You will need to complete an Intake form, which gives Student Accessibility Services your contact information, accommodation background, and other important information.
- You will meet with SAS staff. Together, you will create a detailed accommodation plan based on the recommendations made by your licensed health or mental health care professional. You will then provide copies of this plan to each of your professors **at the beginning of each semester you attend STU**. Your accommodation plan may be modified throughout your time at STU to better fit your needs.

Accommodations

(Quick reference only; for more details, please contact the SAS Office).

Note Taking

- The SAS Office hires students who are enrolled in classes to share their class notes with registered clients who require note-taking services.
- Students will retrieve typed notes via the SAS Office's shared Google Drive which are posted within 24 hours of the class. Please contact Student Accessibility Services if you are not able to retrieve your notes within this time limit.
- If the notes are illegible or unsatisfactory in some way, contact Student Accessibility Services.
- If you change your schedule and drop the class you must inform SAS immediately.
- It is your responsibility to attend classes regularly. This service is not an alternative for attending classes. Please be ready to produce a medical document or reasonable explanation of your absence if classes are missed and you wish to still have access to the class notes. Frequent non-disability related absences will result in suspension of services.
- You need to notify your professor if you are unable to attend class, as per the St. Thomas class attendance policy.
- Be aware that the notes are for your use only and are not to be distributed to other classmates or peers from other courses. Notes taken by the note taker become the property of SAS.
- Though all reasonable effort will be taken to find a note-taker who is enrolled in the class, matches are not always possible. In cases where notes are needed, the SAS office will make alternative arrangements with the client, such as the use of a Livescribe Smart Pen for notes and recording purposes.

Test/Exam Invigilation

- Students with testing accommodations can request to write quizzes, tests, midterms and exams through the SAS Office by sending an Exam Request Form to both the Office and their professor at least one week in advance (2 weeks for final exams).
- If more than one exam is scheduled in a day, it is the student's responsibility to negotiate alternate exam times with the professor if your disability prevents you from writing more than one exam per day.
- On the day your test/midterm/exam is to be written, please arrive at the Student Accessibility Office five minutes early. Bring everything you need with you. The test will previously be delivered to us by your professor.
- The University expects every student to be informed about and comply with policies on exam accommodations.
- No children, family or any other unauthorized persons are allowed in the exam room.
- No variation in the time allotted for the tests/exams is permitted without expressed authorization by the professor and the SAS office.
- No bags, hats, cell phones, mp3 players, radios or other gadgetry and no paper of any kind is allowed into the exam room unless specified by your professor.
- Students who do not abide by the exam rules will have their exam session terminated and the professor will be notified.

Tutoring

- Tutoring through the Student Accessibility Office is for help with general academic skills, such as organization, time management, studying, writing, editing, etc. Only students who are successful in obtaining government funding are eligible for this support through Accessibility Services. Tutors are matched with students through the SAS Office based on a number of factors, including educational background, instructional strengths and availability.
- Students are approved for a set number of hours per week based on their documentation. Hours which are not used in one week can be used in subsequent weeks.
- You and your tutor will schedule meetings, and it is your responsibility to keep these appointments. It also is your responsibility to check your STU email and to respond to your tutor's messages.
- On your first appointment with your tutor bring all of your course outlines so that you and your tutor can create a plan for the semester.
- It is important that you stay on top of your work throughout the semester, and inform your tutor if you run into any unexpected difficulties.
- You may choose to schedule one long session per week or several shorter sessions. It will be left up to you and the tutor.
- You must sign time sheets for all hours worked with your tutor on a biweekly basis. You are advised to keep track of the actual tutoring hours.

Other Accommodations

For more information regarding other accommodations and services offered by Student Accessibility Services, please contact our office.

Canada Student Grants for Students with Disabilities

There is financial assistance available from the Government of Canada to help support full-time and part-time students with permanent disabilities. To be eligible for one of these Canada Student Grants, you must apply for a Canada Student Loan and qualify for at least one dollar (\$1) of a Canada Student Loan. You must also have sufficient documentation of your disability.

Canada Student Grants are used to help cover costs of necessary equipment, software and accommodations received through Student Accessibility Services. Depending on your province of residence, Canada Student Grants are distributed in collaboration with St. Thomas University. Please see Student Accessibility Services for more information.

For more in-depth eligibility requirements, please see Student Accessibility Services, or visit

http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/loans_grants/grants/disabilities.shtml.

*Please note: we ask that all students who use our services apply for a Canada Student Grant. If students are not eligible for a Canada Student Grant, they are still able to receive many accommodations and support through the SAS Office, including note-taking and testing accommodations.

Confidentiality

Student Accessibility Services understands and respects the issues of privacy and confidentiality regarding students who access our services. We take confidentiality very seriously and make every effort to keep our services completely confidential.

Students' personal information is only accessed by SAS staff or shared with our full-time Student Services staff on a **need-to-know basis**. A student's diagnosis, specific disability, or other personal information is never revealed to student employees (i.e., exam invigilators, note takers, or tutors) without consent of the student. These employees are only given enough instruction to sufficiently facilitate these accommodations. All of our employees have signed confidentiality agreements and understand the seriousness of this issue. A breach of confidentiality may be sufficient cause for immediate dismissal from employment with Student Accessibility Services and other possible disciplinary action.

In addition, professors are not told the nature of a student's disability, the student's diagnosis, or other unnecessary personal information regarding the student's relationship with Student Accessibility Services. Professors will only be advised of the accommodations that a student requires.

Consent forms must be signed by the students to disclose any information to other University staff and/or outside parties (such as family members or other individuals). Consent forms are available at Student Accessibility Services.