

University Accessibility

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Physical Barriers

Principle: The McMaster campus, including all buildings and pathways, should be physically accessible for all students to be able to access their education and extracurriculars.

Concern: Many buildings have very few accessible entrances, often at inconvenient locations.

Concern: There is not a centralized system to report broken or malfunctioning elevators or automatic doors on campus.

Concern: Many elevators on campus, including the one in required to write a test with SAS, require key cards, which are difficult and time-consuming to access.

Concern: McMaster's ten-year plan to make a "car-free" campus includes moving the HSR bus stop to the McMaster GO station, which is on the edge of campus.

Concern: This change in bus stop placements means that many students will have much farther to walk to get to classes.

Concern: This long walk is inaccessible, especially for students with mobility impairments.

Concern: Some accessible entrances or washrooms contain offensive language.

Recommendation: Facility Services should ensure that no elevators on campus require key cards to access unrestricted areas.

Recommendation: McMaster University should continue to allow the current bus route to run on campus along University and Sterling Avenues.

Recommendation: If McMaster moves forward with having a car-free campus, they should mitigate any accessibility issues this raises for students.

Recommendation: McMaster University should be fully AODA compliant by 2020.

Recommendation: Facility Services should provide identification numbers for all automatic doors and elevators, similar to water fountains, to make it easier to report malfunctions.

Recommendation: McMaster University should ensure accessibility signage is legible and does not contain offensive or outdated language.

The physical barriers currently on campus present many challenges to students, faculty, and visitors at McMaster University. These barriers pose risks for both physical and mental well-being, especially as students try to attend and do well in classes. McMaster University should be fully AODA compliant, not just for its legal purposes, but should repair and construct their campus as accessible for the betterment of student life and achievement¹. This also includes removing offensive or outdated language from signage, but also providing proper signage so that students who need certain accommodations physically know where to access them, or who to contact when it is barricaded or broken. All accessible entrances should be labelled with appropriate and non-ableist language. Signage with words like "handicapped" should immediately be replaced.

While Facility Services has created a repair and service requests system – it can only be accessed on the McMaster Network, does not offer a timeline for repairs, and does not alert the

¹ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/accommodating-students-disabilities-principles-fact-sheet>

student when repairs are made². This is particularly important in regards to elevators and automatic doors, as when they are stuck or broken, students do not know where to mention it - which can be dangerous to other students attempting to access these. Student consultation revealed that students with mobility impairments are often stuck in elevators, unable to pass through doors, or forced to take indirect routes to their classes due to broken elevators and doors. McMaster University's Facility Services last audit showed that only 43.6% of exterior entrances on campus are accessible – with only 83.3% of those buildings having one accessible entrance³. While students may be able to enter a building, it does not necessarily mean their lecture halls and hallways will be accessible – as only 72.2% of buildings have all floors and hallways fully considered accessible. In addition, some technically accessible buildings are still difficult to use. For instance, many elevators on campus require key cards to use, even though an equivalent set of stairs in the building would not require a key. The elevator in Commons, needed to access the SAS test centre, requires a key card from an entirely different building. As such, McMaster Facility services should update all elevators to ensure that key card access is only necessary on restricted floors.

A streamlined system that provides updates and that is more promoted will help students keep repairs on building catalogued and up to date. This includes adding identification numbers on all outlets, automatic doors, elevators, etc. so that students may identify the where the repair must be made - just as they do with the water fountains.

As part of their ten-year car-free campus movement, McMaster will be moving its bus stops off of campus – greatly disadvantaging students⁴. Students will have to go to the edge of campus to get on buses, which can be added stress on students with physical disabilities or chronic pain.

On campus, only 74.5% of buildings have fully accessible elevators, with some requiring a key card that restricts certain students from student areas, and many elevators on campus are hard to identify for repair⁵. Removing keys will help students maneuver through campus with less difficulties.

Classroom Accessibility

Podcasting

<p>Principle: All willing and qualified students should have equitable access to learning materials. Concern: Students who are unable to attend class are often at a disadvantage, as lecture materials are unavailable outside lecture.</p>
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²https://fsprd.mcmaster.ca/psc/prfsprd/EMPLOYEE/ERP/c/MANAGE_WORK_ORDER_FL.WM_MY_REQUESTS_FL.GBL

³ Facility Services Accessibility Audit, McMaster University
<http://facilities.mcmaster.ca/documents/MOHAMED%20Admin%20Strategy%20Session%20Apr%202023-12.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3ZYRcXEnKRoeQ9h-kOC3q-n5064gdmzdOiYERhfEaxOWwd1oidt-CQ9-o>

⁴ https://issuu.com/urbanstrategiesinc/docs/08-11-21_final-sm

⁵ Ibid.

Concern: Assuming all students learn and process information in lecture excludes students who cannot.

Concern: Other ways to make up missed content, such as SAS notes or posted lecture slides, are often inadequate.

Concern: Many courses in rooms with technology to podcast do not take advantage of podcasting services.

Concern: Many rooms are not outfitted to podcast.

Concern: While optional trainings such as FLEX Forward cover reasoning behind podcasting for accessibility, no training exists for professors who do not know mechanically how to podcast.

Concern: Some professors may not know how to operate new podcasting technology.

Concern: Materials uploaded to Avenue become the intellectual property of the University, not the professor, disadvantaging professors who choose to podcast through Avenue.

Recommendation: All professors teaching in rooms outfitted for podcasting should post podcasts of lectures.

Recommendation: McMaster University should develop online instructional training for all podcasting technologies provided in classrooms.

Recommendation: McMaster University should expand rooms with podcasting technology, prioritizing larger lecture halls.

Recommendation: Professors teaching in rooms without technology for podcasting should allow students to take recordings, or record lectures themselves.

Recommendation: McMaster University should create a formal policy on intellectual property, ensuring podcasted lecture uploaded to Avenue remain the intellectual property of the instructor.

Podcasting courses are one of the easiest ways to increase the accessibility of a learning environment. As such, it is often recommended by disability rights groups to decrease barriers for disabled students⁶. Podcasts can help a student who is unable to leave their bed due to a mental illness or chronic pain still keep up with lecture materials, or may be helpful tool for a student with processing issues to revisit the material, and take notes at their own speed. While some students receive notes through the SAS notetaking system, they are often incomplete. In addition, notes can be incredibly subjective, and differ widely based on the learning style of a particular student. Podcasts allow students to access the original learning material, to allow the same level of access as a student who could make it to class.

To support a broader shift towards increasing the number of podcasted courses, several structural changes are necessary. First, McMaster University should dedicate funding towards expanding rooms outfitted for podcasting services, prioritizing large lecture halls to allow for the maximum utility for students. Next, professors should be taught both the benefits of podcasting and how to use the technology. Finally, it is important that professors aiming to have more accessible classrooms are not punished for doing so. As such, McMaster University should create a formal policy outlining the legal rights for instructors who upload podcasted lectures,

⁶ https://www.neads.ca/en/norc/eag/eag_en.pdf

slides, or any other original learning materials to Avenue To Learn. Currently, many professors believe that posting podcasted lectures to Avenue will result in the University gaining their intellectual property rights to the content, and will therefore refrain from posting. McMaster faculty can retain the intellectual property of academic and literary works created during their employment, and similarly should retain IP of coursework⁷.

Accessible Pedagogy

Principle: Students with disabilities should have equitable access to learning materials.

Concern: Many common teaching methods, such as participation marks, for both attendance and class discussion, are inaccessible.

Concern: Professors often do not provide alternatives to participation.

Concern: Learning materials, such as course readings, are often not available in accessible formats, making them incompatible with screen readers and read-aloud technologies, despite the fact that McMaster provides licenses for several softwares which can convert PDFs into accessible formats.

Concern: Videos posted on Avenue or shown in class are often not properly captioned, although McMaster Libraries provides a captioning services.

Concern: When a microphone runs out of battery in lecture, many students with hearing impairments will be unable to participate.

Concern: Many professors do not use provided microphones.

Recommendation: Professors should provide alternatives to participation marks, such as emailing or posting on Avenue short reflections on readings or uploading notes to Avenue.

Recommendation: All modules and videos, including those shown in class required for coursework should be close captioned, in addition to having downloadable scripts.

Recommendation: All course readings should be posted in an accessible format, ideally with multiple file type options.

Recommendation: All professors should use microphones in classrooms wherever possible.

Recommendation: All lecture halls equipped with a microphone should include a charged spare battery pack, which professors are trained to use.

Students with disabilities should have equitable access to learning materials. According to the McMaster University Faculty Accessibility Resource, McMaster University uses Universal Instructional Design, a concept that aims to eradicate accessibility barriers to education through reinforcing accessible teaching practices. For 1 instance, UID encourages the use of captions to instructional videos to aid deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Broadly speaking, UID advocates for instructional materials and activities to be “accessible and fair,” “straightforward and consistent,” “flexible in use, participation, and presentation” and “explicitly presented and readily perceived.” the UID also promotes a supporting learning environment that “accommodates both students and instructional methods.” 2 Historically, the UID movement was first envisioned to

⁷ <https://milo.mcmaster.ca/researchers/ip>

make physical spaces accessible “to the widest number of patrons.” For instance, curb cuts in sidewalks were 3 deemed advantageous as they supported wheelchair users, people with other mobility restrictions and mothers with strollers. Essentially, UID advocates the proactive design of 4 spaces for inclusion. Against this backdrop, the McMaster Faculty Accessibility Resource 5 asks instructors to prioritize accessibility by identifying potential barriers for students with disabilities prior to the construction of course content and their pedagogical strategies. It stresses the importance of compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The AODA is Ontario government legislation that aims to tackle barriers to access 6 for people with disabilities in contexts such as education. The McMaster Faculty Accessibility Resource also calls on instructors to provide accommodations as soon as possible and create accessible syllabi by ensuring they are straightforward, informative, and include an accessibility statement. With respect to 7 pedagogy specifically, the McMaster Faculty Accessibility Resource highlights the 1 Yara Farran and Rafaella Shammass. The Faculty Accessibility Resource Guide. PDF. Hamilton: McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning, 2014. 2 Farran and Shammass. The Faculty Accessibility Resource Guide. PDF. Hamilton: McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning, 2014. 3 Kari L. Kumar and Maureen Wideman. "Accessible by Design: Applying UDL Principles in a Rst Year Undergraduate Course." Canadian Journal of Higher Education 44, no. 1 (2014): 126. 4 Kumar and Wideman. "Accessible by Design: Applying UDL Principles in a Rst Year Undergraduate Course." Canadian Journal of Higher Education 44, no. 1 (2014): 126. 5 Kumar and Wideman. "Accessible by Design: Applying UDL Principles in a Rst Year Undergraduate Course." Canadian Journal of Higher Education 44, no. 1 (2014): 126. 6 Farran and Shammass. The Faculty Accessibility Resource Guide. PDF. Hamilton: McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning, 2014. 7 Yara Farran and Rafaella Shammass. The Faculty Accessibility Resource Guide. PDF. Hamilton: McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning, 2014. effectiveness of online and blended learning for the implementation of accessible pedagogy. It also has sections focusing on making classrooms welcome, accessible, and implementing “best practices for inclusive education.” These practices include, but are not 8 limited to, making spaces welcoming, holding flexible office hours and facilitating and improving student interaction. McMaster University also has an Accessible Education Online Training Step-Guide that includes the “FLEX Forward” e-book. However, according to the McMaster website, 9 this training and resource is “strongly encouraged for all instructional staff at McMaster University,” not mandated. The McMaster Equity and Inclusion Office also does a great 10 deal of work around promoting accessible pedagogy. For instance, during the 2017-2018 11 year, the EIO was involved with a number of projects aimed at strengthening accessible pedagogy efforts, such as the revision of McMaster’s “Policy on the Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities” and “Policy on Accessibility.” According to the EIO’s accessibility update from 2017-2018, last year, McMaster’s Student Accessibility Services saw increasingly more student involvement, revamping its office space and adding two new offices to bolster its service for the growing amount of student use. In addition, Nick Marquis, McMaster’s Learning Technologies Consultant in the faculty of Social Sciences, created a comprehensive guide through google docs consisting of a list of accessibility resources, such as the McMaster Accessibility Hub and Microsoft Word resources, such as

resources for accessible captioning, hyperlinking, colour and contrast and fonts. Nevertheless, student consultations suggest that many McMaster 12 professors do not consider and actively incorporate the strategies and recommendations outlined in these resources. Some professors may also not know that these guidelines exist in the first place. Moreover, McMaster's resources appear to overlook two key problems. First, they largely neglect consideration of systemic issues at play, such as ableism in individual and institutional contexts. Ableism bleeds into pedagogy in many ways, such as when courses are inaccessible to students with disabilities because they have been constructed for "normal" student learners, necessitating students with disabilities to actively seek out accommodations instead of initially receiving or not requiring them. Student 13 consultations suggest that ableism in pedagogy can be resisted when the voices and concerns of students with disabilities are listened to and respected . While it is not clear 14 whether or not the McMaster Faculty Accessibility Resource effectively consulted students with disabilities throughout the development stage, it should be noted that the resource guide does not explicitly mention ableism. Second, while resources like the McMaster Faculty Accessibility Resource articulate a commitment to accessible pedagogy and provide instructors with a UID framework for course content and delivery, as it currently stands, learning materials and common teaching methods, such as participation marks, for both attendance and class discussion, are inaccessible. This may be the case because instructors are not mandated to comply with several of the university's resources on accessible pedagogy. It may also be the case that instructors are unaware of some of these materials. The goals of the McMaster Faculty Accessibility Resource and the UID framework that it advocates often do not manifest themselves in learning environments in practice. For instance, blind and visually impaired students often do not receive access to course materials on time. Attendance and class discussions can be inaccessible for students . 15 16 Another pedagogical accessibility concern is that professors often do not provide alternatives to tutorial participation, making a key component of many courses inaccessible. In many courses at McMaster, tutorial participation is a mandatory and unavoidable component of a student's grade. Moreover, even when professors do provide alternatives, often times, these alternatives, such as an online essay, necessitate a disproportionately longer time commitment to complete. Another example of 17 McMaster's recommendations and UID principles not manifesting in practice is McMaster course learning materials, such as modules or course readings, which are often not available in accessible formats. For instance, online learning materials do not always include closed captioning and downloadable transcripts. Readings are not always 18 compatible with screen readers. 19 In light of these concerns, we recommend that professors provide fair alternatives to participation marks, such as allowing students to email or post on Avenue short comments on readings. We suggest that all modules and videos required for coursework are close captioned, in addition to having downloadable scripts. In addition, students with disabilities should receive their textbooks and other learning materials on time. All course readings should be compatible with screen readers. All lecture halls equipped with a microphone should include a charged spare battery pack that professors are trained to use. We also recommend that professors and other instructors comply with McMaster and the EIO's resources promoting the UID framework and accessible pedagogical strategies, as well as Nick Marquis' Microsoft Word guidelines.

These resources and guidelines should be widely disseminated to instructors at McMaster University.

Professor / Teaching Assistant Training

Principle: Professors and teaching assistants should be properly equipped to instruct all students.

Concern: Currently, there is no mandatory accessibility training for professors and teaching assistants beyond an AODA module.

Concern: Many professors and TAs are ill informed about accessible learning, their responsibility to accommodate, and best practices.

Concern: Many professors and TAs are unaware of SAS policy, including confidentiality.

Concern: Many students experience ableism in their classes.

Concern: Many instructors feel ill-equipped to properly accommodate students with disabilities, or to use more accessible teaching methods.

Concern: Attendance at many trainings related to accessibility is often low.

Recommendation: McMaster University should mandate that all professors and TAs should be required to attend an in-person training on accessibility before they are permitted to teach.

Recommendation: Individual faculties should ensure that all professors and TAs are completing this mandatory training.

Currently, the only mandatory trainings for course instructors at McMaster University are online videos on the AODA and Human Rights Code (HRC)⁸. While these topics are certainly important, a 30-minute online training is completely insufficient to properly equip instructors to accommodate students and create an accessible classroom. Student consultation revealed that many professors are ignorant of even the most basic principles of SAS, such as student confidentiality. Professors and TAs often are unaware of the extent of their responsibility to accommodate students, from issues as basic as turning on captions when playing videos to failing to properly advertise a notetaker, or refusing to provide students with requested accommodations. Some instructors also enter academia with their own biases and prejudices, and relay ableist notions to their students of all abilities, which often serves to isolate students with disabilities and validate ableist students. Such comments and actions, such as asking a student why they need accommodations if they have good grades, or making an ableist joke in class, are unacceptable. At many existing trainings relating to accessibility or disability, attendance is often low⁹. In addition, many faculty have reported that it is common to skim through the AODA and HRC modules, taking even less than the recommended 30 minutes¹⁰. Many faculty also feel ill-equipped to properly accommodate students, and desire more thorough training¹¹.

⁸ <https://accessibility.mcmaster.ca/topic/aoda-human-rights/>

⁹ Marquis et al

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

As such, McMaster University should develop an accessibility training, which would be mandatory for all professors, lecturers, and TAs. This training should be developed in conjunction with the EIO, and consultation from the PTM or volunteers at Maccess. If students from Maccess are unable to participate, other students with disabilities should be hired as paid consultants. The training should include, but not be limited to: SAS policies and accommodation procedures; accessible pedagogical practices, including applications of Universal Design for Learning (UDL); disability theory; “ableism myths”; and the Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities. The training should allow for sufficient time for attendees to engage in discussion¹². While training faculty on accessibility does often lead to less ableist classes¹³, it is important to recognize that training does not erase systemic ableism from institutions. However, an in-depth training would set a standard of performance for professors, and communicate expectations surrounding accessibility. In addition, an “ableism myths” section, similar to the “rape myths” section in Meaghan Ross’s Supporting Survivors training, could help instructors to unpack pre-existing prejudices and understand why they are wrong.

Incomplete Courses

Principle: No students should be penalized for seeking accommodation.

Concern: Incomplete courses often show up as a fail on a students’ transcript.

Concern: Having a fail on your transcript can inhibit students from receiving OSAP and affect graduate school applications.

Recommendation: Incomplete courses should show up as incomplete on your transcript until the course is completed.

Incomplete courses are often an extremely valuable form of accommodation: they allow students to submit work for a course past the end of the semester, similar to a deferred exam. However, if coursework is not submitted close enough to the end of the semester, the grade from the class may switch from and Incomplete to a Fail, even in cases where the professor will still accept work from the student. Having a Fail on one’s transcript can have serious implications, from inhibiting a student’s ability to receive OSAP to decreasing their chances of being admitted to graduate school. Consequently, the McMaster Registrar’s Office should ensure that if a student has been granted an extension for coursework, and is still within their timeline to submit late work, the grade on their transcript remains Incomplete, and is never temporarily a Fail.

University Transition

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Principle: McMaster should help make the university transition as smooth as possible.
Concern: Getting documentation for accommodations can be difficult or expensive.
Concern: Many students are unaware they can receive accommodations.
Recommendation: Information about SAS and accommodations should be included in the university acceptance package, including potential types of disabilities which may be accommodated (as listed on intake form)
Recommendation: SAS should give the option for students to submit an Individual Education Plan (IEP) from high school as documentation for chronic illnesses or other permanent disabilities.

All students (and their parents/guardians, where applicable) should be informed that students with disabilities are entitled to accommodation, the process for requesting an accommodation, their right to take part in such a process, and any other information that may be helpful in making the accommodation process more understandable and accessible. The accommodation process should be part of the regular life and discourse of the education institution. -- ON HRC Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities, 2018, actually later on says acceptance packages

Student Accessibility Services

Principle: All students should be able to have access to appropriate accommodations to help them succeed in their studies.
Concern: Student Accessibility Services' (SAS) note-taking program provides barriers to both those accessing notes and those contributing to the system such as the paired note system that means the note receiver can only receive notes from that one particular note-taker.
Concern: SAS does not state student accommodations as necessary for instructors to abide by, as the letters provided to them are labelled as "considerations".
Concern: Students are often unaware of their rights regarding their accommodations and all their possible types of accommodations.
Concern: Some SAS policies, such as not listing all possible accommodations for students, are not in line with Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on Education for Students with Disabilities.
Recommendation: SAS should adopt an open catalogue for class notes, so that students have access to all notes from a class that is available, and not just limited to one note taker.
Recommendation: If no note-takers are available, professors must send their notes or a variation to the student.
Recommendation: Note-takers should receive incentives beyond references, such as but not limited to, participation marks, payment, weight percentage taken off exam or assignments, etc.
Recommendation: SAS ensure they are operating fully within the requirements of the HRC, and the Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities.
Recommendation: SAS should provide an information pack upon registration into the system that outlines all rights and information regarding types of accommodations and services.

Recommendation: SAS should change letters of accommodations to instructors to read as mandatory and not just as a consideration.

Recommendation: SAS should create a centralized system for students to provide feedback or complaints.

Students deserve to know all their rights regarding their disabilities - including what accommodations are their rights as students. To achieve this, Student Accessibility Services should provide students with a list of possible accommodations, both in-person and online¹⁴. SAS should take steps to ensure that all policies and proceedings are in line with the Human Rights Code, as well as the Policy on education for students with disabilities.

One common accommodation provided by SAS is its notetaking system, which connects students requiring notes with classmates who can take them. However, this system is deeply flawed, and often ends up becoming almost entirely useless to students requiring notes. The system makes the student who needs notes partner up with one notetaker, and the student must rely on their notes alone¹⁵. This disadvantages students when the notetakers miss class or do not keep up the same quality of notes. It is not unusual for a notetaker to stop posting notes altogether late in the semester, leaving the student requiring notes stranded. To remedy this, SAS should allow students registered for the notetaking program to access all notes to a class. This allows students to compare notes from different notetakers, as notes are often highly subjective, and do not always include all information from a lecture. In addition, it removes pressure from notetakers, who otherwise would not be able to miss a class.

It is also not uncommon for no one to volunteer as a notetaker for a class -- as notetakers are almost entirely uncompensated, this should not be unexpected. If no notetakers volunteer, McMaster policy should dictate that a professor must provide their own notes for the class. In the long term, McMaster should increase compensation for notetakers, possibly including allowing posted notes to count as participation marks, or paying them for their services.

When providing letters of accommodation (LOA) to professors, accommodations are often worded as "consideration." This wording does not properly communicate the legal responsibility of the professor to provide accommodation, and leaves too much up to the discretion of the professor. Consequently, SAS should cease using such wording in LOA.

Students should have a better way to relay feedback or complaints about the SAS system, other than simply emailing them or their SAS coordinator - specifically in an anonymous form. Students have voiced their concerns on the gaps in SAS, and should be able to express their ideas without having to release their information^{16 17}.

Student Wellness Centre

¹⁴ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/accommodating-students-disabilities-roles-and-responsibilities-fact-sheet>

¹⁵ <https://sas.mcmaster.ca/notetaking/>

¹⁶ <https://www.thesil.ca/student-inaccessibility-services>

¹⁷ <https://www.thesil.ca/accessibility-isnt-just-political-tool>

Fees for Services

Principle: The Student Wellness Centre should be financially accessible for all students.

Concern: Cancellation and lateness fees are often a financial burden on students.

Concern: The current cancellation fees are often impact people with disabilities, who may be unable to make an appointment due to flare-ups which cannot be predicted 24 hours in advance.

Concern: Requiring students to pay for their medical records is financially inaccessible.

Recommendation: McMaster University should remove the cancellation/missed appointment fees, which are causing students to pay unnecessary fees.

Recommendation: McMaster University should remove fees requiring students to pay to obtain their medical records.

The SWC should also not financially penalize students with disabilities. Fining students for missed or late appointments but unfairly targets students with disabilities who cannot always predict when they may be unable to leave the house, or when they may no longer be otherwise able to attend an appointment as a result of flare ups of their disability. The SWC should also ensure that accessing medical records is accessible to all students by removing the current cost barrier.

Crisis Protocol

Principle: Students in crisis should be supported, not further harmed.

Concern: The SWC currently may force patients to be hospitalized against their will, which infringes on students' autonomy and may cause further trauma.

Concern: Ambiguity surrounding the SWC crisis protocol causes some students to withhold information about suicidality, fearing hospitalization.

Concern: Doctors at SWC can force hospitalization on students for concerns other than direct fear for a student's life.

Recommendation: The Student Wellness Centre should create a formal crisis protocol, which may be viewed on their website.

Recommendation: The Student Wellness Centre should not force students deemed to be in crisis to be hospitalized, instead other options, such as the Barrett Crisis Centre or Good Shepherd facilities, should be given.

Recommendation: The Student Wellness Centre should ensure that any referral facilities, especially crisis facilities, provide high-standard care.

Recommendation: Employees of the Student Wellness Centre, especially counsellors, should disclose their limits to confidentiality before an appointment.

Body text to be added later.

Booking Appointments

Principle: The Student Wellness should have an accessible and confidential system to book appointments.

Concern: The current system for booking appointments in-person is time-consuming for both students and receptionists and makes it harder to protect student confidentiality

Concern: Students must often self-advocate and understand details of the booking system in order to book an intake appointment with a counselor.

Recommendation: McMaster University should collaborate with the IT department to introduce an online booking system

Recommendation: The Student Wellness Centre should centralize the reception system so that any student may see any receptionist.

Recommendation: The Student Wellness Centre should formalize the process of booking an intake appointment so that all students are equally able to book an appointment without having to advocate for themselves.

Many other medical facilities allow patients to book appointments online. Not only is this easier on students and receptionists, but it allows for increased confidentiality, as students are not required to disclose their medical ailment to a receptionist in front of the entire Student Wellness waiting room. Consequently, the SWC, in collaboration with IT Services, should create an online booking system for appointments.

Getting an intake appointment with a counsellor can often take days of waiting, or require students know the inner workings of the intake system and self-advocate. The intake process should be formalized, and possibly integrated with an online booking system, ensuring that students are not forced to wait in drop-in hours for days.

Transparency about patient observations

Principle: Health care practitioners should be transparent about what observations they are recording.

Concern: The recording of students' appearances and clothing by mental health nurses and social workers is against students' right to privacy and may play into racist, classist, or ableist ideas of dressing.

Recommendation: The Student Wellness Centre should introduce a new policy that requires mental health nurses/social workers to disclose to students if their personal attributes are being written down so that students are aware.

Body text to be added later.

At a minimum, the SWC should provide a standard of care equal to other medical facilities in Ontario. However, the intake forms at Student Wellness are not as extensive as in walk-in clinics or other health care centres. In addition, prescription contracts for controlled substances, often medication for ADHD, are more extensive and must be filled out when the medication is being prescribed by the doctor, rather than when receiving it from the pharmacist. This

specifically targets students with ADHD, and many students reported feeling uncomfortable filling out the contract in front of the doctor.

Financial Aid

McMaster Financial Aid

Principle: The McMaster Bursary Program should be available to all students with disabilities.

Principle: Financial aid information should be easily accessible.

Concern: The Bursary has strict criteria that excludes some students with disabilities.

Concern: The Bursary excludes full-time students with disabilities who do not receive financial aid from the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

Concern: The Bursary excludes full-time students with disabilities who accept partial funding from the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

Concern: The Ontario Student Assistance Program is not accessible to all students with financial need.

Concern: Financial aid information is currently inaccessible and disorganized.

Recommendation: The Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships should expand the Bursary program to include full-time students with disabilities who do not receiving funding from the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

Recommendation: The Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships should update their website to organize all available financial aid options for students, based on criteria.

Recommendation: The Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships should work with McMaster University Technology Services to compile financial aid option information on the Mosaic aid application.

Students with disabilities face unique barriers in accessing post-secondary education. A significant portion of these barriers are financial, as many students with disabilities may require equipment or aids, or be unable to work additional hours to supplement their income. Confronting systemic ableism from all corners of one's life is expensive and exhausting, and McMaster should ensure students with disabilities receive the financial aid they need.

One support that could be expanded to better support students with disabilities is the McMaster Bursary program, which currently excludes many students. The eligibility requires students to either accept all available funding from the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) or be part of a select student group¹⁸. The list of student groups include students with disabilities who are taking a reduced course load¹⁹. As a result, full-time students with disabilities who do not receive OSAP or take only partial OSAP funding are not eligible to receive the McMaster Student Bursary. This creates a barrier for students with disabilities to finance their education.

¹⁸"McMaster Aid Application." Student Financial Aid Scholarships. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://sfas.mcmaster.ca/mcmaster-aid/online-aid-profile/>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Another barrier to students is the lack of organization regarding financial aid specifically for students with disabilities. The information is not streamlined and can prevent students from utilizing all of the resources available to them.

To remove these barriers, the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships should expand the eligibility of the Bursary to include all students with disability, regardless of their status with OSAP. As well, the Office should update their website to categorize resources based on criteria, including resources for students with disabilities. These resources would also be helpful directly on Mosaic at the Financial Aid application. This would effectively disseminate information to students, especially those with disabilities.

Provincial Financial Aid

Principle: Financial aid for students with disabilities should be accessible.

Concern: The Ontario Bursary for Students with Disabilities requires provincial financial aid.

Concern: International students are ineligible for the Ontario Bursary for Students with Disabilities.

Concern: The Ontario Bursary for Students with Disabilities and Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities application is separate from the Ontario Student Assistance Program application and must be completed through Student Accessibility Services at McMaster University.

Concern: The Ontario Student Assistance Program is not accessible to all students with financial need.

Concern: Not all students with disabilities are aware of these bursaries.

Concern: Students with temporary disabilities are not eligible to be considered full-time at a 40% or more course load, the way that students with permanent disabilities can be.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should promote the Ontario Bursary for Students with Disabilities and Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities application to students with disabilities in the OSAP portal.

Recommendation (instead of above to be more clear): The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should develop an alternative application for the Ontario Bursary for Students with Disabilities that is separate from the OSAP application.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should allow students with temporary disabilities to choose full-time OSAP payments.

Provincial financial aid for students with disabilities is an important resource. However, this resource can also be a barrier based on its limiting eligibility criteria. The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) is not accessible to all students with disabilities, for a variety of reasons, and should not be the only metric to assess financial need. The program is also not available to international students, which prevents international students with disabilities from

receiving financial support for assistive devices, support workers, and other costs that may be associated with their disability. In Ontario, there is a specific program for students with disabilities called the Ontario Bursary for Students with Disabilities. To be eligible, it requires that applicants must be receiving at least \$1 from OSAP^{20,21,22}. This requirement prevents some students with disabilities from receiving OSAP, while international students are ineligible because of residency requirements. Regardless, these unrelated requirements prevent students with disabilities from getting adequate financial support. As such, the provincial and government should remove the requirements of OSAP to allow all students with disabilities to be eligible for the Ontario Bursary for Students with Disabilities.

Beyond the strict eligibility criteria, these programs can be inaccessible and difficult to discover. These barriers to access could be reduced by advertising these grants to students through the OSAP portal and through financial aid offices at institutions. The advertisement of these grants should also include an application for students who do not qualify for OSAP.

Federal Financial Aid

Principle: Financial aid for students with disabilities should be accessible.

Concern: The Canada Student Grant for Persons with Permanent Disabilities requires that students receive at least \$1 of provincial financial assistance.

Concern: The Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities requires provincial financial assistance.

Concern: The Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities excludes students with temporary disabilities, regardless of their needs.

Concern: Students with temporary disabilities are ineligible for the Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities and the Canada Student Grant for Persons with Disabilities.

Concern: Students with temporary disabilities who require equipment and services are only eligible for the Ontario Bursary for Students with Disabilities, which provides only a fifth of the total funding available through the Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities.

Concern: International students with disabilities are ineligible for both the Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities and the Canada Student Grant for Persons with Disabilities.

²⁰ "Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD)." Student Financial Aid Scholarships. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://sfas.mcmaster.ca/government-aid/bursary-for-students-with-disabilities/>.

²¹ Social Development Canada. "Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities." Canada.ca. March 26, 2018. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/education/grants/disabilities-service-equipment.html>.

²² Social Development Canada. "Canada Student Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities." Canada.ca. March 26, 2018. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/education/grants/disabilities.html>.

Recommendation: The Government of Canada should remove the provincial financial aid requirement from the Canada Student Grant for Persons with Permanent Disabilities and the Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities.

Recommendation: The Government of Canada, in cooperation with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should develop an application for the Canada Student Grant for Persons with Permanent Disabilities and the Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities that is separate from the OSAP application for students who do not receive OSAP.

Recommendation: The Government of Canada should allow students with temporary disabilities to receive the Canada Student Grant for Persons with Permanent Disabilities and the Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities.

For students to receive federal financial aid specific to students with disabilities, there are strict eligibility criteria which can make the programs inaccessible to a variety of students. For example, the Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities and the Canada Student Grant for Persons with Permanent Disabilities require that applicants must be receiving at least \$1 from OSAP^{23,24,25}. In order to qualify for OSAP, a necessary qualification for these federal programs, students must be Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or have refugee status. The residency requirements exclude international students, despite any need for financial assistance with respect to their disability.

Another criteria of both federal bursaries is the diagnosis of a permanent disability, which excludes students with temporary disabilities regardless of their needs. The discrepancy prevents students with temporary disabilities from up to \$8000 of financial support for equipment and aids²⁶. The current criteria of the federal bursaries is exclusive, inaccessible and prevents many students, from international students to those with temporary disabilities, from thousands of dollars in necessary aid. The federal government should also expand the criteria to include students with temporary disabilities, international students, and students with disabilities who are ineligible for OSAP.

²³ "Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD)." Student Financial Aid Scholarships. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://sfas.mcmaster.ca/government-aid/bursary-for-students-with-disabilities/>.

²⁴ Social Development Canada. "Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities." Canada.ca. March 26, 2018. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/education/grants/disabilities-service-equipment.html>.

²⁵ Social Development Canada. "Canada Student Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities." Canada.ca. March 26, 2018. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/education/grants/disabilities.html>.

²⁶ Social Development Canada. "Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities." Canada.ca. March 26, 2018. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/education/grants/disabilities-service-equipment.html>.

Satisfactory Academic Progress for OSAP

Principle: Financial aid should be secure and stable for the duration of one's studies.

Concern: Students with permanent disabilities who take a reduced course load are at greater pressure to pass all of their courses to avoid OSAP Academic Probation.

Concern: Students with temporary disabilities are not given the same accommodations as students with permanent disabilities.

Concern: A first occurrence of OSAP Academic Probation requires students to submit an academic probation letter, regardless of reason for academic failure.

Concern: A second occurrence of OSAP Academic Probation restricts students from receiving OSAP funding for one year.

Concern: Students can be placed on OSAP Academic Probation for frequent program changes, repetition of courses, or general failure to steadily progress in one's program.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should remove the possibility of OSAP Academic Probation for students with disabilities.

Recommendation: In the interim, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should give students with temporary disabilities the same accommodations as permanent disabilities for OSAP Academic Probation.

Academic probation for students who receive OSAP fails to acknowledge the challenges that students can face in achieving academic success, particularly if these students experience disability. These punishments are unnecessary and place undue stress on students who already experience financial aid and the challenge of navigating academia with a disability. The best solution to this undue stress is the elimination of the program for students with both temporary and permanent disabilities. If there must be an interim process, OSAP should at least consider students with temporary disabilities in the same way that it considers students with permanent disabilities²⁷.

Emergency Funding

Principle: Emergency assistance processes should be simple and readily accessible.

Concern: Students are not always aware of the available options for emergency funding.

Concern: Students with disabilities may be at an increased risk of financial emergency.

Recommendation: The Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships should increase promotion of emergency funds available for students.

Recommendation: McMaster University should develop an emergency fund specifically for students with disabilities.

Recommendation: This emergency fund should be available through both Student Accessibility Services and the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships.

²⁷"Satisfactory Academic Progress (OSAP)." Student Awards & Financial Aid. May 14, 2018. Accessed February 20, 2019.
<https://uwaterloo.ca/student-awards-financial-aid/government-aid/full-time-students/osap-eligibility-requirements/satisfactory-academic-progress-osap>.

Emergencies can happen at anytime and, for students with disabilities, these emergencies can pose unique problems. McMaster University currently does not do enough to promote and support students who experience emergencies and require grants to feed themselves, pay their rent, and beyond. Students deserve stability and security, especially from their institutions. Specifically, McMaster University should further promote the available emergency grants to ensure that all students are aware of these resources in the case of an emergency.

As well, the University should develop an emergency fund specifically for students with disabilities to ensure that any specialized equipment or other aspects of daily life are unaffected by the emergency. This fund should be accessible through Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to streamline the process for students in need. The fund can also be available through the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships, as long as students can access the fund through their counsellor at SAS to avoid unnecessary disclosures and proof of documentation. This would also prepare SAS counsellors to promote the emergency fund to their students, both prior to and during an emergency.

Emergency Services

Principle: Students at McMaster should always feel safe.

Principle: Marginalized people should have equitable access to services.

Concern: The default crisis response service on the McMaster campus is Security Services.

Concern: Security Services often collaborates with the Hamilton Police.

Concern: People with mental illness are more likely to experience violence from police.

Concern: Black and Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC) face increased risk of police violence.

Concern: Many students with mental illness have very good reason to feel unsafe in contacting, or being contacted by, Security Services.

Recommendation: McMaster University, in consultation with the EIO, MSU Peer Support Services (Maccess, WGEN, PCC, SHEC) should develop a new crisis protocol which aims to provide students with support without involving Security Services.

Academic Advising

Retroactive Withdrawal

Principle: Special consideration, such as retroactive withdrawal, should be transparent in its processes and requirements from students.

Concern: Information about retroactive withdrawal is often difficult to access and not easily available.

Concern: Special consideration forms vary greatly between faculties in specificity, documentation requirements, and length.

Concern: Information about the deadline for retroactive withdrawal is available on some faculty websites while missing on other faculty websites.

Concern: The deadline to submit a petition for retroactive withdrawal is shorter for Winter and Summer terms as compared to Fall and Spring terms.

Concern: It can be intimidating for students to complete a petition for retroactive withdrawal, given a substantial amount of documentation and information required.

Concern: Specific OSAP implications are not listed on any petitions for special consideration.

Concern: There is no available information on criteria for approval or denial of retroactive withdrawal petition. "The authority to grant petitions lies with the Faculty Associate Dean's office and is discretionary."

Concern: there is no requirement to provide reasoning for a denied petition.

Recommendation: Petitions for retroactive withdrawal should be more consistent across faculties.

Recommendation: Special consideration forms should be made more easily accessible on faculty websites.

Recommendation: Any deadlines for submitting a petition should be displayed on the form.

Recommendation: Deadline for submitting a petition for Winter and Summer terms should be extended to be proportional to the deadline for the Fall and Spring terms.

Recommendation: Students should be able to complete a petition with the aid of a academic advisor or SAS coordinator.

Recommendation: A criteria for approval or denial of a petition should be available on faculty websites.

Recommendation: All petitions should detail OSAP implications for all options on the petition.

Recommendation: Information about repeated courses and grading implications should be displayed with the petition, in the same area of faculty websites.

Recommendation: All denied petitions should include a reason for denial based on criteria for approval or denial.

Body text to be added later.

Training

Principle: Academic advisors should be equipped to support all students and their needs.

Concern: Academic advisors currently do not receive training on SAS and accessibility.

Recommendation: Academic advisors should be mandated to receive training about SAS and accessibility.

Body text to be added later.

Transparency

Principle: Academic services should be accessible to students.

Concern: Many students are unaware of who to contact for various academic issues.

Recommendation: Information about academic resources what issues they can help with, and contact information should be available on a central location on faculty websites.

Body text to be added later.

Extra Curriculars

Principle: Intramurals should be accessible.

Concern: Intramurals have an attendance limit, preventing students who have missed over half of the games to join the playoffs.

Concern: The playoffs often make up a significant portion of the season, up to nearly a half.

Concern: Students unable to attend over half the games because of disabilities are blocked from participating in the playoffs.

Recommendation: McMaster Athletics and Recreation should reduce the 50% requirement to 30%.

Body text to be added later.

Employment On-Campus, Experiential Learning, Internships, and Co-ops

McMaster Work-Study Program

Principle: Students with disabilities should have equitable access to employment and experiential opportunities.

Concern: The Work-Study program is only open to students who receive funds from the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

Concern: The Work-Study program is not available to students with disabilities who do not receive OSAP and who are taking a full-time course load.

Concern: The Work-Study program is not accessible to all students.

Recommendation: The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships should expand the Work-Study program to allow students with disabilities to participate, regardless of their OSAP-status.

The purpose of the Work-Study program is to “offer students, who demonstrate financial need, the opportunity for meaningful employment on campus”²⁸. This purpose is important; however, OSAP is not accessible to all students with disabilities, for a variety of reasons, and should not be the only metric to assess financial need. These students should not be barred from the opportunity to participate in meaningful employment at McMaster because of their ineligibility to a separate program. As such, McMaster should expand the program to allow students with disabilities to participate.

Workplace Supports for Students with Disabilities

²⁸ "McMaster Work Programs." Student Financial Aid Scholarships. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://sfas.mcmaster.ca/work-programs/fall-winter-work/>.

Principle: Students who participate in co-op, internships, experiential learning, and any employment should be able to maintain accommodations and well-being.

Concern: Workplaces can be difficult to navigate, especially for students with disabilities.

Concern: Students may not be aware of their rights to an accessible workplace.

Recommendation: McMaster co-op courses should include information on workplace accommodations and workers rights.

Recommendation: McMaster Career and Co-op Offices should work with Student Accessibility Services to provide accommodation supports for students in both volunteer and employment opportunities.

Experiential learning, employment, and other work experiences are an important part of the university experience and the transition out of an undergraduate career. However, accommodations in the workplace are unfamiliar to the majority of students, including students with disabilities. The creation of course accommodations can be a great step for many students, as it may be the first time they are receiving systemic accommodations. This applies to the workplace as well, where procedures for accommodations may be less clear, as many workplaces do not have an explicit Accessibility Services. These experiences are important and should be experienced by all willing students, regardless of (dis)ability. To better support students with disabilities who take co-op terms, internships, volunteer placements, and beyond, McMaster Co-op and Career Offices should work with Student Accessibility Services to ensure that students in these circumstances receive the necessary accommodations. This can include aiding the student in navigating the employer human resources departments, working directly with employers, and teaching students about their workplace rights. In addition to one-on-one advising of workplace rights, information about such rights should be included in all co-op and experiential learning courses at McMaster University.