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Employment Equity Workshop Accessibility
Vision Loss, Hearing Loss, and Limited Mobility

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES
Employment Equity is about fair access to employment opportunities

Through its employment equity program, the University of Alberta endeavors to recruit and retain a diverse and representative workforce.

Creating and maintaining work and learning communities that are supportive and welcoming for members of the designated groups is critical to the successful implementation of employment equity on campus. The four groups federally recognized as being disadvantaged in employment in Canada include:

- Aboriginal peoples
- Persons with Disabilities
- Members of visible minorities
- Women

To learn more about diversity, equity, and respect in the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff at the University of Alberta, please contact:

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I Introduction

The purpose of this document is to assist facilitators with enhancing the accessibility of their workshops and meeting their duty to accommodate. Attending to accessibility maximizes the learning of all participants and creates safe and productive learning spaces. The specific recommendations in this guide focus on supporting the inclusion of persons with vision loss, hearing loss, and/or limited mobility. However, these principles accord with good adult educational practices which seek to ensure that all learners feel safe and comfortable in the learning environment. Such affordances will ensure that learning is optimized for all participants, regardless of their learning styles, background ability or social location.

Accommodation is:

“the process of making alterations to the delivery of services so that those services become accessible to more people. In an educational setting, variations in course design, delivery, evaluation and learner differences will determine the need for, and nature of, an accommodation.”

(PSPSD, 2010, p. 9).

“Reasonable academic accommodations must be linked to functional limitations. A functional limitation refers to the effect of the disability on access, learning, behaviour, or performance.”

(PSPSD, 2010, p. 9).

To increase accessibility, facilitators can work with learners and program coordinators to determine what types of arrangements and adjustments are required to support positive learner outcomes and to meet the visual, auditory and ambulatory needs of students. Taking the time to review instructional materials and processes is part of good adult education practice and is consistent with a learner-centred approach. Finally, ensuring that learning environments are comfortable for a range of learners benefits all members of the learning group. Diverse perspectives and life experiences will enrich the experience for both learners and facilitators. Research into workplace diversity has demonstrated that creativity is enhanced in heterogeneous environments.
Learner Characteristics

There are a number of terms used to describe the broad range of abilities associated with hearing loss, vision loss and limited mobility. It will be important to become familiar with these considerations in preparation for workshops and courses.

1. Vision loss can include the following:
   - Partially sighted refers to some type of vision loss.
   - Low vision generally refers to visual acuity of 20/60 to 20/200.
   - Legally blind indicates that a person has 20/200 vision or less in the better eye with best correction possible that is not improved with corrective lenses or that the visual field is less than 20° in diameter
   - Total blindness is the complete lack of form and visual light perception
   - Differing perceptual abilities

2. Hearing loss can include the following:
   - Hard of hearing persons have partial hearing, ranging from mild to a profound loss.
   - Deafened persons have very little or no hearing after childhood and use speech or lip reading as a major means of communication.
   - Deaf persons may identify with a cultural and linguistic minority group and use a signed language as a major means of communication.

2. Limited Mobility is reduced or loss of independent movement.
   Being aware of these factors will help the facilitator to respond to participants who self-identify as requiring accommodation.
II General Guidelines for Facilitators

The following guidelines are meant to be used in conjunction with the many resources available at the University of Alberta through Specialized Support and Disability Services (SSDS) and other campus resources. Further direction may be obtained by contacting the Employment Equity Advisor, Organizational Learning and Effectiveness, University of Alberta at employmentequity@ualberta.ca.

Planning for Accessibility

1. Include an accessibility statement with all course announcements to encourage participants to request support or to communicate any accessibility concerns. Participants may indicate preferred accommodation and provide advice on how they may fully participate. Be cautious about what information you ask participants as you need to avoid any questions that may reveal personal characteristics protected under the University of Alberta’s Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy.

   Sample Accessibility Statement: Sign language interpreting, real-time captioning, or other services can be provided. Contact (include name/email/phone) and indicate deadline to receive an accommodation request (typically, one week prior to the session).

   It is recommended that you reserve sign language interpreting and realtime captioning with SSDS.
   Note: SSDS operates on a cost-recovery basis.

2. When possible, contact the participants or accessibility service providers and provide an overview of the workshop activities to determine the best way to fully engage the participants. Knowing the types of adjustments that have helped them (the participant) in past workshops will be useful in planning.

3. Seek advice from SSDS to determine which, if any, adaptive technologies participants may require and how these will affect their participation in the workshop.

4. Review workshop materials, facilitation methods and workshop activities to determine the accommodations that will maximize participation and learning. Consult the “Accommodation Matrix” at the end of this document for guidelines on how to review materials for the kinds of adjustments that may be useful.
All good adult educational practice includes careful consideration of the learning group and its particular needs. Facilitators/Instructors usually take into account the age, life experience and prior knowledge of participants. These considerations can be expanded to include learner needs with respect to sensory and ambulatory differences such as vision, hearing and mobility issues.

The following questions can be used to determine the types of arrangements or adjustments that will be required or helpful to participants.

1. **How will workshop materials be adjusted to meet participant needs?**

   Traditional learning technologies rely heavily on various forms of textual materials including handouts and PowerPoint presentations. Consider how these materials can be accessed by those who may not be able to see the print. Some successful adjustments have included raising the borders (using fabric paint for example) on diagrammatic handouts and sending handouts and PowerPoint slides in advance of the session so that participants can use specialized technologies to review the materials ahead of time.

2. **Which facilitation techniques will have to be adjusted to meet participant needs?**

   Adult educators develop activities that facilitate learner engagement with concepts through hands-on learning exercises, which include simulations, small group discussions and case work. These types of activities enrich learner experiences; however, they require communicative engagement which can exclude those who cannot see facial expressions and gestures or who cannot hear the spoken word. Mediating these differences can be challenging but also offer the facilitator and other learners the opportunity to be more mindful of difference and respectful of the many small ways our day-to-day interactions can exclude others. Once again, advising learners with specific requirements about the nature of the activities, their purpose and the process can help them to anticipate a) how they can best participate and b) how the activities might be adjusted. There is no one right way to make these adjustments, and consultation and reflection on processes can be used to determine the strategies that work best in a specific context. For example a card game used in a particular workshop was modified by using Braille cards for a learner with vision loss, and by providing the written instructions ahead of time. A slight modification in the process (not requiring the learner to move from table to table) made the activity more comfortable for the participant and in no way had a negative effect on the learning outcomes.

Facilitators might begin the consultation process with the affected learner through the participant’s self-identification at the time of registration. When developing workshop promotion materials, you might include a statement inviting participants to contact the organizer/registrar of the program to alert them of any special requirements. These could range from dietary needs (if food is being
provided) to vision, hearing or mobility issues that should be taken into consideration.

3. How will participants engage in large group discussions?

Large group discussions are an important way to generate creativity. Multiple perspectives on a topic or issue are an important part of the adult learning experience; however the large group discussion can also be challenging for those who are hesitant to speak up in groups, for those who cannot hear the discussion or for those who cannot apprehend visual cues such as facial expressions and gestures. One way to ensure inclusion is to balance out large group discussions with small group work. Another modification requires that the facilitator repeat salient points for the benefit of those working with an ASL interpreter (or other form of interpretive service) and finally to ensure that gestures are translated into verbal forms of expressions. For example, “Mary, you shrugged your shoulders just now. What are you thinking about what James just said?”

Facilitators must pay special attention to gestures that take the place of words – such as pointing at print material instead of saying the words or reading the text. Take note of your own facilitation style and reflect on whether you use a lot of gestures to help make a point. There is nothing wrong with this but it will be important to add to these forms of communication.

4. How will participants take part in small group work which requires interaction?

Small group work can provide an excellent and safe space for learners to express their thoughts on a particular subject and requires less adaptation. Learners in the small group are often very sensitive to the various needs of group members, taking time to express themselves clearly and to making space for all to participate in ways that are appropriate for them. Small groups also provide a good opportunity for the facilitator to attend to process by unobtrusively joining in the small group to support and model good inclusive practice.

5. How will you evaluate the success of the accommodation in meeting the needs of participants?

Good evaluation is part of all adult learning practices. In many respects, whatever evaluation questions you are utilizing will be appropriate for any learner. However, you may have to administer the evaluation in another format (electronic versions are an excellent way to do this). If the learner has had a positive learning experience, then you will know that your adjustments have been successful. It is also good practice to debrief the adjustments with specific learners to continue the learning process about what has worked and what can be improved upon. It is
III Consideration for Workshop Facilitation

recommended that this take place in direct communication with the learner either in person or over the telephone. An email exchange can also be useful if there is no way to telephone or have a face-to-face meeting.

These considerations are a starting point for your reflections as a facilitator/instructor. The process of expanding your practice towards the goal of providing Universal Accessibility will likely be ongoing and will be enhanced by generating and sustaining an open dialogue with learners and other educators. As with all educational practice, lifelong attention to growth and the enhancement of one’s practice is integral to the development of safe, optimal learning spaces. It is a journey.
### IV Accommodation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner Considerations</th>
<th>Location considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure that the workshop space is large enough to facilitate ease of navigation in and out of the room and between tables.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If interpreters are going to be present, ensure there is adequate seating for two ASL interpreters or CART facilitators.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure ramps or lifts are available for access to learning space and to washrooms.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-workshop arrangements</th>
<th>Workshop space and movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consult ahead of time with participant about preferred seating arrangement. Will the participant need to sit close to presenters or screen? Near the exit? Beside a wall or close to an electrical outlet?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set up the space to provide clear pathways for safe navigation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Send instructions about any special entrances or accessibility issues in the location to the participant.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide participant with an outline of the workshop, describing activities that require movement and/or vision.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Arrange for interpreters ahead of time if required.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Send presentation slides with speaking notes to interpreters ahead of time where possible.</td>
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</table>
### IV Accommodation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop space and movement (continued)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consult one of the resources found at the end of the document or the participant to determine how best to guide someone with vision loss. Discuss with the individual whether their fellow participants ought to be advised so that they can assist with accessibility if appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure that the room is well lit to make it easier for a participant who has hearing loss to lip-read.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide the participant(s) with a buddy to help them in an emergency situation such as a fire alarm.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consult ahead of time with participant and interpreters about preferred seating arrangements.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure that the interpreters can see the facilitators and all participants clearly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Avoid walking <em>frequently</em> between the interpreter(s) and participants with hearing loss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set up the room so that participants can see each other and the facilitator.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use round tables for small group work when possible so that participants are in close proximity for their conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure that the participant is alerted in an emergency situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set up the space to provide clear pathways for safe navigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure any mobility aids can be accommodated at tables and for activities that require movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For movement related activities, provide a space which the participant can easily navigate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Workshop materials

- Ensure presentation slides are clear and easy to read.
- Use a minimum of font size 12 with a serif font for text on all handouts.
- Make handouts available in Braille or electronic formats where possible and necessary. Convert diagrams on handouts to 3-dimensional tactile diagrams.
- Have copies of all handouts available for the interpreters.
- Ensure that any films or videos have closed captioning. Alternatively, provide a transcript or overview to the participant ahead of time.
- Use visual aids such as overhead projectors, whiteboards, diagrams, charts, and other media whenever possible.
- Ensure flipcharts posted on the wall are accessible from a wheelchair.
- Ensure all materials that participants need to

## Workshop facilitation process

- Provide verbal explanation of visual material such as diagrams or charts. Read all text on presentation slides aloud and alert participants to slide changes.
- Read aloud text on flipcharts.
- Describe handouts.
- Ask all participants to preface their comments and questions with their name to enable a person with a vision loss to know who is speaking.
- Check periodically with participants to see if the accommodations are meeting their needs.
| Workshop facilitation process (continued) | - Participants with hearing loss rely on visual clues; provide as many visual cues as possible.  
- Ensure that interactive activities account for the presence of interpreters.  
- Speak directly to the participant with hearing loss, not their interpreters.  
- Try not to turn your back to participants.  
- Avoid speaking while you are writing things on flipcharts or on the board.  
- Take regular 'micro-pauses' when providing instructions about activities to allow the interpreters to communicate the message.  
- Speak slowly (not too slowly) and clearly but do not exaggerate or over-emphasize words (this distorts lip movements).  
- Use natural gestures or pointing to clarify your message.  
- Write things down to ensure clarity of communication.  
- Avoid giving instructions while students are visually focusing on a task.  
- Check that the participant's questions and comments can be heard by everyone—restate questions if necessary.  
- Check periodically with the participant to see if the adjustments in teaching style are meeting their needs.  
- Assign a buddy to the participant when necessary, for activities that require assistance in moving around the room and participating in |
### IV Accommodation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop facilitation process (continued)</th>
<th>Interaction between participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Avoid the use of hand gestures to provide instructions or explain something. If using gestures, verbalize the instruction or communication at the same time. When waiting for answers to a question, or during a discussion, allow some lag time to provide time for participant to answer or enter into the discussion.</td>
<td>• Ask participants who are forming small groups to form their groups where the person with vision or hearing loss or limited mobility is seated.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limit the group sizes for small group work to three.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure that participants speak one at a time, and loudly enough to be heard by everyone in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Specialized Support and Disability Services (SSDS), University of Alberta, [http://www.ssds.ualberta.ca/](http://www.ssds.ualberta.ca/)

Universal Instructional Design: [http://www.ryerson.ca/lt/resources/instructionaldesign/](http://www.ryerson.ca/lt/resources/instructionaldesign/)