

ACCOMMODATING FACULTY MEMBERS WITH DISABILITIES



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ROSEPH | Regroupement des organismes
spécialisés pour l'emploi des
personnes handicapées



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As a Dean or a Department Chair, you may need to respond to a request for accommodations from a faculty member. This article guides you through the accommodation process and provides additional prompts or resources specific to employees who are academic personnel.

1. NAVIGATING DISCLOSURES:


Disclosing a disability, mental health, or chronic health condition can be a challenging experience for the person disclosing. While some people may have no issues sharing their access needs, others are concerned about perceptions, how their disclosures will be interpreted, and whether the disclosure will negatively impact their professional prospects. It is important to commit to fostering an equitable, accessible, and inclusive workplace, and that starts with how you respond.

Here are some tips:

- Thank the person for sharing this information with you, and let them know you are going to support them through the accommodation process.
- Do not ask for a diagnosis. An individual with a disability has the right not to share their personal medical information with their supervisor. If supporting medical documentation is needed, it can be provided to the HR Advisor or the Disability Management team directly. Remember that they are the experts on their own lived experiences, and every case is different.
- Encourage the instructor to identify what job tasks are impacted by their health condition, and whether they have any preliminary ideas on what accommodations could be put into place to support them. In some cases, individuals will have brainstormed ahead of time, and already have concrete accommodation requests. Other times, you may need to do some creative brainstorming together. Either way – there are resources available for you!


NOTE: A DISCLOSURE DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN A FULL DISCLOSURE: THE EMPLOYEE MAY BE CHOOSING WHICH ELEMENTS OF THEIR SITUATION TO SHARE WITH YOU, AND MAY NOT WANT OR NEED TO SHARE EVERYTHING.

2. STARTING THE ACCOMMODATION PROCESS:

A grayscale photograph of a person with a hearing aid on their left ear, pointing their right index finger upwards. The image is partially framed by a red line on the left and a blue shape on the right.

Consult the guidelines on accommodations for employees with disabilities. This sets up the general framework for setting up an accommodation plan. The key here is to ensure that it is a dynamic and collaborative process.

3. CONSIDERING THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT:


A grayscale photograph of a woman with curly hair and a headband, sitting at a desk and resting her chin on her hand in a thoughtful pose. She is holding a pen over a notepad. The image is set against a large red circular background.

The barriers a person experiences are influenced by the environment and the context. For an academic staff, you will want to think about how the individual's needs appear in different settings, namely: teaching, research and service. While the underlying barriers will be the same, the accommodations may vary based on the type of activity. The section on Accommodation Ideas lists ideas to help you.



4. IMPLEMENTING THE ACCOMMODATIONS:

Follow up is important. Work together to ensure that the administration of the accommodation is carried out in practice, and that the plan is implemented. This may require some adjustments as you go along.



ACCOMMODATION IDEAS

Statistics Canada released a report in 2019 on [Workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities in Canada](#). According to data collected in 2017, the top required workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities, ages 25-64 were:

1. Modified hours or days, or reduced work hours
2. Modified or different duties
3. Modified or ergonomic workstation
4. Working from home

Other workplace accommodations included: adaptive technologies, parking services, modifications to the physical environment (handrails, ramps, widened doorways), adapted washrooms, communication aids, and specialized transportation.

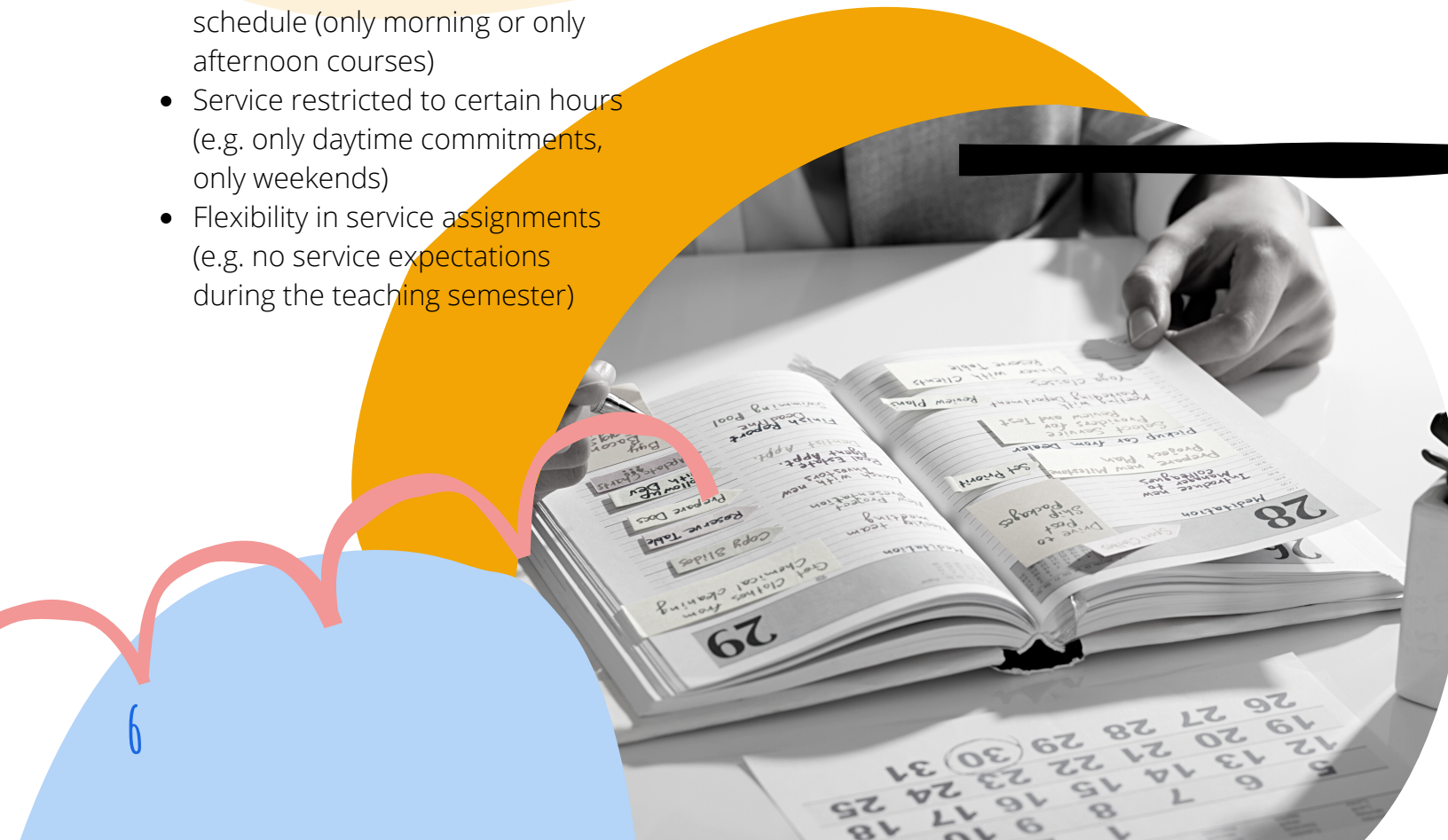


In the following sections, the top workplace accommodations are mapped onto the different areas of academic responsibility, and elaborated with a few ideas to prompt the brainstorming process as you work together to find the accommodations that meet the individual's disability-related needs, and are appropriate to the department's context. The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) hosts a robust Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) which is an excellent tool to explore various accommodation options.



MODIFIED HOURS OR DAYS, OR REDUCED WORK HOURS

- Courses clustered onto the same days of the week to introduce recovery days between teaching
- Maximum number of teaching hours on a single day
- Restricted timing of teaching schedule (only morning or only afternoon courses)
- Service restricted to certain hours (e.g. only daytime commitments, only weekends)
- Flexibility in service assignments (e.g. no service expectations during the teaching semester)



MODIFIED OR DIFFERENT DUTIES

- Reduced teaching load (e.g. changes to total number of courses expected to teach in a given semester)
- Modifications to the expectations of teaching new courses (e.g. only teaching one new course at a time)
- Shared teaching load with a co-instructor for classes of a certain size
- Increased Teaching Assistant (TA) support (e.g. grading, student platform management, etc.)
- Reduced supervisory expectations (e.g. smaller number of graduate student supervision)
- Modified publication expectations
- Tenure clock extension
- Modified expectations for physical attendance at international conferences (e.g. remote presentations, and local conferences being valued)
- Flexibility in type(s) of service activities





MODIFIED OR ERGONOMETRIC WORKSTATION

- Classroom infrastructure: stair-free access to the classroom teaching platform, ability to teach from a seated position (installation of stool or chair in the classroom), accessible audio-visual equipment (e.g. ability to turn on projector/use document camera from a seated position)
- Classroom location assignment (e.g. limit amount of travel between buildings)
- Ergonomic equipment for other teaching settings: (e.g. research lab, office, computer station) – could be adaptive tools, technologies or furniture
- Access to assistive technologies in a teaching classroom (e.g. clicker)
- Ergonomic equipment (e.g. sit-stand bench, height adjustable stool)
- Laboratory or research center in an accessible building: same-floor washroom access, stair-free access to the lab

- Access to assistive technologies in a research setting (e.g. magnifiers, altered lighting)
- Low physical effort service activities (e.g. do not require extensive travel)
- Service activities hosted in accessible locations

WORKING FROM HOME

- Remote/virtual office hours
- Remote student supervision
- Virtual attendance to departmental meetings, or other university-activities

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources can help guide you in these conversations:

- [Guidelines on Accommodating Employees with Disabilities](#)
- Roseph: www.roseph.ca
- Québec interuniversity Equity -Diversity -Inclusion Network : www.rigedi.com
- [EDI2 Institute](#)