

Supporting Students with Disabilities in Career Conversations

A Faculty and Staff Resource Guide

Advising & Career Services
careers.humber.ca



Introduction

In the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, Humber College created 3 strategic pillars to “develop career-ready citizens, provide accessible education, and build a healthy and inclusive community”. Career conversations that are healthy and inclusive can guide students’ ability to access education, subsequently turning them into career-ready citizens.

We hope this document will help you to improve your knowledge of disabilities as they intersect with career readiness for students with disabilities. Remember that a disability is simply another aspect to the student’s life, and that it has given the student a unique set of skills and strengths. When possible, identify and leverage these strengths and talents with the student.

Definitions and Terminology

What is a Disability?

As per [Humber’s Accessibility policy](#), a disability is defined as:

1. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device, and/or;
2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability, and/or;
3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language, and/or
4. a mental disorder, or
5. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; (“handicap”).



Five Main Categories of Disabilities

Humber's definition is based on the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) definition of disability. The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#) pushes us to think about disability as a social concept rather than a medical one. Accordingly, the UNCRPD defines persons with disabilities as *“those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”* (UNCRPD). This definition factors in an individual's ability to participate in society on an equitable basis, regardless of whether their disability is visible or invisible, chronic or temporary.

When it comes to students, here are 5 main categories of disabilities you are most likely to encounter:

1. physical
2. neurological
3. learning
4. developmental
5. mental health

For more information on each type of disability, please refer to [“What Works: Career-Building Strategies for People from Diverse Groups”](#) by ALIS Alberta.

Key Principles of Accessible Policies

Humber will use reasonable efforts to ensure accessibility policies are consistent with the following four key principles:

- **Dignity** - Service is provided in a respectful manner consistent with the needs of the individual.
- **Independence** - Services for people with disabilities shall support their independence while respecting their right to safety and personal privacy.
- **Equity/Equality of Outcome** - Service outcomes are the same for persons with disabilities as for persons without disabilities.
- **Integrate** - Services allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers.

Statistics

Employability

According to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disabilities:

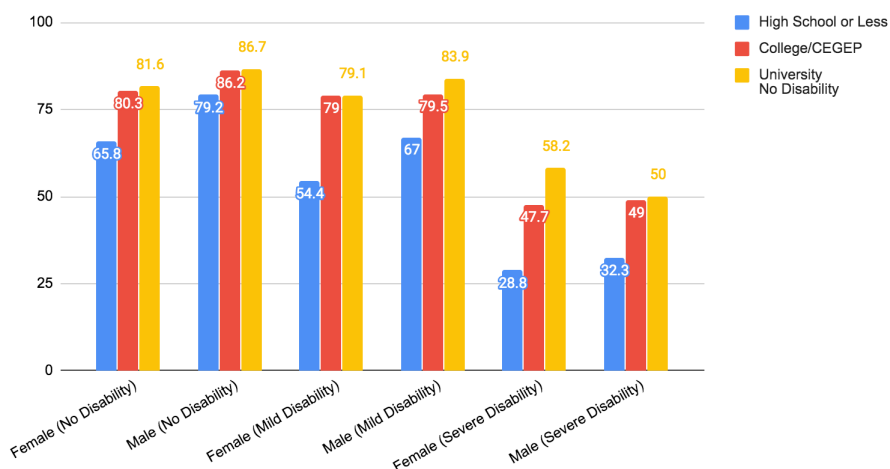
- “Regardless of level of severity, employment rates for persons with disabilities were higher for those with post-secondary credentials than for those with high school graduation or less”
- “Examining those with more severe disabilities in particular...having a trade/college certificate or CEGEP increased the proportion working to nearly a half for both men (49%) and women (48%)”

Employment of Canadian population aged 25 to 64 years, by educational attainment, disability status, severity and sex, 2016

| Education | Persons without disabilities | | Persons with disabilities | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|-------------|------|
| | Women | Men | Milder | | More severe | |
| | | | Women | Men | Women | Men |
| percent | | | | | | |
| High school or less | 65.8 | 79.2 | 54.4 | 67.0 | 28.8 | 32.3 |
| Trade/college/CEGEP | 80.3 | 86.2 | 79.0 | 79.5 | 47.7 | 49.0 |
| University | 81.6 | 86.7 | 79.1 | 83.9 | 58.2 | 50.0 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017.

Employment of Canadian Population ages 25-64, by Education, Severity of Disability, and Sex.



As the graph demonstrates, educational attainment has a notable effect in employment outcomes for persons with disabilities.

For more information on the definitions of mild and severe disabilities, see the [Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017: Concepts and Methods Guide](#). Though these statistics show a positive trend towards persons with disabilities achieving employment, there is significant room for improvement in this area. By better equipping and preparing educators and employers, we hope to have a positive impact on empowering persons with disabilities with the tools to be successful in the labour market.



Supporting Students in Disclosing their Disability to an Employer

How to Talk About Disclosure

Disclosing a disability to an employer can be scary for a student, especially because of the significant societal stigma surrounding disabilities. The best way to work towards de-stigmatization is by talking about disability confidently and respectfully. The process to disclose is a personal decision and based on the student's comfort level.

There are 2 parts to disclosing and requesting an accommodation from an employer:

1. Telling the employer about the medical condition
2. Describing the challenge(s) the medical condition presents in the workplace

For more information on disclosure of disability in the workplace, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) has a robust resource available which walks through the process of disclosure and how to respond: [Disclosure of Disability in the Workplace](#).

How To Have This Conversation With A Student

When navigating career decisions, a student must decide whether to disclose their disability to their employer. There are many factors that need to be considered when making that decision including visibility of the disability, and the types of accommodations required.

Remind the student that should they choose to disclose, they are protected by the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) and the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC).

If a student experiences discrimination as a result of their disclosure, they can contact the [Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario](#), and file a complaint. If the student is having difficulty with filing the complaint, they can reach out to the [Human Rights Legal Support Centre](#).

Top 5 Tips for Faculty/Staff When Discussing Disclosure and Employment

- 1** Let the student take the lead in how much information they are comfortable sharing. Be respectful of the complexities behind the student's choice to disclose.
- 2** Be open to discussing the potentially uncomfortable realities of the student's disability/ disabilities including health implications, accommodations, limitations, challenges, and their previous experiences with discrimination.
- 3** Know the laws that protect the student, the potential employer, and some support resources to guide both parties through a successful career partnership.
- 4** Practice disclosure with the student through role play, encouraging the student to reflect on their strengths and abilities as they pertain to their career goal, or a specific position they are interested in.
- 5** Check out our [Career Conversations for Learners with Disabilities](#) document for more information about how to guide students through this process!



Workplace Accommodations

If the student has pursued academic accommodations at Humber in the past through the [Student Wellness and Accessibility Centre \(SWAC\)](#), these accommodations may be transferable to the workplace or their work-integrated learning experience (e.g. placement/internship). Be sure to refer them to their Accessible Learning Consultant, or to contact SWAC to set up an appointment, in order to best prepare them to have this conversation.

Different disabilities require different types of accommodations and varying levels of accommodations which can be quite complex. If students require accommodation and you are unsure how to help, check out the [Job Accommodations Network's A-Z of Disabilities and Accommodations Resource](#).

In certain cases, accommodations for multiple employees may conflict and employers are required to do what is reasonable in their organization, as directed by their Human Resources department. Support the student through working with their employer to see what kind of solutions could work for the both of them.

There are various categories of workplace accommodations. The most common ones include:

- purchasing or modifying equipment or products
- modifying schedule and allowing leave time
- modifying methods (e.g., tests, communication, training)
- modifying policies
- providing readers and interpreters
- reassignment

Duty to Accommodate

In the context of employment, the Supreme Court of Canada has described the goals and purposes of accommodation: *"...the goal of accommodation is to ensure that an employee who is able to work can do so. In practice, this means that accommodation(s) must be provided in a way that most respects the dignity of the person, if doing so does not cause undue hardship."* ([Ontario Human Rights Commission](#))

Human dignity encompasses individual self-respect, self-worth and inherent worth as a human being. It is concerned with physical and psychological integrity and empowerment. It is harmed when people are marginalized, stigmatized, ignored or devalued. Privacy, confidentiality, comfort, individuality and self-esteem are all important factors.



How to Inform Your Practice

Universal Design & Accessibility

When working with students with disabilities we must be deliberately inclusive of their challenges. One way we can work towards reducing the disproportionate mental and emotional labour they experience is through Universally Designed programming. A teaching and advising practice that is universally designed means that it is usable by all to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. This includes assistive devices, when needed.

Consider many public transportation buses and the stigma produced when an individual with mobility issues approaches the bus. The entire bus must lower to provide them with a platform. This experience places undue attention on the person who requires this service, thereby perpetuating stigma.

In contrast, many public trains do not need to be adjusted in any way in order to accommodate those with mobility issues, as all stations come with accessible platforms.

3 Considerations For Universal Design In Your Practice

1. Is your office or classroom space accessible for every student? Would you have to make any adjustments for those with mobility or visual impairments?
2. How accessible are the tools, resources, and materials you're providing to students? Do these resources require adaptations to access them?
3. What are the sound and privacy levels in your advising space? Are there distracting sounds? Can you overhear other conversations? Can others hear your conversations?

Intersectionality

Our Unique Identities

According to the [Merriam Webster dictionary](#), intersectionality is defined as: *“the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups”*.

We all hold various identities (visible and invisible) and roles which play a part in how we experience the world. Our intersectionality is a strength and it is what brings a diversity of values and perspectives to society. Our various identities allow us to view the world differently. However, for those with multiple marginalized identities (e.g., based on their race, sexuality, gender identity, disability, etc.), they will experience multiple forms of discrimination in their lives.

As a best practice for faculty and staff, always remember to focus on building positive relationships with students by getting to know them as individuals. Understand that their experience may be something you can not relate to, and that’s okay. However, by practising empathy, active listening, and getting to know them as individuals, you can help them feel heard, validated, and supported.



Next Steps & Support Resources

This guide was created to provide faculty and staff with best practices, helpful resources, and information about on and off campus services when supporting students with disabilities through their career journey.

We welcome any feedback you may have or new resources you would like to share.

Email us at careers@humber.ca.

Employer Support

- Career Edge: <https://www.careeredge.ca/for-job-seekers/>
- DiscoverAbility: <https://discoverability.network/job-seeker/resources/>
- JVS: <https://www.jvstoronto.org/find-a-job/employment-source/>
- ODSP employment: https://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/employment_support/index.aspx
- Specialisterne: <http://ca.specialisterne.com/>
- West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre: <https://www.wsncc.org/employment>

Disability-Related Student Groups on Campus

- Autism Spectrum Disorder Social Group: <https://humber.ca/student-life/swac/accessible-learning/information-current-students/asd-social-group>
- Exercise is Medicine (Managing Chronic Illness): <http://ignitestudentlife.com/club/exercise-is-medicine-on-campus>
- Without Limits (General Disability Club): <https://withoutlimitsclub.wordpress.com/>

Humber Resources

- Humber's Accessible Learning Services: <https://humber.ca/student-life/swac/accessible-learning>
- Humber's Health and Counselling services: <https://humber.ca/student-life/swac/health-counselling>
- Humber Advising & Career Services: <https://careers.humber.ca>
- IGNITE: <http://ignitestudentlife.com/>



Additional Online Resources

- ALIS Alberta- What to Say About your Disability, When: <https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/additional-resources-for-specific-audiences/for-persons-with-disabilities/what-to-say-about-your-disability-and-when-to-say-it/>
- Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC) List of Journal articles: <https://ceric.ca/wpdm-package/persons-with-disabilities-and-career-development/>
- Canada's Top 100 Diversity Employers: <https://www.canadastop100.com/diversity/>
- Searchable Online Accommodations Resource: <https://askjan.org/soar.cfm>
- Canadian Association for Career Educators and Employers- Guidelines for Recruiting Graduates with Self-Declared Disabilities: https://www.cacee.com/er_disabilities.html
- National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS): <https://www.neads.ca/en/norc/eag/employment.php>
- Supporting Employee Success: https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/Supporting_Employee_Success_Booklet_Sep2016.pdf
- University of Washington- Career Development and Students with Disabilities: <https://www.washington.edu/doi/career-development-and-students-disabilities-pdfs>

ADVISING & CAREER SERVICES

NORTH CAMPUS:

Academic & Career Success Centre, Learning Resource Commons, First Floor
416.675.6622 ext. 5030

LAKESHORE CAMPUS:

Academic & Career Success Centre, Student Welcome and Resource Centre, First Floor, WEL 105,
416.675.6622 ext. 5028



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