

Students with Disabilities: Post-Secondary Education Planning Information

2026-27

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Information for Students with Disabilities and their Families

Successful transition for students with disabilities entering post-secondary education requires advanced planning—early in your high school years. There are resources to guide the development of a plan, such as My Blueprint, which is an online planning tool available in high school. My Blueprint can also be used to securely share disability-related information from high school with the disability advisor at your post-secondary institution. Sharing information helps to expedite and arrange for services and supports faster when entering post-secondary education.

Making a plan is an important first step to determine what accommodations are needed, where to find them, how to pay for your education and what funding programs are available, as well as other helpful information on how to navigate the educational system and post-secondary institution.

The following provides some helpful information to include in your plan:

a. Required Documentation - Verification of Disability

An important initial step for students with disabilities attending post-secondary education is to obtain proof or verification of their disability status. This documentation is the primary source in the verification process that is used to confirm either a permanent OR persistent or prolonged disability status, as well as eligibility for accommodations (services and supports) and student aid programs to help pay for your education and accommodations. Examples of student aid programs include [Saskatchewan Student Aid](#) (student loans and grants) and [Canada-Saskatchewan Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Disabilities](#). The documentation includes information on the nature of the disability, functional limitations and the accommodations needed to participate in post-secondary education.

To be eligible for [Saskatchewan Student Aid](#) funding, a student's disability must be considered either permanent OR persistent or prolonged as outlined in the [Canada Student Financial Assistance Regulations](#) as:

Permanent disability defined as:

any impairment, including physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment – or a functional limitation – that restricts the ability of a person to perform the daily activities necessary to pursue studies at a post-secondary school level or to participate in the labour force and that is expected to remain with the person for the person's expected life; OR

Persistent or prolonged disability, as defined as:

any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment – or a functional limitation – that restricts the ability of a person to perform the daily activities necessary to pursue studies at a post-secondary school level or to participate in the labour force and has lasted, or is expected to last, for a period of at least 12 months, but is not expected to remain with the person for the person's expected life.

Students are required to provide proof of their disability by having their qualified medical practitioner (e.g., physician, nurse practitioner, audiologist, optometrist, ophthalmologist, registered psychologist or psychiatrist) fill out a [Verification of Disability](#) form. As an alternative to the verification form, the practitioner can provide a medical certificate or letter describing the student's functional limitations that restrict their ability to participate in post-secondary education and whether the disability is expected to be either permanent OR persistent or prolonged. Verification is also acceptable from organizations such as the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), Saskatchewan Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan. Students can share documents through My Blueprint with the disability advisor at their post-secondary institution to help expedite and arrange for the services and supports faster, and before classes begin.

Students with a verified disability will be reimbursed for the cost of their disability assessment, and completed form or documentation by a medical practitioner, provided that the expense was incurred and submitted during the current academic year.

For students with learning disabilities, proof or verification of disability is based on a psycho-educational assessment completed by a registered psychologist within the last seven years. If the seven years have lapsed, contact the institution's disability advisor and Student Service Centre at the Ministry of Advanced Education to determine how updated assessment information can be processed. The assessment may be conducted by a qualified professional in high school or privately in the community for a fee. The fee will be reimbursed to the student, once the learning disability (or other permanent or persistent or prolonged disability) is confirmed for eligibility under the student loans and grants program.

****Verification of your disability by a medical professional only needs to be provided once. However, students are required to self-declare on the student aid application form every year to confirm the status of their disability—if the disability status has changed, then verification of your disability will need to be obtained again.**

If students do not already have an official psycho-educational assessment from high school, some post-secondary institutions accept alternate documentation (e.g., high school Individual Performance Plan) that identifies learning challenges and the needed services and supports. This alternate document may allow the disability advisor to temporarily set up the accommodations, while waiting for the official psycho-educational assessment. It is important to work with the disability advisor at the post-secondary institution several months in advance to understand and determine how best to arrange for the assessment. The student can share the psycho-educational assessment and/or alternate documentation through My Blueprint with the disability advisor at their post-secondary institution to help expedite and arrange for the services and supports faster.

b. Assistive Equipment/Technology, Learning Supports and Other Accommodations

- i. Assistive equipment/ technology needs to be arranged well in advance. Work with your disability advisor and assistive technology services at the post-secondary institution, or your disability-related organization (e.g., Canadian National Institute for the Blind) to obtain the equipment before classes begin to allow enough lead time to set up and learn how to use the equipment. Funding is available through the [Canada-Saskatchewan Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Disabilities](#) to purchase equipment. Talk to your disability advisor or disability organization about how to apply for this grant.
- ii. In addition to assistive equipment/ technology, there are several available learning support services such as tutors, academic strategists, note-takers and exam readers and exam proctors/ supervisors. Talk to your disability advisor at the post-secondary institution who can provide guidance on where to find and arrange for these services, as well as how to apply for funding through the [Canada-Saskatchewan Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Disabilities](#).

- iii. Living accommodations – students who apply for on campus residence and require accommodations (e.g., mobility, medical, mental health and other conditions) will need to contact the accessibility office at the post-secondary institution well in advance to make these arrangements with the campus residence services office.

To learn more about the Canada-Saskatchewan Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Disabilities and other Saskatchewan student financial assistance programs visit saskatchewan.ca.

For more detailed information about the grant application process, refer to the [Guidelines for Educational Institutions](#).

c. Saskatchewan Student Aid

Student aid programs are available for students with disabilities to help pay for educational costs, including services and supports needed to participate in classes.

i. [Canada Student Grant for Students with Disabilities](#)

If you are a student with either a permanent OR persistent or prolonged disability, you may be eligible to receive this grant and will be automatically considered for this grant in your student aid application. This grant provides \$2,800 per school year to assist with educational or living costs.

ii. [Canada-Saskatchewan Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Disabilities](#)

Students with a disability may also be eligible for this grant that provides up to \$22,000 per program year to purchase education-related services and equipment such as: tutors, note-takers, interpreters, computer software and specialized transportation.

- iii. Studying at a reduced course load – if you are a student with a disability, you may take a reduced course load, depending on the program (e.g., university) and be eligible for student aid for a longer academic period. Students are considered full-time if their course load is at least 40 per cent or higher. A part-time course load is at least 20 per cent to 39 per cent. Eligible students can extend their student financial assistance for up to 520 weeks (compared to 340 weeks).

- iv. Request for grants-only funding – when you apply for student aid, you are assessed for a combination of non-repayable grants and repayable loans. You can choose to decline the loans and receive only grants.

d. Funding your Post-Secondary Education - Planning Information

Post-secondary education is one of the most valuable investments and achievements in life. Learn more about [Saskatchewan Student Aid](#) programs, as well as the importance of understanding your student loan repayment obligations and other financial tips and tools, by visiting:

- [National Student Loan Service Centre](#)
- [Financial Consumer Agency of Canada \(FCAC\)](#)
- [Saskatchewan Student Aid](#)

e. Helpful Information to Navigate the Education System and Post-Secondary Institutions

i. [Understanding the changes from high school to post-secondary education](#)

The post-secondary education setting can be overwhelming for many students, especially students who require accommodations. Post-secondary institutions are typically larger, with many buildings and

campuses. First year classrooms can seat over 100 students. Professors or instructors often have limited time to spend with students and may have teaching assistants or lab instructors to assist students in smaller groups.

In post-secondary education, students are expected to be more independent and assertive in terms of asking for what they need and navigate through the institution. This includes living spaces, transportation and social settings, as well as processes, such as program and class registration and obtaining books and materials.

Making a plan early in the high school years can help smooth the transition. Work with a team of high school disability advisors or guidance counsellors, the post-secondary institution, as well as relevant disability organizations (e.g., the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Learning Disabilities Association or Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Neil Squire Society etc.).

Develop a list of questions to review with the disability advisor, as well as a list of questions for the guidance counsellors to assist with choosing your program and classes. Also, make a list of questions for potential professors/ or instructors—the responses will help in determining if the class and professor will meet your needs and accommodations.

II. Academic Accommodations

A number of academic related services and supports are available to students with disabilities and are described on the post-secondary institution's accessibility office website.

Class materials - if in alternate format, will need to be ordered promptly to allow time to obtain publisher permissions and possibly material conversion which is typically done through the accessibility or assistive technology services offices.

Exams - will need to be organized through the assistance of the professor or instructor, and accessibility services office. Familiarize yourself with exam arrangement deadlines, policies, procedures, and expectations. An exam supervisor or proctor may be assigned to you. Also, familiarize yourself with the exam equipment ahead of time, as it may be different than your own assistive technology.

Choosing classes – professors or instructors vary in terms of teaching style and expectations; therefore, the level of attention and accommodations may be different than what was experienced in high school. Your disability advisor may arrange specific room accommodations (e.g., workspace/desk). The following is a sample of the questions and topic areas to consider when selecting programs and classes:

1. Introduce yourself and discuss the accommodations required to participate in class.

Sharing information about yourself and your learning methods with professors or instructors and fellow students can be educational and help you to fully participate in class.

2. Will advance materials and slides be available so you can prepare for each class?

Some students require materials in advance. For example, if a student is unable to see the overhead screen in class, they will need to review slides before class. Will the professor provide slides and materials in advance (e.g., 1 – 2 days prior to class)?

3. What is the class outline, including types of home and lab assignments and exams?

You can better prepare by knowing the amount and type of home and lab assignments and exams in advance, not only for study purposes but also in terms of arranging for tutors and support services. Also, depending on the type of class, you may require specific skills, tools and additional material conversion or technology (e.g., scientific calculators, electronic magnification devices to view large images associated with science courses).

4. Will professors or instructors be available for questions from exam proctors (and the student) during the exam?

Exams are typically conducted in a different room than the class and supervised by another staff member. It is important for you to meet the exam supervisor and familiarize yourself with the deadlines to arrange exams, the different technology (e.g., laptop) used, as well as the exam protocol and expectations.

5. What are the contingency plans should alternate format materials be delayed or unavailable?

Contingency plans, including assignment extensions, should be discussed with professors/ or instructors and disability advisors at the start of the class, and agree on an alternate plan should the need arise.

III. Networking, Learning Strategies and Opportunities

A variety of student services and resources are available at each institution, such as orientation and mentor programs, as well as various student groups to help you, especially in the first year of your program. Institution websites are a valuable source of information about student services and groups, as well as orientation, learning and networking opportunities. Students are encouraged to participate and get involved in as many available services and student groups. Part of the experience of attending post-secondary education is to enjoy student activities outside of class and build your network.

IV. News, Events and Student Success Stories

Visit the institution's online news pages regularly to keep up to date on the latest information that may assist you in your planning. Learn from others and their success stories and remember that you may be part of a group of students who do things differently, but you do not have to do them alone.

V. Frequently Asked Questions

As part of your plan, keep an ongoing list of questions to pose to your advisor team, as well as the professors/ or instructors. Your list will grow over time, as well as your experience and confidence in navigating the post-secondary environment. Visit your accessibility office website for a list of frequently asked questions.

f. Post-Secondary Institutions – Accessibility Office Contact Information

Information about the accessibility offices at the University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina and Saskatchewan Polytechnic is available at the links below. For other institutions, inquire with the admissions or registration office to speak with their designated advisor or guidance counsellor for students with disabilities.

[University of Saskatchewan, Access and Equity Services](#)

[University of Regina, Accommodations Test Centre and Centre for Student Accessibility](#)

[Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Accessibility Services](#)

Where Can I Get More Information?

For more information about Saskatchewan's Student Aid programs, visit the Student Service Centre, Ministry of Advanced Education at:

Website: saskatchewan.ca/student-aid

Toll free: 1-800-597-8278

Email: studentservices@gov.sk.ca

Online Submission: [Advanced Education Student Portal](#)
[Post-Secondary Document Uploader](#)

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