

## **Learner accommodation policy**

### **Policy statement**

Bow Valley College strives to provide a respectful, inclusive, barrier-free learning environment and ensures fair and equitable access to programs and services to learners, while maintaining established academic and college standards and *Bona Fide* Educational Requirements.

Bow Valley College is committed to advancing the principles of Universal Design (UD) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to create an equitable learning environment. This includes applying the principles of UD and UDL to all products, processes, procedures, systems, structures, and environments to make them as usable as possible by as many individuals as possible.

### **Purpose**

Bow Valley College is committed to providing a learning environment free of discrimination and recognizes its duty to accommodate. The purpose of this policy is to promote access, equity, and inclusion through the application of UD and UDL principles, the communication of shared responsibilities, and the provision of reasonable accommodations to learners who experience barriers to their education based on protected grounds.

### **Scope**

This Policy applies to Bow Valley College learners regardless of location or learning modality, including college-sanctioned events at any location. This includes but is not limited to promoting inclusive access to:

- course work, including exams, course loads, work integrated learning experiences, and clinical course settings
- campus services
- learner services
- physical facilities

All members of the college community are expected to understand, abide by, uphold, and endorse this Policy.

The Policy operates alongside other applicable college policies and procedures and should be read and applied in a manner consistent with other college policies and procedures. Where there is unavoidable conflict or inconsistency between the provisions of this policy or the associated procedure and other college policies and procedures, this Policy and the associated procedure governs, to the extent necessary, to resolve the conflict of inconsistency.

This policy is not intended to interfere with any prevailing law.

### **Principal objectives**

1. Bow Valley College recognizes the importance and the evolving role of accommodations, based on all protected grounds, to create the possibility of equitable participation for all learners.
2. Meaningful inclusion of learners is a shared responsibility and a collaborative process between learners and Bow Valley College. All parties are responsible for engaging in thoughtful, open, and respectful dialogue while applying principles of UD and UDL and determining reasonable accommodations.

3. Employees are responsible for increasing knowledge about appropriate inclusive practices for learners and communicate to learners their willingness to participate in providing inclusive practices.
4. Learners are responsible for identifying when they require accommodations based on protected grounds through the processes established and maintained by the college.
1. The college has the responsibility to ensure that this Learner Accommodation Policy and its associated Procedure are made available and accessible to all members of the college community and are reviewed and maintained in accordance with the college's policy review timelines as well as changes in legislation.
5. Accommodations may be provided:
  - 5.1. on an individual or group basis, or
  - 5.2. through the use of UD/UDL principles.
6. Enacting an accommodation does not require lowering academic or non-academic standards or altering *bona fide* educational requirements and does not relieve the learner of the responsibility to develop the essential skills and competencies expected of all learners.
7. Learner privacy is protected throughout the accommodation process in accordance with the college's applicable privacy policy and privacy legislation.
8. While reasonable efforts will be made to grant a timely response to requests for accommodation under protected grounds, accommodation must be balanced with the rights of others. The college will not normally consider a form of accommodation that would cause undue hardship, seriously disadvantage others, compromise safety, or interfere with the college's ability to fulfill its obligations to other learners or members of the college community.
9. The college maintains the right to review or rescind accommodations where there may be evidence that the accommodation is not appropriate or where there is an undue hardship to the college or a member of the college community.
10. Learners may appeal accommodation decisions through the Learner Appeals Policy and associated Learner Academic Appeals Procedure.

## **Compliance**

Members of the college community must know, understand, and comply with college policies, procedures, and associated materials that relate to their position, employment, enrolment, or other relationship with the college. Non-compliance may create risk for the college and will be addressed accordingly through applicable college policies, procedures, and contracts.

## **Definitions**

### **Accommodation**

Is the process of making alterations to the educational environment to ensure equitable access, or to reduce or eliminate a discriminatory effect on learners based on a protected ground. This can include changes to academic services, courses, practices, policies, physical environment, progression, and graduation requirements. They can be provided to individuals and groups or provided through UD/UDL practices, subject to undue hardship.

### **Barrier**

Any physical, architectural, technological, informational, attitudinal policy or practice that hinders the full and equitable participation of persons because of protected ground.

**Bona Fide Educational Requirements**

Requirements are essential to maintain academic integrity and are necessary for learners to acquire and demonstrate essential skills and knowledge. These may include admission, progression, and graduation requirements of a course, course of study, or program, including the requirements for learners to acquire and demonstrate essential skills and knowledge related to course objectives and learning outcomes and, if applicable, any professional licensing requirements.

**College community**

All learners, employees, Elders, independent contractors, suppliers, volunteers, visitors and members of the Board of Governors of the college while they are either on or using college property, participating in college programs and activities or involved in the business or affairs of the college, on or off college premises

**Learner**

A person who is currently registered as a learner at the college whether or not for credit. For the purposes of this document, “learner” shall be used synonymously for applicants, and learners, unless otherwise noted.

**Legally protected grounds**

Alberta human rights legislation prohibits discrimination in the provision of goods, services, accommodation or facilities customarily available to the public on the basis of specifically articulated protected grounds, including race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, sources of income, family status or sexual orientation.. Refer to *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 200,c A-25.5 as amended for the list of legally protected grounds.

**Undue hardship**

Means any grounds at common law for when the duty to accommodate can no longer be met. Examples of such grounds include, but are not limited to, compromising safety standards, failing to meet established necessary requirements and essential elements of a course or program, prohibitive costs, disruption, or interference with the proper or necessary functioning of the college, *bona fide* educational requirements, or substantial interference with the rights of other individuals or groups.

**Universal Design:**

Involves designing products, spaces, activities and services so that they can be accessed by as many diverse people as possible, thereby minimizing the need for individual accommodation. Universal design focuses on the built environment. Universal design does not imply one solution for everyone; rather, it reflects an awareness of the unique nature of each individual as well as the need to accommodate differences.

**Universal Design for Learning:**

Is a curriculum design, development, and delivery framework that works to accommodate the needs and abilities of all learners to create equitable, inclusive and accessible learning environments. The implementation of UDL leads to the development of a flexible learning environment in which information is presented in multiple ways, students engage in learning in a variety of ways, and students are provided options when demonstrating their learning.

## Data sheet

### Accountable Officer

Executive Team member responsible for Student Services

### Responsible Officer

Director, Student Services

### Approval

Board of Governors of Bow Valley College

### Contact Area

Student Services

### Relevant Dates

Approved	Board of Governors: BOG1601127-09
Effective	May 1, 2016
Next Review	January 2029
Modification History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January 27, 2016 - Policy name change from “Academic Accommodations and Supports for Learners with Disabilities” to “Learner Accommodation”</li> <li>November 2019 – titling changes</li> <li>Rebranded 2021</li> <li>Policy Committee reviewed and updated numbering format January 2022</li> <li>Content changes October 2024 – BOG241031-02</li> </ul>
Verified by	Office of the President, November 2024

### Associated policies

Policies, listed in alphabetical order, that are associated to this policy and that a reader of this policy should be aware of:

Academic Continuance and Graduation Policy #500-1-5

Admissions Policy #500-1-2

Bow Valley College Learner Records Retention Guidelines #500-1-16

Grading Policy #500-1-6

Information Management Policy #300-2-9

Learner Appeals Policy #500-1-12

Privacy and Access Policy #300-2-10

Privacy, Information Security, and Identity Management Policy #300-2-11

### Directly related procedures

Learner Accommodation Procedures #500-1-4

### Related legislation

*Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, cA-25.5, as amended

*Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, RSA 2000, cF-25, as amended

*Health Information Act*, RSA 2000, C H-5, as amended