Academic Accommodations
Survey Report
UASU Perks surveys, September 14-16 (n1=1337, n2=1311)

Prepared by: Department of Research and Advocacy
Sample and Platform
UASU Perks (perks.uasu.ca) is a gamification platform. UAAlberta students earn points for activities like checking in at events, participating in a donor-backed vaccination promotion contest, or taking small surveys. Students can redeem points for real-world goods (e.g. branded socks or mugs).

These two concurrent surveys (September 14-16, 2021) received 1311 and 1337 responses. The sample overlapped almost entirely: the overlap comprised 99% of the first survey and 97% of the second. Most respondents were undergraduates; around 5% identified as graduate students or recent graduates.

Across both surveys, a total of 171 respondents stated that they had tried to get accommodations through Accessibility Services.

77 respondents identified as disabled. 73% of disabled students had tried to get accommodations through Accessibility Services.

Knowledge and Access
“Do you feel like you know whether you might be eligible for accommodations?” (n=1337)

> Convenience sample collected through UASU Perks, a gamified student engagement platform.

> Primarily undergraduate students, distributed across faculties and years of study.

> 77 respondents identified as disabled.

> 171 respondents (including ⅓ of disabled respondents) had tried to get accommodations.

> Over half of non-disabled students don't know/are unsure whether they would be eligible for accommodations.

> 1 in 5 disabled students don't know/are unsure whether they would be eligible for accommodations.

> Faculties of concern:

>> Nursing (42% don't know at all)
“Have your professors, TAs, or other faculty members discussed available accommodations and/or accommodation services with you or your classmates during lecture, via an email, announcement or other method of communication?” (n=1337)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a few of them</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, many of them</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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> Faculties of concern:
> - Business (48% no)
> - CSJ (44% no)

“Do you feel like you know how to access accommodations at UAlberta?” (n=1337)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe not</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not relevant to me</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

> Faculties of concern:
> - Arts (36% definitely not)
> - Engineering (34% def. not)
> - Nursing (42% def. not)

Seeking Accommodations
“If you've tried to get accommodations through Accessibility Services, how easy or difficult was it?” (n=171)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Disabled</th>
<th>Not disabled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat difficult</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat easy</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

> Around 45% of those who have sought accommodations have found it difficult.
“If you’ve tried to get accommodations through Accessibility Services, what (if anything) made it difficult?”

- After receiving them, it was difficult learning how to set them up.
- Availability through COVID, long wait times to access services.
- Barriers to figure out how to initiate the process, and difficulty connecting.
- Booking an appointment early but that’s to be expected.
- Booking tests system is very confusing.
- Doctor’s note.
- Due to the pandemic, there was uncertainty on how my possible accommodations would work so I was left feeling unsure if I would be able to receive them.
- Everything.
- Find the website difficult to navigate.
- Finding a time available to have a registration meeting.
- Finding where to access it and getting an appointment.
- Getting a diagnosis without a family doctor.
- Getting an appointment to see the AR.
- Had to seek out, not given clear instructions.
- Hard to find the right links and websites to go to. Lot of asking people and being sent to different places but once you find the right people or links you are fine and it is easy.
- Having to get a diagnosis that qualifies, when you are in the pending process and the health system is extremely slow with so many long wait times for specialists.
- Having to get a doctor to provide proof, during COVID, I’m scared to go to clinics.
- Having to get notes from doctors and they basically just said to read things which is very difficult for me because I have ADHD.

> Frequently cited obstacles:

>> Confusing booking system

>> Long wait/response times, overloaded staff

>> Not knowing what accommodations are available

>> Trouble and cost of getting a diagnosis/doctor’s note

>> Inconsistent treatment (many report positive experiences, many report negative ones)

>> Extensive paperwork

>> Needing to arrange accommodations for each individual exam

>> Long/complex emails and web pages are an obstacle, e.g. with reading/learning disabilities
Having to have written proof from a doctor as well as not knowing what accommodations were available to ask for.

I don't have an official diagnosis for anxiety (I get really bad test anxiety. Like no sleep, borderline puking, rapid heart rate, etc.) But the accessibility services said they couldn't do anything for me unless I had an official diagnosis of permanent anxiety.

I feel they might need strong evidence as to why we want to have accommodations but someone with test anxiety or just any kind of anxiety/stress would require a document/proof but it would be nice if a document/proof was not necessary as not everyone has that document.

I got them very easily.

I haven't had any issues with Accessibility Services, but some professors can be real assholes or even refuse your accommodations.

I just like talking in person.

I struggle to read sometimes and long emails stress me and my brain out, so it was hard to read the email I got after my consultation. Not any fault of the Accommodations people though, I'm sure they didn't know.

I tried to last year and I needed to book an assessment, however I couldn't get an appointment for over a year which made it almost useless for when I needed it for.

I'm still in the process of trying to get accommodations and am worried I won't get them in time for my first exam.

It was a long process to go through. I understand getting the letter filled out but then having to schedule each exam and quiz and talk to both accommodations and the professors every semester is kind of just a pain.

It's so difficult - I don't know where to start!!!

It's just hard getting set up, once you're in the system it's really easy.
• Just getting all my papers sorted for the registration is difficult.
• Just getting documentation.
• Just the process is hard! Vague questions, etc, I usually can't see it through.
• Just the timing part and deadlines of when you can book accommodations for exams but it is an understandable time period for the processing part for the profs.
• Knowing how to access it in the first place is confusing and frustrating, there's limited promotion and information about what is offered and how to get help, making appointments is unclear and wait times are long. Deadlines are confusing and unclear, knowing what changes from year to year is also unexplained. The whole process is convoluted and obtuse.
• Knowing what kind of accommodations are available. Also, accessing accommodations for the first through remote delivery has been more confusing and easier to manage than I'd imagined it would be pre-COVID.
• Lack of communication with professors and each other. Lack of staff. Long response wait time entailing difficulties. No in person test accommodations which are kind of necessary for me because I become a danger to myself. Professors are forcing some students to therefore go fully online rather than just write tests online which is not fair and we are not receiving support.
• Lack of straightforwardness of the process; unfriendliness/unhelpfulness of the staff.
• Little bit confusing. Couldn't upload letter of accommodation request.
• Long process.
• Long process to make sure it has been shared with teachers and signing up for exams.
• Long wait process, couldn't do it in person.
• Making contact. I emailed in and didn't hear back in time.
• Making them believe you. I have severe anxiety/depression and I thought having some accommodations would improve my grades drastically. I had notes from my doctors, I was ready to show proof of Rxs but they denied me before I even got to that point lol.
• Must be professionally diagnosed to get accommodations.
• Must get a form filled by physician (most physicians charge $50) but I understand why we need the form so it's fine by me.
• My high school didn’t send the records over so now I have no accommodations and a bad GPA :(.
• N/A I love their services!
• Navigating government funding was difficult, but Accessibility Services held my hand the entire way.
• No clear communication, no follow up, no understanding, no help.
• Nope, the lady on the phone was super nice and went through the steps of getting accommodations with me clearly.
• Not enough information or knowledge about the program itself and what is required.
• Not knowing that this was available for the times when you truly needed it resulted in a huge decrease in grades prior to accommodations.
• Nothing made it difficult.
• One thing that makes it difficult for me is that I have to activate my accommodations every time I need to book a quiz or an exam. At my old post secondary institution I just had to activate my accommodations and it would automatically apply to everything.
• Paperwork. What documents and assessments they'd actually accept. Booking in to see someone.
• Payment.
• Professors not honoring my accommodations, lack of communication between accessibility services, professors, and other faculty. Lack of information about what is available and how to access it.
● Some profs don't look at which students have accommodations and you have to go through accessibility services to get them to comply. Note takers were taken away this year and access to the new platform was not given until two weeks into the school year. Learning disability assessments cost $2000.

● Sometimes the exam booking program glitches and messes up your booking. If you don't notice in time, it's considered your fault and you're SOL.

● Specifications in doctor notes.

● The accommodations advisors are so helpful.

● The advisors being rude and unaccommodating and making me feel like I was lying.

● The communication is quite convoluted and unclear. As a person with a learning disability, it was kind of ironic that the contact system was so complicated because in order to get accommodations for my disability, I have to go through inaccessible hell.

● The lack of instructions and deadlines.

● The online system sucks.

● The people were very kind and compassionate. The only thing that made it difficult was not knowing all the accommodations available.

● The person at the counter was very dismissive and gave very little information.

● The process.

● The response time.

● The sites are a rabbit hole to find the right link.

● The time it took and not knowing who to contact for what.

● The web page is very busy and could be simplified with steps.

● There are a lot of hoops to jump through.

● There are checks and balances in place, and for good reason of course. I felt very heard and taken care of in this process - and it's a small department tending to many many students. I feel like the folks are being stretched thin and are showing up everyday.
because they care. I wish it was able to be a bigger department for the sake of everyone involved. They seem to wish they could spend more time, and I know I could really use it.

- There were some documents that my parents didn't have regarding medical history. So I stopped applying halfway through the process. The application package is huge and intimidating.
- They are in the process of moving so I was unable to reach them.
- They didn't try to help me get accommodated; just kept referring me elsewhere.
- They would not give the accommodations given to me through my academic career citing that university is different. Even though they are standard accommodations. An example would be a scribe.
- Time it takes to get a response via email. I was emailed and replied less than an hour later. Now I likely need to wait until next week to continue the conversation. Just accessing accommodations is stressful and mentally taxing.
- Trying to get a grasp on how I could be helped was the only thing that was an issue for me, they were very kind and understanding and genuinely wanted to help.
- Wasn't difficult
- You can't go in and adjust exam dates if an exam date changes. You have to email or call the office which can be annoying.

Additional comments from respondents who had not tried to get accommodations

- So I didn't personally, but I had a friend who tried and it was a time consuming and expensive process for her. Meanwhile Concordia's is free and takes a few minutes.
- I looked into it but it was such a legal rigmarole that I didn't bother trying.
• Ok so I need accommodations but I have been lucky and have just been able to get them through profs/my own efforts cause the school kind of sucks for it.
• I want to know if I am qualified for accommodations.
• I haven't, but I’ve had friends who had a lot of issues getting their rightful accommodations.
• Hoping that maybe I can get accommodations in the future if I can ever figure out how (hearing is bad).