#### Trent University LogoOPSEU JOB DESCRIPTION

**Job Title:** Accessibility Advisor/Learning Strategist

**Job Number:** A-289 | VIP: 1402

**Band:** OPSEU-10

**Department:** Student Accessibility Services / Student Affairs Durham

**Supervisor Title:** Director, Student Wellness Centre / Manager, Student Wellness (Durham)

**Last Reviewed:**  April 24, 2024

#### **Job Purpose:**

The Accessibility Advisor/Learning Strategist is responsible for the implementation, coordination, and delivery of academic accommodations and supports, as mandated by the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Ontario Human Rights Code for students with disabilities, ensuring equal access to Trent’s academic programs and facilities.

The Accessibility Advisor/Learning Strategist provides comprehensive accessibility advising, learning strategy and/or academic coaching support to students with disabilities, promoting student development and potential for academic success. Working as part of an interdisciplinary team, the Advisor is responsible in part for program development and coordination of SAS programs and supports. Specific to Student Affairs Durham, the Advisor is also responsible for creating, developing content, and managing social media and other related digital sites related to SAS Durham.

#### Key Activities:

##### Academic Accommodation

* Using a biopsychosocial approach, conducts intake interviews, in-person and/or virtual for the purpose of implementing academic accommodation plans.
* Reviews disability documentation including psychoeducational assessments, psychological assessments, and medical documentation to determine appropriate and reasonable academic accommodation(s)
* Adopting an intersectional lens, considers impact of functional limitations on comorbid cognitive, physical, psychological, developmental, and environmental factors in the creation of and ongoing implementation of academic accommodation plans.
* Applies research-informed best practices in the development of individualized and reasonable accommodation plans with students and in consultation with faculty when required. Accommodations are based on functional limitations and areas of strength while maintaining academic integrity of the program of study.
* Documents and maintains accurate and confidential student records in compliance with privacy legislation and adherence to records management requirements.

##### Accessibility Advising, Support and Learning Strategy

* Provides one-on-one and group instruction in the application of learning strategy skills and/or academic coaching supports to students, including a variety of technical recommendations, using a strengths-based approach.
* Provides collaborative one-on-one accessibility advising to students regarding needs related to accommodation, funding, system navigation, and service coordination.
* Advises students on best steps for obtaining required documentation to support their academic needs relating to disability.
* Provides advocacy and support through liaising with departments and faculty at Trent, initiating referrals to on-campus or community-based support, while ensuring privacy and confidentiality are maintained as required by FIPPA.
* Facilitates referrals for psycho-educational assessments to the Regional Assessment and Resource Centre.
* Completes applications for students to gain access to adaptive technology, funding for assessments, required equipment, and on-going services and support through the Bursary for Students with Disabilities requiring in-depth knowledge of the BSWD/CSG-DSE Policy Manual and liaising with Financial Aid.
* Collaborates with Exam Centre(s) to ensure consistency in practices and student needs are met.
* In conjunction with the Administrative Assistant, manages appointment bookings for advising, learning strategy, and accommodation reviews.

##### Programming and Outreach

* Designs, delivers, and debriefs the effectiveness of programming with the aim to support students with disabilities in the transition in and out of the post-secondary environment, developing learning and self-advocacy strategies, and building a sense of inclusion and belonging within the campus community.
* Provides mentorship and support to student staff.
* Creates and provides education sessions for faculty and staff regarding social model of disability, functional impacts and barriers students with disabilities experience, and strategies for inclusion / universal design.
* Implements creative approaches to developing and posting relevant digital content that increases student engagement including the use of web, video, and social media for Trent Durham Student Accessibility Services.
* Contributes to and provides feedback on procedures for Student Accessibility Services.
* Researches, develops and recommends new strategies, resources, and procedures influenced by emerging industry trends to improve the service-delivery.

#### Education Required:

* Must meet one of the following education criteria:
  + Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) Degree and additional education in Disability Studies, Special Education or Learning Disabilities;
  + Master’s Degree in Psychology, Education, Applied Educational Psychology, Social Work, Occupational Therapy, or other related field.

#### Experience/Qualifications Required:

* Minimum of two (2) years of directly related experience working with persons with disabilities.
* Excellent oral and written communication skills.
* Accredited coach training and experience preferred, or membership to relevant professional association.
* Knowledge of ethics and standards of professional practice.
* Experience working in an inter disciplinary team and coordination of support.
* Understanding of post-secondary educational environment, academic demands, social, and economic implications for students with disabilities.
* An understanding of the meta-cognitive deficits of adults and the effective methods for assisting them.
* Demonstrated creative approach to problem-solving, especially in an instructional environment.
* Excellent teaching and communication skills both in 1:1 and small group environments.
* Interest in the latest developments in marketing and media as well as experience in effective use of social media and online media strategies to increase engagement with target audience.
* Experience with/lived experience as a person with disabilities or the disability community and/or marginalized communities.

**Job Evaluation Factors:**

##### Analytical Reasoning

* Must be aware of current evidence-based practices, theoretical approaches and models, and apply/adapt to work with individual clients (e.g. developing accommodation plans based on advanced analytical reasoning and knowledge of best practices from related fields of psychology, education and disability-related literature).
* Demonstrates understanding of the impact of disability on access to post-secondary education and accommodation that maintains academic integrity and rigour of the program of study.
* Requires understanding of complex co-morbidities and functional limitations caused by multiple personal and environmental factors to identify and implement solutions using professional judgment and reasoning within the biopsychosocial framework adopted by the Student Wellness Centre and human rights legislation requirements.
* Must consider changing information from students, being alert to information not readily presented.
* Example 1: A student presents with multiple diagnoses (e.g. acquired brain injury, whiplash injury, with post-traumatic stress disorder) and requires advising with respect to risks and benefits of remaining at university. Advisor must consider best practices concerning management of acquired brain injury, review the functional impact of multiple conditions to make appropriate recommendations regarding course load and potential accommodations/supports.
* Example 2: A student presents with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and co-morbid mental health issues e.g. bipolar disorder. Advisor must understand how these diagnoses may exacerbate each other, potential risks to the student in an academic environment, and identify strategies that will maximize student strengths.
* Example 3: The advisor meets with eight (8) students in one workday and receives ongoing e-mail and phone requests with varying degrees of urgency and/or time-sensitivity. A student presents in mental health crisis, reporting suicidal ideation. The advisor must intervene to support the student in crisis, prioritizing the level of need from their caseload while continuing to provide a high standard of service to each individual request. (SAS has evening drop-in hours during the regular term and advisors offer e-mail, phone, and virtual meetings to provide access. These multiple formats require specific understanding and awareness of the various styles of students with communication difficulties as a result of their disabilities.)

##### Decision Making

* Authorized to recommend and implement individual academic accommodations including e.g. equivalent to full time status and reduced course load which can affect eligibility for scholarships and external funding. These decisions are based on the complex interaction of factors including supporting documentation, consideration of student functional limitations, funding availability, and developmental readiness of the student.
* When supporting students experiencing an escalated mental health crisis, make informed decisions in order to preserve students' safety. This includes referrals to crisis supports.
* Advocate on behalf of a student for academic consideration with faculty members.
* Initiate referrals to internal and external supports and share confidential information in accordance with privacy legislation and confidentiality policies based on student level of need.
* Guidance received: In order to carry out daily activities and responsibilities, the Accessibility Advisor/Learning Strategist is responsible for developing systems and procedures in collaboration with colleagues to ensure consistent and evidence-based practices are maintained in working with students, parents and faculty. Work is assigned and there is considerable scope to decide on priorities and procedures to be used; work is generally checked for achievement of objectives (e.g. Summer Transition Program).
* Creativity used in Decision Making: New ideas are developed that result in new procedures, policies, and services for clients served by Student Accessibility Services and the Student Wellness Centre. e.g. development of cross-departmental forms and methods of communicating confidential client information, development of Summer Transition Program which provides a new means of access for incoming students and parents to the Student Wellness Centre (PTBO) and other student services.

##### Impact

* If the Accessibility Advisor/Learning Strategist does not develop evidence-based accommodation plans, students may not be able to access academic programs and facilities, thereby contravening the mandate of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Human Rights Code. If a student is not provided equal access to academic programs and facilities at Trent University, the University is at risk for potential human rights complaints and lawsuits, and damage to overall reputation. The SAS office has also been selected by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities as an exemplar for the Summer Transition Program.
* Without appropriate accommodation and support, students' academic progress may be in jeopardy (failed courses), which can have an impact on overall program retention and graduation. A study conducted by the Higher Education Quality Council showed that students who do not have access to advising and transition support are at increased risk of accruing greater debt, and prolonged programs of study can result in lost time in the workforce. Therefore, without appropriate accommodations and support there is a direct impact to student retention and success at the institution.
* “The growth in demand for accessibility supports has been accompanied by increased complexity of supports required. Students increasingly present with multiple disabilities at once; seek support to overcome barriers beyond their registered disability (involving social determinants of health); and do so across a wide range of learning environments, such as experiential learning and remote classrooms, which became more common during and after the pandemic.” Lanthier, S., Tishcoff, R., Gordon, S., & Colyar, J. (2023). Accessibility services at Ontario colleges and universities: Trends, challenges and recommendations for government funding strategies. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

##### Responsibility for the Work of Others

Direct Responsibility:

* Provides training, guidance and instruction to student staff, and volunteers, during university events (e.g. Open Houses) and Summer Transition Program.
* Mentorship and support for student staff member

##### Communication

Must ensure a clear and accurate exchange of information in order to make informed decisions and provide appropriate supports and accommodations.

Provide recommendations and referrals that may be sensitive in nature.

Must be able to communicate cross-culturally.

Internal

* Ability to clearly articulate and advise students regarding accommodations, student responsibilities and learning strategies that are strength-based. Requires professional judgment, active listening, empathetic responses, and ability to normalize situations for students who experience stigma as a barrier to accessing support.
* Adapt communication styles based on student needs and strengths. E.g. Students with sensory loss may require alternate formats and means of communication, students with learning disabilities may also require information presented in an alternate and accessible way.
* Provide clinical rationale for accommodation, funding, and academic consideration for students.
* Ongoing communication and exchange of information in accordance with PHIPA, using professional judgment and tact with faculty members regarding student need for accommodation, AODA requirements and how to support individual students.
* Liaising and consultation with colleagues within the Student Wellness Centre, Student Affairs Durham and other departments.

External

* Communication with students’ parents and families, as well as healthcare and other support providers, as required, in accordance with SAS privacy policy and PHIPA.
* Representative of SAS and Trent University with external organizations (e.g. Inter-University Disability Issues Association, Regional Assessment Resource Centre, Canadian Association of College and University Student Services), other universities and colleges, and general public
* Liaise with community supports.

##### Motor/ Sensory Skills

* Fine motor skill required for typing and documenting notes and student information in ClockWork and Colleague
* Attend to visual and/or auditory cues from students, parents, and faculty

##### Effort

Mental:

* Sustained attention/concentration during student and faculty meetings, for hours at a time.
* Must attend to verbal and non-verbal cues during communication, provide appropriate, clear and positive feedback, and assess level of risk.
* Sustained composure and professionalism

Physical:

* Physical effort includes sitting during student meetings, on average 45 minutes to 1 hour in length, with frequent back-to-back meetings. Occasional moving of boxes and supplies during exam invigilation and student orientation events.

##### Working Conditions

* Must prioritize and manage multiple demands and often high volume of student or parent inquiries/requests.
* Some students and parents are facing psychological stresses or crises. May present as frustrated or angry. Accessibility Advisor/Learning Strategist must manage stress associated with crisis or high-stress student situations and prioritizing high volume of student needs that can arise suddenly and unexpectedly.
* Involves navigating challenging workloads and systemic issues, emphasizing the importance of self-care and support to mitigate the risk of compassion fatigue and ensure sustained well-being.