

# Accommodations and Accessibility in Remote/Online Learning

Oct 27, 2020

# GOALS

- Build community awareness of accommodation and accessibility supports for remote/online teaching contexts.
- Identify the framework that guides accessible and inclusive learning practices at UofT.
- Explore solutions and applied tips and strategies to meet accessible design needs.
- Navigate and utilize support resources.

# AGENDA

- Introductions
- Accessibility Services: Programs and Services
- Considerations for accessibility in online/remote teaching and learning
- Technical Details

# INTRODUCTIONS

## **Panelists:**

Adina Burden, Assistant Director, Accessibility Services

Ben Poynton, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Officer

Rahul Bhat, Resilience Program Lead, Academic Success

Sarah Kloke, Interim Learning Strategies Team Lead, Accessibility Service

Lake Porter, Adaptive Technologist

## **Facilitators:**

Michal Kasprzak, Assistant Director, Teaching Assistants' Training Program, Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation

Will Heikoop, Online Learning Coordinator, ITS

# Academic Accommodations

- Any service, equipment or special arrangement that is put in place to support students with a 'disability' in the university setting.
- Students for whom accommodations are provided must meet the same academic requirements and standards as all students, although the manner by which students registered with AS meet these may vary (Academic Integrity)

# Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC – post-secondary)

- Goal is to accommodate a student's needs, vs. preference/expectations (although these are always considered)
- When making accommodation requests, students have a responsibility to give education providers ample lead time where possible (i.e. register in early summer well before beginning of school year)
- The need for accommodation is demonstrated through the best information available, including medical documentation, student self-reports, history provided by the student, screening tools (e.g. AS Online Intake Form)
- Accommodations individualized, dignified, intersectionality lens

# Our Role

- Verify disability on behalf of university; determine accommodations
- Collaborate in accommodations process
- Problem solve with students, faculty and staff
- Organize services and supports

Keep in mind:

- Accommodations that impact your marking or require follow up from you is on a registered student's Letter of Accommodation and this is something you can request (note: specific test/exam accommodations usually are not listed)
- You don't receive, nor should you request, details medical documentation when a student is requesting a disability/health-related accommodation for which they are registered with Accessibility Services
- We may contact you in order to get a better understanding of the essential requirements in your course or program, navigate requests for accommodations, etc.

# Who and Where We Are

- Interdisciplinary group of professionals (Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Psychometrists, Psychologists, Experienced Health Care Professionals, Special Education Teachers)
- 32 Full-Time Staff (Accessibility Advisors, Front Line Services, Learning Strategists, Adaptive Technologist) and 30+ peer mentors/advisors
- 14 Sites on the St. George Campus, main office at 455 Spadina Avenue (at corner of Spadina and College)
- Currently we are all working remotely



# Registration with Our Office

## 3-Step Process

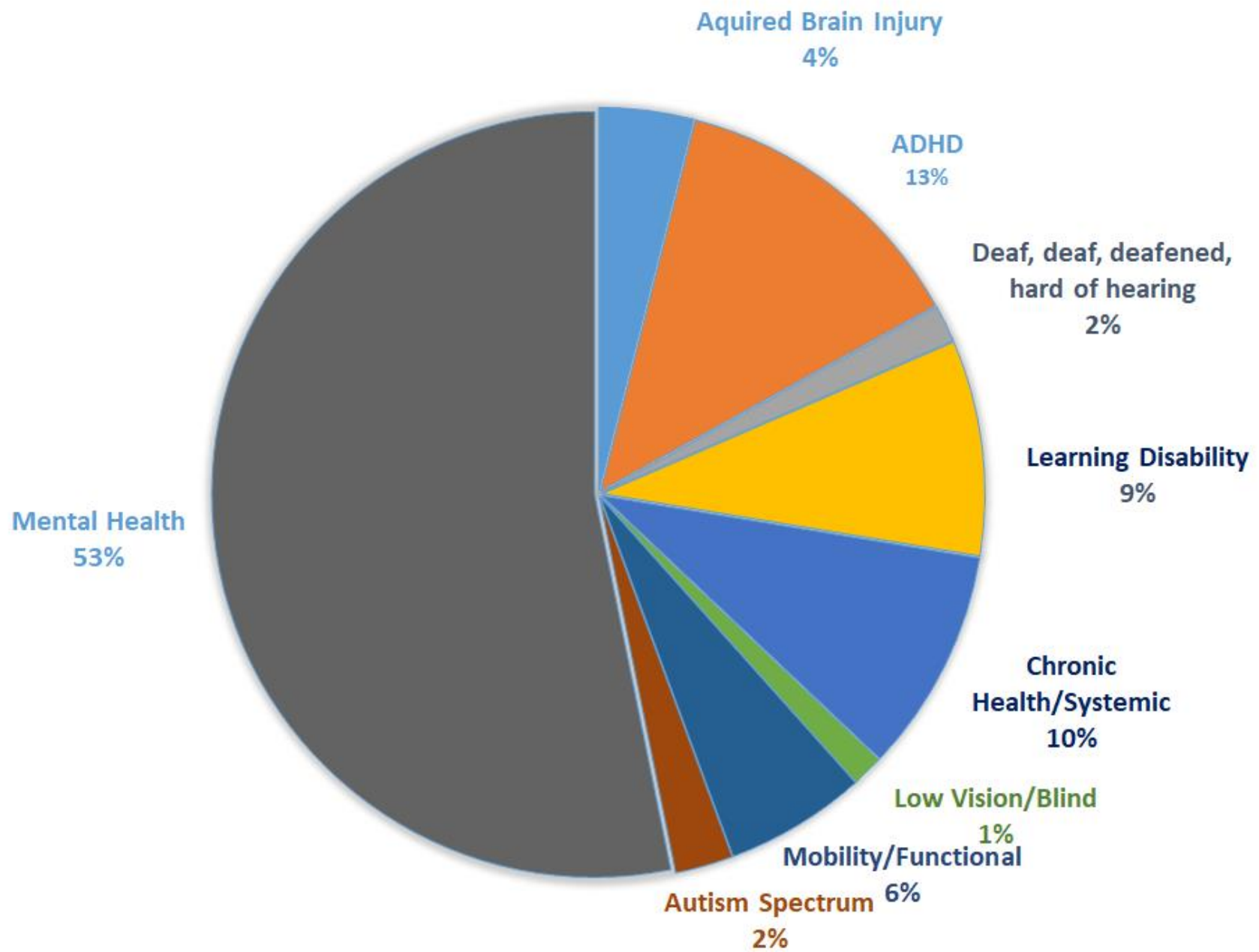
- 1) Student completes Online Student Questionnaire
- 2) Student obtains medical documentation speaking to their disability or health concern, usually in the form of our medical documentation form, but may also be in the form of a psychoeducational assessment, neuropsychological assessment, etc. We need to know the impacts of the student's disability or health concern on their ability to do academic work; can't simply list a diagnosis.
- 3) Student attends intake appointment (virtually) with Accessibility Advisor who they will become assigned to. Their name and contact information will be at the top of their Letter of Accommodation

## Keep in mind:

- During busy times, there can be long waits, so we encourage students to register as early as possible – you may hear from a student that they are waiting for their appointment with AS but we can't confirm any accommodations until we meet with them
- Registration with our office can occur throughout the academic year; therefore you may receive Letters of Accommodation throughout the year, rather than all at once

# Facts and Figures (2019-2020)

- We work with students from all faculties and disciplines - undergraduate, graduate, PhD, professional faculties, etc.
- 4946 students total
- 1437 – graduate professional, second entry, research stream
- 3509 - undergraduate
  - Brain Injuries – 4%
  - ADHD – 13%
  - Deaf/deaf/deafened/hard of hearing – 2%
  - Learning disability – 2%
  - Learning Disability – 9%
  - Chronic Health – 10%
  - Low vision/Blind - 1%
  - Mobility/functional - 6%
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder – 2%
  - Mental Health – 53%



# AODA Office

- Who they are
  - Ben Poynton, AODA officer
  - Chris Sabatinos, Web Accessibility Specialist
- What they do
  - Outreach and training on accessibility and legal compliance
  - Feedback on accessibility of our services and facilities
  - Address barriers through structural changes
- How we work with them
  - Systemic accessibility matters
  - Education
  - Handling feedback
- When to contact them
  - Questions about AODA/OHRC compliance
  - Training on accessibility
  - Want to provide accessibility feedback or have a concern

# Considerations for Accessibility in Online Learning

## All students reported

- Increased uncertainty, overwhelm, and isolation
- Increased challenges with motivation
- Decline in mental health
- Difficulties with collaborative learning
- Perception of increased workload

## Students with disabilities reported

- Increased difficulty focusing
- Inadequate access to accommodations or accessible materials
- Difficulty communicating and building supportive relationships online
- Changes in uses of technology



Pichette, Jackie, Sarah Brumwell and Jessica Rizk. *Improving the Accessibility of Remote Higher Education: Lessons from the pandemic and recommendations*. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2020. Available online: <http://www.heqco.ca/en-ca/Research/ResPub/Pages/Improving-the-Accessibility-of-Remote-Higher-Education-Lessons-from-the-pandemic-and-recommendations.aspx>

# Navigation of online systems

- Tech learning curve and desire for "systempathy"
- Increased distractions – including chat functions
- Difficulty with screen readers
- Students with low vision reported difficulty with online learning platforms
- Video conferencing/increased screen time more challenging for students with pre-existing conditions (e.g., acquired brain injury)

# Addressing Impacts

Students	Accessibility Services	Faculty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timely communication w/ Accessibility Advisor of learning needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussing impacts with student and updating accommodations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information shared/ stored in multiple areas on Quercus</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sending Letters of Accommodations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*New* Remote/ Online Course Accommodations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of time zones</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessing accommodations (ie. Reduced courseload)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online learning-specific strategy supports (group sessions, 1:1, workshops, videos)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration with Accommodated Testing Services</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Booking tests on time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual Accountability Check-ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarity of testing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessing appropriate supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing Mental Health in Online Learning resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Framing participation requirements</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proactive identification of specific in-class only accommodations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Create certainty when you can."</li> </ul>

# Removal of Barriers

- Removal of impacts related to Social Anxiety
- Removal of commutes and impact of travel time
- Added Ability to revisit course material
- Added Automatic closed/ live captioning
- Added Recorded lecture availability
- Preference for alternate participation
- Focusing on individual work



Q&A

