



# Student Accommodation Requests (Non-Disability Related)

## Preamble

BCIT recognizes that although a process exists to address accommodation requests for students with disabilities as well as a policy that outlines attendance, students may face circumstances that need additional consideration. This document outlines considerations for such requests and a process for making decisions and was created in partnership between BCIT's Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion Office, Student Success, and the BCIT Student Association.

For accommodation requests that are disability related, please refer to [Accessibility Services](#).

## Reasonable Accommodation

Under the BC Human Rights Code, BCIT must provide *reasonable* accommodation for student *needs* which are related to their *personal characteristics*, unless doing so would cause undue hardship (See FAQ on page 3 for more information). This means that sometimes it is necessary to treat someone differently, by adjusting a rule, policy, or practice, in order to prevent discrimination.

## Personal Characteristics

Personal characteristics listed in *The Code* and the BCIT [Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#):

- race
- colour
- ancestry
- place of origin
- religion
- marital status
- family status
- physical or mental disability
- Indigenous Identity
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender identity or expression
- age

Situations that may legally require accommodation from instructors include, but are not limited to:

- Leaving class to pray at specific times every day;
- Absence from school on an exam day because it is a religious Holy Day;
- Absence from class to attend to an ill child or other family member.

There are some situations in which we encourage instructors to be flexible in cases of extenuating circumstances (unrelated to personal characteristics), but accommodation is not legally required. We typically refer to these as academic concessions. Examples include:

- When a student has experienced the death of someone close to them;
- When a student has undergone a traumatic event.

*BCIT acknowledges that our campuses are located on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish Nations of [Skwxwú7mesh](#) (Squamish), [səlilwətaʔ](#) (Tsleil-Waututh), and [xwməθkwəy̓əm](#) (Musqueam).*

Situations in which an instructor may choose to use their discretion to provide an accommodation, but are not legally required to do so include:

- Absence from class to attend a child's sporting tournament;
- Leaving class to answer work-related phone calls.

### **Specific Types of Accommodation Needs**

#### Missed classes

Accommodation requests related to missed classes, including absences due to religious observances, are addressed through BCIT's [Student Regulations Policy](#). As of September 2021, this policy is being revised for increased clarity. Possible accommodations might include:

- providing access to video or audio recordings of missed lectures, or
- providing advance access to upcoming required reading or assignments, or
- alternate arrangements for missed group work or clinical shifts.

#### Missed Exams and Evaluations

Sometimes requests for accommodation involve the need to miss an exam or other scheduled evaluation. Possible accommodations might include:

- another opportunity to write the same or replacement examination, or perform some other form of evaluation, or
- another means of judging the student's mastery of the learning outcomes, or
- re-weighting of missed or upcoming evaluations, or
- calculating an aegrotat grade for the student if the conditions for aegrotat have been met, or
- providing an INC grade if the conditions for the INC grade have been met.

### **Examples of Reasonable Accommodation**

#### Example #1:

A student sees on their class syllabus that a test is scheduled for a significant religious day on which they need to be absent from school. The student notifies their instructor as soon as they see the conflict. The student is provided the opportunity to take the test a day earlier.

#### Example #2:

A student is required to pray at a certain time each day and must do so in a quiet space. The student has a lab during prayer time. They advise their instructor before the start of the term. The instructor allows the student to leave class during prayer time, without penalty. The student makes arrangements to get notes from a classmate for the time they are absent.

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Accommodation Process

### **Q. Is a student required to provide “proof” of their need?**

Generally, proof is *not* required for accommodation requests related to religious or cultural observances. For absences during an exam or other evaluation due to medical reasons (that are not related to an ongoing disability), instructors may ask the student to submit a doctor’s note, in accordance with [policy 5101 Student Regulations](#).

In some other cases a student may be required to provide supporting documentation to demonstrate their need.

### **Q. What if granting the accommodation request is inconvenient or challenging to implement?**

Reasonable accommodation needs to be provided unless doing so would cause undue hardship. Factors considered in undue hardship include safety risks, cost (relative to the overall budget at BCIT), and, substantial interference with the rights of others. However, undue hardship is a very high threshold to reach. Neither preference of other staff or students, nor inconvenience constitute undue hardship. In post-secondary settings it is very rare that denying reasonable accommodations to a student could be justified. However, students are still required to meet the “essential requirements” of a course.

### **Q. Who decides what is reasonable?**

Accommodation is a shared responsibility. Both the student requesting an accommodation as well as the person receiving the request have obligations to work together to find an acceptable solution. Providing accommodation to a student should not result in a negative impact to the student. For example, they should not receive a lower grade, or be denied an opportunity because of their request.

A student is expected to accept a reasonable accommodation, even if it is not their ideal solution.

### **Q. Who can students and instructors contact for additional support?**

Sometimes, instructors may not feel comfortable vetting medical documentation. If this is the case, they can contact the Student Life Office at [student\\_life@bcit.ca](mailto:student_life@bcit.ca) or [early\\_assist@bcit.ca](mailto:early_assist@bcit.ca).

Students and instructors are also welcome to contact their Associate Dean, the Student Life Office, the Respect Diversity and Inclusion Office, or the Indigenous Initiatives and Partnerships Office with any questions or concerns that arise relating to a request for accommodation. Students can also contact a BCIT Student Association Wellness Advocate.

## Step-by-Step Student Accommodation Process (Non-Disability Related)

1. Students should:
  - a. First explore whether there is a way to meet their need in a manner that will not conflict with their educational obligations.
  - b. Only if that is not possible should the student then request an accommodation.
2. The student must notify their instructor about their need for accommodation. This should:
  - a. Be done as soon as reasonably possible;
  - b. Be done in writing (an email is acceptable);
  - c. State their accommodation request (e.g. to be absent from school on a particular date);
  - d. State the reason for their request (e.g. to observe a religious Holy Day);
  - e. If their request is ongoing it should state the expected length of the need.
3. The person who receives the request should:
  - a. Respond in a prompt manner (even if it is to acknowledge they have received the request and will look into it further);
  - b. Ensure they are familiar with the relevant policies and procedures referred to above;
  - c. Seek more information if the nature or grounds for their request is unclear;
  - d. Treat the request and any personal information as confidential, only sharing information on a need-to-know basis;
  - e. Consider how they can accommodate the request in a reasonable manner.
4. We encourage both the instructor and student to work together to explore all possible accommodation options to come up with a compromise that works for both parties.
5. Once an accommodation is agreed to it is helpful for the instructor to put it in writing (an email is acceptable) and ask the student to confirm their understanding of the agreement.
6. If the two parties are unable to agree on an accommodation, the instructor will involve their Department Head/Program Head for resolution. The Department/Program Head may wish to consult with the Student Life Office or the Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion Office for further advice.
7. If the accommodation is of a long-term or ongoing nature, it may be that the accommodation is better managed through the Accessibility Services office (for medical conditions) or the Student Life Office (for non-medical complex needs). If the accommodation is non-medical in nature and not complex enough to warrant case management, both parties should check in with the other to ensure it is working and be prepared to adjust if need be.

**Reminder:** This process does not apply to request to accommodate disability-related needs. For those requests please contact [Accessibility Services](#).