Managing Co-op for all:
Accommodating Students with Disabilities within the Co-op Framework

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• 16% of Canada’s working population are people living with a disability

• Enrolment of students with disabilities in many post-secondary institutions over the last decade has grown at a double digit rate

• Graduates with disabilities report that building experience through volunteer work, internships and work placements is important for a successful transition to the workplace
By The Numbers

**HOWEVER**

Students with disabilities are **less likely** to work while in college or university compared to students without disabilities.

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**Chart 1**
Employment rate of persons with or without a disability, unadjusted and adjusted, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons with or without a disability</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No disability</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild disability</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate disability</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe disability</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very severe disability</td>
<td>40%</td>
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- **Unadjusted**
- **Adjusted for age, sex, education and other factors**

1. Results were obtained from a logistic regression that included the following factors: severity of disability, sex, age group, level of education, Aboriginal self-identification, province of residence and living arrangements.

Building Capacity

Alone we can do so little.
Together we can do so much.

-Helen Keller
Partnering for Student Success

**Post-Secondary Institution**
- Co-op Department
- Disability Services Office (DSO)
- Student Services & Academic Supports

**Student**
- Self-determination
- Advocacy
- Lived experience

**Employer**
- Hiring Manager
- Direct supervisor
- HR Department / Accommodation Specialist
**Benefits to Focusing on Inclusion in Co-operative Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Employer</th>
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| • Students with disabilities are less likely to work or volunteer during university due to competing demands of school and disability related needs. Work Integrating Learning is a proactive way of addressing this issue  
• Many students with disabilities benefit from learning “hands on”  
• Students get the opportunity to explore workplace accommodations  
• Students with disabilities have the potential to incur higher expenses and debts than students without disabilities. As such, remuneration for work completed on placement is of great benefit | • Access a skilled pool of candidates  
• Reduce costs associated with turnover, training and safety  
• Improve employee engagement  
• Harness the value of innovative processes and new perspectives  
• Attract an underserved consumer market worth $40 billion in Canada  
• Comply with legislation (Federal and Provincial) |
Student

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Benefits to Focusing on Inclusion in Co-operative Education

Employer

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- Improve employee engagement
- Harness the value of innovative processes and new perspectives
- Attract an underserved consumer market worth $40 billion in Canada
- Comply with legislation (Federal and Provincial)
Once a disability-related need has been identified, education providers and employers have a **duty to accommodate in a manner that maintains confidentiality**.

Accommodation:
A means of preventing and removing barriers that impede students with disabilities from participating fully in the educational environment.

**Principles of Accommodation**

1. **Respect for Dignity**
2. **Individualized Accommodation**
3. **Inclusion and Full Participation**
Factors in Accommodation Planning

Individualized Accommodation Plan

- Lived Experience
- Essential Course Requirements
- Environment
- Documentation
Don’t Lower the Bar…
Open the Door Wider

Accommodation is a means of enhancing an individual’s abilities and of ensuring that workplace performance standards are met, not compromised.

- Accommodations are meant to level the playing field. They should not compromise the essential components, or bona fide requirements, of a role.
Barriers to Inclusion

Consider the following:

- Physical
- Architectural
- Informational
- Technological
- Policy or Practice
- Attitudinal
Co-op Timeline

- Admissions
- Job Seeking
- WTPC
- Onboarding & Work Term
- Academic Evaluation
Student Admissions

Selection and Recruitment
### Student Admissions

**Recruitment and Selection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Reality</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Students apply externally from high school or internally after their first year | • Student may be self-selecting as ineligible for the program | • Incorporate equity statements in all marketing materials & have multiple formats available  
• Consult with DSO to help identify essential criteria of the program and potential barriers to full participation |
Work Term Prep Course

8-month course that all students take in first year

Incorporates learning of job search skills

Job Search Assignment

Senior Student/Alumni interaction through Networking

Employer Mock Interviews
## Work Term Prep Course
### Overview

**Plan**
- Provided same 8-month course that all students must take upon being admitted into the Management Co-op program

**Reality**
- In-Class activities required movement around the classroom creating a barrier to participation
- Curriculum doesn’t address the “whole person”

**Strategies**
- Universal Instruction Design
- Discuss strategies and accommodations for classroom and workplace environments
- Include opportunities for guided self reflection during prep course (e.g. family status, disability related needs, commuting, etc)
Seeking Work

- Building Resume and Mock Interviews
- Networking Events
- Application Process
- Interviews
- Feedback
## Seeking Work

### Building Resume and Mock Interviews

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| • Students can access one-on-one meetings with coordinators to provide job search support and advice | • Provided a set weekly meeting for the student at regular times  
• Difficult to find balance between doing/facilitating  
• Used technology (Skype) to allow student to meet with a Coordinator remotely | • Set clear boundaries and expectations (e.g. Coordinator provides support/guidance student does the work)  
• Use technology to accommodate student needs without diluting the student experience |
### Plan
- Student to attend networking events

### Reality
- Networking events were in the morning. Difficult time for student to attend
- Student requested exemption or one-on-one meetings with employers, which are not available to other students

### Strategies
- Provide advanced notice and possibly extend time of events
- Consult with DSO to identify appropriate accommodation based on disability related needs
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<tr>
<td>• Planned to utilize existing partnerships with firms for work term</td>
<td>• Employment partners were not able or willing to move the work term forward</td>
<td>• Start early – speak to your employers about the benefits of hiring SWD before students arrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provided a realistic approach to the seeking process</td>
<td>• It was challenging to determine what would be realistic for all stakeholders</td>
<td>• Communicate, communicate, communicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Chart success and continue to refine your strategies</td>
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### Seeking Work Interviews

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</table>
| • Interviews will take place on or off campus | • Some employers had made up their minds before the interview started  
• Unsure when to disclose disability related needs | • Prepare the student as much as possible – set realistic expectations  
• Ensure the location for the interview is accessible  
• Decision to disclose must be made by the student. DSO/Co-op should raise topic in advance and provide resources |
While on Work Term

- Onboarding
- Regular Work Activities
- Evaluation
- Regular Work Activities
- Evaluation and Academic Responsibilities
# While on Work Term

## Onboarding

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| • Student will be hired and the organization, in conjunction with the DSO, will identify the appropriate accommodations | • Communication was slow  
• Took 6 weeks for workplace assessment to be completed | • Early communication is imperative  
• Involve your DSO  
• Be realistic with your timelines and plan early |
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<tr>
<td>• Student’s work will be meaningful, as any other student</td>
<td>• Employers were not able to provide meaningful work for the student</td>
<td>• In conjunction with DSO; be proactive on how to provide appropriate work prior to the work term</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### While on Work Term

#### Academic Responsibilities

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Student will complete the necessary assignment at the same time and fashion as outlined for all students</td>
<td>• Students may require additional time or flexibility to complete academic requirements</td>
<td>• Accommodations and flexibility can be put in place in the same way as for other courses and assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Your DSO will provide work with student to identify an appropriate accommodation plan</td>
</tr>
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While on Work Term Evaluation

Plan

- Student will be evaluated in the same time and fashion as outlined for all students

Reality

- Evaluators may have been influenced by pre-conceived notions of disability instead of actual performance indicators (Hero or halo effect)

Strategies

- Be clear with all stakeholders that outcomes and evaluations will maintain existing standards
Examples of Workplace Accommodations

• Provide assistive technology
• Allow employee to record instructions from a supervisor, meetings, etc.
• Provide a written copy of instructions
• Permit working from home
• Arrange a flexible work schedule
• Set up workspace in a location with minimal distractions

• Allow a self-paced workload
• Permit frequent breaks
• Provide extra time to learn new tasks
• Ensure print materials are available in alternate format (e.g. enlarged or digital)
• Divide larger tasks into smaller ones
• Exchange minor tasks with other employees
Examples of Workplace Accommodations

Accommodations in the workplace are seldom as expensive or difficult as sometimes imagined. The vast majority of job accommodations cost under $500 and many cost nothing at all!
A Hire Awareness Video
The Honourable David C. Onley; The 28th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario
http://www.ndeam.ca/a_hire_awareness.shtml
Top Ten Tips

1. Champion a culture of inclusion with internal and external stakeholders

2. Strengthen campus partnerships - collaborate with your Disability Services Office to apply universal design principles (barrier-free) to all aspects of the program

3. Actively engage employers who have existing equity and inclusion policies and practices

4. Provide ongoing equity and awareness training for co-op staff
5. Create a welcoming environment - use inclusive language, provide documents in various formats, ensure your website is accessible and use physically accessible meeting, event and interview locations.

6. Wherever possible build flexibility into the co-op program - consider work term timelines, academic deadlines, accommodation planning, etc.

7. Plan ahead – Refer students to the DSO to discuss work term accommodations well in advance of the work term; Become familiar with the employer’s practices, policies and physical site well in advance of the interview phase.
8. Do not approve or deny any accommodation requests without consultation with the DSO and the employer’s Disability Consultant.

9. Ensure that all disability related information is kept confidential – use appropriate confidentiality and consent forms at the outset of the cycle.

10. Always remember that the student should be central to, and engaged in, every step of the process.
For further information please contact us.

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www.chrc-ccdp.ca/sites/default/files/aplaceforall_1.pdf


Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DO-IT Centre)

http://www.washington.edu/doit

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

https://askjan.org

Council of Ontario Universities (COU). Accessible Campus - Resources for Educators

http://www.accessiblecampus.ca


