

# Pregnancy Academic Accommodation Guidelines

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## Purpose of this Guide

This guide is for all Carleton University students and instructors. The guide is designed to provide clear information on the accommodation process, including how to request accommodation based on the protected grounds in the human rights code. The guide also explains how professors and instructors can assist with the process. For simplicity, professors, instructors, and other teaching professionals will be referred to as “instructors” hereinafter.

## What is Accommodation on Human Rights Grounds?

Accommodation on human rights grounds is related to protected attributes such as disability, family status, sex and creed. The purpose of accommodation is to enable students to meet the essential requirements of their course or program and ensure equitable access to education by making appropriate adjustments to course and program related deliverables. At no time should an academic accommodation undermine or compromise the learning objectives that are established by the academic authorities of the University. Under the Code, accommodation is assessed and provided on an individual basis, to the point of undue hardship.

Beyond meeting policy and human rights legislation requirements, Carleton university is committed to being an inclusive and equitable institution, hence, supporting accommodation

requests with respect, compassion, and in a timely manner, contributes to creating a healthy and flourishing environment. It also prevents discrimination and human rights violations. Below is step-by-step information on the types of accommodation that students can request and how they can make such requests, along with information on how instructors can engage in and support the accommodation process.

## What is Pregnancy Accommodation?

Accommodation under Carleton University's Human Rights Policy is provided when an individual (e.g., employee or student) identifies limitations and/or restrictions based on a Prohibited Ground of Discrimination that requires an accommodation in relation to services, employment or housing provided by the University. In such cases, the University is required to provide reasonable accommodation up to the point of undue hardship based on an individual's functional limitations and/or restrictions.

**Pregnancy accommodation** may involve a temporary modification of elements of the student's academic program (e.g., laboratory, tutorial, assignment, mid-term, final exam, or fieldwork).

Carleton University recognizes that experiences of pregnancy are intersectional in nature. This means that a pregnant person's access to necessary support can be profoundly shaped by the interplay of their race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, disability, and other social markers. These intersections can lead to compounded challenges in all realms of life, such as accessing quality prenatal healthcare, facing stigma or discrimination from peers or instructors, or navigating societal expectations and biases related to pregnancy. As such, intersectionality is a helpful framework for developing accommodations that support all pregnant students in their academic pursuits.

## Students' Role and Responsibilities

As every pregnant person experiences pregnancy differently, the form of accommodation may look different to meet the individual's circumstances.

### How do I ask for accommodation?

If you require pregnancy-related academic accommodation, you should direct your request for accommodation to your course instructor, ideally, early in the term or as soon as a need for accommodation is known to exist. After receiving your syllabus or course outline, you are encouraged to identify any potential conflicts or modifications.

In your request, you should include the following information:

- State that you are seeking an academic accommodation for pregnancy.
- Identify the specific course requirements for which you are seeking accommodation for (e.g. midterm, assignment, final exam, etc.).
- Provide information on the accommodation you are seeking.
- Provide suggestions for means of satisfying the academic requirement such as alternative dates to write a midterm or a final exam, extension on assignments, making up missed tutorial sessions, etc.

If you require academic accommodation for more than one course at the same time, ensure you are connecting with each instructor directly to explore your request. Accommodation for each course may look different depending on the instructor and the structure and requirements of each course.

### After I ask for accommodation, what should happen next?

Once you have made your request for accommodation, your instructor will take the necessary steps to explore the accommodation request. At this time, your instructor may ask for additional information to aid in the process.

Asking for accommodation is often just the first step in the accommodation process, and depending on the circumstances, can take time to work out. Thus, it is important to request accommodation as soon as the need for accommodation arises, such as early in the semester or when the final examination schedule is released.

Your proposed or preferred accommodation may not always be what you will get as other reasonable accommodation options must be considered. As the person requesting academic accommodation, you have a responsibility to co-operate in the accommodation process such as by participating in this process in good faith and being open and ready to seriously consider different ideas and suggestions.

## What if there is a disagreement about my accommodation request?

The accommodation process is a search for a reasonable, and appropriate, accommodation. An appropriate accommodation will vary with the circumstances of each case. It is important to keep in mind that your request for accommodation is often just the first step in a collaborative effort to come up with an appropriate solution. This means that you need to be prepared to work with the other side in good faith and respond to questions or issues that may arise as the accommodation process takes place.

If you have questions, concerns, or need more information on the accommodation process and Carleton's Human Rights Policy, you can schedule a time to meet with an Equity Advisor at Equity and Inclusive Communities by emailing [equity@carleton.ca](mailto:equity@carleton.ca) or by calling (613) 520-5622.

## Instructor's Role and Responsibilities

### What to do when you receive a pregnancy-related accommodation request

Pregnancy accommodation may involve a temporary modification of the elements of the student's academic program (e.g., laboratory, tutorial, mid-term, final exam, or fieldwork). As a student's pregnancy progresses, their needs and accommodation may change as well. In these cases, it is not uncommon for the student to reconnect with you with updated accommodation requests. You are also welcome to check in with them throughout the course about their accommodation or let them know if their accommodation needs change as they progress in their pregnancy, to reach out to you.

Upon receipt of a request for pregnancy accommodation, as an instructor, you are advised to:

1. Determine appropriate accommodation in consultation with the student in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student. For in-class assignment, tests and tutorials accommodations, discuss directly with the student.
2. For final exam pregnancy accommodations requests, discuss directly with the student. Once you have reached an agreement regarding the most appropriate form of accommodation, you can contact the Scheduling and Examination Services (SES) Office for assistance coordinating final exam logistics (e.g., booking a space for the student to take the final exam, proctoring, etc.). Alternatively, you can also contact your department and/or Faculty to inquire if there are any in-house support available that can assist with exam logistics for the final exam accommodation.

If you or the student have further questions or need clarification or guidance, please contact Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) at [equity@carleton.ca](mailto:equity@carleton.ca) or by calling (613) 520-5622 to speak to an Equity Advisor.

### Tips to consider in the process

- Consider using non-gendered terminology as not all pregnant individuals identify as women, and not all lactating individuals are mothers. For example, when discussing these topics, consider using terminology such as "parent" instead of "mother" and "father" to be more inclusive.

## Further reading and resources

- [Understanding the Duty to Accommodate by the Human Rights Legal Support Centre](#)
- [Guide to your rights and responsibilities under the Human Rights Code by the Ontario Human Rights Commission](#)