

# KEY DEFINITIONS

## Disability

Disability is “...an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations” (*World Health Organization*).

Disability is considered “...a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers” (*World Health Organization*).

## Disclosure

Disclosure is “an approach used to inform an [employer, prospective employer, or postsecondary institution] of a disability that needs to be addressed and accommodated” (*Ryerson University*: [http://www.ryerson.ca/ccetutor/pdf/Disclosure\\_TipSheet.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/ccetutor/pdf/Disclosure_TipSheet.pdf)).

## Accommodation Need

“In human rights terms, **accommodation** is the word used to describe the duties of an employer, service provider or landlord to give equal access to people who are protected by [provincial] Human Rights Code,” including persons with disabilities (*Human Rights Legal Support Centre*: <http://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/how-guides-and-fags/your-right-accommodation>).

**Accommodation needs** are the “tasks and functions that a person with a disability cannot fully perform without some type of accommodation” in the context of their course, program or discipline (*Work Without Limits*: [http://www.workwithoutlimits.org/providers/quality\\_employment\\_practices/accommodations](http://www.workwithoutlimits.org/providers/quality_employment_practices/accommodations)).

## Disability Services Office

Disability Services Office (DSO) is one of a collection of terms (including Accessibility Services Office, Disability Support Services, Disability Support Centre, Centre for

Students with Disabilities, etc.) used to refer to the office within a college or university responsible for providing academic accommodations to students with disabilities. Students typically register with the DSO through an intake process requiring disclosure of their disability and/or accommodation need, with appropriate documentation. DSOs are typically housed within the student life, student success or student services portfolios of their institutions.

## Reasonable Accommodation

Reasonable accommodation is any change to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done that allows an individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform job functions, or enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace (*US Office of Personnel Management: OPM.gov*). Post-secondary institutions and employers are required by law to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship (*US Office of Personnel Management: OPM.gov*).

## Undue Hardship

Undue hardship is “an action requiring significant difficulty or expense” when considered in light of a number of factors. These factors include the nature and cost of the accommodation in relation to the size, resources, nature, and structure of the [employer's or university's] operation. Undue hardship is determined on a case-by-case basis. (*ADA.gov*)

## Research-Stream Graduate Program

A research-stream graduate program is a master's or doctoral program that requires the contribution of an original piece of research (in the form of a thesis or equivalent product) to the body of knowledge in the field.

## Professional-Stream Graduate Program

A professional-stream graduate program is a master's or doctoral program that does not require the creation or defense of a thesis. While these programs may contain significant research components (e.g., major research projects, capstone projects), there is less requirement for independent research. Conversely, professional-stream programs may be more course-based, may include practicum or placement learning opportunities or components, and may be more restricted in terms of time to completion.

## Postdoctoral Scholar

A postdoctoral scholar ("postdoc") is an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of his or her choosing (*National Postdoctoral Association*: [http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/?page=What\\_is\\_a\\_postdoc](http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/?page=What_is_a_postdoc)).

## Essential Requirement

"Essential requirements of a course or program refer to the knowledge and skills that must be acquired or demonstrated in order for a student to successfully meet the learning objectives of that course or program" (Rose, 2009).

## Remote Residency

For the purposes of graduate education, "residency" is considered to be the time that a student spends physically present on-campus during their training. Remote residency, analogous to telecommuting in the workplace, allows a student to engage in their research and coursework, as well as with their peers and faculty while remaining off-campus.

## Alternative Format

Alternative formats are other ways of publishing information aside from standard print that still provide the same information, just presented differently (Rowlett & Rowlett, 2009). Some of these formats may be used by everyone, while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user.

## Print Disability

Standard printed publications are not accessible to people with visual impairments or who are blind. Many other categories of readers are not able to use printed books, newspapers and magazines, including those with dyslexia and other types of learning disability, as well as individuals with motor disabilities or manual dexterity limitations who cannot hold or turn pages in a book. Collectively, these groups of individuals are often referred to as persons with "print disabilities."

## Academic Employment

Academic employment is used in the context of this report to refer to situations or circumstances when a graduate student is hired as a teaching assistant, research assistant or graduate assistant during the time of their studies.

## Universal Design

Universal design is “the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits.” By considering the diverse needs and abilities of all throughout the design process, universal design creates products, services and environments that meet peoples' need. These principles also apply to learning environments ([www.universaldesign.ie](http://www.universaldesign.ie)).

## Professional Development

Professional development is a term that may be used in reference to a “wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help [students], administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness” ([www.edglossary.org](http://www.edglossary.org)).

## Transition

As used in this report, transition has two applications: The passage or movement from undergraduate to graduate training, as well as the passage or movement from graduate school to the postdoctorate or to employment.

## Online Learning

Online learning is “a way of studying for an internationally recognized qualification without needing to attend classes on campus. It [can be] aimed at those who wish to study for a postgraduate qualification alongside work or other commitments” (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/online-learning/about>).

## Creativity

Creativity in this sense means being willing to experiment with different approaches, sometimes unusual requests, to find the best solution for all involved.