

Academic Accommodations Survey Report

UASU Perks surveys, September 14-16 (n1=1337, n2=1311)

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Sample and Platform

UASU Perks (perks.uasu.ca) is a gamification platform. UAlberta students earn points for activities like checking in at events, participating in a donor-backed vaccination promotion contest, or taking small surveys. Students can redeem points for real-world goods (e.g. branded socks or mugs).

These two concurrent surveys (September 14-16, 2021) received 1311 and 1337 responses. The sample overlapped almost entirely: the overlap comprised 99% of the first survey and 97% of the second. Most respondents were undergraduates; around 5% identified as graduate students or recent graduates.

Across both surveys, a total of 171 respondents stated that they had tried to get accommodations through Accessibility Services.

77 respondents identified as disabled. 73% of disabled students had tried to get accommodations through Accessibility Services.

> Convenience sample collected through UASU Perks, a gamified student engagement platform.

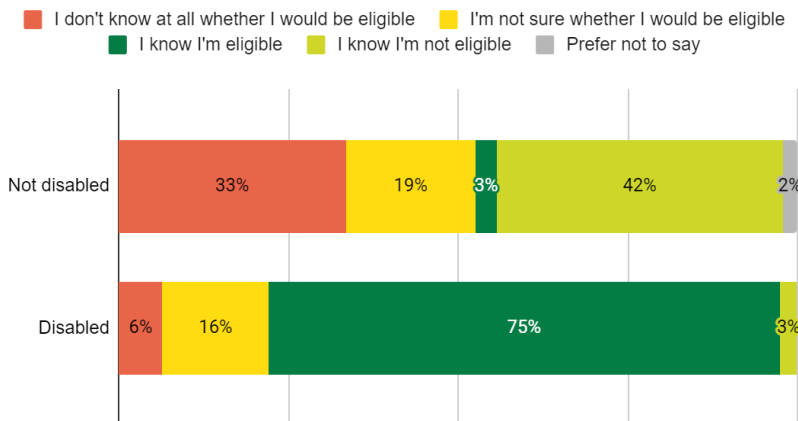
> Primarily undergraduate students, distributed across faculties and years of study.

> 77 respondents identified as disabled.

> 171 respondents (including 2/3 of disabled respondents) had tried to get accommodations.

Knowledge and Access

“Do you feel like you know whether you might be eligible for accommodations?” (n=1337)



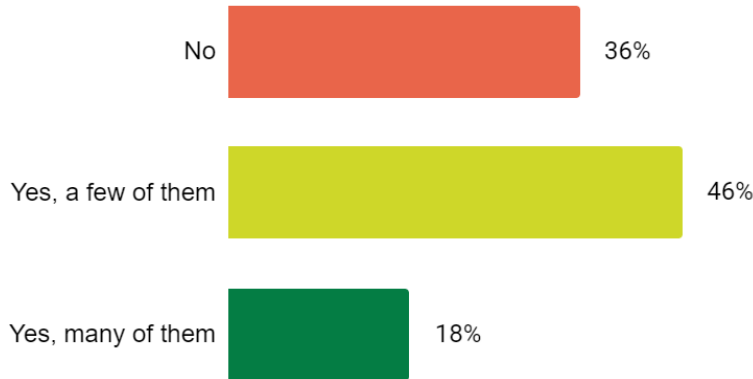
> Over half of non-disabled students don't know/are unsure whether they would be eligible for accommodations.

> 1 in 5 disabled students don't know/are unsure whether they would be eligible for accommodations.

> Faculties of concern:

>> *Nursing (42% don't know at all)*

“Have your professors, TAs, or other faculty members discussed available accommodations and/or accommodation services with you or your classmates during lecture, via an email, announcement or other method of communication?” (n=1337)



> 2/3 of respondents reported that at least some of their instructors had discussed accommodations with them or their class.

> *Faculties of concern:*

>> *Business (48% no)*

>> *CSJ (44% no)*

“Do you feel like you know how to access accommodations at UAlberta?” (n=1337)

■ Definitely not
 ■ Maybe not
 ■ Maybe
 ■ Definitely
 ■ Not relevant to me



> Around 45% of respondents feel they do not know how to access accommodations.

> *Faculties of concern:*

>> *Arts (36% definitely not)*

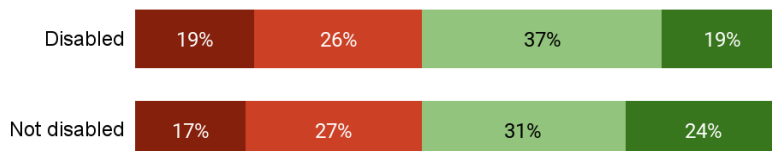
>> *Engineering (34% def. not)*

>> *Nursing (42% def. not)*

Seeking Accommodations

“If you've tried to get accommodations through Accessibility Services, how easy or difficult was it?” (n=171)

■ Very difficult
 ■ Somewhat difficult
 ■ Somewhat easy
 ■ Very easy



> Around 45% of those who have sought accommodations have found it difficult.

“If you've tried to get accommodations through Accessibility Services, what (if anything) made it difficult?”

- After receiving them, it was **difficult learning how to set them up**.
- Availability through COVID, **long wait times** to access services.
- Barriers to **figure out** how to initiate the process, and difficulty connecting.
- Booking an appointment early but that's to be expected.
- Booking tests system is **very confusing**.
- **Doctor's note**.
- Due to the pandemic, there was uncertainty on how my possible accommodations would work so **I was left feeling unsure if I would be able to receive them**.
- Everything.
- Find the website **difficult to navigate**.
- Finding a **time available** to have a registration meeting.
- Finding **where to access it** and getting an appointment.
- **Getting a diagnosis without a family doctor**.
- Getting an appointment to see the AR.
- Had to seek out, not given **clear instructions**.
- Hard to find the right links and websites to go to. **Lot of asking people and being sent to different places** but once you find the right people or links you are fine and it is easy.
- Having to **get a diagnosis that qualifies**, when you are in the pending process and the health system is extremely slow with so many **long wait times** for specialists.
- Having to get a doctor to provide proof, during COVID, I'm scared to go to clinics.
- Having to get **notes from doctors** and **they basically just said to read things which is very difficult for me because I have ADHD**.

> Frequently cited obstacles:

>> *Confusing booking system*

>> *Long wait/response times, overloaded staff*

>> *Not knowing what accommodations are available*

>> *Trouble and cost of getting a diagnosis/doctor's note*

>> *Inconsistent treatment (many report positive experiences, many report negative ones)*

>> *Extensive paperwork*

>> *Needing to arrange accommodations for each individual exam*

>> *Long/complex emails and web pages are an obstacle, e.g. with reading/learning disabilities*



- Having to have **written proof from a doctor** as well as **not knowing what accommodations were available** to ask for.
- I don't have an official diagnosis for anxiety (I get really bad test anxiety. Like no sleep, borderline puking, rapid heart rate, etc.) But the accessibility services said they **couldn't do anything for me unless I had an official diagnosis** of permanent anxiety.
- I feel **they might need strong evidence** as to why we want to have accommodations but someone with test anxiety or just any kind of anxiety/stress would require a document/proof but it would be nice if a document/proof was not necessary as **not everyone has that document**.
- I got them very easily.
- I haven't had any issues with Accessibility Services, but **some professors can be real assholes or even refuse your accommodations**.
- I just like talking in person.
- **I struggle to read sometimes and long emails stress me and my brain out**, so it was hard to read the email I got after my consultation. Not any fault of the Accommodations people though, I'm sure they didn't know.
- I tried to last year and I needed to book an assessment, however **I couldn't get an appointment for over a year** which made it almost useless for when I needed it for
- I'm still in the process of trying to get accommodations and am worried **I won't get them in time for my first exam**.
- It was a **long process** to go through. I understand getting the letter filled out but then having to **schedule each exam and quiz and talk to both accommodations and the professors every semester** is kind of just a pain.
- It's so difficult - **I don't know where to start!!!**
- It's just **hard getting set up, once you're in the system it's really easy**.



- Just **getting all my papers sorted** for the registration is difficult.
- Just getting **documentation**.
- Just the process is hard! Vague questions, etc, **I usually can't see it through**.
- Just the **timing part and deadlines of when you can book accommodations for exams** but it is an understandable time period for the processing part for the profs.
- **Knowing how to access it in the first place is confusing and frustrating**, there's limited promotion and information about **what is offered** and how to get help, making appointments is unclear and **wait times are long**. Deadlines are confusing and unclear, **knowing what changes from year to year is also unexplained**. The whole process is convoluted and obtuse.
- Knowing **what kind of accommodations are available**. Also, accessing accommodations for the first through remote delivery has been more confusing and **easier to manage than I'd imagined it would be pre-COVID**.
- Lack of communication with professors and each other. **Lack of staff. Long response wait time entailing difficulties**. No in person test accommodations which are kind of necessary for me because I become a danger to myself. Professors are forcing some students to therefore go fully online rather than just write tests online which is not fair and **we are not receiving support**.
- **Lack of straightforwardness of the process; unfriendliness/unhelpfulness of the staff**.
- Little bit confusing. **Couldn't upload letter of accommodation request**.
- Long process.
- Long process to make sure it has been shared with teachers and signing up for exams.
- **Long wait process, couldn't do it in person**.
- Making contact. **I emailed in and didn't hear back in time**.



- **Making them believe you.** I have severe anxiety/depression and I thought having some accommodations would improve my grades drastically. **I had notes from my doctors, I was ready to show proof of Rx's but they denied me before i even got to that point lol.**
- Must be professionally **diagnosed** to get accommodations.
- Must get a **form filled by physician (most physicians charge \$50)** but I understand why we need the form so it's fine by me.
- **My high school didn't send the records over** so now I have no accommodations and a bad GPA :(
- **N/A I love their services!**
- Navigating government funding was difficult, but **Accessibility Services held my hand the entire way.**
- **No clear communication, no follow up, no understanding, no help.**
- Nope, **the lady on the phone was super nice** and went through the steps of getting accommodations with me **clearly.**
- Not enough information or knowledge about the program itself and what is required.
- **Not knowing that this was available** for the times when you truly needed it resulted in a huge decrease in grades prior to accommodations.
- Nothing made it difficult.
- One thing that makes it difficult for me is that **I have to activate my accommodations every time I need to book a quiz or an exam. At my old post secondary institution I just had to activate my accommodations and it would automatically apply to everything.**
- Paperwork. **What documents and assessments they'd actually accept.** Booking in to see someone.
- Payment.
- **Professors not honoring my accommodations,** lack of communication between accessibility services, professors, and other faculty. **Lack of information about what is available** and how to access it



- Some profs don't look at which students have accommodations and **you have to go through accessibility services to get them to comply. Note takers were taken away this year** and access to the new platform was not given until two weeks into the school year. **Learning disability assessments cost \$2000.**
- **Sometimes the exam booking program glitches and messes up your booking. If you don't notice in time, it's considered your fault and you're SOL.**
- Specifications in doctor notes.
- The accommodations advisors are so **helpful.**
- **The advisors being rude and unaccommodating and making me feel like I was lying.**
- **The communication is quite convoluted and unclear.** As a person with a **learning disability**, it was kind of ironic that the contact system was so complicated because **in order to get accommodations for my disability, I have to go through inaccessible hell.**
- The lack of instructions and deadlines.
- **The online system sucks.**
- The people were **very kind and compassionate.** The only thing that made it difficult was **not knowing all the accommodations available.**
- **The person at the counter was very dismissive and gave very little information.**
- The process.
- The response time.
- The sites are a **rabbit hole to find the right link.**
- **The time it took and not knowing who to contact for what.**
- **The web page is very busy** and could be simplified with steps.
- There are **a lot of hoops to jump through.**
- There are checks and balances in place, and for good reason of course. I felt very heard and taken care of in this process - and it's a small department tending to many many students. **I feel like the folks are being stretched thin and are showing up everyday**



because they care. I wish it was able to be a bigger department for the sake of everyone involved. **They seem to wish they could spend more time, and I know I could really use it.**

- **There were some documents that my parents didn't have regarding medical history. So I stopped applying halfway through the process. The application package is huge and intimidating.**
- They are in the process of moving so I was unable to reach them.
- They didn't try to help me get accommodated; just kept **referring me elsewhere.**
- They would not give the accommodations given to me through my academic career citing that university is different. Even though they are standard accommodations. An example would be a scribe.
- Time it takes to get a response via email. I was emailed and replied less than an hour later. **Now I likely need to wait until next week to continue the conversation.** Just accessing accommodations is stressful and mentally taxing.
- Trying to get a grasp on how I could be helped was the only thing that was an issue for me, they were very **kind and understanding and genuinely wanted to help.**
- Wasn't difficult
- **You can't go in and adjust exam dates if an exam date changes.** You have to email or call the office which can be annoying.

Additional comments from respondents who had not tried to get accommodations

- So I didn't personally, but I had a friend who tried and it was a time consuming and expensive process for her. **Meanwhile Concordia's is free and takes a few minutes.**
- I looked into it but it was such a **legal rigmarole** that I didn't bother trying.



- Ok so I need accommodations but I **have been lucky and have just been able to get them through profs/my own efforts** cause the school kind of sucks for it.
- **I want to know if I am qualified for accommodations.**
- I haven't, but I've had friends who had **a lot of issues getting their rightful accommodations.**
- Hoping that maybe I can get accommodations in the future **if I can ever figure out how** (hearing is bad).