



**university of victoria**  
**students' society**

# **Disability Policy**

**Adopted August 18, 2015**

**DISABILITY POLICY**  
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# **PART 1: PURPOSE AND APPLICATION**

## **1. Statement of Commitment**

The University of Victoria Students' Society (The Society) is committed to the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including the principle of accessibility. In accordance with the Convention, the Society recognizes that persons with disabilities have rights to:

- \* full and equal participation in cultural life;
- \* full and equal participation in recreation and leisure;
- \* full and equal access to education;
- \* full and equal access to work and employment;
- \* full and equal participation in public and political life;
- \* be included in the community with the same choices as others;
- \* seek, receive, and impart information on an equal basis with others; and
- \* privacy.

Therefore, the Society accepts that it has a responsibility to ensure that all of its programs and services are fully accessible to all persons, regardless of impairment. The Society's responsibility includes the responsibility to ensure that all goods, services, buildings, structures, premises, programs, projects, events, meetings, and communications are accessible. To meet this obligation, the Society will develop an accessibility plan that will establish goals towards improving accessibility.

## **2. Principles**

The Society's policies on accessibility are guided by the principles of dignity, independence, accessibility, and equal opportunity.

**Dignity** - Dignity means providing services so that persons with disabilities maintain their self-respect and the respect of other people. Communication with persons with disabilities shall be done in a respectful manner which takes into account their disability and maintains their dignity. Respect for dignity includes minimizing the stigmatization of persons due to their disabilities and refraining from using communications that deploy ableist terms (terms that discriminate in favour of able-bodied people) to describe persons with a disability and their ability to contribute and participate in the Society's activities.

**Independence** – Independence means ensuring that people are able to do things on their own without unnecessary help, or interference from others.

**Accessibility** - Accessibility means providing service in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as others.

**Equal Opportunity** - Equal opportunity means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. In the case of services, it means that persons with disabilities shall have the same opportunity as others to benefit from the way you provide goods or services.

## **3. Scope**

This policy shall apply, in its entirety, to the Society's staff, volunteers, contractors, visitors, and guests.

The full definition of disability, as stated by the provincial government, is:

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a development disability;
- c) a learning disability, or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- d) a mental health condition; or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

#### **4. Training**

The Society shall provide mandatory anti-oppression training on the topic of ableism to staff and directors, as required by Board of Directors Policy.

Training shall include the following:

- An understanding of ableism and stigmatization of persons with a disability; and
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities with an understanding of ableism and stigma; and
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.

#### **5. Hiring**

The UVSS and the Union hereby recognize and support employment equity programs. The parties agree to cooperate in the identification and removal of systemic barriers in the selection, hiring, training and promotion of persons with disabilities. In addition, the parties agree to cooperate in the identification and implementation of steps to improve the opportunities, employment status and participation rates of this group. It is understood that none of these actions will be at variance with the Collective Agreement unless mutually agreed upon between the parties.

#### **6. Harassment**

The Society shall identify the following as harassment within its anti-harassment policies:

- The stigmatization of persons with disabilities; and
- Ableism (discrimination in favour of able-bodied people).

#### **7. Feedback Process**

The Society is committed to providing high quality goods and services to all members of the public it serves. Feedback is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements. Therefore, the Society shall regularly solicit feedback concerning disability-related issues as they relate to goods and services provided by the Society.

#### **8. Policy Review and Renewal**

The Society is committed to developing service policies that respect and promote the dignity and participation of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to

this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities, including consultation with the Society's current official constituency organization for students with a disability.

Any policy of the Society that does not respect and promote the dignity and participation of people with disabilities shall be modified or removed.

## **PART 2: SERVICE**

### **1. Purpose**

The intent of this policy is to enable persons with disabilities to access the range of goods and services offered by the Society within the Student Union Building and wherever else these goods and services are provided.

Persons with disabilities are permitted to use their own personal supports to access goods and services offered by the Society. Personal supports include personal assistive devices, service animals, and support persons.

### **2. Communication**

The Society shall strive to communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. This means that the Society will communicate in ways that enable persons with disabilities to communicate effectively for the purposes of using, receiving, and requesting the Society's goods, services, and facilities.

The Society shall fund a minimum of 100% of costs for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities for all Society meetings, such as but not limited to General Meetings, Board of Directors meetings, club and course union meetings, and speaking events. The Society requires a minimum of two [2] weeks notice to provide this support. If shorter notice is given, all reasonable efforts will be made to provide necessary supports. A line item in the UVSS annual budget shall be created for this purpose.

### **3. Assistive Devices**

Persons with disabilities are permitted to use personal assistive devices to access goods and services offered by The Society.

An assistive device is any device that is used, designed, made, or adapted to assist a person in performing a particular task. Assistive devices enable persons with disabilities to do everyday tasks such as moving, communicating, reading, or lifting.

Examples of assistive devices include, but are not limited to the following:

- Wheelchairs
- Canes
- Walkers
- Assistive listening devices (FM systems)
- Laptops with screen-reading software or communicating cap abilities
- Smart phones (i.e. wireless handheld devices)
- Hearing aids
- Global positioning system (GPS) devices
- Digital audio players
- Teletypewriters (TTY)
- Portable oxygen tanks
- Personal digital assistants

- Communication devices, such as voice-output systems or pictures/symbols

The Society allows assistive devices to be permitted in all areas of the Student Union Building to which students, staff, faculty, and the public normally have access.

#### **4. Accessible Food Services**

The Society is committed to providing safe and accessible food options for persons who have specific food-related health conditions and disabilities.

#### **5. Service Animals**

Persons with disabilities are permitted to use licensed service animals to access goods and services offered by the Society.

A licensed service animal is any guide dog or animal individually trained by a professional service animal training organization to assist a person with a disability. An animal is a service animal if it is readily apparent that it is being used by a person for reasons relating to her or his disability - or if the person has a letter from a physician verifying that the animal is required for reasons relating to her or his disability. Licensed service animals include licensed emotional support service animals.

Licensed service animals are permitted in all areas of the Student Union Building premises to which students, staff, faculty, and the public normally have access.

There are a few exceptions where a service animal would be excluded by law:

The Health Protection and Promotion Act (1990) does not allow animals in places where food is manufactured, prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold or offered for sale. Therefore, a sign should be placed in food handling areas notifying persons that service animals are not permitted.

However, the Health Protection and Promotion Act does contain specific exemptions for licensed service dogs only, allowing them to accompany their owners into areas where food is normally served, sold or offered for sale.

Should municipal by-laws restrict certain breeds of animals or dogs from the municipality and these by-laws apply even if the animal is acting as a service animal. In unique situations where the presence of the animal presents a significant risk for another person (e.g. severe allergies), the Society is required to meet the needs of both persons in these situations and must devise an accommodation plan that enables both persons to access services and goods accordingly.

#### **6. Support Persons**

Persons with disabilities are permitted to use support persons to access goods and services offered by the Society. When a support person accompanies a person with a disability to an event hosted by the Society for which there is an admission fee, the support person will not be charged admission.

A support person is someone either hired or chosen to help a person with a disability. A support person can be a personal support worker, volunteer, family member, spouse, or friend of the person with the disability. The Society believes that a support person, in some cases, does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

Support persons may provide one or more types of assistance.

- Transportation
- Job coaching
- Guiding a person with a vision loss
- Adaptive communication (e.g., Intervener for someone who is deaf/blind)
- Interpretation (e.g., ASL/English interpreter, LSQ/French interpreter)
- Note-taking, scribe or reading services (usually coordinated by disability or library services offices)
- Personal care assistance including emotional support
- Support persons in the event of a seizure (e.g., protect from falls)
- Interpret and speak on behalf of someone with a speech disability