

There is a strong focus on health and wellness in the Health Care professions due to the demanding nature of the work and Occupational Health and Safety requirements. If you are considering a health care profession or you have been accepted into an Allied Health program with a medical condition or disability that may impact you in the classroom, labs, simulation or practicum experiences you are strongly advised to discuss concerns with the program Academic Chair and SAIT Accessibility Services as soon as possible. Alberta Occupational Health and Wellness has recommended that the SAIT School of Health and Public Safety advise our students who are required to complete a practica rotation to consult with a professional with expertise in the documented disability or health condition prior to entering the SAIT program. Our practica partners may request further medical documentation and we want you to be prepared and successful for your program.

The disabilities or medical conditions listed below are not exhaustive:

- A former injury (e.g. back)
- Vision or hearing loss
- Nervous or muscular system disorders
- Epilepsy or seizures
- Brain injury
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Learning disabilities
- Emotional or psychological concerns
- Communicable blood-borne viruses or other diseases
- Immune deficiencies

You have many strengths to use in an occupation and you also need to understand how the challenges of your disability or medical condition might interact with the required duties of an occupation. The following questions are intended to help you think about how your disability or medical condition might be impacted by the tasks or duties of an occupation. The questions will also help you think about modifications that may be needed in that occupation to accommodate your disability or medical condition. The purpose of the questions is to assist you to:

- Understand how the disability or medical condition may impact the ability to perform the Bona Fide Occupational Requirements and scope of practice of the occupation.
- Determine whether the career choice is realistic and reasonable
- Manage, prevent or decrease the potential risk of further harm to yourself and the patient.

Getting started

Are you aware of the Bona Fide Occupation Requirements of the profession? You can learn more about the occupation you are interested in pursuing by the following:

- Go to the alis.alberta.ca website.
- Select OCCInfo and search by Occupation Title.
- Read carefully the duties, working conditions and personal characteristics of the occupation of interest.
- <http://alis.alberta.ca/occinfo/Content/RequestAction.asp?format=html&aspAction=GetHomePage&Page= Home>

Are you aware the Alberta government is working with the healthcare industry to develop Alberta Healthcare Industry Health and Safety Initiatives to reduce the workplace injuries and also to retain current workers in the healthcare workforce?

- Go to: <http://work.alberta.ca/occupational-health-safety/6311.html>
- Scroll down to the bottom of the page
- Select your area of profession
- Read the associated documents and reflect on whether you have the ability to perform the stated duties.

Questions to ask yourself and an expert based on challenges

Think about the challenges created by your disability or medical condition. Many of the challenges below may not apply. Consider discussing these questions with someone with expertise with the challenges created by your disability or medical condition.

Physical challenges

- Is the person required to stand for long periods, walk a lot, lift or move heavy objects, or perform repetitive actions like typing or manipulating machinery?
- Is there a lot of strength and stamina required to perform activities for long periods?
- Does the occupation require good manual dexterity, motor coordination or fine motor control?
- Can the workplace be modified to enable you to perform the duties of the occupation?

Auditory processing and verbal communication challenges

- Is there a lot of information or instructions presented verbally?
- Does the occupation require strong oral communication skills?

Visual perceptual processing challenges

- Is there a lot of reading of print or electronic material, charts or graphs required in this occupation?
- Does the occupation require the person to be able to visualize objects in three dimensions?
- Is there a lot of numerical calculations required?
- Does the occupation require strong mechanical ability?

Information processing and problem solving challenges

- Are quick decisions required in the occupation?
- Does the person have to work rapidly?
- Are there frequent short deadlines?

Memory and attention challenges

- Does the occupation require the ability to perform several tasks at the same time?
- Does the occupation require strong organization skills?
- Is the person required to pay attention to detail?
- Is there a requirement to hold information in short term memory?
- Does the occupation require a high level of accuracy? What are the consequences if there are errors made?

Social or emotional challenges

- Is there a lot of people contact and social interaction in this occupation?
- Is there a lot of noise or "busyness" in the workplace?
- Is the environment fast paced?
- Does the person have to deal with difficult or aggressive clients/customers?
- Is there a lot of team work?

Other

- Does the occupation have shift work? Long days? Frequent travel? How might this impact you?
- Is there exposure to contagious diseases?
- Are the clients/customers/patients at high risk if exposed to a contagious disease?
- Is your disability or medical condition stable or changing?
- Could the disability or medical condition put you, your colleagues, and/or the patients you work with at risk?
- Where are you in the disease process or the treatment process (if applicable)?
- Is this a barrier or limitation for performing job duties?
- How might your medical condition or disability affect practicum and or employment performance and expectations?
- Are you fit to work now or later if the disease progresses or becomes unmanageable?

Now what?

If you have identified one or more disabilities or medical-related challenges in your chosen occupation, consider the following:

- How will you work around the barrier in the classroom, lab, simulation, practicum or workplace? Each experiential location may require a different modification.
- Will you require accommodations in the learning environments to overcome this barrier?
- Will you require further documentation for the practicum rotation?

There are many successful people with disabilities and medical conditions in medical fields. It is important for you to do some research on what accommodations or modifications in the workplace these individuals have used.

Consultation about the disability or medical condition may be completed with a physician, the provincial college of the chosen profession, employer of health, an infection control practitioner or a patient safety group, and, psychologist for neuropsychological or psychoeducational disabilities. The practicum site may require you to seek specified experts to determine any modifications for the workplace environment. Your Academic Chair will work with you and the partnering site to determine any needs.

Guiding Process

1. You are advised to meet with the program Academic Chair (AC) prior to the beginning of the program to discuss accommodations in each of the learning environments. Each course may require different accommodations. The practicum site may require specific documentation from their Occupational Health and Wellness department based on scope of practice and Alberta Learning Information System's standards.

If you do not know who the Academic Chair is for your program please phone the School of Health and Public Safety at 403.284.8500 or email hps.info@sait.ca.

2. You are also advised to contact SAIT Accessibility Services at 403.774.5093.
3. You are advised to meet with a SAIT Accessibility Advisor and your Academic Chair to discuss possible requirements for each learning environment. All paperwork will need to be agreed upon by the Academic Chair and Accessibility Advisor.
4. You should provide the required the expert documentation to facilitate the accommodation. Any additional documentation or assessments required for the program, including practicum is your responsibility to provide and pay for.

As some accommodations can take time to arrange, you are encouraged to meet with your Academic Chair and SAIT Accessibility Services as early as possible.