
TITLE: UNIVERSAL DESIGN POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT:

RDC is committed to the principles of Universal Design and endeavors to use these principles for the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent.

PURPOSE:

The intent of universal design is to simplify life for all students, staff, faculty and community users by making products, communications, and the physical environment more usable by as many people as possible. Universal design benefits people of all ages and abilities.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all RDC students, staff and faculty members and members of the public that access RDC information or services.

Universal design guides the following four areas of RDC:

College space and grounds: Universal design principles are used to design new and redesign existing college spaces. This includes the college grounds.

Learning environments and technology: Universal design principles are used to create learning environments that are flexible and adaptable to a variety of learning and teaching styles.

Curriculum: Universal design principles guide the planning and development of curriculum and provide a framework that enables all individuals to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. Further, Universal Design in the learning context provides rich support for learning and reduces barriers within the curriculum while maintaining high achievement standards for all.

Services to students, staff, faculty and community members: Universal design principles are used to guide the development and implementation of services for students, staff and faculty to ensure all services are accessible and flexible to the needs of a variety of users.

PRINCIPLES:

1. In recognition of the diverse population it serves, RDC is committed to creating a welcoming, respectful, inclusive and universally designed environment.
2. Red Deer College is committed to making the college grounds, classrooms, learning spaces and technology, services and curriculum as usable as possible by as many individuals as possible.
3. Universal does not imply one solution for everyone; rather, it reflects an awareness of the unique nature of each individual as well as the need to accommodate differences.
4. Respecting the reasonable allocation of resources that optimizes access, all students and employees of RDC are entitled to a reasonable opportunity to pursue their education and work goals in a universally designed and inclusive environment.
5. RDC is committed to cultivating a universally designed environment for all of its communities through the removal of barriers that restrict accessibility and through the creation of accessible learning mediums.
6. RDC is committed to the reasonable accommodation of individual needs of its students and employees through the establishment of effective mechanisms (for example, policies, procedures, guidelines, standards and practices).

DEFINITIONS:

Universal Design: The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Barriers: These are structures, designs and/or practices that prevent or impede a person from accessing a facility, service or program.

GUIDELINES:

Guidelines for Universal Design at Red Deer College include but are not limited to:

1. **Equitable Use.** The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
 - Provide the same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible; equivalent when not.
 - Avoid segregating or stigmatizing any users.
 - Provisions for privacy, security, and safety should be equally available to all users.
 - Make the design appealing to all users.
2. **Flexibility in Use.** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
 - Provide choice in methods of use.
 - Accommodate right or left-handed access and use.
 - Facilitate the user's accuracy and precision.
 - Provide adaptability to the user's pace.
3. **Simple and Intuitive Use.** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the users' experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
 - Eliminate unnecessary complexity.
 - Be consistent with user expectations and intuition.
 - Accommodate a wide range of literacy and language skills.
 - Arrange information consistent with its importance.
 - Provide effective prompting and feedback during and after task completion.
4. **Perceptible Information.** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
 - Use different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile, auditory, visual, kinesthetic, for example) for redundant presentation of essential information.
 - Provide adequate contrast between essential information and its surroundings.
 - Maximize "legibility" of essential information.
 - Differentiate elements in ways that can be described (i.e. make it easy to give instructions or directions.)
 - Provide compatibility with a variety of techniques or devices used by people with sensory limitations.
5. **Tolerance for Error.** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
 - Arrange elements to minimize hazards and errors: most used elements, most accessible, hazardous elements eliminated, isolated or shielded.

- Provide warnings of hazards and errors.
 - Provide fail safe features.
 - Discourage unconscious action in tasks that require vigilance.
6. **Low Physical Effort.** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
- Allow user to maintain a neutral body position.
 - Use reasonable operating forces.
 - Minimize repetitive actions.
 - Minimize sustained physical effort.
7. **Size and Space for Approach and Use.** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of users' body size, posture or mobility.
- Provide a clear line of sight to important elements for any seated or standing user.
 - Make reach to all components comfortable for any seated or standing user.
 - Accommodate variations in hand and grip size.
 - Provide adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistance.

PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

1. Physical facilities, College grounds, services:

- a. Complaints regarding access to physical facilities, College grounds, communications, counseling, and technology are made to the Vice President, College Services. Technical services include access to information technology, computer networks, and all forms of instructional technology.
- b. Upon receiving the complaint, the Vice President (or designate) investigates the complaint with a view to remediation of the issue.
- c. In making the determination regarding remediation, the Vice President takes into account the guidelines within this policy, the guidelines set out by the Alberta Human Rights Commission, and the guidelines concerning "reasonable accommodation".
- d. The Vice President then communicates the findings of the investigation and the College's intention regarding potential remediation to the complainant.

2. Academic services, learning activities, instruction, student services:

- a. Complaints regarding access to academic services (such as library and learning support), learning activities, instruction, and student services (such as Registrarial services and student financial assistance) are made to the Vice President, Academic.
- b. Upon receiving the complaint, the Vice President (or designate) investigates the complaint with a view to remediation of the issue.
- c. In making the determination regarding remediation, the Vice President takes into account the guidelines within this policy, the guidelines set out by the Alberta Human Rights Commission, and the guidelines concerning "reasonable accommodation".
- d. The Vice President then communicates the findings of the investigation and the College's intention regarding potential remediation to the complainant.

OFFICER RESPONSIBLE: Vice President Academic

RECOMMENDING AUTHORITY: Deans' Council, upon recommendation from Service Council

CONSULTATION FOR REVIEW: Deans' Council, Service Council, Human Resources, Learning Resources, Learning Support Services, Student Services, Students' Association

POLICY REVIEW DATE: January 2017

EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2013

REVISION HISTORY: November 1, 2013

RELATED POLICIES:

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

CONNECTION TO BOARD POLICIES:

All RDC policies support relevant Board of Governors operational policies.