

To Refer or Not to Refer: That is the Question

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RARC Lunch and Learn Series
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Regional Assessment Resource Centre (RARC)

www.queensu.ca/rarc

Our vision is to enable students with neurodevelopmental disabilities to thrive in post-secondary education.

Services provided under 4 pillars:



Transition



Research



Training



Assessment

Session Topics

- Role of assessment
- When to refer a student
- Referral process overview
- FAQs



Equitable access to education

- Human Rights legislation (provincial and federal) governs access to post-secondary education
- Eligibility for accommodations under this legislation requires, in part, a diagnosis of a disability, but that diagnosis, in and of itself, does not necessarily compel accommodation, even if that person was given special education services in the past (Roberts, 2012).
- Accommodations are provided when the impairments that flow from a disorder interfere with equal ability to access and use the educational system.

Functional impairments

- According to OSAP, a disability means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a functional limitation—that restricts your ability to perform the daily activities necessary to pursue studies at a postsecondary school level or to participate in the labour force.
- Post-secondary programs are not obliged to provide accommodations that would undermine the essential requirements of a course or examination.



Goal of Psychoeducational Assessments

- Determine whether a Learning Disability, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder is present and contributing to an individual's academic impairment.
- Allows determination of the nature and degree of specific functional impairments.
- Guides appropriate interventions and supports to minimize the impact of identified functional impairments on their ability to access the curriculum.



Scenario #1

Jackie presents to Accessibility Services in the last weeks of August. She has an early diagnosis (grade three) of a Learning Disability in reading and writing and has been receiving accommodations as outlined in an Individual Education Plan (IEP) since early elementary school. She will be starting the Early Childhood Education program at your institution in a few weeks and would like to discuss accommodations. What do you do?



Scenario #2

Nelda presents to Accessibility Services in the last weeks of August. She has never been formally assessed but has been receiving accommodations as outlined in an Individual Education Plan (IEP) since early elementary school. She will be starting the Sociology program at your institution in a few weeks and would like to discuss accommodations. What do you do?



Scenario #3

Jody has been working with Accessibility Services for some time, and is receiving accommodations related to a permanent mental health disability. With these supports, the student is consistently attaining marks in the 80s and 90s (As and Bs). Jody presents to Accessibility Services with concerns that Autism Spectrum Disorder might underlie some of their challenges. As such, they are asking to be assessed for this condition. What do you do?



Scenario #4

Nasreen presents to Accessibility Services. They are currently in their fourth year of a Bachelor program, having received As and Bs in all of their courses to date (on a full-time program). They did not receive accommodations or special education supports in elementary, secondary, or their current post-secondary program. They report experiencing challenges with sustained attention, time management, and organization, and wonder if they might have AD/HD. What do you do?



Scenario #5

Xander presents to Accessibility Services. He is finishing his second year of a nursing program. He did not receive accommodations or special education supports in elementary, secondary, or his current post-secondary program so far. He had As and Bs in elementary and secondary school, and in first year of college. He failed some courses in his most recent semester and withdrew from others. His self-reported symptoms are: difficulty motivating himself to complete academic tasks, struggling to attend class, not sleeping well, and low mood. His family doctor provided a note saying an assessment is required to rule out LD and ADHD. What do you do?



Straightforward Presentations



Yes referral

Previous and outdated assessment/diagnosis (LD, ADHD, ASD)

No diagnosis but has received accommodations as outlined in an IEP historically

No previous assessment or accommodation but current and historical academic struggles



No referral

Permanent and sufficient accommodations already in place for other disorder

No evidence of academic impairment historically or currently

Challenges reported to be new and likely to be mental health in origin

Scenario #6

Trina presents to Accessibility Services in the last weeks of August. She has never been formally assessed, nor has she ever received academic accommodations. Trina reports a history of academic challenges, noting that she has always had to work harder than her peers to succeed. She will be starting the Social Services Worker program at your institution in a few weeks and would like to discuss accommodations. What do you do?



Scenario #7

Tali presents to Accessibility Services in the last weeks of August. She has never been formally assessed, nor has she ever received academic accommodations. Tali reports a history of academic challenges but states that, in her home country, these assessments/ accommodations were not readily available. She will be starting the Social Services Worker program at your institution in a few weeks and would like to discuss accommodations. What do you do?



Scenario #8

Sara presents to Accessibility Services with a history of strong academic performance, though she was told by her instructors to connect with accessibility services. Her interactions with the accessibility advisor are atypical, with stilted communication and fleeting eye contact. Sara discloses that she is performing well in her classes to date but her program coordinator is concerned about her ability to complete required practicum coursework. What do you do?



Tricky Presentations



What to do when there is...

No historical academic records available

Presentation complicated by English as a Second Language

Complex history/constellation of symptoms and diagnoses

Different course/class structure

- Part-time students
- Co-ops and placements
- Apprenticeships

Screening Evaluation for Neurodevelopmental Disorders (SEND)

- Screening Questionnaire:
 - Screening Evaluation for Neurodevelopmental Disorders (SEND)
 - Starts with a determination of impairment
 - No impairment - may still benefit from assessment but not a RARC/BSWD referral
 - Explores the possible role(s) of neurodevelopmental conditions
 - Helps identify additional underlying or comorbid conditions that may be affecting success

What do you do with the tricky presentations?

- Learning/study strategies
- Mental health support and treatment
- Temporary accommodations
- RARC can review documentation to make a recommendation about proceeding to assessment
 - Does involve collecting all of the paperwork
 - You can reach out to rarc@queensu.ca to ask questions before collecting paperwork



What is the RARC referral process?

1. Accessibility Advisor meets with student, recommends an assessment to go forward. Completes a Referral Form.
2. Documentation is collected (facilitated by Advisor or RARC).
3. Depending on location and availability, student is connected with a RARC or MAT practitioner for assessment.
4. In some cases a deposit or payment is required from student.
5. Assessment, feedback and report/DVF completed.
6. Final payment required from student/school.



Funding for Assessment

1. Paying out of pocket
2. Supplementary Health Insurance
3. BSWD/CSG-PDSE
 - a. RARC waives fees in excess of BSWD coverage
 - b. For federal only OSAP students with no diagnosis (and supplementary health insurance) we'll bring fees down to \$500
4. Sliding scale (goes as low as \$500)



Frequently Asked Questions

- Why is there so much paperwork?
- What is the difference between RARC's assessment and online ADHD assessments (Frida, Talk & Thrive, etc.)
- Why did RARC not recommend an assessment go through?
- When and why does the student need to pay a deposit?
- Are international students eligible for RARC assessments/funding?
- How do I know if it's a PEA, PEA + ASD Query or Neuro?



Assessment Types

Assessment Type	Psychoeducational Assessment (PEA)	Psychoeducational Assessment (PEA) + ASD Query	Neuropsychological Assessment
Cost	\$2800	\$3200	\$3200
Qualification of Assessor	Performed by Clinical Psychologist, School Psychologist, and/or Clinical Neuropsychologist		Performed by a Clinical Neuropsychologist (with training in brain-behaviour relationships)
What is included in evaluation	Formal assessment of overall ability, specific cognitive processing skills, and academic functioning. Also includes the evaluation of behavioural and/or psychological factors that may be contributing to identified academic impairment.	PEA evaluation plus: Evaluation of historic and current social, emotional, and sensory issues impeding academic success.	PEA evaluation plus: In-depth exploration of specific domains of cognitive functioning and exploration of the likely role of psychological factors in the client's reported challenges.
Goal of assessment	Seeks to understand an individual's learning style and to guide the development of academic accommodations and supports.	PEA evaluation plus: Seeks to understand any additional impairment caused by social, emotional, and/or sensory deficits.	Seeks to understand how an individual's brain functions and how that functioning impacts the individual's behaviour and learning. Guides the development of accommodations and supports to address their difficulties both inside and outside of the educational environment.
Focus of the assessment	Focuses on identifying the individual's difficulties in the educational environment (i.e., what is happening) rather than examining the underlying brain origins and neurocognitive processes causing the individual's difficulties (i.e., why it is happening).	PEA evaluation plus: Identifying the role that social, emotional, psychological, sensory, and behavioural factors are having on the student's inability to access the academic curriculum.	Examines an individual's underlying neurocognitive processes in greater detail to provide deeper insight into why a student is having certain difficulties, what their learning strengths and weaknesses are, and what interventions can be used to successfully address their difficulties both inside and outside of the educational environment.
Reason for referral	Requested to determine whether a Learning Disability or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is present and contributing to their academic impairment. May also be requested for students with a pre-existing Autism Spectrum Disorder that is causing academic impairment.	Requested to determine whether Autism Spectrum Disorder is present and contributing to academic impairment through persistent social, emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and/or sensory challenges.	Requested to determine how a medical condition affecting the functioning of their central nervous system (e.g., traumatic brain injury, stroke, tumour, CNS vasculitis, sickle cell disease, neurofibromatosis, etc.) is impacting academic impairment.

www.queensu.ca/rarc/assessments/rarc

Save the date!

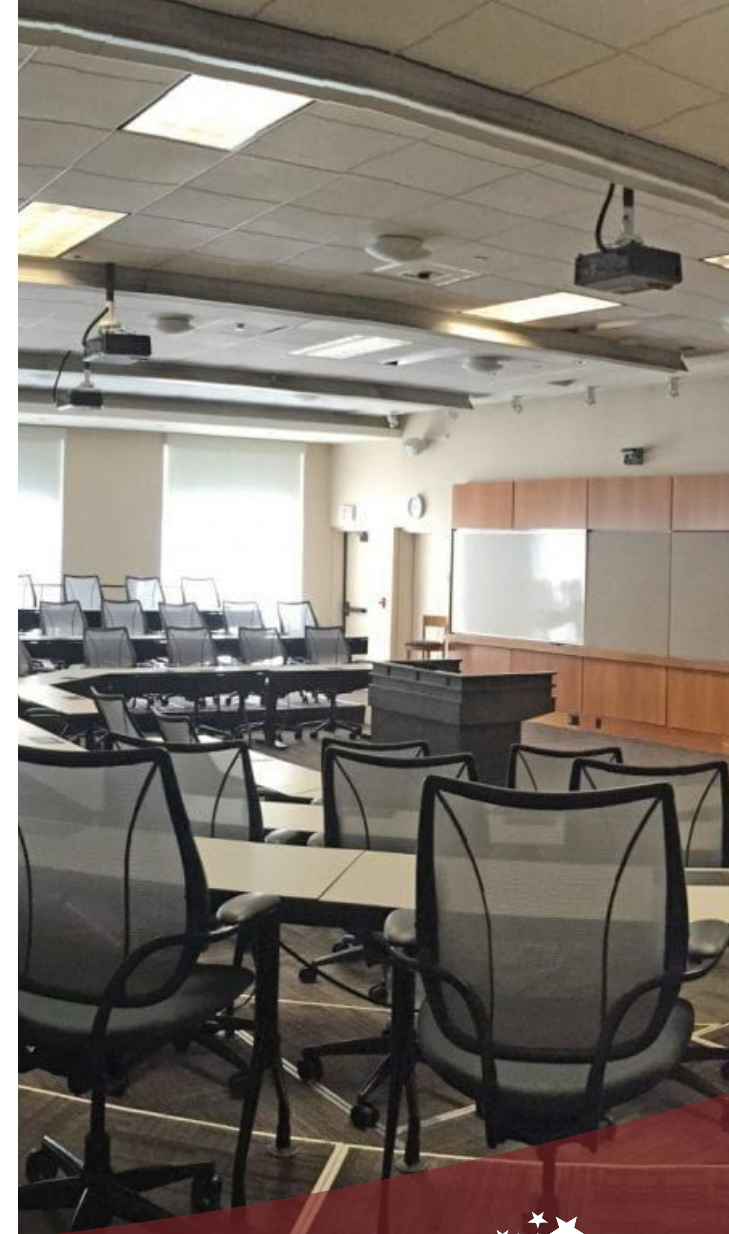
2025 RARC Workshop

Beyond Barriers: Sharing Innovative Insights and Strategies in Post-Secondary Accessibility

When: Thursday, May 8 & Friday, May 9, 2025

Where: Donald Gordon Conference Centre at Queen's University, in Kingston, Ontario

Call for proposals due Sept 30th, 2024



Upcoming Fall Lunch and Learns

All About Non-Verbal and Math LDs: What They Are and How to Support Students

Thursday, October 17th | Dr. Beth Pollock

Tricky Accommodations Issues

Thursday, November 21st | Dr. Beth Pollock



Thank You!

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