

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Career Strategies and Resources

Disability & Career Services

"Disability is an umbrella term covering impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions...Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society."

– World Health Organization

Here at Career Services, we understand that disability is a complex issue and affects each individual differently. We work with students to manage decisions affecting your work and further education in an integrated manner and consider all relevant factors that impact these decisions, including disability.

Disability and Employment

Prevalence and awareness of disability is increasing across the country:

- Across Canada, 22% of the population (approximately 6.2 million people) identify as a person with a disability. These disabilities vary greatly and include visible, invisible, permanent, temporary, episodic, sustained and life-long disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities represent 20% of the working age population (adults aged 25-64).

So what does this mean for the workforce?

- About 60% working-age adults with disabilities are employed
- More companies these days have appropriate policies and procedures in place for accommodating workers with disabilities
- Many public and private organizations are looking to recruit persons with disabilities to increase representation levels in their workforce to match those of the general population

Career Decisions & Job Search for Persons with Disabilities

Career and job search are big tasks for anyone, and with the additional considerations regarding your disability(ies), you may have additional questions or concerns about your career path. Come to [Drop-In Career Advising](#), or book a 1-on-1 [Career Consultation appointment](#) to learn more.

Here are some suggestions of successful job search and career decision strategies:

- Start with yourself - When choosing a career path or starting a job search, it is important to start with yourself. Look back at past experiences, what skills are you good at, what experiences have you enjoyed, what skills have you enjoyed using, where have you succeeded in the past, what topics or industries are you passionate about or interest you.
- Focus on your strengths – Identify your strengths and what skills and strategies you have succeeded with before. Use these as a place to start looking for jobs or careers that use and

focus on these strengths. When applying for a job, employers want to hire the most qualified (regardless of other factors) candidate; show that your strengths meet their needs.

- Do your research – when making a career decision, it is important to find out more about the careers you are considering through reading books, online resources, and talking to people in the profession to get an idea of what the day-to-day of this role will look like. For any job seeker, it is important to do your research on the company to make sure that they are a good fit for you. As a person with a disability, looking for company policies regarding equity, diversity, and accommodation may help you understand the supports that particular employers provide. You can also check out external reviews such as Canada’s [Top 100 Diversity Employers](#) to help you evaluate companies. Finding an employer who is experienced working with persons with disabilities can make your first transition to work easier.
- Be ready to talk about your functional limitations – when disclosing or requesting accommodations, you are not required to tell the employer your exact diagnosis. You will, however, need to be able to talk about the functional limitations and how these may potentially affect the way you do your work. For more information, see [our Disclosure & Accommodation tipsheet](#).

Dispelling Common Disability Myths

There are some common myths that exist around disabilities and employment for both the job seeker and the employer.

Job Seeker Myths:

“Disclosing my disability will always have a negative impact on my application.”

- More companies are specifically looking to hire employees with disabilities to increase representation to match the general population. Especially public sector (municipal, provincial and federal) employers will have specific mandates, policies and procedures regarding employment and recruiting persons with disabilities.

“Due to employment equity policies, I probably only got the job to meet a quota.”

- Employment Equity policies require employers to hire the most qualified candidate. If employers are considering two equally qualified candidates, then they are required to hire the person of an equity-deserving group first (person with a disability, visible minority, woman, Indigenous person).

“I will be the first person that this employer hires who has a disability/the employer won’t have experience understanding and meeting disability related needs.”

- Although your unique situation may be new to the employer, with persons with disabilities representing 20% of working-age adults, and 60% of working age-adults with disabilities employed, many employers are well-versed in working with employees with disabilities.

Employer Myths:

Many employers are making great strides in understanding accessibility and employment, however it can be useful to be aware of these myths and be able to speak to them if these topics come up with employers.

“Employees with disabilities have a higher absentee or turnover rate than the general population.”

- Research has found that 86% of employees with disabilities have average or above average attendance records.
- Tim Hortons franchisee [Megleen Inc.](#) which operates 6 stores in Toronto and includes people with disabilities in all aspects of the business, experiences employee turnover of 35% compared to the 75% industry average. And in 2011, absenteeism of Megleen’s employees with disabilities was 0. [Marriot reported a turnover rate of 6%](#) among persons with disabilities versus 52% overall. ¹

“The cost of accommodating a person with a disability is prohibitive.”

- According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, over 2/3 of accommodations cost less than \$500 or nothing at all.²
- Another study has shown that 57% of accommodations cost nothing, with 37% reporting a one-time cost, averaging \$500.³
- Many accommodations cost nothing to the employer (eg. flexible schedule). You can use the Job Accommodation Network (askjan.org) to get ideas on different accommodations you could request.

Employees with disabilities will be less productive or require more supervision

- A DuPont study showed that 90% of people with disabilities rated average or better on job performance.⁴
- The Harris Study revealed that 82% of managers found employees with disabilities no different to supervise than employees without disabilities. ⁵

Resources:

Canada Student Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/education/grants/disabilities.html>

This grant provides up to \$2000 for each year of study to students with permanent disabilities who qualify for student financial assistance and are enrolled in full or part-time programs at designated post-secondary institutions.

CareerEdge <https://www.careeredge.ca/>

CareerEdge provides a paid internship program that aims to help individuals facing barriers to employment connect with top employers in Canada, secure opportunities, and launch a meaningful career. Ask about the Ability Edge program for graduates with self-declared disabilities.

CareerWise Disability Articles <https://careerwise.ceric.ca/tag/disability/>

CareerWise is produced by CERIC, a charitable organization that advances education and research in career counselling and career development. On this page you can find many curated articles surrounding disability and employment. You can also use the tags on the right-hand side of the page to view other topics.

Discover Ability [Discover Ability Network](#)

The Discover Ability Network is a job search website built to allow employers to reach employees from equity seeking in a confidential manner. Job Seekers can confidentially identify themselves to the system, which will then notify them of matched job postings from employers. Use this platform to increase your access to equity employers today.

Jobpostings.ca Disability Articles <https://www.jobpostings.ca/career-guides/disabilities?tab=articles>

This job posting site curates articles related to disability and employment

Lime Connect <https://www.limeconnect.com/>

A global not for profit organization that works to connect high potential university students and professionals with disabilities with scholarships, internship and careers. Lime Connect works with a number of corporate partners to help educate them and develop opportunities for persons with disabilities. Check out their opportunities and programs on their website.

NEADS – National Educational Association of Disabled Students <https://www.neads.ca/>

Charitable organization with a mandate to support full access to education and employment for post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities across Canada. This website has both education and employment resources including financial aid and scholarship information and a number of videos and articles related to job search and disability.

Neil Square Society <https://www.neilsquire.ca/individual-programs-services/>

A Canadian national not-for-profit organization that has been empowering Canadians with disabilities through employment, digital literacy, and innovation for the past 35 years. Neil Square Society offers employment programs, computer training (online anywhere in Canada), and ergonomic and assistive technology services.

Accessibility at Career Services

Career Services would be pleased to assist you with any accommodations or alternate formats needed during a visit to our centre. To see what is already available in our centre, please visit <http://careers.queensu.ca/contact-us/request-accommodation>. Please contact us at 613-533-2992 or mycareer@queensu.ca for further support.

References

- ¹ "Rethinking DisAbility in the Private Sector – Report from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities." Government of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/consultations/rethinking-disabilities.html#h2.4-h3.3>
- ² "Undue hardship." Ontario Human Rights Commission, <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/pt/node/2874>.
- ³ Government of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/consultations/rethinking-disabilities.html#h2.4-h3.3>
- ⁴ DuPont/Australian Public Service Commission [APSC] "Ability at work: Tapping the talent of people with disability," Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2007.
- ⁵ "Mythbuster: Myths About Hiring Persons With Disabilities." Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, www.ccrw.org/.