

# *Personal Assistive Devices*

## Policy & Guidelines

### *Introduction*

Queen's is committed to welcoming and enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities in the life and work of the University.

The University recognizes that some persons with disabilities use personal assistive devices for reasons of their disability to perform personal, academic or professional tasks. The University recognizes that a growing range of personal assistive devices has served to expand significantly accessibility for persons with disabilities, thus improving their participation in the University community.

### *Definitions*

A *personal assistive device* is any device that is used, designed, made or adapted to assist persons with disabilities in performing various, everyday tasks such as moving, communicating, reading, writing or lifting.

Personal assistive devices cover a broad range of products including wheelchairs, power chairs, walkers, white canes, assistive listening devices, microphones, oxygen tanks, computers (including laptops), smartphones (e.g., Blackberry, iPhone), global position systems (GPS), etc.

### *Policy Statement*

Queen's University recognizes that some persons with disabilities may use personal assistive devices while accessing any service or location of the campus, excepting in circumstances where the use of a personal assistive device contravenes policies and/or legislation governing the delivery of particular services.

### *Guidelines*

The University sets out the following as guidelines regarding the use of personal assistive devices:

- 1) Persons with disabilities are entitled to use personal assistive devices while accessing any service or location of the University campus, excepting in situations where the use of the device contravenes policies and/or legislation governing the delivery of particular services. For example, the use of one's laptop may be restricted when writing examinations unless individualized, specific accommodations have been previously arranged through Disability Services;

- 2) There are circumstances under which assistive devices may be made available to persons with disabilities to enable them to access the University's goods and/or services. For example, Disability Services makes available assistive listening devices on loan to students registered with their services. For more information on the assistive devices that the University makes available for persons with disabilities, please visit the Equity Office website at: <http://www.queensu.ca/equity/content.php?page=accessibility>.
- 3) Persons with disabilities are entitled to confidentiality and the protection of their privacy and are not required to disclose to members of the University community information about their disability and/or the need for a personal assistive device, unless such information is required by Disability Services or Human Resources or other appropriate person for the purposes of creating and implementing an individualized accommodation plan;
- 4) Faculty, staff and other individuals engaged in the delivery of a service on behalf of the University (for example, guest lecturers, third party contractors, entertainers, etc.) are required to cooperate with the use of a personal assistive device for reasons of improving access to the University's services or goods. For example, lecturers should cooperate when asked by an audience member to wear a microphone or an assistive listening device. While individuals should not ask about a person's disability or their need for the device, they are encouraged to ask questions about the device to ensure its correct use;
- 5) *Use of Laptops in the Classroom* - Laptops are sometimes considered personal assistive devices and some students with disabilities use a laptop computer for reasons of a disability. Examples include:
  - a) students with vision loss or learning disabilities may use laptops equipped with screen reading technology
  - b) students with vision loss may use laptops equipped with magnifying technology
  - c) students with physical disabilities may take notes more easily with a laptop than by handwriting
  - d) students with hearing loss may participate in classroom interactions through the services of a note taker who records notes on a laptop which are then displayed simultaneously on the student's laptop

All faculty members are *required* to accommodate students with disabilities who use laptops for reasons of a disability. However, requiring students to disclose their need to use a laptop for disability-related reasons and consequently identifying them in the classroom poses a significant threat to the right of students to dignified participation in the University community

In light of the University's commitment to advancing accessibility for persons with disabilities by preventing the creation of new barriers, faculty members should, therefore, carefully consider any restrictions on the general use of laptops in the classroom.

Faculty who are concerned with the inappropriate use of laptops or other personal assistive devices in the classroom should seek guidance and support from the following services:

[Disability Service Office](#)

[Library Services for Students with Disabilities](#)

[Centre for Teaching and Learning](#)

[Emerging Technology Centre](#)

[Equity Office, Accessibility](#)