

Developing Academic Considerations for Students Affected by Sexual and Gender-Based Violence at Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions



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Land Acknowledgement

This work is taking place on and across the traditional territories of many Indigenous nations. We recognize that gender-based violence is one form of violence caused by colonization that is still used today to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands and waters. Our work on campuses and in our communities must centre this truth as we strive to end gender-based violence. We commit to continuing to learn and grow and to take an anti-colonial and inclusive approach to the work we engage with. It is our intention to honour this responsibility by actively incorporating into our work the [Calls for Justice within Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#).

About Possibility Seeds

[Courage to Act](#), is a national initiative to address and prevent gender-based violence at Canadian post-secondary institutions. It is led by Possibility Seeds, a social change consultancy dedicated to gender justice, equity, and inclusion. We believe safe, equitable workplaces, organizations and institutions are possible. Learn more about our work at www.possibilityseeds.ca.



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Introduction

Summary

The ability to defer an assignment, reweight coursework, modify an exam date and/or writing location, among other forms of academic support, are essential in supporting students affected by sexual and gender-based violence (SV/GBV) at post-secondary institutions (PSIs). In fact, academic considerations are often the most practical support that PSIs can provide those affected by SV/GBV. An academic considerations framework can provide PSIs with a blueprint for designing and implementing these vital academic supports. This facilitates students' access to academic considerations, and bolsters post-secondary staff, faculty and administrators' ability to navigate institutional policies and protocols and better support students seeking academic considerations as a result of SV/GBV.

This draft guide is therefore designed with post-secondary staff, faculty and administrators in mind. It provides a robust framework and promising practices to mitigate the impacts of SV and GBV on a student's academic experience. Structured in four parts, it distinguishes between academic accommodations and academic considerations; offers PSIs a survivor-centred, trauma-informed framework for developing academic considerations; discusses the application of the framework to policy and protocol; and includes guidance for supporting survivors through various related administrative processes. It also embeds examples of promising policies and protocols from various PSIs across Canada and includes reflection questions to allow a deeper dive into the nuanced issue of academic considerations.

This draft guide addresses the topic of academic considerations from a critical theory standpoint and integrates community-based participatory research methodology. Accordingly, qualitative methods are used to gather data through surveys and semi-structured interviews. From 2019–2021, Courage to Act consulted over a hundred PSI community members on the subject of designing and implementing accommodations and considerations for PSI classrooms and workplaces. Students and community members from across the country shared their lived experiences on how SV/GBV has impacted their academic wellbeing, degree completion, labour market readiness and graduate education (Khan, Rowe, & Bidgood, 2019). The results from consultations and survivor testimony were



used to develop a framework that would offer immediate response and support for survivors of SV/GBV. In summer 2022, Courage to Act conducted further consultations (surveys and interviews) with frontline GBV workers and administrators at PSIs across Canada to assemble policy examples and promising practices, and gather expert feedback on the academic considerations framework.

Strengths of this Draft Guide

This draft guide is unique in that it is the first to document academic considerations at PSIs in Canada and identify promising policies and protocols for designing and implementing academic considerations. It is also grounded in the understanding that SV and GBV are linked to acts of systemic oppression, including but not limited to sexism, racism, colonialism, classism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia. It adopts a systemic approach to change.

Informed by multiple levels of stakeholder consultation and collaboration, it is influenced by diverse voices, experiences and perspectives. As an evolving document, we welcome feedback from individuals in the GBV and PSI sectors with experience and expertise in developing and implementing academic considerations. Please share your comments and examples by emailing: operations@possibilityseeds.ca

Areas for Further Exploration

While this draft guide offers promising practices for developing academic interventions, questions still remain about supporting international students, mature students and students seeking to switch to different institutions. More work must be done to develop robust academic infrastructure that recognizes and mitigates the profound interruptions posed by GBV in the lives of students at PSIs.

Reflection Questions

1. How are academic considerations currently managed at your institution? Is the process centralized or decentralized?
2. What current policies guide academic considerations at your PSI?
3. Does your PSI SV/GBV policy explicitly address academic considerations for people affected by SV/GBV?
4. What are some barriers faced by SV/GBV survivors and respondents when accessing academic considerations/accommodations at your PSI?

Note on Wording

- Please note that some institutions refer to SV/GBV support staff as sexual violence support staff. This document uses these two terms interchangeably.
- This document uses the phrase “subjected to SV/GBV” when directly referring to survivors, and the phrase “affected by SV/GBV” to refer to survivors, their support networks and everyone impacted by that particular incident of violence.

References

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- Khan, F., Sweet, A., & Patel, D. (2023). *Acknowledge, Respond and Connect Model for Addressing Disclosures of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Professional Settings*. Possibility Seeds.

Section 1: Academic Accommodations and Academic Considerations

Quick Look: What's the Difference?

- **Academic accommodations** are rooted in accessibility legislation like the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) and corresponding post-secondary campus policies. They are typically governed by multiple university offices, and require diagnoses as well as the completion of assessments and authentication from medical professionals. They are available long-term (e.g. an autistic student may have provisions for exams at a smaller test centre, longer time for assignments, and be provided with a note taker).
- **Academic considerations** are temporary and informal, usually based on immediate circumstances (i.e. a student was sexually assaulted over the weekend, and their campus SV/GBV office reaches out to their academic advisor to ensure they can receive an extension on their papers). The need to provide academic considerations for people affected by SV/GBV can be included in campus policies, as well as be part of campus support protocols. Academic considerations do not require formal documentation. They are usually provided by the office dedicated to GBV support, or can be obtained through self-advocacy. They can also be attained without entering a formal PSI process or investigation.

What are Academic Accommodations?

Academic and workplace accommodations within PSI settings refers to a strategy or implementation that is designed to ensure an equitable and inclusive environment for persons with disabilities. It must allow for dignity, individualization and full participation in PSI activities (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018). Academic accommodations are typically defined within campus policies and require a formal diagnosis of a student. PSIs may have designated accessibility offices that facilitate student accommodation plans.

SV/GBV survivors whose trauma responses impact their ability to engage with the educational environment may qualify for accommodations under provincial accessibility legislation and PSI policy. However, many survivors struggle to secure academic support

because accommodations are framed as ongoing medicalized needs. Traumatic experiences such as being subjected to SV/GBV may be excluded from this as these incidents often occur unexpectedly and survivors' needs change over time. Further, students may struggle to register with accessibility offices because of the standardized medical diagnostic procedure that must be completed to receive accommodations. These procedures can be costly and span several weeks.

Accessibility Legislation in Canada

Provincial accessibility legislation recognizes the history of discrimination and mistreatment experienced by people with disabilities and aims to rectify and prevent systemic oppression via implementation of policies and protocols that accommodate for the unique accessibility needs of community members. The accommodations that students are entitled to under accessibility legislation vary across provinces and territories, thereby impacting how and when students can receive support. Additionally, some provinces do not have accessibility legislation (please refer to the chart below)¹:

Province	Act and Date of Last Revision	Link
Alberta	Does not have legislation	N/A
British Columbia	Accessible British Columbia Act - 2021	https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/21019
Manitoba	The Accessibility for Manitobans Act - 2014	https://accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/accessibility_for_manitobans_act.pdf
New Brunswick	Seeking legislation	N/A
Newfoundland and Labrador	An Act Respecting Accessibility in the Province (Newfoundland & Labrador) - 2021	https://www.assembly.nl.ca/HouseBusiness/Bills/ga50session1/bill2138.htm

¹ Nunavut, Yukon, and Northwest Territories have accessibility legislation contained within each province's Human Rights Acts.

Nova Scotia	An Act Respecting Accessibility in Nova Scotia - 2017	https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/accessibility.pdf
Ontario	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act - 2016	https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11#BK0
Prince Edward Island	Does not have legislation	N/A
Quebec	Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights to achieve social, school and workplace integration (Quebec) - 2022	https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/E-20.1
Saskatchewan	Seeking legislation	N/A

Barriers to Securing Academic Accommodations

Consultations with survivors, faculty, staff and administrators uncovered several barriers to accessing academic accommodations, including but not limited to systemic oppression; shame and judgment; and procedural concerns.

Systemic Oppression

Ableism and disableism towards people with disabilities (Dolmage, 2017) create a reluctance to label oneself as having a mental health disorder or disability and act as a deterrent to seeking accommodations for survivors.

Ableism: Maintains compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006) and holds that “being a person without a disability is desirable” (Vaccaro, Lee, Tissi-Gassoway, Kimball, & Newman, 2020).

Some students may not feel like they can register at an academic accommodations office because of mental health stigma. In fact, some students may prefer to have a failing grade or drop a course than be labeled with a disability or a mental health diagnosis.

Furthermore, engaging with the mental health system can be traumatizing for students who identify as Indigenous, Black, or from other racialized backgrounds. Research indicates

racialized patients face health inequities and receive distinctly different standards of care than their white counterparts (Gupta, 1996; Mahabir, O'Campo, Lofters, Shankardass, Salmon, & Muntaner, 2021; Tang & Browne, 2008). For example, Black patients are often treated with scrutiny in assessing their symptoms, and their level of physical pain and other symptomatology is downplayed by medical professionals (Feagin & Bennefield, 2014). This, and other forms of medical racism, are rampant in healthcare systems and make completing the diagnostic process difficult for racialized students.

Reflection Questions

1. How does the accessibility office at your PSI maintain a list of trauma-informed practitioners to refer clients for diagnoses?
2. Are the accessibility advisors themselves trained in anti-oppressive, anti-racist principles?
3. Does your PSI support students by acquiring culturally informed practitioners when needed?

Shame and Judgement

Additionally, the bias against people who have been subjected to SV/GBV remains intertwined in our societal fabric. Survivors may unknowingly interact with medical professionals untrained in trauma symptomatology and/or carrying internal biases. The fear of being shamed, judged or blamed for what happened to them can prevent people subjected to SV/GBV from reaching out for professional medical support when it is needed.

Retraumatization: Occurs when the methods used to discuss, debate and analyze the original trauma cause triggering symptoms related to the incident itself, or reliving moments from the original trauma (Valpied et al., 2014)

Procedural Concerns

Barriers to accessing academic accommodations include procedural concerns like timeliness, invasion of privacy, lack of confidentiality and retraumatization (Kammerer & Mazelis, 2006). These are all issues that PSI community members have identified as hindrances to receiving the care and support they require following an incident of GBV or SV.

"The expectation is that I go through the Accessible Learning Centre and I flagged it as a pretty large concern in that I feel like it's problematic to tell students in order to get these accommodations, they have to essentially identify as having a disability. I think that's like ethically and liabley [sic] kind of a nightmare. (...) For students who are experiencing harm late in the semester, I often struggled to get them accommodations (in a) timely (manner) because the Accessible Learning Centre is obviously so booked up and they won't be taking new people within like a month or three weeks of exam times and so then those students are kind of screwed."

- Response and Support, People Doing the Work, Listening and Learning Participant (Khan et al., 2019, p. 65)

The formal processes of academic accommodations offer limited flexibility and customization in the way SV/GBV survivors can navigate surrounding policies. Accommodations usually require medical documentation of disability which includes a cost. Further, registration wait times are usually more than two (2) weeks and have a standard registration process regardless of the nature of the disability. Additionally, these processes can be difficult to navigate when a student is struggling due to the impacts of trauma. In our consultations, we heard that these were some of the most common procedural challenges survivors faced when seeking accommodations:

- Multiple offices mean a potential for a lack of continuity of care and/or the requirement that survivors retell traumatic events, which can be traumatizing to students and staff.
- Registration wait times may be unpredictable and deter students who need consideration within days or hours.
- A standardized response for all disabilities means that the specific needs of SV/GBV survivors may not be met, and trauma-informed practice may not be guaranteed as SV/GBV expertise will vary between staff members.
- Medical documentation is not equally accessible to all students. Seeking documentation may challenge students who are reluctant to engage with the healthcare system, unable to communicate their needs to a medical professional or unable to pay for documentation fees that are not covered by insurance. Having to

seek documentation can further extend registration timelines depending on the availability of medical professionals.

- The process of seeking documentation requires time and energy. It is unreasonable and inequitable to expect that all students who have been recently subjected to violence or are trying to manage a flare-up of post-traumatic symptomatology will be able to successfully navigate healthcare systems to obtain medical documentation.


Reflection Questions

1. What is the impact of requiring people subjected to SV/GBV to “qualify” their trauma through formal psychiatric diagnoses? What alternatives, if any, exist at your PSI? Are they grounded in a trauma-informed and healing-centred framework?
2. What are some ways current formal diagnostic procedures are accessible to students who are survivors of SV/GBV? In what ways are they not?
3. What hurdles may students face in pursuing these diagnostic processes?

What are Academic Considerations?

Academic considerations are an immediate and flexible approach to support student well-being and mental health and can be used to prevent the retraumatization of SV/GBV survivors at PSIs. They allow SV/GVB offices to provide an immediate response and minimize disruption to a survivor’s daily routine, academic progress and performance, and future career outcomes (Potter et al., 2018; Rossiter et al., 2020).

At first, academic considerations may appear synonymous with accessibility accommodations. However, academic considerations do not require the involvement of accessibility offices; considerations can be granted through the campus SV/GBV office. Further, academic considerations limit the complications of traditional accommodations by removing the requirement of meeting rigid timelines and diagnostic criteria. Although considerations work outside the accessibility accommodation process, this does not mean they cannot be developed or implemented into existing policies. Considerations can be used in campus-wide SV/GBV policies to fill the gaps left by highly administrative accommodations processes. For example, many PSIs have time frames in which a student



needs to request an academic consideration, such as seventy-two (72) hours after the event leading to the consideration request. Using a trauma-informed and healing-centred approach, we can design academic considerations that allow survivors to request considerations over a wider period of time to be better equipped to provide support on a case-by-case basis.

Examples of Academic Considerations

Below are some examples of academic considerations. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and what is permitted in terms of academic considerations will vary from institution to institution.

- Flexibility on assignment deadlines
 - Following an incident of SV or GBV, survivors may request an extension on assignments.
- Assignment, group, or presentation modification
 - Survivors may request the opportunity to submit an essay orally rather than in writing.
 - They may also request that they do not have to present in front of their class, and not participate in group work because of difficulty managing group scheduling or because they are grouped with someone who has caused them harm.
- Modification of coursework
 - Survivors may request permission to engage with alternate material if the assigned content contains graphic descriptions of GBV.
 - Survivors may also request make-up assignments for work that has been missed.
- Exam or test rewrites
 - Following an incident of SV or GBV, survivors may request to rewrite an exam.
- Exam or test rescheduling

- Trauma impacts cognition and concentration and survivors may request more time to study.
- Survivors may have been harmed by a classmate, teaching assistant or instructor, and not wish to write their exam in the same space with someone who has caused them harm. We recommend that GBV support staff be empowered to proctor exams and that GBV support offices have a space where survivors can write their exams.
- Reweighting of assignment grades
 - If survivors are unable to complete coursework, they may request that other assignments completed for a course are reweighted.
- Requests for incomplete grades/extensions beyond the end of a semester
 - Many institutions have a process for requesting extensions beyond the end of a semester. A GBV office can support such a request through academic considerations by requesting that the due date extension goes beyond the end of the semester, or by requesting that the student be granted an incomplete grade and permitted to complete the course after the semester has finished. The office can then support the student through the incomplete grade request process.

How Academic Considerations are Administered

Considerations administered by a single office limit the student's interaction with multiple administrative offices and personnel. In practice, considerations are coordinated by the GBV team, who maintains the confidentiality of the student and communicates their request to the appropriate administrator, such as the program administrator or registrar, who confidentially communicates the consideration to the professor of the class without ever revealing the reason for the request. Providing survivors with a streamlined pathway to access academic considerations through an office staffed with GBV experts allows survivors to get the support they need without being retraumatized by a cumbersome process or the expectation of repeatedly recounting vulnerable and painful information.

This accomplishes the following:

1. Reduces retraumatization: students do not have to retell their story or describe their situation to multiple administrators.
2. Addresses fears of being shamed, blamed and judged: a SV/GBV support office will have people trained in trauma-informed delivery of care that will refrain from relying on common myths about GBV.
3. Empowers one team to complete the considerations process: this will reduce the replication of labour that comes with involving multiple offices and staff members.
4. Protects the privacy of the person affected by GBV: the consideration request received by the sexual violence support staff is masked by the time it reaches the professor. Any paperwork given to the student's instructor is not explicit in explaining why the request is being made.

"Our office's staff can assist students with coordinating these requests with their instructors for academic modifications, so they do not need to retell their story to each instructor, particularly if this may be triggering for them."

- GBV support staff

Ultimately, academic considerations provide a more organized and productive method of processing student requests; they are also compassionate, dignified, survivor-centric, trauma-informed and healing-centred.

Barriers to Accessing Academic Considerations

Data from our surveys and interviews also uncovered barriers to accessing academic considerations. Although academic considerations are considered less formal, survivors may face barriers in needing to justify considerations with each instructor. Because there is a discrepancy in how each instructor structures their course policies (discussed below) and because each instructor possesses a different level of awareness on issues of SV/GBV, there is a possibility that survivors may have their requests for academic considerations dismissed.

Re-telling their Experience

A survivor should not need to tell their story to every instructor in their schedule. Through centralized communication about requests for academic consideration by a SV/GBV campus worker, survivors are protected from the additional anxiety of needing to account for each instructor's perception of their request and rationale for requiring academic considerations. Staff who are not trained in trauma-informed support; probing and unnecessary questions; and unclear timelines all serve as barriers to receiving support.

Restrictive Deadlines

Because the academic semester runs on a tight schedule, students may feel pressure to submit their request for academic consideration within a certain time frame or risk being dismissed. A course syllabus cannot account for when violence occurs and when post-traumatic stress may be most significant.

Inconsistencies in Policy between Instructors

All post-secondary instructors approach their personal course policies differently. While some instructors may be lenient with extensions and various other academic consideration requests, some instructors hold very strict and restrictive policies. Having a standardized approach reduces the risk that survivors will be accommodated in some learning spaces on campus and not others.

Reflection Questions

1. Does your PSI include the concept of "considerations" or "accommodations" determined on a case-by-case basis in their SV/GBV policy? Can this concept be raised at your next policy review?
2. Are the exam moderators at your PSI trained in understanding the impacts of GBV and treating survivors with compassion?



Academic Considerations in Practice

The University of Victoria allows for their campus [Sexualized Violence Resource Office](#) to provide academic considerations to students who are referred to the office for support. Instead of reporting the incident of SV/GBV to multiple offices or expending time seeking accommodations via accessibility offices, students can speak to a GBV specialist and acquire support on academic assignments, quizzes and examinations.

Promising Practice

Procedures for the [Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response Policy \(GV0245\)](#) at the University of Victoria.

A14.00 Information and support can include helping students to access academic support options, which may include but are not limited to:

- (a) adjusting a student's academic schedule, course, exam dates, academic supervisor, or instructor;
- (b) withdrawal from a course without penalty;
- (c) academic concession requests (e.g., deferring a final exam, assignment, or other course work; backdated course drops or withdrawals; an alternative form of assessment; etc.);
- (d) applications for leaves of absence; and/or
- (e) referral to other academic resources and available supports.

A13.01 Information and support can be provided to help students understand the implications of relevant timelines for academic concessions. Additional information on academic concessions is contained in the Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Calendars.

Recommended Readings

Eerkes, D., De Costa, B. & Jafry, Z. (2020). *A Comprehensive Guide to Campus Gender-Based Violence Complaints: Strategies for Procedurally Fair, Trauma-Informed Processes to Reduce Harm*. Courage to Act: Addressing and Preventing Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada.

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Section 2: Developing an Academic Considerations Framework

Summary


This section aims to present a practical, evidence-based academic considerations framework that can be adapted by every PSI to design and implement comprehensive academic considerations for students affected by SV/GBV. Surveys and interviews with key post-secondary stakeholders revealed that there is little consistency and few formalized processes for academic considerations to support students affected by SV/GBV. Each PSI has a unique approach to developing academic considerations. This framework is therefore not prescriptive; rather, it offers guiding principles, promising models and key approaches to centre the needs of those affected by SV/GBV while recognizing broader structural issues and forms of institutional violence.

Building an Academic Considerations Framework

Guiding Principles

Inclusive and Intersectional: Policies, protocols, and support must consider intersecting identities and experiences as these impacts someone's access to support; whether they are believed; how they are treated in their community; and how they are treated by institutions such as medical, legal or educational systems (Courage to Act, p. 38). Those affected by SV/GBV have noted that this can make navigating academic accommodations and considerations processes especially challenging, i.e. procuring necessary documentation.

Accessible: PSIs must commit to removing barriers and ensuring access to services and support for those affected by SV/GBV, thereby allowing them to heal, participate in the campus community in a way that works for them and achieve academic success (Courage to Act, p. 38). People affected by SV/GBV often reported facing "difficulty obtaining medical documents for trauma as well as the cost of medical documentation," and that "institutional timelines do not consider the impact of trauma on a student's ability to access or reach out for support" (Courage to Act, p. 65). Further, any protocols, procedures, and support spaces should be accessible to all PSI community members, including, but not



limited to, people with visible disabilities, deafness or being hard of hearing, intellectual or developmental learning and mental health disabilities (Courage to Act, p. 38).

Transparent: Those affected by SV/GBV should be able to easily access resources, as well as policies and protocols about academic accommodations and considerations, both online and in-person (Courage to Act, p. 38).

Trauma-Informed: Those affected by SV/GBV have reported, “GBV is often seen as an episodic, not a chronic, issue with long-lasting impacts that are not taken into account within accessibility, medical or compassionate grounds” (Courage to Act, p. 65). Policies, protocols and support must recognize the impacts of trauma (intergenerational, historical, complex, acute, chronic, and community-based) and integrate this into institutional responses (Courage to Act, p. 38).

Informed Consent: There is a need for confidential administrative processes to ensure that those affected by SV/GBV know how and when their information is being shared within and beyond the institution.

Continuity of Care: With informed bilateral consent, a student affected by SV/GBV should have access to connected and coordinated care while seeking support across the institution. This would help build trust, as well as prevent retraumatization from having to tell their story multiple times (Courage to Act, p. 66).

Promising Models

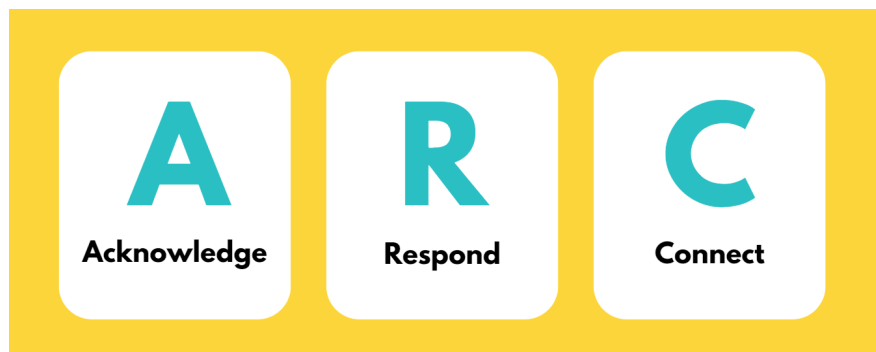
Possibility Seeds CEO Farrah Khan has developed two models, BRAVE and ARC, to respond to disclosures of SV/GBV in a trauma-informed and healing-centred manner. Each model will consist of a workbook and accompanying toolkit, and will be released by Possibility Seeds’ Courage to Act in late 2023.

This academic considerations framework integrates the ARC Model (Khan, Sweet, & Patel, 2023) which reminds responders to “acknowledge their role, respond with empathy, and connect with support” when receiving disclosures of SV and GBV. Throughout this draft guide, we will refer to this model to guide the application of trauma-informed and healing-centred administrative support.



BRAVE

- **B:** Begin by Listening
- **R:** Respect Confidentiality
- **A:** Ask what Support Looks Like for Them
- **V:** Validate
- **E:** Empathize



ARC

- **Acknowledge:** I will acknowledge my role, recognizing my boundaries and the limits to my confidentiality based on my workplace policy/professional standards with the person who has disclosed to me. Consider using the BRAVE Model (Khan, 2023) in such cases.
- **Respond:** I will listen with care and respond with empathy. I will collect initial information but will not investigate or probe. I will provide a clear explanation of what information is being collected and why, as well as who will see the information

and what to expect from the process. I will gently explain any limits to what can be requested in the process.

- **Connect:** I will connect the student to the campus office with the expertise to address the situation. Afterward, I will take steps to support and care for myself as needed. If a student has requested several academic considerations over the course of a semester, I will consider connecting them with accessibility support for longer term academic accommodations. If I am not tasked with providing support to survivors of GBV at my PSI, I will connect the student to the people within this role.

Key Approaches

Trauma- and Violence-Informed & Healing-Centred

The Academic Considerations framework is grounded in trauma-informed and healing-centred approaches, which recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma and its impacts on behaviour, communication, and memory (Khan et al., 2019). To learn more about the physiological aspects of trauma, review Courage to Act's [A Comprehensive Guide to Campus Gender-Based Violence Complaints](#), which provides an in-depth account of the impacts of trauma, including conscious and unconscious effects, post-traumatic stress disorder, behaviour, and memory (Eerkes, De Costa, & Jafry, 2020).

A trauma- and violence-informed (TVI) approach draws direct attention to broader structural and social conditions, as well as forms of ongoing and/or institutional violence, and the need for service providers to conduct their work in full recognition of these contexts.

Four principles of a TVI approach

1. Understand trauma and violence and their impacts on people's lives and behaviours
2. Create emotionally and physically safe environments
3. Foster opportunities for choice, collaboration, and connection
4. Provide a strengths-based and capacity-building approach to support client coping and resilience

A healing-centred approach, based on the work of Dr. Shawn Ginwright (2018), is a valuable approach in designing academic considerations. It recognizes that by providing academic considerations, campus administrators are allowing survivors to attend to their immediate needs, thereby reducing the likelihood and severity of long-term impacts.

“A healing-centred approach to addressing trauma requires a different question that moves beyond “what happened to you” to “what’s right with you” and views those exposed to trauma as agents in the creation of their own well-being rather than victims of traumatic events.”

- Dr. Shawn Ginwright

Institutional Collaboration

Recognizing that academic considerations are a valuable tool to support survivors, we encourage you to convene key stakeholders and services—i.e. counseling, registrar’s office, sexual violence and gender-based violence support, student union, accessibility/academic accommodations—to explore the following questions:

Reflection Questions

1. What are your PSI’s guiding principles for providing academic considerations for people affected by SV and GBV? If your PSI does not have these, consider building your own to establish a shared language for all offices providing support to students.
 - You may want to refer to the six principles shared in the introduction.
2. What are ways academic considerations are presently included, or can be included, in your PSI’s SV policy?
3. What is the current protocol on your campus for students accessing academic considerations?
 - How can this protocol be modified to better align with your guiding principles?
 - How can this protocol be grounded in a trauma-informed and healing-centred framework?

Further, as not every administrator will be a GBV expert, all PSIs should implement annual training on all forms of GBV and the impact of trauma, especially on learning. Research shows that student success and potential is highly influenced by factors relating to mental health and carries long-term and life-changing effects on graduation rate, rate of retention, and career longevity (Bruffaerts, Mortier, Kiekens, Auerbach, Cuijpers, Demyttenaere, Green, Nock, & Kessler, 2018). The deterioration of mental health during transformative years at a PSI can be detrimental to a student's ability to build healthy relationships and gain financial security. Literature indicates students with mental health concerns are twice as likely to leave PSIs without attaining a degree (Kessler, Foster, Saunders, & Stang, 1995), while students who experience depression symptomatology and suicidal ideation are more likely to have lower overall grade point averages (De Luca, Franklin, Yueqi, Johnson, & Brownson, 2016).

In addition, it is important that each institution has a strategy to create a trauma-informed, healing-centred educational environment within their academic plan. This will ensure a holistic approach that moves beyond academic considerations to support the whole campus community from the very first point of engagement.

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Section 3: Applying the Academic Considerations Framework to Policies & Protocols

Summary

Academic considerations for GBV survivors can be administered in a way that is trauma-informed and healing-centred to protect students from further harm, while still respecting academic integrity. Following this framework ensures that policies and protocols are immediate, responsive, confidential, survivor centric, trauma-informed and healing-centred. This section will consider how to integrate this framework in the development of policies and protocols for academic considerations with GBV survivors.

Integrating the Framework into Policy

Principle	Integration in Policy
Inclusive and Intersectional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intersecting identities (sex, ancestry, race, ethnicity, language, ability, faith, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender identity, etc.) impact someone's access to support; whether they are believed; and how they are treated by institutions such as the medical, legal and educational system.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Policy should acknowledge this and speak to how the PSI will ensure that its responses, prevention efforts and supports take an anti-oppressive and trauma-informed stance. For instance, if a survivor experiences difficulty procuring documentation because of systemic barriers, the policy could recognize the expertise of GBV support workers and give them the power to validate consideration requests without requiring documentation from a healthcare professional.
Accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students should know that they can request academic considerations if they are subjected to or affected by GBV.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Policy could mandate that every course syllabus has information on the sexual violence/gender-based violence support office, the range of supports available, and how to access them.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy documents and considerations requests should be made available in accessible formats, as PSI community members including, but not limited to, people with visible disabilities, deafness or being hard of hearing, intellectual or developmental learning and mental health disabilities, will have different access needs. • Flexibility with time frames for request and the types of request <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ PSIs may have rules for when academic considerations should be requested, often within 72 hours. A policy with flexibility for survivors in mind would allow for case by case determinations of acceptable timelines that respect academic integrity. ◦ Support for survivors cannot be “one size fits all”. Policies should allow for survivors to collaborate with support workers and instructors to create consideration plans that are academically sound and reflect the needs of the survivor. For example, if an assignment requires students to reflect on material that contains graphic descriptions of GBV, survivors should be able to request other materials that meet the requirements of the assignment.
Trauma-Informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors should not have to endure retraumatization in order to access services and secure academic considerations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Policy could focus on impacts rather than incidents so that students are not required to share graphic details of an assault in order to secure academic considerations. • Trauma-informed practice requires informing survivors of regulations and limits to processes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Survivors should be made aware of the limits of a process, what is an acceptable request, when support staff may request details about an assault to better support the student, and what information needs to be shared, with whom, and why. ◦ GBV involves the theft of autonomy and a transgression of boundaries. Being clear with survivors about what is possible gives them the control to make their own decisions within existing boundaries.

Transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those affected by GBV should be able to easily access resources, as well as policies and protocols about academic accommodations and considerations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy and corresponding documentation should be easy to find online, and paper copies should be made available through the campus SV/GBV support office.
Informed Consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GBV is always personal, regardless of how connected it is to structural oppressions. Survivors should have control over their story and should be able to make decisions based on all available information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy can require staff to explain the details of a process, such as academic consideration or retroactive withdrawal, including but not limited to: what can be requested, expected timelines, and if there are avenues for appeal if the request is denied. Policy can require that administrative bodies such as the registrar's office work with campus SV/GBV support offices to ensure that support staff have all available information to relay to students. Information about a case should only be shared on a need-to-know basis, and the survivor should be informed of with whom information will be shared. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Who needs to know what?" is the question that should guide the sharing of information. Instructors do not need the details of an assault, but they do need the details of the consideration request, to know the request is valid, and to know with whom they will be communicating. Policy can primarily focus on impacts of trauma, rather than incidents of trauma. For example, those weighing the validity of a retroactive withdrawal request need to know how a student has been impacted in such a way that prevented them from dropping a course by posted deadlines; human resources needs to know when an incident involves a staff member and the staff member(s) involved. Survivors will have different financial concerns. If a survivor needs to drop classes, this may impact their student loans, scholarships and bursaries, or enrollment status. Support staff should explore

	these realities with the survivors so they can make decisions that work best for them.
Continuity of Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With informed bilateral consent, a student affected by SV/GBV should have connected and coordinated care while accessing support across the institution. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Policy can require program administrators, instructors, and other university offices to work with survivors and GBV support staff to provide support on a case-by-case basis. ◦ Policy can clearly state the roles of students, GBV staff, instructors, and program staff in administering and requesting academic considerations. • These administrative processes can be bureaucratic, but they are also an opportunity to show survivors that there are staff, faculty, administrators and resources available to support them and that it is not shameful to ask for help. It also shows staff that there are experts on campus who can assist them as they support students. This reduces the duplication of work and vicarious trauma. It can also increase staff and student retention by preventing burn out.

Considerations for Policy

When developing a policy to describe an academic consideration process, it is important to authorize the SV/GBV support staff to independently validate requests without needing to consult other offices. Support workers should be empowered to provide documentation that validates the nature of a request while maintaining the student's confidentiality, similar to a doctor's note. The policy should clarify which staff are able to validate academic consideration requests on the basis of GBV to avoid confusion, replication of work, and possible conflict when these requests are made. To accomplish this, the policy must make use of legitimate grounds for consideration and support. Since PSIs will already have protocols for managing requests, academic considerations, retroactive withdrawals, grade appeals and other administrative processes, the campus SV/GBV support office should be included in larger, overarching policies. We recommend that SV/GBV support offices be the sole body that administers academic considerations related to GBV. This limits how often a survivor needs to share the details of their story, and with whom these details are shared. Academic considerations should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis that recognizes the

impacts of trauma while being mindful of academic integrity. Once a request is validated, the GBV support staff can work with faculties and/or instructors to implement these considerations.

Incorporating academic considerations into a PSI's existing SV/GBV policy ensures the following:

- The PSI is prepared to implement a process to support the academic success of student survivors.
- SV/GBV support staff are able to coordinate consideration requests.
- Students can be informed of their support options.
- Request protocols are in accordance with an established policy wherein specific staff have the authority to validate requests. This can mitigate accusations of misuse of the process.

Promising Practice

Let's review the following policy, University of Ottawa's [Policy 67b Prevention of Sexual Violence](#):

5.6. The Sexual Violence Response Team must ensure that:

- i) the person who has experienced sexual violence received information regarding internal and external personal support and advocacy services, and internal (non-criminal) and external (criminal and other legal proceedings) complaint processes;
- ii) appropriate accommodations and interim measures are available and implemented to stabilize the situation and/or separate the parties and to address any safety or security concerns; and
- iii) a threat assessment is conducted.

Reflection Questions

1. What grounds are recognized as a valid appeal by your institution?
2. How does the policy on SV/GBV prevention at your institution address grounds for appeals and considerations?

Considerations for Protocol

With a strong policy in place to add authority to their actions, SV/GBV support staff are empowered to follow a protocol that is trauma-informed and centres the well-being of the person affected by GBV. This section will reflect on how the ARC model can practically be applied to considerations protocols (Khan et. al., 2023).

Acknowledge: When a student is seeking academic considerations for GBV, their request may involve a disclosure of an incident of violence that may or may not be ongoing. Acknowledge what the student is going through and that the situation is a source of stress.

Respond: Let the student know about the academic considerations request process, including what kinds of requests can be made, who will see the request, who will know that the request is related to GBV, what information you will need and why you are asking for it. Let the student know that there is support for survivors at the institution.

Connect: If you are a GBV support worker at your institution, it may be important to do a risk assessment based on what the student has disclosed. Be sure to remind the student of your limits of confidentiality. If you are not a GBV support worker at your institution, let the student know about the GBV support office and offer to connect them to a worker there.

When designing protocols for academic considerations for SV and GBV, we advise the following:

1. Initial request: student makes a request to the SV/GBV support office.
2. A trained member of the support office communicates the request to the program administrator/academic advisor, without offering details for why the request is being made.
3. The academic advisor then sends an anonymized version of the request to the instructor, indicating that a validated request has been received by their office, without mentioning the office that facilitated the process or revealing that the student has accessed resources relating to SV/GBV support.

Promising Practice

GBV workers must also maintain communication with survivors and ensure they understand that considerations may change or need to be adjusted over time. As one GBV worker shares:

"Students are encouraged to consider both their current academic needs and recognize that [their consideration] needs may emerge or change over time and that they are entitled to connect and seek these at any point."

To see the process in action, take a look at the Template Academic Considerations Request Form and Template Email to Academic Administrator.

Promising Practice

Queen's University has written academic considerations into the Policy on Sexual Violence Involving Queen's University Students by stating:

7.1. Students requiring academic consideration (e.g. extensions on assignments, deferrals of exams, dropping classes) or longer-term academic accommodations can be assisted by the SVPRC, and/or other university staff and faculty including but not limited to Student Wellness Services and the Human Rights and Equity Office, in seeking those measures, in accordance with the University procedures and standards for requesting and granting academic consideration or accommodations, as the case may be.

Retrieved from:

<https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/board-policies/policy-sexual-violence-involving-queens-university-students>

Additional Policy and Protocol Considerations

Listed below are three further considerations for developing policies and protocols on academic considerations.

Ensuring Freedom from Reprisal

Unsurprisingly, it is common for students affected by SV/GBV to fear negative consequences, additional harm, or danger to their reputation as a result of disclosing incidents of GBV or simply asking for support. Students seeking support may need to traverse a number of different processes with different officials, including their professors, with whom they may work closely. Accessing accommodations and considerations for GBV puts students in the vulnerable position of asking for help and disclosing GBV. Students should not ever be put in a position where they are made to feel indebted to those who have supported them, nor should they feel spurned or disrespected when they reach out for help.

A student shares their fear of reprisal:

“Facing stigma from professors, being afraid or unsure to speak out”

PSIs can combat reprisal within their communities in the following ways:

1. Make freedom from reprisal a component of your campus GBV policy: during periods of policy review, establish language within the policy that directly opposes reprisal, as well as a “non-compliance” clause that addresses what will happen if people enact reprisal.
2. Education and training that promotes cultural and attitudinal changes towards GBV and reacting to GBV on campus; an emergence of consent culture and a community that respects and believes people affected by GBV will not occur overnight. PSIs must contribute resources and personnel dedicated to producing educational campaigns, training and other materials that work to build cultures of consent, survivor-centricity, anti-oppression and human rights on campus.
3. Anonymization of documentation: wherever possible, administrators should provide ambiguity to requests for academic considerations and accommodations. This includes using general and non-descript forms for academic considerations, and using language that focuses on the request being made, versus the events that triggered the request.

Promising Practice

Retrieved from Toronto Metropolitan University's (formerly Ryerson University) [Sexual Violence Policy](#):

Part Two – Adjudication of Reports or Complaints

Section 3d. Freedom from Reprisal

Every member of the Ryerson community has a right to claim and enforce their rights under this policy, to provide evidence and to participate in proceedings under this policy, without reprisal or threat of reprisal.

All respondents will be informed of the university's position regarding the seriousness of any allegations of reprisal against complainants, witnesses or others involved, what constitutes reprisal; any claims of reprisal will also be investigated and responded to.

Reflection Questions

1. What practice or actions can you take to ensure survivors are protected from reprisal throughout the considerations process?
2. What training or education initiatives can you introduce at your institution to advance a consent culture?

An Inclusive & Intersectional Lens

Students and staff from marginalized communities are differentially impacted by GBV. Rates of GBV for Black, Indigenous and racialized, disabled, LGB, and Two Spirit, trans, and nonbinary communities are higher than for cisgender, able-bodied, heterosexual white people. To better equip policies to support survivors with a range of needs, include language that acknowledges the reality that marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by GBV. Also, consider including language that provides GBV workers the latitude to make additional requests for survivors when they must navigate multiple intersecting oppressions on their healing journey.



Promising Practice

V. Policy Part One – Education and Support

1. Sexual Violence and Identity

Toronto Metropolitan University is a diverse community and every effort to address issues of sexual violence needs to be grounded in an understanding that each person's experience will be affected by many factors including but not limited to sex, ancestry, race, ethnicity, language, ability, faith, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender identity. It must be acknowledged that acts of sexual violence can also be acts of systematic oppression, including but not limited to sexism, racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, and/or transphobia.

Sexual violence impacts people of all genders. The university recognizes that sexual violence is overwhelmingly committed against women, and in particular women who experience the intersection of multiple identities such as, but not limited to Indigenous women, racialized women, Black women, trans women and women with disabilities. Additionally, the university recognizes that those whose gender identity and gender expression does not conform to historical gender norms are also at increased risk of sexual violence. Due to the complexities of violence experienced by people with intersecting identities, the university is committed to ensuring that its responses, prevention efforts and supports take an anti-oppressive and trauma-informed approach so that all community members can access these supports and services with care.

Retrieved From: <https://www.torontomu.ca/policies/policy-list/sexual-violence-policy/>

Addressing Concerns Related to Citizenship Status

International students comprise one of the most vulnerable campus demographics facing GBV within North American PSIs (Bonistall Postell, 2020). Their presence in their host countries is tethered to their student status, and thus their ability to maintain a student visa. International students who are affected by GBV should not only receive the same principled care described in this draft guide, but should be supported in their attempts to remain at their PSI even if they choose to withdraw, or must withdraw, from a program or

credit. A potential pathway to protecting international students who are affected by GBV is the creation of non-credit or experiential credit courses that may allow international students to maintain student status and thus fulfill their student visa requirements. Additionally, international student advisors should be included not as periphery supports, but parallel supports throughout the academic accommodation and consideration process to provide guidance on next steps and clarity on potential consequences of dropping courses, withdrawing from the program, or switching institutions (Liu, Flora, Gupta, Keren, Kordich, Sharma, & Siddiqui., 2020).

Academic considerations are one of the most practical supports a PSI can provide to survivors of SV/GBV. The adoption of an academic considerations framework enables each PSI to create policies and protocols around academic considerations that are immediate, responsive, confidential, survivor-centric, trauma-informed and healing-centred. This draft guide will now discuss specific examples of academic considerations in practice.

Recommended Readings

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<https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/board-policies/policy-sexual-violence-involving-queens-university-students>

Section 4: Academic Considerations in Practice

Summary

Previous sections identified the importance of an academic considerations framework for PSIs to effectively support students affected by SV/GBV, and noted how this framework could be strategically applied to existing policies and protocols. Drawing on data from various surveys and interviews conducted by Courage to Act between 2019–2022, this draft guide will now discuss four areas of academic intervention using examples and case studies.

1. Academic considerations: Assignment extensions, test or exam rescheduling or rewrites, incomplete grades, and assignment and presentation modifications
2. Considerations when a change of academic supervisor is needed (this can be part of an interim measure related to an investigation)
3. Retroactive withdrawal and retroactive tuition reimbursement
4. Short-term withdrawal

These interventions can help improve retention of survivors at PSIs, while working to mitigate negative impacts of SV/GBV. Ultimately, this allows students affected by SV/GBV to continue to participate and perhaps even thrive at their PSIs.

Application of the Academic Considerations Framework

The following section is designed for staff, faculty and administrators who receive a disclosure of SV/GBV alongside a request for academic considerations. It applies the academic considerations framework (guiding principles, promising models and key approaches) to the provision of academic considerations for survivors of SV/GBV.

Step 1: A student is connected to you because they are struggling to meet deadlines and are a survivor of SV/GBV.

Action	Guiding Principles	ARC Model (Khan et. al., 2023)
<p>Acknowledge the impacts of GBV, let them know it is normal to struggle with deadlines when managing the impacts of GBV and that there is support for them at the university. Explain your role.</p> <p>At this time, complete your normal intake process, attending to and noting any immediate needs such as STI testing, sexual assault evidence kit (if needed), etc.</p>	<p>Inclusive and Intersectional - As social location impacts someone's access to support, whether they are believed, and how they are treated by institutions, responses must be anti-oppressive and trauma-informed.</p> <p>Accessible - This opens the conversation to talk about what support can look like, and lets the student know you are equipped to have this conversation.</p> <p>Trauma-Informed - This normalizes how the impact of GBV can make day-to-day tasks like studying and meeting deadlines very difficult to manage.</p> <p>Transparent - Explain your role and limits to confidentiality.</p>	<p>Acknowledge the violence and the profound impacts of GBV on an individual. Normalize that this is a difficult experience, and that the student is not to blame for their experience of GBV.</p>

Step 2: Work with the student to determine the types of support that are needed.

Action	Guiding Principles	ARC Model (Khan et al., 2023)
<p>Ask the student where they are struggling academically and emotionally. You can divide this conversation into two parts, letting the student know which you will address first.</p> <p>For example, "I know a lot is going on right now. Let's just focus on what's coming up academically for the next few minutes."</p> <p>Return to making emotional support plans afterwards, drawing from the impacts that the student has mentioned during this process.</p>	<p>Inclusive and Intersectional - Maintain this lens as you work alongside the student to determine the types of support that are needed.</p> <p>Trauma-Informed - When individuals are traumatized, it can be very difficult to organize tasks. By delineating your focus, you model a way to divide various sites of concern into more manageable tasks.</p> <p>Accessible - Lets the survivor know that there are multiple options for support. Build a plan to manage and mitigate the many impacts and hardships they are navigating.</p>	<p>Respond - By working with the survivor to divide areas that need attention into academics and emotional/mental health, you let them know that each area is important enough to get focused attention.</p>

Step 3: Explain available supports.

Action	Guiding Principles	ARC Model (Khan et. al., 2023)
As you speak with the student, make note of where they would like support or where you think support might be helpful. Explain what those supports entail. For example, "It sounds like you're struggling with that class. You could request extensions on the assignments and try to finish it before the end of the semester, request an incomplete grade, or we could try for a retroactive withdrawal because we have passed the course drop date." Explain what each process is, what information is needed, and what to expect with each process.	<p>Accessible - Lets the student know what support is available and how to request it.</p> <p>Inclusive and Intersectional - Maintain this lens as you provide possible routes for support for the survivor and allow them to choose what works best for them.</p> <p>Trauma-Informed - By clearly explaining a process, expectations can be set and survivors can know what and how much support to expect from your PSI, which helps survivors regulate their emotions.</p> <p>Transparent - Help survivors access necessary policies and forms (both online and in print).</p> <p>Informed Consent - Let survivors know what information is needed and who will have access to it.</p> <p>Continuity of Care - With informed bilateral consent, survivors should have connected and coordinated care while accessing support across the institution. Let them know this.</p>	Respond - Through this continuation of the response element of ARC (Khan et al., 2023), you are showing the survivor that you take what they are navigating seriously and that you want to work with them to provide support that works best for them.

Step 4: Request support.

Action	Guiding Principles	ARC Model (Khan et. al., 2023)
<p>Work with the survivor to navigate the process. This could look like filling out forms, writing support letters, taking notes while they dictate what they want in a personal statement (to accompany requests for late withdrawal, etc). Make sure to explain why you are asking for this information. If you need to write about why the student requires a consideration, focus on the impacts, not the incident. For example, "The student reports disrupted sleep, intrusive thoughts, and a loss of concentration" rather than detailed descriptions of their flashbacks.</p>	<p>Inclusive and Intersectional - Maintain this lens as you request support from other staff, faculty and administrators.</p> <p>Accessible - With appropriate support from your PSI reflected in policy, you should be able to validate requests for academic considerations and be seen as an on-campus expert on GBV when writing supporting letters for processes such as retroactive withdrawals or program transfers, so that survivors do not need to visit multiple offices to get the support they need.</p> <p>Let survivors know that they do not need to navigate these processes alone.</p> <p>Trauma-Informed - Work with the survivor to determine the best way to record the information. For instance, typing while the survivor talks to you allows them to name feelings and impacts without having to organize them into a coherent document. You can then work together to edit and format the document.</p> <p>By explaining a process and working with a survivor to complete the process in a way that feels safe for them, you are helping to create space for them to heal and be heard. By approving academic considerations through a GBV office, survivors can limit</p>	<p>Respond - Through this continuation of the response element of ARC (Khan et al., 2023), you are showing the survivor that you take what they are navigating seriously and that you want to work with them to provide support that works best for them.</p>

	<p>how often they need to repeat their story.</p> <p>Informed Consent - Work with the survivor to determine what they want to say about the harm they have been subjected to. Your expertise can help them put language to what they are experiencing. By explaining who will receive what information, you let the survivor choose what parts of their story they share.</p>	
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Step 5: Submit the request.

Action	Guiding Principles	ARC Model (Khan et. al., 2023)
<p>Once the necessary forms are completed, work with the survivor to submit them. Where possible, let the survivor know how long the process takes and that they can reach back out to you if there are any issues. Make sure the survivor has a copy of what was submitted.</p> <p>Work with the survivor to determine if there are other emotional or mental health supports they need at this time. You can draw from the impacts you have identified with the survivor as a guide of where they may need support.</p>	<p>Inclusive and Intersectional - Maintain this lens as you submit the request for academic considerations.</p> <p>Accessible - By letting the survivor know what to expect and that they can come back to you, you help to keep support accessible to the student in the future.</p> <p>Continuity of Care - Students should have access to continuous and coordinated care. While administrative processes are bureaucratic, they are also an opportunity to show survivors that there are staff, faculty, administrators and resources available to support them, and that it is not shameful to ask for help.</p>	<p>Connect - By working with the survivor to determine what emotional or mental health supports they may need in addition to academic considerations, and connecting them with supports such as counseling, you help them to enlarge their circle of support.</p>

Section 4.1: Academic Considerations: Assignment Extensions, Test or Exam Rescheduling or Rewrites, Incomplete Grades, and Assignment & Presentation Modifications

Summary

Using the academic considerations framework, we will work through an example of designing and implementing academic considerations for exams. Note that this can also be applied to assignment extensions, test rescheduling or rewrites, incomplete grades, and assignment and presentation modifications.

Guiding Principles in Practice


Inclusive and Intersectional

An inclusive and intersectional approach to academic considerations is one that acknowledges the complexity of violence experienced by people with intersecting identities, and takes appropriate measures to ensure that all students subjected to SV/GBV have access to academic support, including measures pertaining to exams.

Accessible

In cases where it is in the best interest of the student to acquire a registered accommodation plan (for example, where students may require long-term exam modifications or modifications that last throughout their degree), documentation from GBV offices should carry the same weight as medical documentation when students are making requests to alter exam conditions due to reasons of GBV. Additionally, because it may take a long time for students to disclose GBV, it is likely that many impacted students will miss the registration deadlines set out by accommodations offices and examination centres. For this reason, institutions should allow exam accommodations to be processed as academic considerations in cases where timelines are a factor.

Further, to mitigate the challenges of registering for formal accommodations, and many other examples of feeling unsafe in usual testing environments, PSIs should expand their exam proctoring status to include staff in designated GBV offices to provide support to



survivors. These teams should be given the authority and training to allow students to write exams in their offices, or other settings where a staff member is able to proctor their test. This eliminates a number of scenarios where students feel they have to write their exams in strenuous circumstances.

Trauma-Informed

Deferred exam requests should evaluate the severity of trauma impacts which create additional barriers for students, rather than the incident that caused impacts. PSIs need to be prepared to accommodate students with ongoing and long-term trauma impacts that continue after an exam has been deferred. This may require a mix of considerations and accommodations, wherein the first set of examinations are written in an alternate environment (for example, the GBV office), while supporting the student in obtaining formal accommodations through the accessibility centre. The time-consuming process of registering for accommodations should not prevent students from acquiring exam deferrals or alterations; in cases where timeliness is a factor, institutions should allow such requests to be processed as considerations.

Informed Consent

Students who seek support from GBV offices should feel confident the information they are sharing will not be circulated to other offices or departments without their consent. Additionally, any documentation (such as letters of support) prepared for them should be edited and written collaboratively, so it best reflects the reality of the student. In a test or exam situation, this means letting the student know if and when there is communication with faculty or a course instructor, and sharing those communications with the student.

Exam proctoring requirements are uniquely designed by each faculty to reflect the appropriate environment in which an exam is meant to be written. Exams may be lab-based or require the use of special technology and computer programs, while others are question-and-answer-based in an examination hall.

Continuity of Care

In the case that a student is required to collect documentation from multiple offices, a centralized GBV support office will work to collaborate with those administrators and streamline the collection process in a way that prevents the student from having to explain their circumstances more than once. For example, the GBV support office will work with course instructors and departments to obtain exams and facilitate the pick-up of materials to administer the exam and to return materials and completed examinations.

Case Study

Anisa is studying for an exam taking place at the end of the semester but does not know where her exam hall is going to be. Her professor has informed the class that exam hall information will be posted one week prior to the exam. When the exam locations are finally posted, Anisa learns that the location is the gymnasium, where hundreds of other students from various courses will be writing exams at the same time, including the person who sexually assaulted her. Anisa feels uncomfortable having to take her exam knowing that they will be there. Anisa feels unsafe at the idea of being in close proximity to him and is triggered due to being subjected to sexual assault in the past.

Anisa decides to email her professor and request if she could write her exam in a small classroom and have one of the teaching assistants (TAs) present to proctor her exam. Her professor denies her request and states that TAs are only permitted to proctor at the designated exam locations. Anisa then decides to reach out to the accessibility office, but Anisa is not registered with a documented disability and is not able to book a time with the office to change her exam location. Even if an appointment was available with the accessibility office, the registration process would take several weeks to complete, by which time the exam would have passed.

She comes to your SV/GBV support office to seek assistance. What would you do to support her?

Reflection Question

How would you apply the academic considerations framework (guiding principles, promising models and key approaches) to the above case study?

Section 4.2: Considerations for When There is a Need to Change Academic Supervisor

Summary

In most cases, the responsibility of finding a supervisor for a research-based master's, doctoral program, course, or project lies with the student. For example, [University of Toronto's guidelines on finding a supervisor](#) indicate that the responsibility of finding a suitable supervisor lies directly with the student.

Academic Supervisor: a faculty member who mentors and guides students in research-based courses, programs, and/or projects.

Students must work with their supervisors throughout the entirety of the academic work and in most situations, they routinely share physical space with their academic supervisors such as workspaces, offices, labs, etc. Supervisors act as gatekeepers, and are the bridge for connecting students to the greater community of scholars in their area of specialization. There is an immense amount of power allotted to supervisors, and it is crucial that their relationships with students are free of any coercion, volatility or strain. It's important to acknowledge that social location—i.e. racialization, ability, gender, sexuality, employment status—shapes how people are targeted for sexual harassment and violence, as well as the support they receive, whether they feel safe disclosing and how the harm is addressed.

When a supervisor subjects a graduate student to sexual violence or sexual harassment, the student may believe that:

1. They must maintain a relationship with a supervisor who has caused them harm because their degree, success in their program and career relies on it.
2. They cannot drop out of a program because their legal status as an international student depends on it.
3. Their financial, not to mention emotional, investment will be lost if they leave their course of study.

Given how much is at stake once the student-supervisor relationship breaks down, it is crucial to act swiftly and decisively to support the student who has been harmed.

It is important you acknowledge your institution's limits of confidentiality, respond with empathy to the student and connect them with support. If they do not want to be connected, consulting with the appropriate office on campus is key to learn the appropriate next steps. It is important to remind the student that they have the right to a safe work and learning environment that is free from reprisal when they are a complainant in an investigation.

Using the academic considerations framework, we will now work through an example of designing and implementing academic considerations in cases where a student requires a new supervisor.

Reflection Question

How does your PSI support survivors with finding a new supervisor and address the concerns raised by students in points 1 to 3?

Guiding Principles in Practice

Inclusive and Intersectional

An inclusive and intersectional approach to academic considerations is one that acknowledges the complexity of violence experienced by people with intersecting identities, and takes appropriate measures to ensure that all students subjected to SV/GBV have access to academic support, including measures pertaining to a change in academic supervisor.

Trauma-Informed

The following are strategies for trauma-informed academic considerations:

1. Departmental coordinators and program administrators should be prepared to prioritize the wellness and safety of graduate students over graduate degree requirements, and recognize that trauma impacts will follow affected students even after another graduate degree has started or another supervisor has been found. Students may need a range of support. Finding a new supervisor may be the first step of many on a student's healing journey.

2. PSIs must ensure that all mechanisms used to support students affected by GBV will last at least as long as the duration of their studies to prevent students from having to request considerations over and over.
3. Students who have been subjected to GBV may opt to complete their degree prior to reaching out for support; be prepared to provide students with support long after the supervision has ended without questioning why concerns were not raised during the course of study with the supervisor in question.

In addition, PSIs should be prepared to react with flexibility in situations where a supervisor subjects a student to SV/GBV. This includes extending or freezing timelines for:


- Research project submissions
- Thesis submissions
- Project proposals
- Assignments
- Time limits for degree completion
- Any other assignment or requirement dependent on interaction with the supervisor

In cases where a formal investigation has been initiated, these deadline freezes may accompany or be a part of required interim measures that allow the investigation to proceed without any hindrances. Flexibility in deadlines is not only a way to support people affected by GBV in maintaining their academic responsibilities, but facilitates procedural fairness and the sanctity of the investigation.

Having well-established mechanisms for students being subjected to GBV by their supervisor allows them to safely report policy violations without compromising their work. These mechanisms also enhance the investigative process by allowing students to report incidents earlier, thereby allowing for earlier intervention and collection of evidence, and most importantly mitigating harm by interrupting the violence to which a student is subjected.

Accessible & Continuity of Care

Once an incident of GBV occurs between a supervisor and student, PSIs—through the faculty, sexual violence support office, and other relevant bodies—should be prepared to



share the responsibility of searching for a new graduate program advisor with the student. This is vital, as GBV will likely make it unsafe or unhealthy for graduate students to continue their working relationship with their supervisor. PSIs are infinitely more connected and resourced than students and should allot time and energy to find a replacement supervisor for students subjected to GBV.

1. This includes researching appropriate matches within the department, the institution and/or at other PSIs.
2. In situations where a change in supervisors requires changing programs or schools, institutions should be prepared to use their increased and elevated access to support students to arrange the documentation they need to continue their studies, such as letters of reference and communicating transcripts, grades, etc.

Program administrators should also work collaboratively with GBV offices to understand the nature of consideration requests from impacted students without asking or requiring the student to disclose details of the trauma to which they have been subjected. For example, students may simply be inquiring about their options to assess how they want to move forward with their degree. As such, PSIs should be willing to describe individual student trajectories on a case-by-case basis and what their degree might look like should they ask for a new supervisor.

Informed Consent

Students should be given agency in deciding next steps after hearing their options in a situation where they need to search for another supervisor. Confidentiality in scenarios involving student-supervisor relationships is even more important given their critical nature and the fact that student success in graduate programs is entirely dependent on the approval of their supervisor.

Implement the following practices and strategies in managing requests for a supervisor change to protect the survivor's agency in deciding what happens next:

1. A pathway should exist for students to inquire about the next steps without initiating a complaint. GBV offices should be prepared to lay out the next steps and other hypothetical scenarios without deferring to investigative offices or protocols.


2. Administrators must be trained in explaining limits to their confidentiality to students during scheduled check-ins to ensure students are aware that the information they share may initiate complaints mechanisms within the institution's SV/GBV policy. Consider the "Respect Confidentiality" measure as described in the BRAVE model², a guide for working with supporting someone who discloses an experience of SV/GBV to you.
3. If, after hearing the potential impacts on their degree trajectory, or other factors, they decide to move forward without a desire to launch an investigation, this option should remain available to them, unless they have disclosed information that requires you to trigger an investigation. These requirements vary from province to province. Administrators must be well versed in such legislation. For instance, in Ontario it is required that instances of sexual violence that involve an employee, such as an instructor or a TA, be investigated.
4. It should be reiterated in communications with students and reflected in policy that the opportunity to seek support and guidance remains available to students regardless of whether or not they choose to report an incident of GBV.

Case Study

Samira is a master's student completing the final year of her research-based graduate degree. Samira's last semester is focused entirely on the writing of her thesis, which is based on experiments carried out in one of two biomedical labs at her university. Last month, when she was working alone in the lab with her supervisor, he made comments about her appearance that made her uncomfortable. The comments continued throughout the following week, but Samira tried her best to ignore them. When the comments did not stop, Samira informed her supervisor that she felt uncomfortable with the unwelcome comments and wanted the focus of their interactions to be on academic work solely. Her professor said he understood and apologized for his actions.

When midterm evaluations were completed, Samira was surprised to see that her professor had graded her much lower than she was expecting. Confused about the low

² Khan, F. (2023). *Be BRAVE: A Model for Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence*. Possibility Seeds.



grades, she had a meeting with her supervisor, who coldly insisted that she was wasting time by raising these concerns and should focus on improving her grades instead.

Samira went back to look over the written feedback her supervisor had provided prior to the incidents of last month and confirmed they were very positive and in direct contrast to what her supervisor had written in her evaluation. Though she wasn't certain, Samira was fairly sure her professor's conduct violated her university's sexual and gender-based violence policy and reported it to the university with the support of the SV/GBV support office. While the investigation takes place, what are the steps that need to be put in place, such as finding her a new supervisor, so that she can graduate?

Reflection Question

How would you apply the academic considerations framework (guiding principles, promising models and key approaches) to the above case study?

Section 4.3: Retroactive Withdrawal & Retroactive Tuition Reimbursement (Withdrawal with Cause)

Summary

Retroactive withdrawal: occurs when the regular deadlines for withdrawal from a course have passed, and/or the credit/grade for the course has already been granted.

Retroactive tuition reimbursement: occurs when the financial penalty deadlines for dropping a class have passed, but no grade has been granted. In some cases, retroactive tuition reimbursement occurs after a class has been retroactively withdrawn, though this is not always a requirement.

Given the similarities between the retroactive withdrawal and tuition reimbursement process, we will use the notation “**RWR**” for retroactive withdrawal/reimbursement in this section.

The RWR process in most PSIs requires students to fill out an application that explains why the student was unable to meet the registrar’s deadlines in a timely manner and to submit supporting documentation that supports the occurrence of extenuating circumstances. These extenuating circumstances are often classified as “grounds”:

- **Medical grounds:** due to an illness, mental health crisis or injury that prevented the student from meeting the deadline
- **Procedural grounds:** errors in the construction and/or delivery of the course or curriculum that resulted in failure to meet the prescribed deadline
- **Compassionate grounds (may also be called “personal” or “family” reasons):** a broader category that recognizes extenuating circumstances stemming from the loss of a family member, and other personal conflicts and incidents that arise suddenly and unexpectedly

The process will require the student to submit a supporting statement based on the aforementioned “grounds.” Some PSIs require additional statements of approval from the

faculty. RWR processes are outside of the purview of GBV offices; they may be administered by the registrar's office, the senate, the faculty, or a combination of bodies. As GBV supports, we can provide explanations of the process, write supporting letters, help students draft personal statements, and help students obtain or organize supporting documentation from counselors, physicians and other professionals. Having templates of support letters and personal statements is significantly helpful for survivors. Templates not only provide guidance in the RWR process, they show that others have had to make the difficult decision to enter into this process. As with all documentation, we encourage you to focus on impacts rather than incidents of GBV.

Reflection Question

Are the decision-makers for the RWR processes at your PSI trained in GBV prevention, and the effects of GBV on student success?

Using the academic considerations framework, we will now work through an example of designing and implementing academic considerations in cases where a student requires a retroactive withdrawal.

Guiding Principles in Practice

Inclusive and Intersectional

An inclusive and intersectional approach to academic considerations is one that acknowledges the complexity of violence experienced by people with intersecting identities, and takes appropriate measures to ensure that all students subjected to SV/GBV have access to academic support, including measures pertaining to RWR.

Trauma-Informed

When building your RWR process, consider the following strategies to ensure it is trauma-informed:

1. The deciding body must guide students in cases where the RWR application is submitted incorrectly or is missing elements, instead of denying the application outright.

2. Committee members or decision-makers must receive training from the GBV office to comprehend the impacts of trauma in the classroom and for GBV survivors.
3. The deciding body is prepared to accept statements that simply indicate the presence of trauma or GBV without requesting additional documentation or details.
4. The deciding body is aware and trained to understand their roles as decision-makers related to the RWR process and its impacts on the student's academics. They are not there to determine whether the incident of GBV actually occurred.
5. GBV staff should be provided with up-to-date forms and requirements for RWR processes. If the institution uses online forms, the questions should be made available to support workers so that they can better support students going through RWR processes.

Additionally, to make the RWR process flexible, consider the following when building or amending RWR policies:

1. Waive timeline restrictions when an incident of GBV is involved, or when documentation from a GBV office, social worker, or support person is submitted. Research indicates it may take several years for people affected by GBV to come forward about what they have been subjected to; strict timelines that do not compensate for these effects fail to support survivors who may not disclose or come to terms with GBV until much later into their academic career.
2. Try to assess each application on a case-by-case basis, including applications where a single course from a single semester is being dropped but others are not.

To ensure the process is as collaborative as possible:

1. Create templates of personal statements and/or supporting documentation where students can customize letters alongside GBV staff.
2. Have students read over, approve and provide feedback on letters of support provided by professionals.

Accessible

To mitigate systemic barriers, PSIs need to be willing to accept documentation provided by GBV and other non-medical offices to authenticate the requests for RWR, such as:

1. Counselors
2. Advocates
3. Spiritual guides and leaders
4. Cultural centres
5. Circles of support

PSI Tip

PSIs that have medical centres on campus additionally need to recruit medical professionals that are trained in anti-racism, anti-oppression practices, and have an understanding of intersectionality as well as trauma-informed practices. Institutions without on-site medical clinics must maintain relationships with community professionals trained in anti-oppression and the delivery of trauma-informed care. Additionally, PSIs should keep lists or networks of professionals in the community who do not require documentation or ID upon booking an appointment. This is particularly important for international students for whom obtaining the proper paperwork may be a barrier or cause of anxiety.

Informed Consent

To ensure RWR processes remain as confidential as possible, implement the following strategies into your RWR framework:

1. Publicly share the members of the decision-making committees. There are a number of reasons students may not want sensitive and confidential information about the violence they were subjected to shared with particular people on campus. Have a system in place for committee members to recuse themselves if there is a conflict or potential bias.

2. Wherever possible, ensure each application sent to the deciding body is anonymized. Remove the name of the applicant and other identifying characteristics of their case when presenting the application to the decision makers. Anonymizing the identities of applicants ensures that biases of decision makers do not cloud their judgment, while also preserving the applicants' right to privacy and confidentiality.
3. Before applications are submitted, students should be informed of what may happen if the RWR is denied, avenues for appeal and potential impacts to their student loans if their course loads change, so that they are aware of what they are consenting to.

Continuity of Care


If allowed by the student, GBV staff can take an active role in reaching out to other professionals and coordinating letters of support to reduce the number of times a student may have to tell their story.

For examples of RWR letter templates your PSI could use, please view the [Template for Students: RWR Letter](#).

Case Study

Sam is a business major in the second year of their three-year diploma program. Their second year of their program includes a co-op component. Sam has been maintaining the minimum GPA needed to enter the co-op stream but is struggling with one of their required classes. The required class is one that includes an interactive component where Sam must market a product to investors in the city. Sam is struggling because they are experiencing difficulty in interacting with strangers in environments they feel are unsafe, due to an incident of sexual harassment that occurred in one of their interactive assignments earlier that year. Sam applies for an retroactive withdrawal from the course, hoping to reattempt it at some point in the future.

While the committee that makes decisions on retroactive withdrawal applications was sympathetic to Sam's application, they ultimately decided to deny the request because Sam



was only dropping a single course and not all of their courses. The committee's reasoning is based on the following assumption: "If Sam is able to complete one course, they should be able to complete the rest."

Sam comes to your office defeated and scared that they made the wrong choice in protecting their wellbeing. How would you support them in appealing the decision?

Reflection Question

How would you apply the academic considerations framework (guiding principles, promising models and key approaches) to the above case study?



Section 4.4: Short-Term Withdrawal

Summary

Short-Term Withdrawal: Offers students an opportunity to take a leave from their studies and return to their program. The timeline for completing a degree is paused until they return to their studies on a full-time or part-time basis.

Short-term withdrawal is a process that is administered outside of the GBV support office. GBV support workers can work with survivors to inform them of the processes and help coordinate support when they return. Offices such as the registrar's office can work with GBV offices by ensuring that students who are returning from a short-term leave are aware of all the support the PSI offers. This keeps students informed without singling out survivors or requiring someone to disclose GBV. Following a short-term leave, PSIs should be prepared to connect with students to support them in creating a plan for their return to their academic responsibilities. Many PSIs have offices dedicated to workplace wellness that connect with employees prior to their return from medical leave to create plans for their return to work. A similar process should be engaged when students are returning to school after a short-term leave.

Using the academic considerations framework, we will work through an example of designing and implementing academic considerations for taking a short-term leave.

Guiding Principles in Practice

Inclusive and Intersectional

An inclusive and intersectional approach to academic considerations is one that acknowledges the complexity of violence experienced by people with intersecting identities, and takes appropriate measures to ensure that all students subjected to SV/GBV have access to academic support, including measures pertaining to short-term leaves.

Further, GBV offices should maintain lists of practitioners that are:

1. Anti-racist and trained in principles of anti-oppression

2. Trauma-informed and specialized in the area of GBV

This prevents impacted students from having to visit multiple offices who may not be equipped to support vulnerable students. Additionally, administrators and adjudicators of requests for medical leave should have training in trauma symptomatology and GBV to be able to fairly deliver decisions in granting students leaves of absence.

Trauma-Informed


Most PSIs will already have processes in place to grant leaves of absence for students experiencing medical complications or other unexpected events in their life. These policies should be expanded to include incidents of GBV or long- and short-term impacts of GBV. These impacts may fall under grounds defined as “compassionate” or “medical” in nature.

Accessible

The process of meeting the requirements for medical leaves will be challenging for students subjected to GBV for a number of reasons:

1. Acquiring documentation about injuries related to the incident(s) of GBV may elicit feelings of shame, fear and anxiety in students who will have to share their stories and personal details with professionals.
2. Barriers to adequate and equitable health care as a result of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and other social factors may prevent students from receiving the appropriate care and documentation they deserve.
3. Practitioners without trauma-informed training may rely on rape myths and other misunderstandings of the presentation of trauma symptomatology in people subjected to GBV.
4. Lacking access to appropriate offices, fees, and other material obstacles to acquiring proper care.

GBV offices can assuage some of these barriers when they are empowered to support such students in coordinating their applications for medical leaves. By providing support such as reference letters, authentication of their trauma symptomatology, and coordinating appointments with medical professionals, GBV offices can help prevent retraumatization in



students. Limiting how many times students have to share their story and eliminating the possibility of interacting with staff who are not trauma-informed helps support survivors.

Transparent

Students seeking leaves of absence should be provided with accessible information outlining the administrative processes they are accessing, such as being made aware of how many leaves of absence or program timeline extensions are typically permitted by an institution.

Informed Consent


Students should not have to disclose more than the documentation coordinated by appropriate GBV offices in order to complete their leave requirements, and should be made aware of how their information will be shared within the institution.

Continuity of Care

Short-term leave may be seen as “weightier” or more intimidating than academic considerations, as there are elements of formality in the adjudication of these requests and a decision to withdraw can have lasting impacts on things such as graduation timelines and loans. GBV offices should act as systems navigators for students applying for leave to limit their interactions with multiple campus offices. With informed bilateral consent, a student seeking a short-term leave should have access to connected and coordinated care while seeking support across the institution.

Case Study

Joyce is a PhD student and a parent. After being subjected to intimate partner violence during their master’s degree, they began receiving support from both the accessibility centre and the sexual and gender-based violence support office. The last few years of the pandemic have been particularly difficult for Joyce due to remote learning and lack of childcare. The stress of the pandemic, feeling isolated, in addition to trying to heal from trauma, exacerbated Joyce’s anxiety. When their PSI announced a gradual return to campus, Joyce felt relieved they could return to campus on a part-time basis and drop their child off at the on-campus daycare site. However, their faculty announced that all courses in their program would remain virtual until the start of the new academic year.



Now feeling overwhelmed, Joyce considers taking a break from their studies until the new school year begins. They are worried about facing financial penalties related to student loans and a lack of access to medical documentation. Joyce no longer has a family physician and has spent the last year trying to find a new one.

What are the various pathways for support that your office can provide to Joyce?

Reflection Question

How would you apply the academic considerations framework (guiding principles, promising models and key approaches) to the above case study?

Works Cited

- Khan, F. (2023). *Be BRAVE: A Model for Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence*. Possibility Seeds.
- Khan, F., Sweet A., & Patel D. (2023). *Acknowledge, Respond and Connect Model for Addressing Disclosures of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Professional Settings*. Courage to Act: Addressing and Preventing Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada.

Appendix A: Template - Academic Considerations Form

The following request has been verified as fulfilling the requirements of academic consideration described under Policy (insert policy number).

Name of student: Jelena Khannum

Student number: 50068574

Major/academic department: Medical Sciences

Name/email of academic administrator: Yulexy Lushkov

Name/email of instructor	Course code	Assignment in need of consideration	Consideration request
Dr. Pirani dpirani@university.ca	CASC110	Essay 1 Original due date: June 2nd, 2021 (11:59 pm EST)	Extension of the due date to June 16th, 2021 (11:59 pm EST)
Dr. Teller eteller@university.ca	GEOG451	Quiz #4 Original due date: June 11th, 2021 (4 pm)	Allow access to the online quiz until June 20th, 2021 (4 pm)

I, Jelena Khannum, verify this information is accurate and complete.

Student signature:

Staff signature:

Note: This email template was taken from Consent Comes First, the Office of Sexual Violence Support and Education at Toronto Metropolitan University.

Appendix B: Template Email - Sexual Violence Support Staff to Academic Administrator

Dear (insert name),

My name is (insert name), I am a sexual violence support specialist at the office of (insert office name). I have recently been supporting a student in your program, (insert student name and student number), with academic planning this semester. They are currently requesting considerations for course content described in the attached [academic considerations form](#), which includes information about their instructors and the courses involved.

Please communicate this form with the instructors listed using the following template email:

Dear (insert name),

My name is (insert name), I am the Academic Advisor/Administrator for the department of (insert office name). Attached below is an academic considerations form for a student in your class that has been verified under the requirements of Policy (insert policy number).

Please let us know if you need assistance in completing the considerations request, or in communicating the extensions with the student in your class.

Regards,

(insert name)

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach me or my manager (insert name).

Regards,

(insert name)

Note: This email template was taken from Consent Comes First, the Office of Sexual Violence Support and Education at Toronto Metropolitan University.

Appendix C: Template - Retroactive Withdrawal Letter

To whom it may concern:

My name is (insert name) and I am an (undergraduate/graduate) student in the (program/faculty) at (the name of institution). My student number is (your student number). Due to circumstances outside my control, I am requesting a backdated withdrawal on compassionate grounds for (course(s), course code(s)).

The reason for this request relates to traumatic experiences that have impacted my ability to participate in this course. I have included a letter of support from the GBV support office that authenticates this request.

Before the traumatic incident I was working hard in my program to (what you have been working towards in your courses). As a result of the incident(s) I am experiencing the following academic impacts: (why you would like to drop the course(s), ex. attendance, ability to concentrate). Additionally, (other impacts ex. needing to take time off work, lack of sleep).

I have taken the following steps to regain my place in my program by (what you have done already, i.e. seeing a counsellor, taking a leave from work) to prepare myself for (the following semester). This backdated withdrawal would be helpful in ensuring I am able to return to my studies when I am in a better place.

Sincerely,

(Name)

(Student Number)

Note: This email template was taken from Consent Comes First, the Office of Sexual Violence Support and Education at Toronto Metropolitan University.