



FAST FACTS FOR FACULTY

Center for Academic Success and Achievement
Disability/Access Services

Students with Sensory Disabilities

Students with sensory disabilities such as those who are blind, low vision, deaf, or hard of hearing often bring auxiliary aids and adaptive equipment to the classroom (e.g., dog, cane, interpreter). These aids assist in gaining access to the classroom; however they do not ensure access. The classroom instructor is responsible for considering the needs of every student when teaching. For example, your instruction, including lectures, website, videos, handouts, and textbooks must be accessible to the student.

Blind or Low-Vision Students

Students with visual impairments are constantly challenged by classroom instructional strategies. Although they can easily hear lectures and discussions, it can be difficult for them to access class syllabi, textbooks, PowerPoint presentations, maps, videos, written exams, demonstrations, library materials, films, etc. A large part of traditional learning is visual; fortunately, many students with visual disabilities have developed strategies to learn.

Students who are blind or visually impaired vary considerably. For example, some have no vision; others are able to see large forms; others can see print if magnified; and still others have tunnel vision with no peripheral vision or the reverse. Furthermore, some students with visual impairments use Braille, and some have little or no knowledge of Braille. They use a variety of accommodations, equipment, and compensatory strategies based upon their widely varying needs. Many make use of adaptive technology, especially print to voice conversion using a scanner and voice production software. Textbooks, when not available digitally, are manually scanned and converted to PDF for use with screen-reading software. Others use equipment to enlarge print (closed circuit television [CCTV]) or actual enlargements.

Guidelines

Via the *Academic Accommodation letter*, you will be notified if a student qualifies for certain accommodations. These can include:

- **Exam Accommodations:** Exam accommodations, which may include adaptive technology, a computer, closed circuit TV (CCTV), Braille, enlargements, and/or image enhanced materials, may be needed. Students may also need extended time to complete exams. Assist these students in arranging for appropriate exam accommodations, whether you arrange them yourself or through CASA.
- **Assistance with Notetaking/Permission to Record Lectures:** Some of these students have difficulty taking their own notes and would benefit from supplemental notes from a classmate and/or recording the lecture.
- **Course Materials in an Alternate Format:** Coordinate with CASA to ensure that course materials will be available in alternative format. Some of these students need print material in alternative format (e.g., audio or electronic format). When you are contacted by a student or Disability/Access Services, it is important that you immediately provide information about the required textbook(s) and readings you will be using as well as any other reading expectations. It can take a considerable amount of time to convert materials into alternative format.

- **Preferential Seating:** Students with visual impairments may need preferential seating since they depend upon listening. Since they may want the same anonymity as other students, it is important that you avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to others in the class.
- **Service Dogs:** Keep in mind that service dogs are working animals. They must be allowed in all classes. Do not feed or pet a guide dog. Since they are working, they should not be distracted.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing Students

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing rely upon visual input rather than auditory input when communicating. Using visual aspects of communication (body language, gestures, and facial expression) often feels awkward to people who are accustomed to the auditory; however, it is essential that faculty learn to effectively communicate with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing do not all have the same characteristics. Some have a measure of usable residual hearing and use a device to amplify sounds (FM system). Some choose to speak; others use very little or no oral communication. Some students are extremely adept at speech reading, while others have very limited ability to “read lips.” For some, sign language and/or finger spelling are the preferred means of communication; other communication choices include gestures and writing. Most students who are deaf or hard of hearing have experience communicating with the hearing population. Let them be the guide on how best to communicate.

Guidelines

Via the *Academic Accommodation letter*, you will be notified if a student qualifies for certain accommodations. These can include:

- **Assistance with Notetaking/Permission to Record Lectures:** Some of these students have difficulty taking their own notes and would benefit from supplemental notes from a classmate and/or recording the lecture to listen to later.
- **Course Materials in an Alternate Format:** Coordinate with Disability/Access Services to ensure that course materials will be available in alternative format. It is essential that all videos or audio content have captions or transcripts of content. When you are contacted by a student or Disability/Access Services, it is important that you immediately provide information about the required textbook(s) and other materials you will be using. It can take a considerable amount of time to convert materials into alternative format.
- **Preferential Seating:** Offer the student preferential seating near the front of the classroom so that he/she can get as much from visual and auditory clues as possible or clearly see a sign language interpreter if one is used.
- **Sign Language or Captioning Services:** When a student uses a sign language interpreter, discuss with both the student and interpreter(s) where the interpreter(s) should be located to provide the greatest benefit for the student without distracting other class members. When a student uses a captioning service, discuss with the student and captioner the appropriate location.
 - **Role of the Interpreter:** The interpreter is in the classroom to facilitate communication for both the student and the instructor. Speak directly to the student, even though it may be the interpreter who clarifies information for you. Likewise, the interpreter may request clarification from you to insure accuracy of the information conveyed. The interpreter should not be asked to run errands, proctor exams or discuss the student’s personal issues. They should not participate in the class in any way or express personal opinions.