



FAST FACTS FOR FACULTY

Center for Academic Success and Achievement
Disability/Access Services

Educational Access for Students with Disabilities

Although enrollment rates of students with disabilities in higher education are increasing, some faculty and teaching staff may not be aware of the many services and supports available to students with disabilities. In particular, instructional staff members may not always be aware of the types of accommodations available or what steps are involved in the accommodations process. The following is a list of frequently asked questions regarding the roles and responsibilities of Instructors in providing accessible learning for students with disabilities.

These questions address the most common of concerns, but the issue of responsibility is situation-specific and as such can be difficult to define. As you are confronted with some of your concerns, keep in mind that Disability/Access Services is the office on campus that determines appropriate accommodations. We hope that you find the following questions to be a quick and useful resource guide, but we encourage you to contact us if you are in doubt about how best to meet the needs of a student with a disability.

Qualifications and Notification

Q: Who is responsible for determining appropriate accommodations?

A: Disability/Access Services within the Office of Academic Success at CASA is the office on campus that determines appropriate accommodations. The office bases their decision upon documentation collected from a student with a disability and the student's functional limitations.

Q: Are all students with disabilities registered with Disability Services?

A: No, it is likely that many students with disabilities have chosen not to be registered with office, or they may not have met the eligibility criteria for services. In either instance, Faculty are not required provide these students with accommodations. However, if a student discloses the presence of a disability that may affect their academic performance, you can encourage them to contact Disability/Access Services.

Q: A student has asked for accommodations. How do I know the student truly has a disability and needs accommodations?

A: Students registered with Disability/Access Services are given copies of their Documentation Confirmation Letter at the beginning of each semester. These letters, one for each course instructor, outlines the accommodations to which a student is entitled. The student is responsible for delivering the letter to their instructor and beginning a conversation about accommodations. If a student requests accommodations, you can ask for a copy of their letter.

Q: I have a student in class who told me that they have a disability, but since that time has never requested any accommodations. Am I still responsible for accommodations?

A: No, you are only responsible for reasonable accommodations if requested. In these types of situations, however, it would be appropriate to speak to the student privately to let the student know that you welcome the opportunity to discuss reasonable accommodations if the student is interested.

Quizzes/Exams

Q: Am I required to provide exam accommodations to students who request it?

A: Yes you are. Students with disabilities are protected by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. This law requires that qualified students with disabilities get equal access to an education, and this includes exam accommodations.

Q: A student with a disability has requested that they take an exam at CASA. How do I know that my exam will be safe and that the student will get no unfair advantage?

A: The Office of Academic Success has developed a very systematic and secure procedure for getting exams from faculty and returning them once the student has taken the exam. There are check in and check out procedures for exams, and no student is able to take an exam with appropriate accommodations without authorization. While exams are at the CASA, they are kept in a locked file during the night. Students are not allowed to bring unapproved materials, including cell phones, into the testing space, and are monitored while sitting for the exam. Students must complete the exam in one sitting, with minimal breaks. Each student signs an honesty policy immediately before testing.

Q: Students with disabilities ask me to fill out a Permission to Test form. I have a million things to do. I don't mind if they use exam accommodations, but do I have to fill out that form?

A: Yes you do! In order for students to arrange for exam accommodations at CASA, and in order for Disability/Access Services to administer your exam to your student following your guidelines, you must quickly and totally fill out the Permission to Test Form. It is often very helpful to meet with the student so that you two can fill the sheet out together to avoid miscommunication. Not only does the form help facilitate the exam accommodation process, but it also helps Disability/Access Services administer the exams using your specific requirements for the administration of the exam.

You may opt to administer the exam yourself to the student, but appropriate exam accommodations must be provided. This includes adaptive technology, a distraction-reduced space, reader/scribes, etc. if needed.

Notes

Q: A student with a disability has asked me for a copy of my lecture notes. Do I have to give this to the student?

A: The short answer is no; your lecture notes are your intellectual property. Some students with disabilities have difficulty taking notes. Whenever possible, Disability/Access Services will work with the instructor to facilitate furnishing notes upon request.

This can include working with the class to locate another student willing to share their notes with the student in a confidential arrangement. Instructors also have the option of making their lecture notes, PowerPoints, etc., available to the entire class in advance of each lecture.

It may also be appropriate for some students to record a class lecture. In this case, they must disclose this to you via a Permission to Record form.

Other Questions

Q: I have a student who is having difficulty in my class. I think this student may have a disability. What should I do to help the student?

A: Talk privately with the student to discuss your observations. The student may reveal they have a disability. If this is the case, but the student has not registered with Disability/Access Services, suggest that the student talk to a staff member in the office. Please note that Disability/Access Services does not administer diagnostic testing for disabilities; however we may be able to provide them with resources to begin the diagnostic process.

Q: Am I required to lower the standards of a required assignment because the student has a disability?

A: No, the standards should be the same for all students; however, some students with disabilities may exhibit their knowledge, production, and other course expectations differently than their peers. For example, a student with a learning disability in writing may produce an essay exam by using a computer or scribe rather than writing out an answer without the use of accommodations. The quality of the work should be the same.

Q: I have a student with a disability getting behind in their schoolwork. This student is missing a number of classes and has not handed in several assignments. Although they have taken a midterm and used accommodations, the student's grade is about a D. At this point, the student is not passing the class. Do I have a right to fail a student with a disability?

A: The student with a disability must meet all course expectations and has the same right to fail as anyone else. Their work should be equivalent to their peers. It may be a good idea to discuss your observations with this student just as you would with anyone else in your class who is experiencing difficulty.