

Fast Facts for Faculty – Most Frequently Asked Questions

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Introduction

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 accommodation process. The following is a list of frequently asked questions regarding the roles and responsibilities of faculty and teaching associates in providing accessible learning for students with disabilities. Although these questions address the most common of concerns, the issue of faculty and TA 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 Accessibility Services (AS) 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 AS at 419-372-8495, 38 College Park Office Building when you are in doubt about how best to meet the needs of a student with a disability.

Q: Who is responsible for determining appropriate accommodations?

A: AS 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 AS?

A: No, it is likely that many students with disabilities have chosen not to be registered with AS or they may not have met the eligibility criteria for services. In either instance, faculty does not need to provide these students with accommodations.

Q: What would be the best way to inform students in the class that I would like to help in facilitating exam accommodations or any classroom accommodations?

A: It is important that all faculty put a statement about accommodations in their syllabus. It should read something like this: "Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact AS at 419-372-8495 in room 38 College Park Office Building to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities."

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, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These laws require that qualified students with disabilities get equal access to an education, and this includes exam accommodations.

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

A: You may ask the student to provide you with a letter from AS verifying that s/he has a disability. The student, if registered with AS, will be given a letter in a timely manner. AS has documentation of disability on file for every student who is registered with the office and uses services.

Q: I have a student in class who told me that s/he has 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.

Q: What are some of the types of exam accommodations available to students with disabilities?

A: First of all, the exam accommodations are based upon the student's functional limitations and the documentation of disability that the student has provided AS. Some of these accommodations include but are not limited to: extra time for exams (usually 50% extra time but in some cases as much as double time), a reader, a scribe (a person who writes answers verbatim), a computer, a Brailled exam, an enlarged exam, an exam scanned onto a disk and use of computer (student uses voice, enlargement options, or spelling/grammar check), a distraction-reduced space, image enhancements (converting graphs, charges, and other types of images converted into raised-line format), and use of a closed circuit TV to enlarge print.

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

A: AS has developed a secure procedure for getting exams from faculty and returning them once the student has taken the exam. There are very rigid checking in and checking out procedures for exams, and no student is able to take an exam with appropriate accommodations without authorization. While exams are at AS, they are kept in a locked file during the night. While students are taking the exam, they are monitored on video camera. The camera records the exam session, and faculty are welcome to view the tapes if they have any concerns.

Q: I've been debating about what book I want to use for my class, but AS keeps asking me to select a book ASAP. Do I have to?

A: It would be most appreciated. It takes several weeks for requests for alternative formatted books to be processed. Students who are print impaired have a legal right to equal access to their textbooks or any instruction at the same time as their peers. They need to be able to read their textbooks at the same time as others in the class. By delaying the selection of textbooks, AS may not be able to get books converted to an appropriate format in a timely fashion. This means that students may have to start the semester without access to their textbooks.

Q: When I have a student who is deaf in class, am I required to have an interpreter or real time captioner in the class too? My class is very crowded and also, the students sometimes watch the interpreter instead of me.

A: There is no question about it. You are required by law to have what is essential for the student to have equal access to an education, and this includes a sign language interpreter or real time captioner.

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 s/he has a disability. If this is the case and the student is registered with AS, suggest that the student talk to his/her counselor in this office. Suggest that the student call AS at 419-372-8495 for further information.

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 his/her schoolwork. This student is missing a number of classes and has not handed in several assignments. Although s/he has 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 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 in your class who is experiencing difficulty.

Q: I have a student who is blind in my chemistry lab. How is s/he going to participate and be graded in his/her lab work?

A: If possible, assist the student in getting a lab partner or assign a student assistant to work with the student with a disability. In either situation, the student who is blind should direct the assistant to carry out the functions of the lab assignment. If a volunteer lab partner cannot be found, suggest to the student that s/he needs to contact AS as soon as possible for assistance in getting a lab partner. The speed in making these arrangements is critical so that the student will not get behind.

Q: Do I have any recourse if I disagree about requested accommodations?

A: To clarify any disagreement about a requested accommodation, you can first contact ADS. Start with the student's accessibility counselor, but you are also free to talk to the director of AS.
