

Faculty Reference Manual

Working with Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at University of New Orleans

University of New Orleans is committed to providing an environment where all students have the opportunity to equally participate in the academic experience, including students with disabilities. Students with disabilities have rights as determined by federal and state laws which require institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for the student's disability in order to afford an equal opportunity to participate in the college's programs, courses, and activities.

Faculty members, who play an integral role in the process, should work closely with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), University Center, Room 260, and the Accommodative Testing and Adaptive Technology Center (ATATC), Library Room 120, when dealing with a student with a disability and in providing disability-related accommodations. If a student makes reference to having a disability and you are not comfortable working with the student to determine appropriate accommodations, please refer them to ODS or the ATATC.

The information contained in this guide has been presented as a resource to help faculty members understand their vital role in accommodating students with disabilities and to address common questions about working with these students.

Disability Defined

An individual with a disability is:

Any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities (such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working) or any person who has a record of, a history of, or who has been classified as having a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities.

Disability and the Law

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended through the Rehabilitation Amendments of 1992 (Rehab Act) establish criteria and offer guidance regarding the provision of services to students with disabilities in post-secondary education. While the scope and specific language of each of these laws differ, their goal in the higher education setting is the same: to provide meaningful access to the educational services offered by colleges and universities so that students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate.

ODS Forms

As a faculty member, you will likely be presented with several different forms from ODS at some point in time. One form with which a student with a disability may present you is the *Student Accommodation Agreement*.

This is the form that serves to notify you that the student has a documented disability and outlines the accommodations for which the student is eligible.

Another form is the *Accommodative Testing Form*

This is the form by which the student reserves time and assistance in the Accommodative Testing and Adaptive Technology Center for taking a test. The form has a section that the faculty member must complete outlining the specifics regarding the test. The student must submit this form one week prior to the scheduled testing date. ODS requests that the faculty deliver the test to LIB 120 prior to the scheduled testing time unless the faculty member has a disability which precludes him or her from doing so. ODS staff members will deliver the test back to the faculty (either individual offices or departmental offices) when the student has completed the test.

A student might present you with a letter outlining necessary accommodations. This letter serves just to inform you. There is no section to sign or complete.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions about these forms.

Syllabus Statement

Faculty are strongly encouraged to include on their syllabus a statement directing a student to ODS or the ATATC in order to make it clear to a student that it is his or her responsibility and right to get the process of receiving accommodations started. Some examples of statements are:

“To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the ODS Office (x6222) or the Accommodative Testing and Adaptive Technology Center (x7284).”

“Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services at 280-6222 or the Accommodative Testing and Adaptive Technology Center at 280-7284, as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner.”

“If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please see the Office of Disability Services in UC Room 260 or the Accommodative Testing and Adaptive Technology Center in LIB 120.”

Frequently Asked Questions

What exactly is an accommodation?

An academic accommodation is defined as any alteration in the usual manner of teaching, demonstrating, or evaluating a course objective that enables a qualified student with a disability to have an equal opportunity to participate in the educational experience.

How are accommodations determined?

Accommodations are developed from the individual student's documentation of disability that is provided to ODS. Two students with the same disability may qualify for and be eligible to receive different accommodations. The particular accommodations that a student utilizes will depend upon his or her particular characteristics and needs, as well as the demands of the course and learning environment.

Am I being fair to other students by granting one student an accommodation?

Appropriate accommodations do not compromise the essential elements of the course, nor do they weaken the academic standards or integrity of the course. Accommodations simply provide an *alternative* way of accomplishing the course requirements by eliminating or reducing disability-related barriers. The goal of accommodations is to provide a level playing field, not an unfair advantage.

When do I have to comply with a student's request for accommodations?

The law provides the student with a disability the right to request accommodations from the college once he or she has provided the college with *appropriate documentation*. The documentation is kept by ODS and is held in a confidential manner. The University asks that the student discuss her or his disability with ODS and follow the ODS process for communicating with the faculty regarding the accommodations.

How do I know if a student is "faking" his or her disability?

The ODS has policies and procedures for the documentation needed for each disability. It is the job of the ODS to determine eligibility for accommodations. ODS has strict guidelines that are required for the documentation of a disability and follows national standards recommended by the Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD.) ***Faculty members should not expect to see diagnostic information.***

What happens if I do not agree with a formally requested accommodation?

The student can take *legal action* against you and/or the institution. Denial of accommodations could be considered a violation of a student's civil rights. Colleges and universities cannot discriminate against qualified people with disabilities in recruitment, admission, or treatment after admission. A grievance policy exists if you do not agree with the requested accommodations. You should contact ODS. At that time, the Associate Provost would be advised and a meeting scheduled. The documentation would

be reviewed and the reasoning for and against the requested accommodations reviewed. If upon this review, the accommodations were determined to be warranted, you would be required to accommodate the student. *If you have concerns about a particular accommodation request you should discuss it with ODS.*

A student just brought me a Student Accommodation Agreement Form. I don't have the flexibility in my schedule to provide extra time for testing/the ability or know how to provide the accommodations. What do I do?

ODS can proctor exams for you in the Accommodative Testing and Adaptive Technology Center (ATATC), LIB 120. The ATATC can assist with other accommodations as well, like securing volunteer note-takers and enlarging materials. Just give us a call.

A student came to me in the middle of the semester and said he has a disability. What do I do?

The student with a disability is responsible for requesting and initiating all disability-related services and accommodations. An instructor should immediately refer the student to ODS.

I have a student with a disability who is behind in the assignments. This student has not done well on the exams. May I fail the student if she or he does not earn the required points to pass the class?

A student with a disability should be held to the *same standards* as any other student. You may wish to contact ODS to discuss your concerns, and you would certainly want to talk to the student just as you would with any other student.

How can I encourage the student to talk to me about her disability?

Each student has the right to determine when, and if to disclose the nature of her or his disability to the faculty. We know that communication is important and we encourage students to discuss their learning needs, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Some students, especially those with hidden disabilities, such as psychological or learning disabilities, may need time to feel comfortable to discuss their disability. Some students may never choose or need to discuss their disability. Feel free to contact ODS and/or the ATATC for more information about specific disabilities.

Why does ODS keep asking me to choose a textbook for my class in the fall? It is months away and I cannot decide right now?

Students whose disability impacts their reading may receive an accommodation for their course materials (textbooks, handouts, syllabi, lab manuals) to be in an accessible format. Formats include cassette tape, Braille, large print, e-text or scan and read access. Advanced planning is essential in the provision of alternate format materials. Depending upon the particular format, it can take from 8 weeks to 3 or more months to produce the document.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

University Center Room 260

280-6222 voice/TTD

280-3975 (fax)

Director: Dr. Janice Lyn

Email: jlyn@uno.edu

Assistant Director: Amy A. King

Email: aaking@uno.edu

ACCOMMODATIVE TESTING AND ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Library Room 120

280-7284 voice/TTD

280-3998 (fax)

Contact: Amy A. King, aaking@uno.edu