



### **1. How does a student register with the Office of Educational Accessibility?**

A student with a disability may register with the Office of Educational Accessibility by presenting documentation of his/her disability. Documentation should be provided by an impartial, professionally qualified third party, must include evidence of "the nature of the disability and its impact on the student's ability to learn in the academic setting", must provide a specific diagnosis and any relevant testing reports to support the diagnosis, and must include "recommendations about accommodations for the academic setting which the University will consider."

Once the student, at his/her expense, has obtained the appropriate documentation, the student makes an appointment with the Office of Educational Accessibility to complete the intake process. The student's documentation is reviewed to determine if it meets the "Guidelines for Documentation." If the guidelines are met, the student and the Educational Accessibility Advisor discuss which accommodations are reasonable and appropriate. The student is informed of the process of obtaining letters, delivery of letters to faculty, testing procedures, and other services available to them based on their individual circumstances.

### **2. Who determines the accommodations for a student with a disability?**

Accommodations are based on the documentation that the student presents and the discussion that the student has with the Educational Accessibility Advisor during the intake process. Accommodations are established which will support the student with a disability in the academic setting. Since some students are not familiar with using accommodations, and the types of classes change from one semester to another, accommodations may have to be adjusted during the course of their academic career in order to continue to balance the burden of having a disability as a student.

### **3. What types of accommodations are professors *required* to make?**

For the students who provide verification of disability from the Office of Educational Accessibility, faculty should:

- provide accommodations as enumerated in a reasonable and timely manner
- confer with students to establish the best means of providing accommodations as laid out in the Faculty Accommodation Letter
- evaluate students based on their abilities, not their disabilities.

You are ***not*** obligated to provide accommodations to a student until he/she presents a letter from the Office of Educational Accessibility that verifies whether he/she is currently registered with our office. You are ***not*** expected to change grades earned without accommodations prior to self-identification.



#### **4. How can the Office of Educational Accessibility assist in providing the identified accommodations?**

Most faculty handle the provision of accommodations by making arrangements directly with the student once a letter requesting accommodations has been presented.

The Office of Educational Accessibility is willing to support faculty in the implementation of special accommodations. For students who need a distraction-reduced setting or access to computers for testing, the Office of Educational Accessibility is willing to proctor the exams. Due to the small size of the office, the Office of Educational Accessibility cannot implement all accommodations that are requested. Instead, the Office of Educational Accessibility relies on the collaborative efforts of faculty.

#### **5. If I object to an accommodation for a student, how should I proceed?**

Please contact the Educational Accessibility Advisor if you believe a particular accommodation interferes with the process or methodology of a class. The Office of Educational Accessibility will work with the faculty member and student to try to find a reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of all interested parties for a particular situation.

Faculty should continue to provide the recommended accommodation until a resolution is reached. *Withholding an accommodation puts both the faculty member and the University at risk for legal liability.*

Since most faculty do not have formal training or extensive experience in the area of disabilities and the legal issues related to accommodation, they are advised to discuss any concerns with the Office of Educational Accessibility. If the Educational Accessibility advisor is not able to provide answers to the faculty member's satisfaction, the faculty member may appeal to the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs for assistance.

#### **6. Why am I not told the nature of the student's disability?**

While some students' disabilities are readily evident, such as if they use a wheelchair, hearing aids or a white cane, many students have disabilities that include medical conditions, psychological conditions, attention deficit disorder, and specific learning disabilities. Since the Office of Educational Accessibility is legally bound by confidentiality of all records, it may release only the information that is necessary to meet the student's academic needs. Thus, the Office of Educational Accessibility does not identify the nature of the student's disability and only lists the accommodations that have been determined as necessary for the student's academic support. Individual students may choose to discuss their particular situation with a faculty member; however, the faculty member *must not* ask questions about the nature of the disability. Doing so will put the faculty member and the University at risk for legal liability.



### **7. Why do students provide the letters from the Office of Educational Accessibility so late in the semester?**

Due to the confidentiality of all documentation and communication related to students with disabilities, the Office of Educational Accessibility cannot provide notice to faculty members until the student authorizes release of this information. Students are encouraged to request letters for faculty early each semester. Most of the students do so in a timely manner during the first weeks of classes once their schedule is set.

A student may elect to attempt a class without accommodations or to self-identify later in the semester. However, if the student opts for this approach, any grades that have been earned without the use of accommodations are to remain as earned.

In addition, registration with the Office of Educational Accessibility may take place at any point during the semester. Thus, a student may not have documentation until later in a semester. Once the student has provided the appropriate documentation, reasonable accommodations can be determined and instituted. The Office of Educational Accessibility does not accept new documentation for accommodation for a current semester during the week prior to final exams or during exam week.

### **8. What should I do if I think that the student is pushing to get better grades because of a disability?**

Students with disabilities are as broad a crosssection of the student body as any other group. They will vary in their intellectual ability, learning styles, emotional health and moral integrity. Recognition of the diverse population of students in general can be helpful when dealing with students with specific behaviors. When concerned about whether a student is being pushy, a professor needs to identify the basis for that concern by asking if a student without a disability with the same behaviors would be viewed in the same manner. If the answer is "yes", the professor should deal with the student in the same manner as though no disability were present. If the answer is "no," the professor may consult with the Office of Educational Accessibility regarding how to proceed.

If any particular accommodation is cause for concern, please contact the Office of Educational Accessibility to make sure that the accommodation is valid. The Office of Educational Accessibility determines accommodations on a case-by-case basis with certified professional documentation as the objective criteria by which such decisions are supported.

Students using accommodations should never be graded on differently from their peers, nor should they have their accommodations suspended, even if a professor believes that the student does not need support for a disability. This is not the professor's determination to make.



### **9. What is an appropriate statement to use on my syllabus?**

The Office of Educational Accessibility recommends that all faculty invite students with disabilities to self-identify to them. This sample statement may be useful:

*The University of the Arts provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. If you are a student with a documented disability, the University's Educational Accessibility Advisor determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. Before you can receive accommodations in this class, you will need to make an appointment with the DSA. To speak with me about other concerns, such as medical emergencies or arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment as soon as possible. My office location and hours are...*

### **10. What records do I need to keep on students with disabilities?**

Faculty should maintain records on all students in their classes. These records should be the same for the student with a disability as for a student without a disability. If the student raises a specific concern that you want to document, please feel free to do so as you would for any other student who raised a concern with you.

### **11. How should I make a referral to the Office of Educational Accessibility?**

If, during the course of a semester, a student displays one or more of the following characteristics, you may suggest that the student discuss these difficulties with someone in the Office of Educational Accessibility:

- effort exceeds returns
- poor reading/listening comprehension
- poor written expression
- extreme distractibility/frustration
- severe math errors
- severe test anxiety
- good class participation; poor test performance and vice versa

The student may be entitled to accommodations if he/she can document this situation as a disability. Referrals can be made to the Office of Educational Accessibility, 215-717-6616.

### **12. What is the process used for test proctoring at the Office of Educational Accessibility?**

The information presented here explains how to interface with the Office of Educational Accessibility with regard to testing accommodations:

- Students who need testing accommodations should present a letter from the Office of Educational Accessibility identifying their specific needs.
- Students who need the single accommodation of extended time on tests may be accommodated by taking their tests in Advising Center in Pine Hall or by resources that you arrange.
- Students who need additional accommodation, such as a distraction-reduced setting, scribing, or tape-recording of tests should be allowed to complete their tests through the Office of Educational Accessibility.
- The Office of Educational Accessibility requires that a student provide at least 3 business days' notice prior to test proctoring.



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- Once the student has notified the Office of Educational Accessibility, the Educational Accessibility Advisor will contact you via e-mail or phone to arrange to obtain the test.
- Any specific instructions regarding test administration (i.e. open book, open notes, etc.) should be clearly noted and attached to the test.
- Tests may be sent electronically via an attachment to the Office of Educational Accessibility or sent via campus mail.
- Once the test is completed, the Office of Educational Accessibility will return the test between 3 and 5 pm on the day following completion of the test, unless other arrangements have been made.
- **If a test is not available on the day prior to the test administration**, choose one of these options: bring the test to the office at 210C Hamilton Hall, or allow the student to obtain the test in a sealed envelope from the professor or departmental office and take it to the Office of Educational Accessibility for proctoring.
- When the Office of Educational Accessibility returns the test, it will obtain the signature of the accepting party in the departmental office. The date and time of its return will also be noted.
- The Office of Educational Accessibility maintains a record of tests proctored for one academic year. The return slips are filed in student confidential files.

### **13. What information should I be able to obtain from the Office of Educational Accessibility if an exam is not returned to me?**

If a problem arises with respect to any unreturned examination, please contact the Office of Educational Accessibility at 717-6616. The Educational Accessibility Advisor should be able to inform you whether the student has completed the test, on which day it was taken, when (date and time) and to whom the test was returned.

### **14. Doesn't the provision of accommodations provide an unfair advantage for the student with a disability?**

This question usually does not arise in relationship to students with visible disabilities as most professors expect that the student will need to have accommodations. However, if the disability is not visible, and the student is being successful in the class, the question of fairness may arise. In a research study by K. Runyon in 1989, two groups of students with and without learning disabilities were compared with respect to extended time on tests. The results indicated that the students with learning disabilities did have significantly better results on tests when they were provided with extended time for testing. This was not a surprising result. However, the students without learning disabilities did not do significantly better on their test scores when they were given extended time. This result suggests that the accommodation of extended time helps to provide a level playing field but does not provide an advantage for the student with a learning disability.



### **15. What is a learning disability?**

A specific learning disability is an umbrella for a variety of disorders that have a presumed neurological base. Dr. Larry Silver of Georgetown University has provided a helpful model for understanding the nature of a learning disability as a cybernetic model. A student may have severe dysfunction in one or more of four areas--input, storage, retrieval and output.

First, a student may have difficulty with "input." Input depends on the intake of information through the senses -- eyes, ears, and touch, in particular. If a student struggles to process information obtained through his/her senses, he/she will have a distinct disadvantage when competing with students for whom input problems do not exist. The more multi-sensory the approach of the instruction, the more likely the student will be able to input accurately.

A second area of difficulty may be the "storage" of material. The student who has learning disabilities in this area has difficulty with moving material learned into short-term or long-term memory. The more diverse the methods of instruction, the more likely the student will be able to link newly learned material to previously learned material.

The third area of dysfunction may be the "retrieval" of material. Some students have a difficult time recalling material learned from memory. While recognition memory may be easier for some, having to use both recall of facts and then application of the facts may be problematic. Other students have difficulty with material that is sequential in nature and may not be able to recall all the steps in a process such as in mathematics. The method of testing and the time for processing of material becomes crucial for these students.

Finally, many students have dysfunction in the output of information. They have difficulty with spelling, with writing or with oral presentations. The students who experience this aspect to the disorder may need accommodations of extended time, access to word processing, or disregarding of spelling for in-class work.

For a student experiencing one or more of these dysfunctions, they will be at a decided disadvantage when evaluated alongside their peers if they do not receive the accommodations that allow them to begin on a level playing field. The sensitivity of the faculty with regard to learning disabilities will assist these students in seeking the assistance that they need to become successful students and qualified graduates.

In addition, it is important to know that students with learning disabilities do not outgrow the disability as they mature. While they do become better at coping with the disability, the stresses of the higher education setting often exacerbate the disorder. The performance of the student with a learning disability is not a matter of the capability to learn but of the neurological processing mechanisms that facilitate learning.

### **16. How can I handle the resentment of other students without disabilities?**

Some students without disabilities may object to the provision of accommodations to students with disabilities. Since faculty, staff and administrators are bound by the confidential status of the student disability, this information cannot be shared with other students, even if no specific information is revealed. A faculty member cannot disclose that a student is even registered with the Office of Educational Accessibility, especially to another student. It is best to make some statement to the effect that you are not at liberty to discuss the confidential nature of another student's affairs and that you hope that they understand as you would afford them the same courtesy if someone inquired about them.