

# Reasonable Accommodations: Strategies for Support



A Faculty Guide to Working with  
Students with Disabilities



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

Office of Educational Accessibility  
David J. Thomas, Ph.D.  
Educational Accessibility Advisor  
ADA/504 Coordinator

University of the Arts  
320 S. Broad Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

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## *Foreward*

The University of the Arts is the only university in the nation dedicated exclusively to the visual and performing arts, design, and writing. It's an exciting, energizing time to work here – we're becoming an internationally renowned leader in arts education. We're teaching the creative process to kids as young as five and to adults of all ages. And we're moving the creative economy forward.

In recent years, we have seen dramatic increases in the numbers of students with disabilities who are applying to and being accepted into our programs. Indeed, since the original publication of this handbook, our population of students with disabilities has grown exponentially and their presence is becoming an important part of the University community. As such it has become necessary to draw the attention of faculty and staff to the special needs presented by this unique population.

The mission of the Office of Educational Accessibility is to enable citizen artists to succeed, creatively and personally, at the University of the Arts, and beyond, by removing barriers and by promoting acceptance and accessibility in all University programs, activities, and facilities. We are committed to inspiring, educating, and preparing innovative artists and creative leaders for the arts of the 21st century. We do this by directing each student's quest for creative self-expression toward a productive role in society that we might stimulate and influence not only our students but the very disciplines they study. The Office of Educational Accessibility embraces student learning and development by tailoring the accommodations and interventions for students with disabilities to meet them where they are developmentally and to develop the skills necessary to self-advocate.

The primary mandate of the Office of Educational Accessibility is to provide leadership and facilitate equal access to all institutional opportunities for disabled individuals. The Office of Educational Accessibility provides institution-wide advisement, consultation, and training on disability related topics, including legal

and regulatory compliance, universal design, and disability scholarship. The Office of Educational Accessibility collaborates with partners to identify and remove barriers to foster an all-inclusive campus and provides individual services and facilitates accommodations for students with disabilities.

To this end, we have produced this Handbook to serve as a guide and a toolkit for faculty who work closest with our students in fostering student success and furthering the artistic mission and vision of the University.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. Thomas".

David J. Thomas, Ph.D.  
*Educational Accessibility Advisor*  
*ADA/504 Coordinator*  
*Office of Educational Accessibility*

## ***Introduction***

This faculty guide has been developed to provide the faculty at the University of the Arts with practical information and suggestions to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

***A student with a disability is any student who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working. A person is considered to be a person with a disability if he/she has a disability, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.***

The increased observance of students with disabilities on college campuses can be attributed to several factors. First, greater assistance has been provided to students with disabilities at the elementary and secondary levels resulting in more students with disabilities leaving school prepared to attend college. Second, current college students who have not been previously identified as having a disability are being recognized and are requesting accommodations. Finally, federal laws have protected the rights of these students to receive reasonable accommodations and have provided means of redress if rights are violated. This final factor supports student assertiveness in requesting accommodations.

The legal obligation to accommodate students with disabilities extends beyond the University's commitment of access to programs, services, activities and facilities. A legal imperative, which is embodied in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, confirms civil rights for persons with disabilities by the following statement:

*No otherwise qualified individual shall, solely by reason of their disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.*

In order to comply with this mandate, colleges and universities that receive Federal assistance must assure that the same educational programs and services

offered to other students are available to students with disabilities. Academic and artistic ability must be the sole basis for participation in post-secondary education.

To accomplish this goal, both physical and programmatic access must be provided. While this includes the removal of architectural barriers and the provision of auxiliary services, reasonable accommodations must be made by the University through its instructors and administrators in the instructional process to ensure that appropriate educational strategies and modes are available to students.

Achieving this goal requires knowledge and sensitivity to the specific needs of students with disabilities. This handbook is designed to provide information and to heighten awareness for the benefit of both faculty and students.

*University of the Arts Accessibility Advisory Committee*

Dr. David J. Thomas, Educational Accessibility Advisor, Chair

Rick Longo, Vice President for Enrollment, Retention, and Student Affairs

Dr. Stephen Lightcap, Vice President for Finance and Administration

Dr. Maria deSantis, Assistant Vice President for Academic Support Services

Josh Stern, Assistant Vice President for Student Services

Christine Schaefer, SPHR, Associate Vice President for Human Resources

Desiree DeLuca, Assistant Vice President for Operations and Facilities

Nick Embree, Associate Dean of the College of Performing Arts

Joe Rapone, Associate Dean of the College of Art, Media, and Design

Connie Michael, Associate Dean of the Division of Liberal Arts

Suzanne Scott, RN, Director of Health Services

Sara Kupferer, Director of Student Life and Deputy Title IX Coordinator

Abe Zubarev, BCD, LCSW, Director of Counseling Services

Jeanette Brown, Director of Public Safety

TJ Walsh, Manager of Parent and Alumni Relations

Joshua Roberts, Digital Initiatives and Systems Librarian

Lexi Morrison, J.D., Title IX and Diversity Administrator

## ***General Considerations for Working with Students with Disabilities***

- Some students with disabilities identify themselves by contacting the Office of Educational Accessibility and/or their instructors before or early in the semester. Others may not.
- **Students with disabilities are not required to register with the Office of Educational Accessibility; however, in order to receive accommodations, they must fully disclose their disability to the Educational Accessibility Advisor**
- Some disabilities are visible through casual observation and immediately recognizable. Others are invisible or hidden disabilities, which are usually not apparent. These may include learning disabilities, emotional or psychological conditions. Some students may present with multiple disabilities, both visible and invisible.
- **If you believe that a student has a disability, seek guidance from the Office of Educational Accessibility. Please do not make assumptions about a student's abilities or comment on the student's presumed disabilities.**
- It is crucial that the faculty member includes a statement in the class syllabus encouraging students with disabilities to arrange accommodations early in the semester. The approved statement through the Office of the Provost and should be included on all syllabi reads:

*Students, who believe they are eligible for course accommodations under the ADA or Section 504 or have had accommodations or modifications in the past, should contact the Office of Educational Accessibility at 215.717.6616 or [access@uarts.edu](mailto:access@uarts.edu) to arrange for appropriate accommodations and to obtain an accommodations letter, if applicable. Faculty can provide course accommodations/modifications only after receipt of an approved accommodations letter from the Office of Educational Accessibility. Accommodation letters can be provide to qualified students at any time during the semester, but grades earned before the faculty receives the letter cannot be changed.*

- Dialogue between students with disabilities and their instructors is essential early in the term, and follow-up meetings are recommended. Faculty should not feel apprehensive about discussing students' needs as they relate to the course. There is no need to avoid using terms that refer to the disability, such as see, blind, hear, or walk.
- Students using wheelchairs or other assistive devices, such as crutches, may encounter obstacles or barriers in getting to class on time. Many rely on alternate modes of public transportation. Others may have periodic or irregular curtailments of functioning, either from their disability or from medication. Some flexibility in applying attendance and promptness rules to students with mobility and chronic medical disabilities would be warranted and helpful.
- A wide range of students with disabilities may be assisted in the classroom by making book lists available prior to the beginning of the term, by speaking directly toward the class, and by writing key lecture points and assignments on the chalk- or white-board.
- Chronic weakness and fatigue characterize some disabilities and medical conditions. A student may exhibit drowsiness, fatigue, impairments of memory, or slowness due to medication side effects. Such curtailments of functioning and interferences with students' ability to perform, based on disability, should be distinguished from the apathetic behavior it may resemble.

**The objective of academic adjustments is always to accommodate the student's disability, not to dilute scholastic or artistic requirements. Students with disabilities are expected to produce the same quantity and quality of work as those students without disabilities.**

## ***University Policies And Procedures***

The University of the Arts is committed to achieving equal educational opportunity and full participation for students with disabilities. It is the University's policy that no qualified person be excluded from participation in any University program or activity, be denied the benefits of any university program or activity, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination with regard to any University program or activity. This policy derives from the University's commitment to non-discrimination for all persons in employment, access to facilities, student programs, activities and services.

The Office of Educational Accessibility shall oversee the assessment of student requests for accommodation and assistance and shall coordinate the development of the program among the student and faculty members. In addition, the office shall implement the University's disability program for students and supervise the delivery of equipment and services.

### **Definition of Those Qualified for Assistance**

The appropriate recipient of accommodations is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, performing manual tasks or learning. In addition, a person who has history of such impairment is qualified for assistance. With respect specifically to the post-secondary setting, such a person must be otherwise qualified under the academic standards requisite for admission in spite of the disability.

### **Recruitment**

The Office of Admissions at University of the Arts will make all reasonable effort to assure that all recruitment activities are made accessible to persons with documented disabilities. All facilities hosting University of the Arts recruitment activities will be encouraged to provide that such facilities are accessible so that interested persons with disabilities will not be excluded or denied participation. In keeping with this policy, University of the Arts will provide, if given adequate

advance notice, such services as interpreters, audiotapes or reader services at recruitment functions.

## **Admissions to the University**

### **General Admissions**

The requirements for admission for persons with disabilities are no different from those for other persons applying to University of the Arts. The official application for admission to the University will not ask for information concerning an applicant's physical or mental disability. However, programs within the University have technical standards that must be met. A prospective student may choose to self-disclose in the admissions process.

### **Acceptance to Specific Programs**

Technical standards will be established by each academic program which describe the skills the student must have or be able to acquire in order to meet curriculum requirements and to perform successfully in an academic program. The University is not required to make major academic adjustments, fundamental changes, or substantially modify standards for acceptance into or completion of any program of study. Students with disabilities interested in applying for acceptance to a particular program should assure that they are aware of any applicable technical standards.

If a question arises about the qualifications of a student with a disability who wishes to be accepted in a particular degree program, the department chair shall have the responsibility of deciding whether or not the applicant will be accepted to the program. After having considered the requests for accommodation presented by the student, as well as the technical standards for the requested program, the department chair shall determine whether or not the student is otherwise qualified for acceptance to the program.

In making the determination, the department chair should consult with the student's advisor and the Office of Educational Accessibility. If after careful consideration, the department chair decides that the student is not otherwise

qualified for acceptance to the program of study, the student will be advised of his or her academic options.

### **Determination of Need for reasonable Accommodations/Academic Adjustments**

Under Section 504, institutions are required to respond by making modifications in academic requirements as necessary to ensure that such requirements do not discriminate or have the effect of discriminating against a student with a disability.

The information sent to students upon acceptance to the University shall include a notice that it is the responsibility of students with a disability to contact the Office of Educational Accessibility to arrange for accommodations. The information provided by the student in doing so will be kept confidential and shared only with those involved in arranging for accommodations. Diagnoses will never be revealed except at the express written request of the student.

Students who request reasonable accommodations must be prepared to provide documentation of the disability by a qualified professional, where appropriate, before accommodations will be implemented. Except under extraordinary circumstances, the documentation must be current i.e., dated no more than three years prior to enrollment in the University.

Documentation must provide sufficient information to assist the institution in determining what difficulties the student would encounter in a normal learning environment. Although formats will vary, the following critical data should be included in any documentation in support of a request for accommodations:

The student's name, the dates of examination or testing, the examiner's name and credentials.

- Identify the problems or reasons for referral.
- In cases of learning disability, a list of the tests administered, including the names of the tests as well as the version used.

- An analysis or interpretation of test results.
- Diagnostic summary with a brief composite of the entire assessment process. The summary should address the concerns raised in the section on reasons for referral.
- Recommendations of strategies to assist the student in becoming an efficient learner.

A student with a documented disability who has registered for class or has been accepted into the University can request support services and the use of assistive technology for classroom and extracurricular activities. The student must notify the Office of Educational Accessibility of the accommodations required within a reasonable time prior to the date of anticipated need. Reasonable accommodations by the university are possible only after contact with the Office of Educational Accessibility has been initiated. Students needing sign language interpreters or special equipment should provide 45 days notice to the Office of Educational Accessibility.

The Office of Educational Accessibility will assess requests for accommodation after carefully reviewing the diagnostic evaluation and supporting documentation. Each accommodation will be based on objective documentation regarding the effect of the specific documented disability on the ability to learn in the content area in question.

In order to receive accommodations, students must supply their instructors with letters from the Office of Educational Accessibility which verify their disability and identify reasonable accommodations. The student and faculty member shall:

Discuss the implementation of appropriate accommodations

Note their respective agreement to these accommodations

Students who have a documented disability may elect not to disclose the disability. Should the student seek accommodations late in the semester, or if a student has a disability which is not obvious and chooses not to disclose it, then he/she should be aware that 1) all previous grades will stand as earned, and 2)

accommodations will be implemented in a timely manner, usually within two weeks. For students who are newly identified and documented during the course of a semester and thus, have not had the advantage of accommodations, considerations will be made on a case -by-case basis in consultation with all parties involved.

The types of accommodations provided to student with documented disabilities will vary depending on the nature of the disability and the course content. Often an initial trial-and-error period may be needed to determine the best way to accommodate a student's disability.

The Office of Educational Accessibility will advise the students in writing of the results of the assessment. This notification to the student from the university shall serve as a guide for the provision of services from the university for the semester or situation specified.

If agreed upon accommodations did not meet the needs of the student, the student should contact the Office of Educational Accessibility as soon as possible for further assistance.

## Support Services

1. Advising - Students with documented disabilities should make sure that their advisors are aware of the disabilities so that the advisor can guide the student as to course or degree requirements which may affect the student's completion of the course or degree program.
2. Classroom Accommodations - The University shall provide the following minimal accommodations for students with documented disabilities in the classroom; 1) classroom activities, including testing procedures and other methods of evaluation used for classroom participation, shall be reasonably modified to provide students with documented disabilities with the opportunity to participate; 2) the location of classrooms shall be changed as appropriate to accommodate the student with a disability; 3) a reasonable number of elective courses shall be held in accessible facilities; 4) the use of special equipment and assistive technology shall be made

available; and 5) modification of course requirements or assignments which may not be essential shall be considered.

3. Student Services and Activities - Students with documented disabilities at University of the Arts shall be provided reasonable accommodations for participation in and use of student services and activities including housing, health, insurance, counseling, financial aid, recreation, transportation, or other extracurricular programs or activities.
4. Given adequate notification, those students who require assistive technology and assistance for counseling settings will be provided with the aids and assistance necessary to participate.

## University Wide Accessibility Projects

The University Accessibility Advisory Committee is comprised of key decision makers from a variety of constituencies and office across the university. Together with the Educational Accessibility Advisor, this team is actively involved in creating a more accessible environment for the University of the Arts community.

Our current projects include:

- Development of Disciplinary Technical Standards to guide decision making and aid the Office of Educational Accessibility is providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities.
- Improving the physical accessibility of the campus facilities including classroom spaces, theatres, workshops, studios, and gathering spaces.
- Improving the accessibility of services, programming, and performances for the UArts community and the community-at-large.
- Providing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff working directly with students with disabilities.
- Providing assistive technology for use by students, faculty and staff.
- Recommending and implementing design applications for the development and maintenance of adaptive computer labs.
- Implementation of the Friday Night Social Club with the Office of Counseling Services, a group for students with social anxiety and those on the Autism Spectrum.

## *Disability Etiquette*

It is most important to remember that students with disabilities are just that; students first who happen to have disabilities. They were accepted into the University using the same standards as all other students and they share the same desire to learn and succeed as artists. Therefore they need to be treated with the same respect. One of the best ways to do this is by treating them as people first and by using person first language or if the student indicates a specific form of reference respect their wishes. When using person first language, the person precedes the disability.

Say this:	Not this:
Student with a disability	Disabled student
Student who uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair bound student
Student with an emotional disability	Emotionally disabled student
Student with a seizure disorder	Epileptic student
Student with ADHD	Hyperactive student
<b>Deaf or hard of hearing student*</b>	<b>Student with a hearing impairment or Hearing impaired student</b>
<b>Blind student*</b>	<b>Student with a visual impairment or Student who is blind</b>

\*Please note that for Deaf students and blind students that person first language is *not* followed. Deaf or hard of hearing is the preferred usage as indicated by the majority of culturally Deaf people.

When you place the student first, you are subtly acknowledging that the student is more than his/her disability. It is also important to refrain from using descriptions of the disabilities that have negative connotations such as afflicted,

invalid, confined, and stricken. These words evoke thoughts of illness and weakness; not a message we wish to send to our students.

When Meeting with a Student with a Disability:

- Offer help, then wait until it is accepted before you give it. Offering to assist someone is polite behavior. Giving help before it is accepted is rude and may, sometimes, even be unsafe, illegal, or unethical.
- If a person with a disability asks for help and you want to provide assistance, but don't know how, ask the person to tell you the best way of providing the needed assistance.
- If a person with a disability feels she/he can do something but you cannot understand how (e.g. performing certain job requirements, tasks, white water rafting), ask the person to explain.
- Accept the fact that a disability exists. Not acknowledging a disability is similar to ignoring someone's sex, height or race. But to ask personal questions about the disability would be inappropriate until a closer relationship develops in which personal questions are more naturally asked. You should never initiate the conversation about specifics of a student's impairment; it is the student's right when, how and to what extent they disclose their disability.
- Speak directly to the person with a disability (including a person who is Deaf), not to their companion or interpreter.
- Include students and employees with disabilities when planning programs and meeting locations.
- Do not assume that a lack of a response indicates rudeness or a lack of understanding. In some cases a person with a disability may seem to react to situations in an unconventional manner or appear to be ignoring you. Consider that the individual may be hard of hearing or have a processing impairment which may affect social or motor skills.

### When Speaking to Someone who uses a Wheelchair:

- Do not hold on to a person's wheelchair. It is part of that person's body space. Hanging on or leaning on the wheelchair is similar to leaning on a person sitting in any chair.
- Do not be oversensitive about using words like "walking" or "running." People using wheelchairs use the same words.
- If conversation proceeds more than a few minutes and it is possible to do so, consider sitting down in order to share eye level. It is uncomfortable for a seated person to look straight up for a long period of time and it creates a uncomfortable power differential.

### When Speaking to a Blind Person:

- If you see a blind person in a dangerous situation (about to walk into a wall or piece of furniture) speak out and make her/him aware of the danger.
- Do not be sensitive about using words like "see" or "look," etc. Blind people use them regularly.
- Speak in a clear, normal manner. Do not exaggerate or raise your voice. Remember that the person is blind, not necessarily hard of hearing.

### When Speaking with a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Person:

- Speak clearly and distinctly, but do not exaggerate your words. Use normal speech unless asked to slow down.
- Provide a clear view of your mouth. Waving your hands or holding something in front of your lip, thus hiding them, makes speech reading impossible.
- Use normal tone unless you are asked to raise your voice. Shouting will not help.
- Speak directly to the person, instead of from the side or back of the person. Also, make sure the Deaf or hard of hearing person is looking at you before you begin to speak. It is acceptable to touch a Deaf or hard of hearing person in order to get their attention; this is expected and a normal part of conversation for them.

- Speak expressively, and keep good eye contact. Deaf or hard of hearing people cannot hear subtle changes in tone which may indicate sarcasm or seriousness. Many will rely on your facial expressions, gestures, and body language to understand what you are saying.
- If you are having trouble understanding a person's speech, feel free to ask her/him to repeat. If that does not work, then use paper and pen. Most people will not be offended.
- Remember, communication is your goal. The method is less important.
- If you know any ASL, try using it. If the deaf person you are communicating with finds it a problem, the person will let you know. Usually your attempts will be appreciated and supported.
- When talking with a Deaf or hard of hearing person, try not to stand in front of a light source (e.g. a window). The Deaf or hard of hearing person will find it hard to see your face, which will be silhouetted in the light.
- Do not assume that the Deaf or hard of hearing person really understands you if she/he nods her/his head "yes." This is often an automatic reaction. If you want to make certain that the person understood, ask her/him (in a tactful way) to repeat or explain what you said.

## *The Office of Educational Accessibility*

Students seeking accommodations and services through Educational Accessibility are expected to self-advocate and disclose fully the nature of their disability. Federal regulations allow the University of the Arts to request appropriate documentation of a disability which substantially limits one or more major life activities before accommodations can be made. Accommodations are tailored to the specific needs of each individual student in order to maximize their potential and will, therefore, differ from student to student.

While disclosure of a disability is voluntary, students are highly encouraged to meet with the Educational Accessibility Advisor as early in their UArts career as possible to ensure the highest levels of success. The Educational Accessibility Advisor is available for regular appointments as well as drop in consultation on issues related to the student experience at the University of the Arts.

## **Receiving Accommodations/Services**

Students wishing to use services and accommodations through the Office of Educational Accessibility must follow the established process developed by the University. No services will be rendered or accommodations provided until the student has completed the prescribed steps and indicated that he/she understands and agrees with the Educational Accessibility Advisor's recommendations and the student's responsibility in the delivery of services. The accommodations intake and provision process is as follows:

1. Complete an intake appointment with the Educational Accessibility Advisor prior to the provision of services.
2. Provide recent documentation (generally within the last 3 years) of the nature of the impairment and recommendations for accommodations from a qualified professional.
3. Meet with the Educational Accessibility Advisor to determine reasonable accommodations.
4. Submit a Request for Accommodations Letters Form to provide information regarding reasonable accommodations to faculty as soon as possible.

5. Provide Faculty Accommodations letter to course instructors and teaching assistants.

The Office of Educational Accessibility *does*:

1. Offer pre-admission information concerning services and accommodations which are available to enrolled students.
2. Facilitate program accommodations in accordance based on qualifying documentation.
3. Refer students to appropriate services within the University and the community.
4. Coordinate a note-sharing program
5. Offer opportunities for faculty/staff awareness and professional development.
6. Act as a liaison between faculty, staff, administrators, and students
7. Proctor examinations.

The Office of Educational Accessibility *does not*:

1. Provide formal diagnostic evaluations, although we do provide a comprehensive list of qualified diagnosticians in the area.
2. Offer self-contained classes for students with learning disabilities.
3. Ask faculty to compromise the quality of instruction or evaluation in any class, but rather to provide the accommodations necessary for a student to meet the standards of the class.

The Office of Educational Accessibility is located in the Advising Center. The telephone number is (215)717-6616. The Educational Accessibility Advisor can be reached via email at [access@uarts.edu](mailto:access@uarts.edu).

## Documenting Disability

### Fundamental Questions

- What barriers to full access and participation is the student experiencing?
- What is the student's experience of *disability*?
- What is the student's personal history of accommodation?
- What is the student's experience with previous accommodations?
- What accommodations were found to be appropriate and which were found not to be beneficial?
- Why were these accommodations appropriate? How did they directly address the disability experienced by the student?
- What accommodations would reasonably and directly address the removal of barriers to access without fundamentally altering a program and meeting disciplinary technical standards?

### Documentation Practices: Sources and Forms

The Office of Educational Accessibility is a member of the Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) and adheres the standards set forth by that organization. AHEAD has established a three tier classification of acceptable sources of documentation to substantiate a student's impairment and identification of any barriers to access:

#### ***Primary Documentation: Student's Self-report***

The student is a vital source of information regarding how he or she may be "limited by impairment." A student's narrative of his or her experience of disability, barriers, and effective and ineffective accommodations is an important tool which, when structured by interview or questionnaire and interpreted, may be sufficient for establishing disability and a need for accommodation.

#### ***Secondary Documentation: Observation and Interaction***

The impressions and conclusions formed by higher education disability professionals during interviews and conversations with students or in

evaluating the effectiveness of previously implemented or provisional accommodations are important forms of documentation. Experienced disability professionals should feel comfortable using their observations of students' language, performance, and strategies as an appropriate tool in validating student narrative and self-report.

### *Tertiary documentation: Information From External or Third Parties*

Documentation from external sources may include educational or medical records, reports and assessments created by health care providers, school psychologists, teachers, or the educational system. This information is inclusive of documents that reflect education and accommodation history, such as Individual Education Program (IEP), Summary Of Performance (SOP), and teacher observations. External documentation will vary in its relevance and value depending on the original context, credentials of the evaluator, the level of detail provided, and the comprehensiveness of the narrative. However, all forms of documentation are meaningful and should be mined for pertinent information. (AHEAD, 2012, p.2)

For the purposes of determining eligibility for accommodation, the Office of Educational Accessibility will consider referrals via faculty, administrators, student affairs staff, and CARE reports to be sufficient tertiary supporting documentation when interpreted in concert with primary and secondary supporting documentation.

### *Student Self-Report Interviews*

A semi-structured interview protocol is used to obtain a student's self-report. Due to the variant nature of information collected in this manner, the interview protocol is continually reexamined, renegotiated, and revised to reflect the changing nature of the impairment and barriers to access experienced by the student. Students are initially prompted by a series of open-ended interview questions about their experience in school and what brings them to OEA. The interview protocol is comprised of a number of fundamental questions and related follow-up questions designed to elicit further information from students to adequately assess a student's needs for accommodation. Follow-up questions

are used only to prompt further responses from the student for the purposes of clarification.

At the beginning of intake appointment, students are asked to provide detailed contact and disclosure data using the Accommodations Request Form. Students are asked to provide information about their age, year in school, major field of study, native language, and whether or not they have received any accommodations in the past (i.e., Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan).

To ensure credibility of information collected and results, a number of measures are used: triangulation of responses using multiple sources of data, consultation with experts in other areas when a student's case is beyond the expertise of the primary evaluator, the use of integrative and holistic qualitative data, and bracketing of researcher assumptions and bias. Data collection instruments are based on guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Justice, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, AHEAD, the Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education, University of the Arts policies and were piloted and peer reviewed prior to use to identify and address threats to credibility and validity.

The design of the structured interview implements three of the four types of triangulation identified by Patton (2002) to increase the validity and verification of information provided during the intake process: triangulation of sources, analyst triangulation, and theory/perspective triangulation.

Documentation obtained from each of the three tiers of documentation is examined for overarching emergent themes and for internal consistency between sources of documentation. Any discrepancies are investigated, and a determination is made based on all of the information available to assess an individual student's case.

Information is examined and accommodations are determined primarily and ultimately by the Office of Educational Accessibility. However, depending on the accommodation requested, the impairment and its effects, and the disciplinary technical standards involved in the student's courses, it may be necessary for OEA to consult with the Assistant Vice President for Academic Support Services, the Assistant Vice President for Student Services, Counseling Services, Student Health Services or the Office of Student Life.

Information obtained during the intake interview is examined with the perspectives of a number of stakeholders taken into consideration: the student, the department, the colleges, and the University. However, the Department of Justice has mandated that the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act be construed as broadly as possible, and the needs and experience of the student will be given primary consideration when making determinations of accommodations, and the effect of accommodations on any other constituency, including other students, must not be considered when making accommodations determinations.

### **Accommodations Notification Process**

The Office of Educational Accessibility has adopted a new accommodations notification system for the Spring 2016 semester. This system is two-fold: Deans and Program/School Directors will be provided access to the accommodations letters of all students registered with OEA that fall under their purview, and the Office of Educational Accessibility will notify individual faculty of each student's accommodations as they are requested by the student (see attached request form). Please keep in mind that all communication with the Office of Educational Accessibility is strictly confidential and should not be discussed with anyone not associated with the provision of accommodations.

### **Notification of Deans and Program/School Directors**

All accommodations letters for any students with a declared major in your school or program will be uploaded to a secure Google drive which has already been shared with you. Please be sure to update the Office of Educational Accessibility when such permissions should be changed. These letters are for your reference only and are not intended to serve as a formal request for accommodation in any given course. Examples of uses for these letters might be clarification of an accommodation for a faculty member, recommendation that a student use their accommodations if they are performing poorly in a course, etc.

### **Notification of Individual Faculty**

The Office of Educational Accessibility will email accommodations letters directly to the faculty members at their UArts email listed in Colleague at the time the letter is requested. The Office of Educational Accessibility will track read receipts

for these messages and will follow up with faculty, as necessary, one week after the initial notification email is sent. If after the follow up the accommodation letter does not appear to have been read by the faculty, OEA will follow up with the Program/School Directors and Department Chairs. All accommodations letters will be sent using UArts email and to UArts email addresses – because of the sensitivity of this information the use of private email addresses is inappropriate. Accommodations letters will be accompanied by an email explaining the accommodations process and with the subject line “Accommodations Letter Submitted – Abby Student”. (see attached for email text.)

As always, the Office of Educational Accessibility is willing to answer any questions that you may have about individual accommodations, the accommodations process, or any questions involving our students with disabilities.

## Universal Design in Education

### In Instruction

- A statement on a syllabus that invites students to meet with the instructor to discuss learning needs and individual learning styles.
- Multiple delivery methods that motivate and engage all learners.
- A flexible curriculum that is accessible to all learners.
- Examples that appeal to students with a variety of characteristics with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, disability, and interest.
- Regular, accessible, and effective interactions between students and the instructor.
- Allowing students to turn in parts of a large project for feedback before the final project is due.
- Class outlines and notes on an accessible website.
- Assessing student learning using multiple methods.
- Awareness of processes and resources for disability related accommodations.

### In Services

- Service counters that are at heights accessible from both a seated and standing position.
- Staff who are aware of resources and procedures for providing disability-related accommodations.
- Pictures in publications and on websites that include students with diverse characteristics with respect to race, age, gender, and disability.
- A statement in publications about how to request special assistance, such as a disability-related accommodation.
- A student service website that adheres to accessibility standards, and printed materials that are easy to reach from a variety of heights and without furniture blocking access.
- Printed publications that are available in alternate formats (e.g., electronic, large print, Braille)

## **In Information Technology**

- Captioned videos
- Alternative text for graphic images on web pages so that individuals who are Blind and using text-to-speech technology can access the content.
- Procurement policies and procedures that promote the purchase of accessible products.
- Adherence to standards for the accessible and usable design of websites.
- Comfortable access to computers for both left- and right-handed students.
- Software that is compatible with assistive technology.
- Computers that are on adjustable-height tables.

## **Physical Spaces**

- Clear directional signs that have large, high-contrast print.
- Restrooms, classrooms, and other facilities that are physically accessible to individuals who use wheelchairs, crutches, or walkers.
- Furniture and fixtures in classrooms that are adjustable in height and allow arrangements for different learning activities and student groupings
- Emergency instructions that are clear and visible and address the needs of individuals with sensory and mobility impairments.
- Non-slip walking surfaces.

## **Sources and Additional Resources**

- The Center for Universal Design in Education at <http://www.uw.wdu/doi/CUDE>.

## ***Specific Accommodations***

All accommodations students receive at the University of the Arts are based upon documentation resulting from an evaluation performed by a qualified professional and in line with the documentation standards laid out by the Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). The University does not provide such documentation or evaluation of disability for students.

Guidelines for Documentation of Specific Learning Disability have been developed which identify the elements that must be provided in verifying this disability.

These components include:

- Comprehensive testing that assesses aptitude, achievement, and information processing
- Current test results, usually within the past three years
- Assessment instruments normed for testing adults
- Specific test scores
- Clear and specific diagnosis of a learning disability
- Results provided by experienced, impartial, qualified professionals
- Clear identification of the testing professional's credentials
- Recommendations about accommodations for the academic setting.

The following is a list of some of the accommodations to which eligible students with appropriate documentation may have access at the University of the Arts:

- Allowing extended time for testing
- Disregarding spelling errors for in-class work
- Permitting tape recording of classes
- Allowing use of a calculator in mathematics or related classes
- Allowing a distraction-reduced setting for testing
- Permitting an alternative to opscan forms for objective tests
- Permitting attendance at duplicate lecture sections
- Allowing essay exams to be completed using word processing
- Permitting tests to be placed on tape
- Permitting alternative testing which allows for a scribe
- Utilizing multiple choice tests as much as possible
- Providing advanced notice of writing assignments
- Allowing extended time to complete course requirements.

## **Attendance and Promptness**

The student using a wheelchair or other assistive devices may encounter obstacles or barriers in getting to class on time. Others may have periodic or

irregular curtailments of functioning, either from their disability or from medication used to treat their impairment. Flexibility in applying attendance and promptness rules to such students will be helpful, if not necessary.

Students with conditions which may unexpectedly impact their ability to attend class and require attention to their personal well being should be given special consideration when being evaluated on attendance. In addition to the days allowed in your attendance policy, students are allowed to miss the contact equivalent of one additional week of class (i.e. if a class meets twice a week, two absences). The student MUST contact the faculty member and copy [access@uarts.edu](mailto:access@uarts.edu) within 24 hours of the absence.

This should not in any way be interpreted as a waiver of a course's attendance policy. Students are expected to contact both you and the Office of Educational Accessibility within 24 hours of the absence and are required to make up any work that was missed.

If a student exceeds the number of absences permitted by this accommodation, please contact the Office of Educational Accessibility as soon as possible to discuss the student's situation.

## **Classroom Adjustments**

A wide range of students with and without disabilities may be served in the classroom by making reading lists available prior to the beginning of the term, by thoughtful seating arrangements, by speaking directly toward the class and by writing key lecture points and assignments on the chalkboard. Applying the principles of Universal Design for Instruction is beneficial to all students, not only students with disabilities.

## **Note-Taking**

Students who cannot take notes or have difficulty taking notes adequately would be helped by allowing them to tape-record lectures, by permitting them to bring a note-taker to class, by assisting them in borrowing classmates' notes, or by making an outline of lecture materials available to them. The method most

appropriate to each student will be identified by the Office of Educational Accessibility and communicated to faculty via a faculty accommodations letter.

Student notetakers are paid a \$150 per semester stipend and are responsible for uploading their notes to a cloud server for access by a student with a disability. Faculty are responsible for identifying students who would be a good fit for this position early in the semester and to forward their names to OEA as requested.

## Testing and Evaluation

Depending on the disability, the student may require an adjustment in the administration of examinations. For out-of-class assignments, the extension of deadlines may be requested. A letter from the Office of Educational Accessibility will identify the appropriate accommodation(s) for each student. The same standards should be applied to students with disabilities as to all other students in evaluating and assigning grades.

Many UArts students receive accommodations for testing. These accommodations vary by student and are determined based on an individual student's needs. Most students with testing accommodations will receive extended testing time up to twice the allotted time in class as well as the ability to test in a distraction reduced setting.

Variances in time and date of the administration of an exam may be caused by multiple exams in one day, conflicts with attending another class, or to accommodate the Office of Educational Accessibility's hours of operation. While an exam may be administered at a different time than when it is given in class, students should make all efforts to take the exam at the same time as the rest of the class. In order to clarify confusion on the scheduling of exams through the Office of Educational Accessibility and other aspects of the accommodations process, OEA has developed the following policy regarding the administration of exams.

- Students may only make use of accommodations, including testing accommodations after they have met with their instructors and presented

them with the Accommodations letter provided by the Office of Educational Accessibility.

- Students are encouraged to forward the email received from Educational Accessibility; however, they may present you with a hard copy letter as well.
- **Students are *not eligible* for extended testing time or any other testing accommodations without presenting their faculty member with an accommodation letter. All testing accommodations should be coordinated through the Office of Educational Accessibility. The hours of the Educational Accessibility Testing Center are M-F 10:00 am – 3:00 pm.**
- Students seeking accommodations outside of the OEA process after they have been referred to OEA may be in violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

### Test Requests

- A Test Request Form must be submitted online **at least 5 business days in advance** of the scheduled quiz or test. (If a test is scheduled for a Monday, your request should be submitted by the previous Monday as weekends do not count toward the 5 business days). The form is available at [uarts.edu/accessibility](http://uarts.edu/accessibility).
- OEA will not administer tests on a walk-in basis.
- Instructors **should not** provide quizzes, tests, or exams to the Office of Educational Accessibility without receiving an official Test Request from OEA nor should they provide any assessments directly to the student.
- **There is no penalty for signing up early** for a quiz, test, or exam. Most instructors provide syllabi at the beginning of each semester which indicates their testing dates.

### Changes/Cancellations

- Instructors are notified of the operating hours of the OEA Testing Center as well as the common accommodation of up to double time on tests; instructors know they may need to make allowances for students to take

their quiz, test, or exam at a time different from the rest of the class because of this.

- The scheduled time of a requested test in OEA **may not deviate** from that of the class's scheduled time **unless**:
- written permission from the instructor is provided, OR;
- the scheduled time of the class takes place outside of OEA Testing Center hours of operation, OR;
- the scheduled exam time with accommodations would directly conflict with attendance in another class.
- If circumstances require a student to cancel, reschedule, or make some other change in a testing appointment, this information must be submitted to **both** the instructor and OEA in writing.
- If a test is rescheduled, the instructor must notify OEA with the approved new date/time at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled test. Failure to do so may prevent OEA from being able to administer the test.

### Tardiness

- Students are expected to arrive on time and begin their test **as scheduled**.
- OEA will **not** administer tests to students who arrive exceedingly early or late or on the incorrect day.
- Study time will **not** be allowed past your scheduled appointment time.
- A 20 minute grace period will be observed. If the student arrives more than 20 minutes late, the **instructor will be notified** of the student's tardiness.
- Students who arrive more than 20 minutes late or miss a scheduled test **must contact the instructor** for further instructions. The missed test will not be administered by OEA without written permission from the instructor.

### Test Proctoring Integrity

- Test sessions are proctored by Advising Center and Educational Accessibility staff.

- Any students with testing accommodations which include the use of a computer or other adaptive technology **must** take their exams through OEA in order to use such technology. Students using computers will complete their exams using a UArts controlled computer.
- Students are expected to abide by the UArts Student Code of Conduct while testing with OEA. If any student is found to have violated this code, testing will be stopped and the instructor will be contacted immediately. **Decisions regarding academic dishonesty are not determined by OEA**, but are done in accordance with University Policy and the Student Handbook.
- No items, other than those indicated by the instructor or related to an accommodation, will be allowed in the testing environment. OEA will supply scantrons and scratch paper; if these items are used, they will be submitted with the test. Book bags, cell phones, and other personal belongings are to be left with the test proctor prior to entering the testing space and should remain there for the duration of the exam.
- Students are not allowed to make phone calls or answer phone calls while taking a test **unless** they take place on a UArts phone with a staff member present.
- After completing an OEA proctored exam, the exam will be returned to the proctor who will scan a copy to the Educational Accessibility Advisor and forward a copy to the instructor of record of the course.
- It is a privilege to use OEA's Testing Center, not a right. Failure to comply with these procedures can result in the student losing the privilege of taking any or all quizzes, tests, or exams in the Testing Center.

## Online Course and Course Component Accessibility

UArts offers online course components and online courses through the Digication software platform, which offers opportunities and challenges for students with disabilities. Although the asynchronous nature and remote access to these course components can eliminate some physical barriers, the technologies themselves can also hinder access. Following are some suggestions to assist faculty in ensuring that online courses and course components are accessible:

- Reading materials should be available in accessible electronic formats.
- Make sure, whenever scanning print materials that you will post on Digitization, to create files that have been recognized as text by optical character recognition (OCR) software, not simply scanned as images or copies, which will ensure access to blind, dyslexic, or other print-disabled students.
- Video and audio recordings should be captioned and/or transcripts should be provided.
- Graphics and images should be labeled with descriptive text tags.
- Use one-on-one discussions with any student needing accommodation to better understand how to provide access to your course.
- Use many of the techniques and recommendations provided throughout this Guide to make your online course content accessible to all types of student learners.

While the use of digital and electronic formats allows for greater access to course offerings by students with disabilities, some students may still be excluded when course materials are not designed with the needs of all learners in mind. Examples of problematic course materials are videos that lack captions or audio descriptions which exclude viewers with hearing or visual impairments. Many students with learning disabilities and second language learners can also experience increased comprehension when video-based materials are captioned. This concept of universal design of instructional materials and practices has thus become an important tool in ensuring that all learners have complete access to course materials.

Keeping the following guidelines in mind when designing, developing, and delivering course content will allow you to address any significant barriers to learning.

### **Pictures/Descriptions**

- Recognize that some students cannot see pictures in textbooks, on websites, or on presentation slides. Include a brief description of a picture that you believe serves a vital role for the course curriculum.

- Deliver the description orally, along with the picture on a presentation slide, if showing the slide to the class. The description should be included as an alternative text for a course-based webpage.
- Check that any website with illustrations or pictures that you refer students to provides adequate descriptions for important elements.

## Video

Like pictures and illustrations, the use of video can present particular challenges to students with visual and hearing impairments. The use of videos in a curricular context should be accompanied by at least:

- Brief descriptions that convey the significance of the visual action, with pertinent dialogue that can give the student sufficient context to derive a meaningful experience.
- Captioning or full transcripts that enable students with hearing disabilities to access the content, which, combined with the visual action, can enable students to fully benefit from the experience of classroom videos.

## Audio/Captions & Transcripts

- Audio materials like podcasts, lecture recordings, and other material should be accompanied by synchronized captions or have transcripts available for students with hearing or auditory processing disabilities.
- Videos that feature video descriptive services, an enhancement of the narration that describes the visual elements of the movies – the action, characters, locations, costumes, and sets – without interfering with the movie’s dialogue or sound effects. This type of enhancement can provide accommodations for students with visual impairments.

## Digication & Accessibility

Be sure to consult [www.digication.com](http://www.digication.com) for the latest documentation to see which key features are inaccessible to students with disabilities. Keywords such as “accessibility” and “disabilities” will bring up results that will give you the latest information on how to create accessible content using Digication, as well as

provide information on features that do not work for students with certain disabilities.

### **Other Technology Tips**

- When creating PDF files, be sure not to lock them with security features so as to prevent access by screen readers, etc.
- Whenever possible, convert your course material into formatted text rather than relying on a scanned picture of a printed page.
- When creating presentation and posting them on Digication, convert your presentation to a common format like RTF (Rich Text Format) to allow for better access.
- Ask OTIS or the Office of Educational Accessibility if software or services are available that make accessibility and conversion of course material to accessible formats easier.
- Students themselves can serve as guides to what they need. Discuss the curriculum as well as the material you plan to use during the course of the semester to ensure that the student has an opportunity to work with you to make any necessary changes.
- Studios and performance spaces can present unique challenges for students across a wide range of disabilities. These challenges are usually manageable with some forethought and planning. This can be accomplished with the approach that measuring a student's ability to understand and learn is the primary objective.

### **Alternative Text for Students with Disabilities**

Under various federal and Pennsylvania laws and regulations, any student who is deemed to be “print disabled” as a consequence of a learning, visual, or other physical disability is entitled to receive copies of any printed instructional materials in any variety of accessible alternative formats from the publishers of those instructional materials. These alternate formats can include electronically scanned versions of textbooks, or HTML, PDF, or Microsoft Word formatted documents.

Instructional material is defined as follows:

- Printed instructional material, including the text of the material, sidebars, the table of contents, chapter headings, subheadings, footnotes, pictures, illustrations, graphs, charts, indexes, glossaries, and bibliographies.
- Supplementary non-printed instructional materials, including all materials, regardless of original format (CD-ROM, DVD, web pages, video and audio tapes, etc.), with the goal that all electronic materials will meet guidelines and standards required by §508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

*For background information and additional details regarding §508, please visit <http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/508standards.htm>*

Students should contact the Office of Educational Accessibility for assistance obtaining these alternate formatted materials prior to the start of the semester.

Faculty can expedite this process by posting information about required textbooks or other course materials prior to the beginning of the semester on Digication, or any course Website.

## *The Law*

### **Disability Laws**

Under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, disability is defined in multiple sections as applying to any individual who has “a physical or mental disability which for such an individual constitutes or results in a substantial handicap to employment” or who might benefit from rehabilitation services provided for under the Act (Pub. L. 93-112 §7(6)). Further defining disability, the Act defines the term severe handicap to include disabilities which require “multiple covered services over an extended period of time” (Pub. L. 93-112§7(12)).

The ADA defines disability in broader terms: an individual must have “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one of more major life activities of such individual” (42 U.S.C. § 12102(1)(A)), there must exist a record of a qualified impairment diagnosed by a recognized and licensed medical professional (42 U.S.C. §12102(1)(B)) or the individual must be generally recognized as having a qualified impairment (42 U.S.C. §12102(1)(C)). For a disability to be covered under the ADA, it must limit one or more major life activities. If any major life activity is limited, the disability is covered under the Act regardless of its impact on other major life activities. Additionally, a disability covered under the ADA must impair, or be expected to impair a major life activity for at least six months (42 U.S.C. 1202(3)(B)). Major life activities are defined by the ADA as including, but not being limited to, “caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working” (42 U.S.C. §12102(2)(A). Additionally, major life activities are deemed to include major bodily functions and the functions of major bodily systems: immune, reproductive, digestive and excretory, nervous, and endocrine (42 U.S.C. §12102(2)(B)).

It is important to note that the determination of whether an impairment exists for the purposes outlined in the legislation should be made without regard to the effects of mitigating measures such as medication, medical devices, appliances, assistive technology, reasonable accommodations, learned behavioral responses or behavioral modifications. (42 U.S.C. § 12102(4)(E) and §12103).

The ADA mandates equal treatment and opportunity under the law for persons with disabilities. The ADA and Section 504 mandate that reasonable accommodations be provided so long as such accommodations do not fundamentally change the nature of or place an undue burden on the institution. The ADA prohibits intentional discrimination, as well as policies and procedures that have a discriminatory impact. For instance, while proof of a disability can be requested to verify an impairment exists, colleges and universities are not allowed to establish policies or procedures which are sufficiently complex enough to hinder a student seeking accommodation (Abdo v. University of Vermont, 2003; Guckenberger v. Boston University, 1995). However, according to the Court's decision in Stern v. University Osteopathic Medicine and Health Sciences (2000), an institution is only legally responsible for providing accommodations that directly address a qualified disability (Eckes and Ochoa, 2005). The ADA and Section 504 mandate that the provision of accommodations allow for integration, not segregation, of individuals with disabilities. Section 504 and the ADA are interpreted consistently with each other: court decisions brought under Section 504 are considered as precedent when deciding cases brought under provisions of the ADA.

The specific wording of Section 504 includes the much debated concept of otherwise qualified individual. In *Southeastern Community College v. Davis* (99 S.Ct. 2361), the Court found that in order to be protected under the Rehabilitation Act, an individual must be able to carry out the essential technical requirements of the position despite a disability provided that reasonable accommodations are made. However, the Court also found that while reasonable accommodations must be made, changes which fundamentally alter the program are not necessary and would place an undue burden on the institution. The ADA defines an otherwise qualified individual as one "who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the employment position that such individual holds or desires" (42 U.S.C.A. 12111(8)).

While Section 504 and the ADA may be less specific in detailing the services and accommodations to be provided than IDEA, their reach is equally as broad. When taken together, Section 504 and the ADA affect all aspects of modern American life except for healthcare.

The most recent and broadest expansion of disability rights in the United States comes in the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. The most significant revision to the ADA in nearly 20 years, Congress overturned broadened the scope of the ADA by reducing the stringent burden of demonstrating that a qualifying disability exists. ADA regulations state that “the primary purpose” of the ADA “is to make it easier for people with disabilities to obtain protection under the ADA”. Colleges and universities are under no requirement to provide for the individualized education of students. However, postsecondary institutions are expected to tailor accommodations to the individual needs of the student.

## Privacy Laws

The Office of Educational Accessibility works closely with students to help them understand and advocate for their rights and responsibilities under the law. Some of those rights are covered by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. §1232g; 34 CFR Part 99).

Under FERPA, the Office of Educational Accessibility will be unable to discuss a specific student’s circumstances or diagnosis or record with anyone (including a parent or guardian) without that student’s express written permission. FERPA does allow a school to disclose **education records**, without consent to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR §99.31):

- School officials with legitimate educational interest to be determined by the Office of Educational Accessibility
- Other schools to which a student is transferring
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes as determined by the Office of Educational Accessibility
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the institution
- Accrediting organizations
- Parties identified in a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to Commonwealth of Pennsylvania law.