

Office of Educational Accessibility

GUIDE FOR FACULTY

Office of Educational Accessibility **Guide for Faculty**

CONTENTS

[About the Office of Educational Accessibility \(OEA\)](#)

1. Eligibility of Services
2. Reasonable Accommodations
3. Course Access Memos

[Faculty Role and Responsibilities](#)

1. From the Office of Civil Rights
2. Faculty Roles, Responsibilities & Rights
3. Confidentiality

[Student Responsibilities](#)

[Accommodations Online Classes](#)

[Accommodations Explained](#)

1. Quiz/Test Accommodations
2. Use of a Digital Recorder and Note-taking Assistance
3. Additional Absences within the Academic Standards of the Course
4. Additional Time on Assignments

[Statement on Syllabus and Announcement](#)

[CARE Reports and Disability Disclosure](#)

[Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#)

[Digital Accessibility](#)

[Concluding Points](#)

[Contact and Support](#)

[Explore More](#)

About the Office of Educational Accessibility (OEA)

The Office of Educational Accessibility (OEA) is committed to providing equal access to individuals with disabilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The ADA of 1990 and the ADA amended. UArts will make reasonable accommodations unless doing so will fundamentally alter the nature of the service or program or pose an undue administrative or financial burden. The Office of Educational Accessibility provides services that promote independence and inclusion in all areas of university life.

OEA serves over 300 students with various disabilities including students with learning, cognitive, psychiatric, medical, physical, and other health-related impairments. Regardless of the number of students who seek support and accommodations, UArts is a diverse and neurodiverse community of learners, and OEA promotes a culture of inclusion designed to universally support everyone.

For students with documented disabilities, accommodations are determined on an individual basis and are determined by understanding the functional limitations within the context of the environment.

1. Eligibility of Services and Accommodations

Students who are eligible for accommodations begin the process by completing an intake and providing comprehensive documentation from a qualifying medical professional. Documentation must include (1) a diagnosis, (2) functional limitations, and (3) recommendations for accommodations/support. Students with learning disabilities (reading, processing) submit neuropsychological evaluations that include diagnostic tests. Documentation must show a direct link between the functional limitations and the accommodation requested.

2. Reasonable Accommodations, not limited to:

- Extended time on tests and exams
- Reduced-distraction test environment
- Additional absences within the academic standards of the course
- Additional time on assignments
- Textbooks and course materials in alternative format
- Note-taking assistance and Use of a Digital Recorder
- Use of a computer or electronic device during class
- Housing accommodations, including Emotional Support Animals

3. Course Access Memos (Accommodation Letters)

Course Access Memos are distributed to faculty from OEA's email access@uarts.edu once a student requests that they be sent out through OEA. A Course Access Memo is provided to each instructor that includes accommodations, not the nature of the student's disability.

Students are responsible for initiating contact with instructors and discussing the implementation, reasonableness of accommodations according to course design, and other factors.

Instructors may also initiate contact with the student once the memo is received. Instructors should not provide accommodations without receiving notification via a Course Access Memo.

Accommodations do not compromise the essential elements of a course or curriculum. Accommodations provide an alternative way to accomplish the course requirements by reducing disability-related barriers.

Faculty Roles and Responsibilities

With an increasing number of students registering for accommodations, it's critical for instructors to know their role and responsibility in supporting students in the process of providing accommodations.

1. From the Office of Civil Rights (OCR)

"OCR enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (Title II), which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Every school district and nearly every institution of postsecondary education in the United States is subject to Section 504 or Title II. Entities covered by these civil rights laws have an obligation to comply with legal requirements and to carry out their programs and activities in a manner that does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

Institutions of postsecondary education must provide an appropriate academic adjustment based on students' disabilities and individual needs when necessary to avoid discrimination. In providing an academic adjustment, a postsecondary institution does not have to eliminate or lower essential requirements, or make modifications that would result in a fundamental alteration of the programs or activities being offered or impose an undue burden on the institution."

2. Faculty Roles

- Make Reasonable Accommodations
- Provide Access to Classroom & Materials
- Maintain Confidentiality

In certain situations, reasonable accommodations may require modification of standard classroom approaches without lowering course expectations or standards. The following are examples of accommodations that may be necessary to ensure equal access to education:

- Provide alternative ways to fulfill course requirements when reasonable.
- Allow technology such as recorders, electronic devices in the classroom.
- Consider alternate ways of assessing students

3. Faculty Rights

Faculty members have the right to:

- Maintain and uphold the academic standards of their course
- Determine course content and how it will be taught
- Confirm a student's request for accommodations and ask for clarification about a specific accommodation with OEA
- Deny a request for an accommodation if the student has not been approved for such accommodation
- Distribute grades appropriate to the level of the student's demonstration of mastery of material
- Fail a student who does not perform to passing standards

Faculty members do not have the right to:

- Refuse to provide an approved accommodation for a documented disability
- Challenge the legitimacy of a student's disability
- Review a student's documentation, including diagnostic data

4. Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty members have the responsibility to:

- Understand the laws and the University's OEA guidelines
- Refer students to appropriate resources
- Provide requested accommodations and academic adjustments to students who have documented disabilities in a timely manner

- Maintain appropriate confidentiality of records except when disclosure is required by law or authorized by the student
- Provide handouts, videos and other course materials in accessible formats, regardless of whether there are any students in the class who qualify for accommodations.
- Evaluate students based on their abilities rather than their disabilities

5. Confidentiality

The University cannot provide information about a student's academic record unless the student signs a release of information. Student information, including disability, can only be shared on a need-to-know educational basis. Students may choose to discuss their disability with faculty, but, faculty should not ask specific questions about the nature of the student's disability. Faculty must ensure the student's need for accommodations is kept confidential by not "outing" the student in class. Faculty are encouraged to speak to OEA for clarification or questions.

Student Responsibilities

Every student with a disability who requests accommodations has the responsibility to adhere to the following:

- Meet the University qualifications and essential course standards
- Identify themselves in a timely manner as an individual with a disability when seeking an accommodation
- Understand parameters of accommodations and reasonableness standards
- Follow UArts procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations
- Provide current documentation from an qualifying professional that verifies the nature of the disability and the need for specific accommodations
- Communicate with the faculty member at the beginning of each semester about the disability, how performance may be affected, and necessary and reasonable accommodations.
- Filling out the required [Course Access Memo Renewal Form](#) each semester and completing the "student responsibilities contract" within.

Accommodations For Online Classes

When classes are taught in an online format, the goal of disability accommodations remains the same: providing equitable access. Faculty may find that some classroom accommodations are not even necessary in the virtual setting, whereas others may call on additional creativity to implement. The Office of Educational Accessibility can assist with any questions related to accommodations online.

Accommodations, Explained

1. Quiz/Test accommodations

Test accommodations allow students an equitable opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the course material being assessed, without penalizing the student or putting them at a disadvantage because of their disability. An increasing number of faculty are opting to provide tests in multiple formats to remove the barrier that timed tests can create for students with learning/processing disabilities or anxiety. Instructors should consider multiple ways to test students' knowledge such as presentations, audio podcasts, written papers, verbal responses to questions, or different formats.

Should a student need additional time on tests due to their disability or a reduced-distraction space, the student should notify our office in advance (at least 48 hours) so that OEA has ample time to find a space and proctor. Please see our [Student Test Accommodation Guidelines](#) for more information. If you are administering a timed test or quiz via Canvas, you may [extend the time limit for an individual student](#).

2. Use of a Digital Recorder & Note-taking Assistance

Audio-recording ("use of a digital recorder" on the Course Access Memo) for class lectures is an accommodation approved for students with learning disabilities, visual impairments, attention deficits, impaired auditory processing, or limited manual dexterity. The purpose of the audio recording is a supplement to the student's notes and serves as a purpose for access and studying. Instructors must allow students with this approved accommodation to record when appropriate.

UArts utilizes an outside service called Habitat Learn or Note-taking Express to meet note-taking needs of students who qualify for this accommodation. Students receive an account, download an app, and upload an audio file to receive notes/transcripts of the recording.

Keep in Mind

Recording is not permitted in instances where sensitive and confidential discussions in class are happening. Instructors can ask students not to record.

For more information and to access a template for a “student agreement” about recording class material, please see OEA [Digital Recording Guidelines](#).

3. Additional Absences within the Academic Standards of the Course

Due to a medical flare-up, mental health setback, or unpredictable symptoms of an illness, a student with a disability may need to miss a class. Federal law requires colleges and universities to consider reasonable modification of attendance policies if needed to accommodate a student’s disability.

The number of allowable absences depends on the interactive or participatory nature of a course, and is determined by faculty at the university or department level.

Questions to consider to determine additional absences as a reasonable accommodation

- What is the course attendance policy? What do the course description and syllabus say?
- What method is used to calculate the final grade? (attendance, assignments, exams, etc.) and how much of student participation is calculated in the grade?
- Does the design of the course rely on student participation as a significant method for learning?
- How and when your student should inform you he/she will miss class?
- The number of reasonable absences (beyond what any student is allowed) and whether a drop, withdraw or incomplete may be appropriate based on your students’ situation

OEA asks that students with an approved disability-related accommodation need for flexibility in attendance meet with their instructor to discuss how a modification in attendance policies may be reasonable for a particular class. Please contact the director of OEA access@uarts.edu if you need assistance at any point in this process.

Keep in Mind

- An accommodation in attendance past a certain point is not reasonable if regular attendance is essential to the course and/or curriculum

- Limits are reasonable and should be applied; instructors are urged to stay away from blanket “come-and-go and submit work as you please” policies.
- Students are not required to provide doctor’s notes for absences covered under this accommodation.
- The accommodation does not cover non-disability related illness (such as flu) or other non-medical reasons as to why a student is absent.

When class is missed due to a disability-related absence, it may also be reasonable to allow a make-up or late assignment (such as a paper, test, or quiz). A general rule to consider for determining a reasonable timeframe for a makeup or postponement of an assignment, paper, exam or quiz is typically a minimum of 48 hours. In certain courses, it may be appropriate to consider an alternative assignment, reading, or project to make up for missed class discussion or projects. Even if attendance and participation are fundamental to the learning, instructors might find creative ways to grant this accommodation without compromising the pedagogical integrity of the course, such as allowing the student to meet with a tutor outside of class.

4. Additional Time on Assignments

Additional time on assignments does not mean open-ended deadlines or permission to submit assignments at the student's convenience. Consideration of a deadline extension must be reasonable, and the amount of time granted for each extension will take into consideration the stated expectations of the assignments and the course. This accommodation must be negotiated between the student and the instructor for each assignment.

Additional time on assignments apply as a reasonable accommodation when a student has a disability with random or cyclical acute episodes; the accommodation allows for flexibility in making up work.

Keep in Mind

- Proper planning and time management are a student’s responsibility in college. Failure to properly manage time does not constitute an accommodation.
- Assignments with more than one week to complete can be done successfully with planning and management and only warrant an accommodation when an unexpected disability-related episode occurs that prevents the student from following through – or an assignment not listed on the syllabus has been given a short turnaround.
- After agreeing upon an extension with the student, it can be helpful to [add](#)

[an individual due date in Canvas](#), both as a record of this agreement and so it will appear on the student's To-Do list with the correct deadline attached.

When Does This Accommodation Apply?

- An assignment was not listed on the syllabus initially and is given to students with one week or less to complete.
- An unexpected medical or physical episode interferes with the student's ability to complete the work in the expected timeframe.

Statement on Syllabus and Announcement

Instructors should include the following information on their syllabus to inform students of the availability of accommodations..

"UArts values our diverse population of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded an educational opportunity to participate in all learning experiences. If you have or think you may have a disability—including mental health, medical, physical, or learning-based—that would impact your educational experience in this class, please contact the the Office of Educational Accessibility at 215-717-6616 or access@uarts.edu to register for appropriate accommodations. Faculty can only provide course accommodations after receipt of an approved Course Access Memo from OEA.

If you are a student who receives academic accommodations through the Office of Educational Accessibility, please schedule a meeting with me within the first two weeks of classes to discuss how your accommodations will be implemented for this course. During this meeting, you are not expected to disclose any details concerning your disability, though you may discuss these details at your discretion."

CARE Reports and Disability Disclosures

Faculty are encouraged to submit a [CARE Report](#) and click "Disability Concern/Disclosure" when a student discloses a disability or learning challenge in the classroom and the student does not have a Course Access Memo. Please note that Report Types that are only submitted with "Disability Concern/Disclosure" selected routes only to OEA. If you have additional non-academic concerns such as mental health or behavior concerns please select the applicable report type to route the CARE Report to the appropriate office.

Universal Design for Learning

Due to learner variability in our community, OEA encourages instructors to adopt a [universal design for learning \(UDL\)](#) approach. UDL is an inclusive strategy that

addresses barriers to learning and provides students multiple ways of learning and accessing information, making accessibility more of a rule, not an exception.

For example, Zoom sessions can be recorded with captions or a transcript provided, making accessing the content available to all students.

Students with executive functioning challenges, students with sensory and processing disorders, and students who are finding the learning circumstances challenging as a result of a virtual learning environment will all benefit from reinforcement and additional ways of reviewing course material.

The Office of Educational Accessibility works with the Center for Teaching and Learning Design to provide materials on Universal Design/Inclusive Teaching. A Simple Framework to Incorporating UDL from “Reach Everyone Teach Everyone” (Tobin, Behling, 2021)

- 1) Evaluating **Single-Stream Approaches**
- 2) Reflecting on your course’s **Pinch/Pain Points**
- 3) Applying **Plus-One Thinking**

Evaluate your teaching and how you provide content, feedback, or information in a **single-stream approach**, or just one way. Consider how you can provide that information in an additional way by applying plus-one thinking. For example, if you are giving instructions in a handout, send a digital version, and/or send a visual video recording with the instructions read aloud.

What are your Pinch Points? Pinch Points are the areas of your course where students are consistently asking the same question over and over; where you get a ton of emails needing clarification on a topic, or a content area where students always get the same answer wrong. Reflect on your course or instructional Pinch Points and make information available in multiple ways to reduce the “pinch/pain.” For example, if you are always getting the same question at 10pm in an email, address it in class regularly and post the response in Canvas.

Apply “Plus-One” Thinking: Consider ways you provide information *just one way*. UDL asks that we consider *one additional way* of delivering content and assessing how students learn. For example, if you are explaining an idea verbally in class (one way), consider recording the content in a video and also providing a handout.

- ★ Simple explanation of Plus-One Thinking (UDL): [Tom Tobin and UDL Plus One](#)

Universal Design in Teaching Strategies

Focus on your learning objectives and how you can assess and present your information in an additional way (plus-one thinking) without lowering your course standards. Some tried and true UDL tips include:

- Clear, explicit instructions and objectives
- Multiple modes of presenting information (verbal and written and audio)
- Multiple ways of assessing student learning (audio file, podcast, paper)
- Multiple ways of student participation (discussion boards, chats, email, and verbally in-class)
- Options in meeting learning objectives
- Repetition and summarization
- Check-ins regularly for understanding
- Larger projects broken down into smaller assignments
- Feedback often and early in the semester
- Preview information of the lecture topics and offer PPTs in advance and/or following class
- Syllabus availability early and re-visit several times during the semester

Digital Accessibility

Digital accessibility is the practice of removing barriers that prevent or impede access to digital materials by individuals with disabilities. While digital accessibility is necessary for people with disabilities, it is beneficial for everyone. Our diverse population of learners process, retain, and understand information differently. Moreover, ensuring the sufficient accessibility of digital content at UArts helps to fulfill our mission of providing equitable access and helps us to comply with applicable laws and regulations.

Anyone creating digital content at UArts is responsible for ensuring that the content is accessible.

The Center for Teaching and Learning Design (CTLTD) at UArts has created a set of [Universal Digital Practices](#) and a [How-To Guide Collection](#) to support the implementation of accessible digital content.

1. Document Accessibility

Course documents and readings shared by instructors must be in an accessible format. Please note that image-based PDFs are not accessible and will require conversion to an accessible format before sharing/posting. Check for “select, copy and paste” functionality in a PDF document; if you can do this, then basic accessibility is present. If you cannot do this, the document is not accessible.

Electronic documents should meet or exceed the accessibility standards outlined in the [Universal Digital Practices](#). For support in making documents accessible, please [contact the CTLD](#) or the [University Libraries](#).

2. Videos – closed captions / subtitles

Any videos posted for students to view pertaining to the course must be accessible. An easy option is YouTube's automatic captions. After the captions are created, you have the option to edit the content to fix errors. Transcripts are another option when captioning is not readily available.

3. Digital Accessibility Resources

- [UArts Digital Accessibility Policy](#)
- [Universal Digital Practices](#)
- [Accessible Canvas Courses](#)
- [How-To Guide Collection](#)

Concluding Points

- Students can register for accommodations at any time, but accommodations do not work retroactively.
- Accommodations have to be “reasonable and appropriate” according to law.
- Students are responsible for self-disclosing and advocating for their needs.
- Students are responsible for discussing their accommodations with instructors once the Course Access Memo is sent.
- Faculty should not provide accommodations unless they receive a Course Access Memo.
- Any accommodations should go through OEA to serve all students fairly.
- An accommodation related to attendance and deadlines is not a blanket reason to miss class or turn in work late.
- Accommodations are not a one-size-fits-all – they are individualized and modified at the discretion of faculty and in consultation with OEA.
- OEA works closely with other offices to provide accommodations and support. Students are often seeking medical assistance regularly as part of their treatment plans and goals. Accommodations and OEA are one piece of their support system.

Contact

Office of Educational Accessibility (OEA)

access@uarts.edu

215-717-6616

Student Center 204

uarts.edu/accessibility

See our [Faculty Resources webpage](#)

Center for Teaching and Learning Design (CTLD)

Rachel Hoke

Director for Teaching & Learning Design

rhoke@uarts.edu

215-717-6282

Explore More

- [When We Design for Disability, We All Benefit](#) (Elise Roy TedX)
- [How Design for One Turns Into Design for All](#)
- Lillian Nave's [Think UDL and Learner Variability](#) podcast
- University of Washington's [Do-It Center](#)
- [Disability Etiquette Guide](#) United Spinal Association
- [How to speak respectfully about Autism](#)
- National Deaf Center – [Resources, videos, guides](#)


Updated Aug 2023/KD


UArts



**ADVANCING
HUMAN
CREATIVITY™**

 @universityofthearts

 @uarts

 facebook.com/uarts

 vimeo.com/uartsphilly

 youtube.com/uartsphilly

uarts.edu