

## Fast Facts for Faculty

### Most Frequently Asked Questions About Educational Access for Students with Disabilities

#### Introduction

Although enrollment rates of students with disabilities in higher education are increasing, some faculty and teaching staff may not be aware of the many services and supports available to students with disabilities. In particular, instructional staff members may not always be aware of the types of accommodations available or what steps are involved in the accommodations process. The following is a list of frequently asked questions regarding the roles and responsibilities of faculty and teaching associates in providing accessible learning for students with disabilities. **Although these questions address the most common of concerns, the issue of faculty responsibility is situation-specific and as such can be difficult to define.** Keep in mind that the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) at Ashland University determines appropriate accommodations. We hope that you find this to be a quick and useful resource guide, but we encourage you to contact Julie Donatini, Director of the Student Accessibility Center, at [jdonatin@ashland.edu](mailto:jdonatin@ashland.edu), or 419-289-5904 when you are in doubt about how best to meet the needs of a student with a disability.

#### **Q: Who is responsible for determining appropriate accommodations?**

A: The Student Accessibility Center (SAC) is the entity on campus that determines appropriate accommodations. The office bases its decision on extensive discussion with each requesting student, documentation collected from a student with a disability, and the impact of the disability on the student's functioning.

#### **Q: Are all students with disabilities registered with SAC?**

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

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

A: It is important that all faculty members put a statement about accommodations in their course syllabus. Your Dean has provided your Department with an appropriate Syllabus Statement.

#### **Q: Am I required to provide exam accommodations to students who request them?**

A: Yes, you are. Students with disabilities are protected by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504. This law requires that qualified students with disabilities get equal access to an education, and this includes exam accommodations.

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

A: You may ask the student to provide you with a letter verifying that they are eligible for accommodations. The student, if registered with SAC, will be given accommodation letters to distribute to instructors. The SAC has documentation of the disability on file for every student who is registered with the center and uses services.

**Q: I have a student in class who told me that they have a disability, but since that time has never requested any accommodations. Am I still responsible for accommodations?**

A: No, you are only responsible for reasonable accommodations if requested. In these types of situations, however, it would be appropriate to speak to the student privately to let the student know that you welcome the opportunity to discuss reasonable accommodations if the student is interested.

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

A: The exam accommodations are based upon the student's functional limitations and the documentation of disability that the student has provided SAC. Some of these accommodations include but are not limited to: extended time for exams (usually 50% extended time but in some cases as much as 100%), a reader or scribe (a person who writes answers verbatim), use of a computer, an enlarged exam, an exam scanned onto a flash drive or computer (student uses text to speech software, voice to text, or spelling/grammar check), a distraction-reduced space in SAC Testing Areas, or use of assistive technology to enlarge print.

**Q: A student with a disability has requested to take an exam in the SAC Testing Area. How do I know that my exam will be safe and that the student will get no unfair advantage?**

A: SAC has developed a very systematic and secure procedure for receiving exams from faculty and returning them once the student has taken the exam. There is a very rigid check-in and check-out procedure for exams and no student is able to take an exam (with appropriate accommodations) without authorization. Faculty members may choose to email exams, or deliver them to SAC. If paper exams are delivered, faculty are encouraged to seal them in envelopes; completed exams will be scanned and emailed back, or can be picked up from SAC in sealed envelopes. There is also a **Faculty Test Proctoring Instruction Form** that can be requested, completed and emailed to the Testing Coordinator along with the exam in advance of the exam date. These forms are designed for you to provide the Test Proctors with specific instructions regarding your test-taking preferences. Paper exams in the possession of SAC are stored in locked spaces until students are ready to take them. While students are taking the exam, they are monitored by Test Proctors. Our Test Proctors are well trained, and located in the SAC Testing Areas, and maintain a consistent vigil during testing.

**Q: I have a million things to do. I don't mind if students use exam accommodations, but do I have to fill out that Test Proctoring Instruction form?**

A: This form is helpful to Test Proctors, and will ensure that we are administering your tests and quizzes to your specifications. It is also often very helpful to meet with students so that you and the students are on the same wavelength in terms of how you want them to let you know they've scheduled a test in the Testing Areas. You may, however, opt to administer the exam to the student yourself, but **appropriate exam accommodations must be provided**. These can include assistive technology, a distraction-reduced space, reader/scribes, etc. if needed. If you are unable to provide appropriate accommodations or are unsure about what is appropriate, please work with SAC to ensure that the student's accommodation needs are met.

**Q: I've been debating about what book I want to use for my class; is it important to SAC for me to select a book ASAP?**

A: We prefer that you do. SAC receives requests for textbooks to be presented in alternative formats such as Braille, or scanned for conversion to digital or PDF format. Students who are print impaired have a legal right to equal access to their textbooks or any instruction provided. They need to be able to listen to recorded textbooks at the same time as others in the class. By delaying the selection of textbooks, SAC may not be able to get books converted to an appropriate format in a timely fashion. This means that students may have to start the semester without access to their textbooks. No one wants to contribute to a student getting behind or failing a class.

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

A: You are required by law to have what is essential for the student to have equal access to an education, and this includes a sign language interpreter or real-time captioning.

**Q: A student with a disability has asked me for a copy of my notes. Do I have to give this to the student?**

A: Some students with disabilities have difficulty taking notes. Sometimes faculty notes are only a brief outline of the actual lecture given. These notes may not be too helpful. It is important that you assist the student in getting access to class notes. You may want to help the student find a volunteer note taker in class by making an announcement in class without revealing the student's name. The volunteer can bring their notes to the SAC and we will copy them for the student with a disability. If you believe your personal class notes are good, sharing your notes would be another option. Many faculty members have developed online guided notes. These have been extremely helpful to many students who lack the ability to keep up the pace in taking thorough notes. Please remember that if you have posted notes or Power Point slides online, they are easily accessible to most students with disabilities and function as a note taking accommodation. It may also be appropriate for students to record class lectures.

**Q: I have a student who is having difficulty in my class. I think this student may have a disability. What should I do to help the student?**

A: Talk privately with the student to discuss your observations. The student may reveal they have a disability. If this is the case and the student is not registered with SAC, suggest that the student talk to the Director of the Student Accessibility Center. The student can contact Julie Donatini in SAC at [jdonatin@ashland.edu](mailto:jdonatin@ashland.edu), or call 419-289-5904, or stop in to schedule an appointment.

**Q: Am I required to lower the standards of a required assignment because the student has a disability?**

A: No, the standards should be the same for all students; however, some students with disabilities may exhibit their knowledge, production, and other course expectations differently than their peers. For example, a student with a learning disability in writing may produce an essay exam by using a computer or scribe rather than writing out an answer without the use of accommodations. The quality of the work should be the same.

**Q: I have a student with a disability getting behind in her schoolwork. This student is missing a number of classes and has not handed in several assignments. Although she has taken a midterm and used accommodations, the student's grade is an F. At this point, the student is not passing the class. Do I have a right to fail a student with a disability?**

A: Students with disabilities have the same right to fail as anyone else. Their work should be equivalent to their peers. It may be a good idea to discuss your observations with this student just as you would with anyone else in your class who is experiencing difficulty.

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

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

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

A: To clarify any disagreement about a requested accommodation, please contact the Director of the Student Accessibility Center.

**Student Accessibility Center (SAC)**

**Julie Donatini, Director**

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Revised 7/2023

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