

Teaching Students with Medical/Mobility Impairments

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The Ohio State University Partnership Grant
Improving the Quality of Education for Students with Disabilities

Introduction

Mobility impairments are often due to but not limited to a diagnosis of cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or a spinal cord injury. Students may use crutches, braces, or a wheelchair, and in a few instances, may be accompanied to class by a round-the-clock nurse.

Medical impairments are often invisible and caused by a diagnosis of arthritis, asthma, cancer, diabetes, orthopedic limitations, post-surgery, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, or seizure disorder. The student may have limited energy; difficulty walking, standing, or sitting for a long time; or may have other characteristics, such as an inability to write.

At times, functional abilities may be limited due to episodes of dizziness, disorientation, and difficulty breathing during a recurrence related to the student's diagnosis. For example, with asthma or a seizure disorder, a student may have periods when they function without any accommodations, but at other times, the need for accommodations is necessary when functional abilities become more limited.

Even with the same disability, students with mobility or medical impairments may have a wide variety of characteristics. For example, two students who have both experienced a spinal cord injury are likely to show differing degrees of ability. Each student may require different types of classroom accommodations and one or both may not need any accommodations at all.

Medical/Mobility Impairment

Guidelines

Exam Accommodations: Students who have upper body limitations may be unable to use their hands to take an exam easily or without assistance. A student in this situation will likely need exam accommodations. These accommodations may include extended time, a scribe, or voice recognition software.

Access to Class Notes: Students who are unable to use their hands may need the assistance of a note taker, or they may elect to tape record lectures.

Tardiness: Some students may need additional time to arrive to class due to mobility, architectural barriers, or the need to use adaptive transportation. The transportation system is influenced by traffic, weather, and scheduling problems. For these reasons, a student may be late getting to class. Please be patient when this happens.

Seating Arrangements: In a few situations, a student may need to use an alternative chair or desk other than what is provided in a particular classroom. ODS will assist the student in making special seating arrangements and communicate with faculty as needed.

Inaccessible Classroom: If your classroom is inaccessible and a student is unable to get into the assigned room, your class location must be moved to an accessible location. Call ODS immediately for assistance in getting your class location changed.

Laboratory Courses: Some students may need assistance for laboratory courses. If a student needs assistance in the lab, it is recommended that the student is paired with another student or a teaching assistant. Or, a student using a wheelchair may need a lower lab table to accommodate the wheelchair. Please consult ODS if you need assistance in making these arrangements.

Missed Exams or Classes: Some students experience recurrence of a chronic condition requiring bed rest and/or hospitalization. He/she will need extra time to complete course work that is missed and the opportunity to make up tests. Other arrangements may be necessary if a student misses a class excessively due to a disability and is unable to make up the essential requirements of the class. In either situation, it is essential not to penalize a student for his/her disability and at the same time maintain the integrity of the requirements of the class.

Field Trips: Make arrangements for field trips or other out of classroom experiences as soon as possible so that all students are able to experience all class teaming opportunities. Consult with ODS about arrangements if you need assistance.

Considerations for Teaching All Students with Disabilities

Universal Design for Learning: “Universal design is an approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit people of all learning styles without adaptation or retrofitting.” (Visit <http://www.sru.edu/ods> for more information.) By incorporating Universal Design principles in instruction that allow students with disabilities access to the classroom, you may also be designing instruction that works better for everyone in the class. Classes designed with this concept in mind offer a variety of methods of content presentation, flexible teaching strategies, and options for demonstrating mastery of course content.

Expectations: Although many students with disabilities need accommodations, the expectation for a performance at a level commensurate with their peers should remain. Do not have a special grading scale or other criteria for students with disabilities.

Collaboration: Don’t hesitate to call ODS to arrange for a three-way meeting between you, the student’s assigned disability counselor, and the student to work out any issues and to collaborate on the best instructional strategies for the student.
(Visit <https://www.sru.edu/ods>)

Guided Notes on the Web: Providing students with guided notes that they can access through the Web prior to class assists them with focusing on the appropriate material. It will help them to learn more effectively in the classroom as well as take better notes.
(Visit <https://www.sru.edu/ods>)

Web-Enhanced Learning: If a student is experiencing issues viewing, reading or experiencing materials through the use of assistive technology on www.sru.edu, advise them to contact the Web Communications office at 724-738-4314 or through email at websupport@sru.edu. TDD available at 724-738-4501. Please contact ODS if a student reports issues with assistive technology and D2L.
(Visit <http://www.sru.edu/ods>)

Comprehensive Syllabus: A comprehensive syllabus with clearly delineated statements about expectation is helpful to students who need help with structure and organization.
(Visit <http://www.sru.edu/ods>)

Inappropriate Behavior: Students with disabilities are subject to the same code of conduct required of any student at Slippery Rock University. If there are incidences of inappropriate behavior, meet privately to discuss issues of behavior and encourage students to seek help. Give concise and honest feedback about behaviors that are inappropriate. If you observe a student in a non-emergency situation

where additional support may be needed, please make a Care Referral to the Office of the Associate Provost for Student Success: <http://www.sru.edu/life-at-sru/health-and-wellness/care-network>. If there are situations involving threats or abusive behavior, call **University Police** directly at 724-738-3333. If the student is so disruptive that he/she prevents you from effectively teaching your class, call Student Conduct at 724-738-4985. You are always welcome to consult with ODS. These situations are not likely to occur, but it is wise to have a plan.

Remember...

It's your responsibility to support Slippery Rock University's commitment to equal access to education. This information will assist you when you have students with disabilities in your class; staff at the Office for Disability Services are also available to help you. Some key elements are:

- **Alternative Format:** Many students need print materials in alternative format (scanned to USBs, audio tapes, Braille, or enlarged). Work quickly with ODS and the student to make sure students get materials converted in a timely fashion.
- **Verification of a Disability:** If you would like verification that a student has a disability, ask the student to provide you with a letter. ODS produces these letters only for students who are registered with this office and for whom documentation of the disability is on file. You may also login to Accommodate at <https://sru-accommodate.symlicity.com/>.
- **Class Notes:** Some students with disabilities have difficulty taking notes. They may need your assistance in getting a volunteer note taker if ODS cannot locate one. In addition, you may provide them a copy of your notes and/or copies of overheads and other class materials.
- **Proctor Sheets:** A student with a disability may ask you to complete a proctor sheet, a form that facilitates the administration of your tests with accommodations at ODS. It is essential for you to fill the form out completely and quickly so that arrangements can be made for exam accommodations.

Resources

The Ohio State University Partnership Grant Website:

<http://www.telr.osu.edu/dpg/>

The Ohio State University Office for Disability Services (ODS) Website:

<http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

The Ohio State University Web Accessibility Center Website:

<http://www.wac.ohio-state.edu/>

The Ohio State University Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator's Office Website:

<http://ada.osu.edu/>

Important Note

This information is available in alternate format upon request. Please call the Office for Disability Services at (724) 738-4877.

It is also available at <http://www.sru.edu/ods> and Accommodate faculty resources tab at <https://sru-accommodate.symlicity.com/>.

Public requests for accommodations through the Office of Disability Services can be made by visiting the following link: https://sru-accommodate.symlicity.com/public_accommodation

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