

Rights and Responsibilities to Assure Educational Access for Students with Disabilities

Developed by Patricia Carlton and Jennifer Hertzfeld
The Ohio State University Partnership Grant
Improving the Quality of Education for Students with Disabilities

Introduction

Educational access is the provision of classroom accommodations, auxiliary aids and services to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of disability. Creating equal educational opportunities is a collaborative effort between the student, the faculty member, and the Office for Disability Services (ODS). ODS is available at (724) 738-4487 or <http://www.sru.edu/ods>

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 protect students with disabilities from discrimination that may occur as a result of misconceptions, attitudinal barriers, and/or failure of the institution to provide appropriate accommodations, auxiliary aids, or services. Examples of accommodations and auxiliary aids include, but are not limited to: qualified interpreters, note takers, extra time for exams, and educational materials in alternate format (i.e. Braille, audiotape, electronic format, enlarged print).

Who Benefits

- Students with disabilities. A disability includes any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or major life activity.
- All Faculty and Teaching Associates. Instructors are assisted in their responsibility to teach all students in their classes and to provide equal access to education.
- The Office for Disability Services. The office provides a system for service coordination in order to better meet student needs.
- Slippery Rock University. By providing educational access for all students, the university meets its mandated responsibilities and enhances campus diversity.

Principles of ACCESS

- A - Accessibility:** Faculty members play a major role in making their classrooms accessible to all students.
- C - Communication:** It is imperative that students with disabilities, faculty members, and ODS communicate on a regular basis.
- C - Confidentiality:** All instructors and ODS staff must respect a student's right to confidentiality.
- E - Eligibility for Accommodations:** ODS is the office designated to determine eligibility for federally mandated academic accommodations and services.
- S - Student Responsibility:** Students have a responsibility in ensuring they get the necessary services.
- S - Support:** Both faculty and ODS work together to support students in their legal right to access an education.

Faculty Rights and Responsibilities

Faculty Have the Right to:

Documentation

- Request verification of a student's eligibility for any requested accommodations. Such verification will be in the form of an accommodation letter which is e-mailed directly to the faculty member or viewable in the Accommodate software system. ODS is the only office designated to review disability documentation and determine eligibility for appropriate accommodations. Faculty should not view this documentation.

Accommodations

- Expect the student to initiate accommodation requests.
- If the student is taking their tests at ODS, expect ODS to administer exams in a secure and monitored environment.

Faculty Have the Responsibility to:

Accommodations

- Identify and establish essential functions, abilities, skills, and knowledge of their courses and evaluate students on this basis. Students with disabilities should meet the same course expectations as their peers.
- Provide accommodations only to students who are registered with ODS. It is NOT your responsibility to provide accommodations to students who are not registered with ODS.
- Use a syllabus statement and class announcements to invite students to disclose their needs. A fact sheet is available on syllabus statements via <http://www.sru.edu/ods>.
- Act immediately upon getting a student's request for accommodations by contacting ODS (if unsure about request), by providing the service or by meeting with students to complete a Test Proctoring Sheet. A Test Proctoring Sheet is a form that facilitates exam accommodations and should be completed by the student and faculty member collaboratively. The student is responsible for returning the Test Proctoring Sheet to ODS. This process may also be done via the Accommodate System and would only require faculty to approve a student's request to take an exam in ODS via Accommodate. If you have questions, contact ODS.
- If a student needs alternative media, please provide ODS with syllabi, textbooks, course packets, etc., well before classes begin (5 weeks prior to the start of the quarter is recommended) in order for students with disabilities to use alternative media when all other students have course materials. With such timely consideration, students with disabilities who have alternative media needs for accommodations and instructional access will be best served. Converting print materials is both labor and time intensive. Alternative media may be print material in Braille, on audiotapes, scanned onto discs, or enlarged.
- Work to ensure that all audio-visual materials used in class are accessible (e.g., that videos shown are captioned for students with hearing impairments and that the VCR equipment used has captioning capabilities, that videos shown will be made with auditory description in some way or that written transcripts will be provided, etc.)
- Consider incorporating principles of Universal Design for Learning in your teaching. A fact sheet is available on Universal Design from ODS or via <http://www.sru.edu/ods>.

Confidentiality

- Treat and protect all disability-related information as confidential medical information. For example, keep printed items, such as Test Proctoring Sheets or emails regarding student disability-related information in a protected location.

Communication

- Clearly communicate your testing procedures with the student and with ODS by completing a Test Proctoring Sheet or approving testing requests via Accommodate upon request.
- Consult with students with disabilities and ODS in providing appropriate accommodations.

PLEASE NOTE: Faculty do NOT have the right to ask students if they have a disability. For those students with documented disabilities, faculty do NOT have the right to ask about the nature of the disability. However, if students choose to disclose their disability, this information should be treated confidentially.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Students Have the Right to:

Confidentiality

- Expect all disability-related information to be treated confidentially.

Accommodations

- Receive appropriate accommodations in a timely manner from faculty or ODS. Students should have the opportunity to meet privately with faculty to discuss needed accommodations and any other concerns. Please keep in mind that ODS is the only office designated to review disability documentation and determine eligibility for appropriate accommodations.
- Appeal decision regarding accommodations and auxiliary aids. For more information, visit <http://www.sru.edu>.

Students Have the Responsibility to:

Documentation

- Provide ODS with appropriate documentation of the disability.

Confidentiality

- Go to the instructor's office hours or make an appointment with the instructor to facilitate privacy when requesting accommodations.

Accommodations

- Initiate requests for specific accommodations in a timely manner, preferably before the semester begins or early in the semester.
- Follow procedures with faculty and ODS in order to get the appropriate accommodations. When arranging for exam accommodations at ODS, first pick up a Test Proctoring Sheet or instructions for requesting an exam in the Accommodate system from ODS. If filling out the Test Proctoring Sheet, try to meet privately with the instructor to collaboratively fill out the Test Proctoring Sheet. Once the form has been completed, return the Test Proctoring Sheet to ODS at least 2 week days before the actual date of the exam. If using Accommodate, follow the instructions to request an exam in ODS for your professor to approve. Discuss any specifics with the professor before submitting the testing request. This request must also be done at least 2 week days prior to your exam date.
- Inform ODS of the materials you need in alternate format as soon as possible.
- Notify faculty/ODS immediately when an accommodation is not being provided completely or correctly.
- Notify faculty/ODS immediately when a decision has been made to not use an accommodation or the accommodation is no longer needed.
- Provide for their own personal independent living needs or other personal disability-related needs. For example, coordinating services of personal care attendants or acquiring homework assistance are student responsibilities and are not the responsibilities of ODS.

Communication

- Act as your own advocate. Work with ODS professional staff on developing advocacy skills and communicating your specific needs and accommodations to faculty.

ODS Rights and Responsibilities

ODS Rights:

Documentation

- Receive the appropriate documentation from the student prior to the services being initiated.

Accommodations

- Expect students and faculty to work cooperatively with ODS to facilitate academic accommodations.
- Deny unreasonable academic accommodations, adjustments, and/or auxiliary services. Accommodations cannot impose undue hardship to, or fundamentally alter, a program or activity of the college.
- Deny academic accommodations/services if appropriate documentation has not been provided.

ODS Responsibilities:

Documentation

- Collect, evaluate, securely house disability documentation and determine eligibility for services.

Confidentiality

- Treat and protect all disability-related information as confidential medical information.
- Meet with the student privately in an accessible location to discuss disability-related needs.

Accommodations

- Administer exams as directed in a secure and monitored environment.
- Provide appropriate accommodations in collaboration with the instructor and student.
- Provide print materials in accessible format once the faculty member and student identifies them.

Communication

- Communicate procedures clearly to the student and the faculty.

Advocacy

- Assist students with disabilities in understanding their strengths and functional limitations. Provide them with the skills to become self-advocates.

Definitions of Terms

Alternative media - Print material that has been converted to a format that enables a student with a print related disability to read the materials. This includes but is not limited to: taped materials, Braille, electronic text, and enlarged print.

Auxiliary aids - Services, equipment, and procedures that allow students with disabilities access to learning and activities in and out of the classroom. They include but are not limited to: sign language interpreters, real time captioning services, adaptive technology, alternative media, exam accommodations, etc.

Exam accommodations - Legally mandated services that allow students with disabilities to exhibit their knowledge on exams by using auxiliary aids which include but are not limited to: extra time, a reader/scribe, computers, large print, CCTV, distraction reduced environment, etc.

Test Proctoring sheet - The form that aids in the facilitation of exam accommodations at Slippery Rock University. It must be completed by both the student with a disability and the classroom instructor together. Exam accommodations cannot be scheduled at ODS without this form.

Universal design - An approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit people of all learning styles without adaptation or retrofitting. Universal design provides equal access to learning, not simply equal access to information. Universal design allows the student to control the method of accessing information while the teacher monitors the learning process and initiates any beneficial methods.

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.symplicity.com/>.

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

This publication is funded by the US Department of Education under project #738322. For additional copies or more information, please contact:

Margo Izzo, Ph. D., Phone: 614-292-9218, Email: izzo.1@osu.edu

Ann Yurcisin, ED.S., Phone: 614-292-3307, Email: yurcisin.1@osu.edu