



COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

University Disability Services Accommodations 101

Reasonable accommodations provide equitable access to programs or facilities and do not fundamentally alter the essential nature of a course or academic program. Determination of reasonableness is done by UDS on a case-by case basis after engaging in the interactive process. When students request accommodations for a particular course, the instructor will receive a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) through the ACCOMMODATE portal. Not all students will use all accommodations for all classes. Therefore, it is important to talk with the student privately about their accommodations and in relation to a particular class. It is your responsibility to support Commonwealth University's commitment to equal access to education. This information will assist you when you have students with disabilities in your class

The following list of accommodations are ones that are most commonly seen in University Disability Services (UDS), not an exhaustive list of all accommodations.

Calculator

A calculator may be used to assist with simple math calculations that are required, but are not an essential learning objective of the course. This refers to both in classroom and/or on exams. Faculty can determine the type of calculator that is appropriate and/or if a calculator is appropriate to use for an exam.

Captioned Videos

Captioned videos should be chosen for full access to the materials. In addition, please ensure that any YouTube videos or movies that you use for your course have ACCURATE captioning available.

Consideration for Absences

Some students have documentation to support their needs for unexpected absences due to the nature of their disability. Often, the symptoms of the student's disability or medical condition are unpredictable or they are ones that need immediate medical attention. Students with this accommodation are informed that communication with the professor is key to this accommodation due to the faculty member being the professional who sets the requirements and standards for attendance for the course.

As a way to assist with communication between the faculty and student, UDS has developed a *Consideration for Absences Procedures and Agreement* which is available on our office page. The purpose of this form is to facilitate discussions about how to apply this accommodation to a given course by balancing the student's need for a reasonable accommodation and maintaining the academic integrity of the course. Either a student or the faculty member can initiate this discussion by use of this form and can request UDS participation in the meeting.

Please note: This form is not mandatory to this accommodation. Rather, it is a framework for conversations about possible absences in a course.

Enlarged Font

Classroom handouts, quizzes, exams, diagrams, etc. need to be provided in enlarged font in order for the course materials to be accessible. Please provide all of these course materials in the font that is communicated by the student and noted on the Letter of Accommodation (LOA). In addition, please consider having all course content uploaded into Brightspace for easy access.

Extended Time for Assignment Completion

Some students have documentation to support a need for additional time to complete assignments due to the nature of their disability. The students are expected to meet with their instructor IN ADVANCE to discuss reasonable extensions on assignments when at all possible. Some students have conditions which become symptomatic unpredictably. If you are asked to honor extended time the day that an assignment is due, you are invited to have a conversation with the student and UDS to determine reasonableness of the accommodation for that unique case.

Extended Time on Exams

These students are allowed more time than the amount of time given for any in-class exams, quizzes, or timed essays. Extended time can easily be calculated if the exam is being taken in the classroom or conference area with the professor (Refer to the Letter of Accommodation for specifics regarding extended time accommodations). If the exam is being taken in UDS, the student is responsible for following the appropriate steps to schedule an exam in our office with the time extension. Faculty must use Accommodate to review the request and confirm the date/time are appropriate and provide the exam/instructions.

Laptop

These students are permitted to use a laptop to take notes during class or to type answers to an exam or quiz. The student is instructed to use the laptop for classroom activities and not for personal use during class time.

Leave Classroom Temporarily

These students may need to exit the classroom quickly due to symptoms of or conditions related to their disability. Please allow the students to leave and do not draw attention to their brief absence.

Lecture Recording

Some students are permitted to use an audio recorder in the classroom. Please note that when students are registered for this accommodation, they are required to sign a Lecture Recording Agreement which is on file in the UDS office.

Make Up Exams and Assignments

These students have documentation to support their need for unexpected absences due to the nature of their disability. Often, the symptoms of the student's disability or medical condition are unpredictable or they are ones that need immediate medical attention. Students with this accommodation are informed that communication with the professor is key.

Need to Eat/Drink in Class

These students need flexibility to eat or drink in class (provided that does not pose a safety issue) due to the nature of their disability.

Note Taking

Some students may require a peer notetaker. If we are unable to find a peer note taker, we will reach out to the faculty member to provide us with suggestions for a potential notes taker or to announce the need for one to the entire class, without identifying the student who has the accommodation.

Note taker assignments are confidential. Neither the note taker or the student receiving notes will know which student in the class needs or takes the notes.

Reader for Exams

Students who have been approved for this accommodation will typically take their quiz or exam in UDS Because they need exams read to them via spoken voice or text to voice via a computer. The reader is not permitted to answer any questions about the exam and can only provide information to the students directly from the exam. If there is a question regarding the exam, the students are permitted to contact the professor for clarification. If the exam is being taken in UDS, the students are responsible for following the appropriate steps to schedule a test in our office with the time extension. If the professor and student decide that an exam can be completed with the professor, that can be organized with the professor and UDS would not have to be contacted.

Scribe for Exams

These students need assistance with writing or recording answers for exams due to the nature of their disability. The scribe is not permitted to answer any questions about the exam and can only provide information directly from the student.

Separate Location - Distraction Reduced Environment

Some students need to take an exam in an environment with less distraction than what the classroom can offer. This can be an area that is separate from the rest of the class that contains a small group of students or it can be in UDS. If the exam is being taken in UDS, the students are responsible for following the appropriate steps to schedule a test in our office so that this environment can be utilized. Faculty must use Accommodate to review the request and confirm the date/time are appropriate and provide the exam/instructions.

Sign Language Interpreter

These students need a sign language interpreter for full access to the course. When this accommodation is in place, the certified interpreter(s) facilitate communication between student and the class environment by interpreting from English to American Sign Language (ASL) and vice versa.

Faculty should continue to look at, speak to, and ask questions of the student, not the interpreter, when any communication occurs while using first person language. The interpreter is only there to facilitate the information to and from the student.

**** Spelling Aid**

These students are permitted to use a dictionary or spell check device during in class writing assignments and exams, when it is not an essential learning objective of the course. The students are provided this access so that they are not penalized for basic spelling and grammar errors when they are otherwise able to provide accurate responses to the questions that are asked. Faculty can determine whether this accommodation is permissible based on the course objectives.

*** Students are notified that under certain circumstances, (i.e. course requirements) not all accommodations may be permissible by the professor*

Considerations for Teaching All Students with Disabilities

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.

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.

Comprehensive Syllabus: A comprehensive syllabus with clearly delineated statements about expectation is helpful to students who need help with structure and organization.

Inappropriate Behavior: Students with disabilities are subject to the same code of conduct required of any student at Commonwealth University.

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.” 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.