

Faculty Fact Sheet
Providing Accommodations to Students with Disabilities

1. Make a statement the first day of class inviting students with a disability to request accommodations. Put a statement, such as the following, on your syllabi: “If you have a disability and would like to request accommodations, please visit AccessAbility Services, located in Student Center 207. They will give you an accommodation letter which you should bring to me as soon as possible.”
2. Encourage students with accommodation letters to meet with you privately to discuss their needs. Respect confidentiality.
3. Read the accommodation letter carefully. If you have any concerns, call Deborah Cohen, Coordinator of AccessAbility Services. If you have no concerns, please sign the back receipt and either pass the letter along to your Chair, or return the receipt to AccessAbility Services. Keep the letter in a secure location for your own records.
4. If a student requires testing accommodations, discuss logistics. If she needs extra time, should she arrive early or stay late? If she needs a reduced-distraction location, will you put her in a nearby empty classroom, an office or send her to AccessAbility Services? Should she remind you of her accommodations before every test or will you remember?
5. Some accommodation letters may also include other information, such as suggestions of teaching strategies that would help the particular student, information about the particular disability or how to respond in case of a seizure or other medical emergency.
6. Accommodations are not meant to give a student with a disability an advantage over other students, make the course easier, or in any way change essential requirements or standards of the course or major. Rather, accommodations are intended to remove barriers to learning or to demonstrating what students have learned. The general rule is that we accommodate by process rather than by content.
7. It is considered an invasion of privacy to ask what the student’s disability is. Instead, when a student brings you an accommodation letter, ask him how he learns best. Ask him if there are any types of activities or exams that he finds difficult. If a student reveals his areas of difficulty, discuss possible solutions.
8. Remind your students the importance of seeking assistance. Consider posting names of campus support services, including the Tutoring Center, Math Lab, Writing Center, AccessAbility Services and the Counseling Center.
9. If a student requires a reader or scribe or text in alternate format, please contact AccessAbility Services for assistance.
10. Call AccessAbility Services for suggestions, support, and assistance with accommodations.

What is an Accommodation?

An accommodation is a legally mandated modification or service that gives a student with a disability an equal opportunity to benefit from the educational process. An accommodation may be:

- Changes to an environment or task to allow a student with a disability to participate
- Removal of architectural barriers
- Modifications to policies, practices, procedures
- Provision of auxiliary aids and services
- Other adaptations and modifications that will allow students to participate in university activities, programs and services

Reasonable accommodations are not intended to eliminate a student's disability or responsibilities but to support the student's own efforts to circumvent obstacles to learning. Students are expected to meet the essential course and degree requirements. Accommodations are not substitutions for faculty academic decisions such as course content, grading, or syllabus requirements. These determinations are not within the jurisdiction of AccessAbility Services.

AccessAbility Services is the designated service at Western Connecticut State University for students to voluntarily disclose a disability, submit appropriate documentation for verification, and request accommodations. The university respects the student's right not to disclose a disability or request accommodations. This decision rests with the student. Disclosure of a disability is voluntary; however, it is important to note that the university is not responsible for providing accommodations to a student who has not provided appropriate documentation of a disability to AccessAbility Services and requested a reasonable accommodation.

Accommodations should not lower academic standards or compromise the integrity of academic programs. Accommodations are provided at no cost to students. Students receiving accommodations are required to meet the essential requirements of courses, programs, majors and are required to abide by the university code of conduct.

Examples of Accommodations

Classroom Accommodations: preferential seating, excused absences, extension on assignments, captioning, print in alternate format, interpreter, assistive technology, permission to take breaks, permission to bring a beverage or snack, permission to refrain from public speaking or group activities, accessible furniture, tape recorder, laptop, note-taker, lab assistant, service animal, personal care attendant.

Testing Accommodations: extended time, reduced-distraction location, reader, scribe, laptop for essay exams, spell/grammar check, calculator, other assistive technology, breaks, alternate format such as large print, audio or Braille, lined paper instead of scantron, oral instead of essay.

Housing Accommodations: single, wheelchair accessible room, bed shaker, strobe light, outside light switch, alternate door handles and light switches, hand rails, Braille, digital controls w/ voice output, ground floor, air conditioning, scent free/non-toxic.

Alternate Courses/Waivers: specially designated sections of Math and Writing courses, foreign language alternative, modified or waived exercise courses, other course waiver or substitution.

Other Accommodations: classes, meetings and events may need to be relocated to an accessible location, accessible parking or transportation, full time status and privileges with reduced course load.

To Receive Accommodations a Student Must:

- Disclose disability to AccessAbility Services
- Provide appropriate documentation that substantiates the need for the accommodation or services requested

- Provide faculty, housing or other departments with an accommodation letter from AccessAbility Services
- Make the request for accommodations and services in a timely manner according to established procedures and policies

Registering with AccessAbility Services

Students interested in registering with AccessAbility Services must schedule an In-take/Registration meeting. In general, students are encouraged to register with AccessAbility Services 4 weeks before the semester begins. As some services may take longer to arrange, students requesting services such as sign language interpreters, CART, book scanning or text in alternate format are encouraged to register with AccessAbility Services 6-8 weeks before the semester begins.

In making the determination of eligibility for services, the Coordinator of AccessAbility Services conducts a comprehensive assessment and evaluation process that is consistent with established standard practices. Students are required to provide appropriate documentation, which should include a recent evaluation by an appropriate credentialed professional that makes evident the current academic impact of the disability as it relates to the accommodations and services requested. Documentation should contain a diagnostic statement identifying the disability, a description of the diagnostic methodology, a description of past and current treatment, a description of the expected duration and progression of the condition and a rationale and justification for all requested accommodations.

This type of documentation validates the presence of a disability covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and is most useful in providing information to support accommodation requests and anticipate future accommodation needs. All documentation is subject to review on a case-by-case basis.

Accommodation Letters

After meeting with a student and reviewing his/her documentation and course schedule, AccessAbility Services prepares Accommodation Letters. The accommodation letters give notification that the student has provided appropriate documentation to AccessAbility Services that supports the requested accommodations.

Students are responsible for promptly providing faculty with the accommodation letter from AccessAbility Services. Please note that without this notification, a faculty member is not responsible for providing an accommodation. Accommodations are not retroactive; faculty are not required to provide accommodations until they receive the

accommodation letter. Students requesting testing accommodations must present their professor/s with an accommodation letter at least 2 weeks prior to the exam. Last minute or retroactive requests for testing accommodations will only be considered in the case of medical emergencies. In such cases, appropriate medical documentation must be provided to AccessAbility Services.

Academic accommodations have a duration of one semester because accommodation needs may change. Established accommodations must be renewed from semester to semester. The student determines whether or not their approved accommodations are needed for each semester. Students are strongly advised to schedule their accommodation meeting 4-6 weeks before the next semester begins.

If a problem arises with a requested accommodation, the student should bring the situation to the attention of his/her professor and AccessAbility Services right away. It is important to keep communication lines open with faculty, AccessAbility Services, and others who are involved in providing an accommodation. Students must notify AccessAbility Services of changes in class schedules and the need for accommodation adjustments.

What To Do When You Receive an Accommodation Letter

Students are advised to meet privately with each professor to present an accommodation letter and to discuss individual needs. When a student presents you with an accommodation letter, please:

- Appreciate that for many students, this is intimidating. Help to make this process a positive experience by treating your student with compassion.
- Read the letter carefully and completely. Consider whether any of the requested accommodations will fundamentally alter an essential requirement of your course or pose an undue hardship. If not, please sign the receipt on the last page of the accommodation letter. You may choose to show your department Chair and have him/her sign the receipt as well. **Return the signed receipt to AccessAbility Services and keep the accommodation letter in a secure place for your own records.** You may return the receipt via interoffice mail.
- If you believe the requested accommodations will fundamentally alter an essential requirement of your course or pose an undue hardship, please call the AccessAbility Services Coordinator and explain your concern. Other appropriate methods of accommodation may be considered.

- Students who have mobility impairments, visual or auditory impairments, seizure disorders or other chronic medical problems are encouraged to speak with faculty about how to best respond to medical emergencies and what to do in case the building must be evacuated.
- If a student requires printed material in alternate format (i.e. Braille, large print, audio), please contact AccessAbility Services for assistance with this accommodation as soon as you receive the request. We have the technology and staff to provide large print and audio format in house. The turn-around time for this service depends on the time of year and number of pages requested. We need to contact an outside resource for material prepared in Braille and the turn-around time can take a few months.
- Ask the student if they want to share any concerns about the course or information about how they learn best.

If the Student Requires Testing Accommodations

- If the student requires extended time, discuss how and where quizzes, tests and exams will be administered. This may require a little creativity. If a student requires extended test time and either of you have back to back classes, you may agree to have the student arrive early or meet you later in the day. You may also send your student to test in AccessAbility Services.
- Students needing a reduced-distraction test location should be offered a room that is a quiet, clutter-free environment, preferably where there are no other students present. Appropriate locations may include a nearby classroom, office, library or AccessAbility Services.
- If a student requires a Reader, a Scribe or an exam in alternate format, please contact AccessAbility Services for assistance.

Testing in AccessAbility Services

AccessAbility Services provides exam proctoring during our regular office hours M-F 9-4:30. During midterms and finals, our exam proctoring hours extend to 6pm. At the beginning of the semester, those who will need to take exams in our office will be given Exam Scheduling Forms that they must give to each professor. In order to receive services, students will need to have these filled out by their instructors and brought to our office so we can schedule an appropriate time. On this form, we ask you to provide the day and time the student may take the exam, the time limit for the rest of the class, any materials the student may use such as notes, books or a calculator and how you will deliver and pick up the exam. You may hand deliver, e-mail, fax or have the student deliver the exam in a sealed and signed envelope. We ask that you do not rely on interoffice mail.

We ask that students make their appointments 1 week in advance of a regular quiz, test or exam. Those requesting readers/scribes or scheduling a midterm or final exam are asked to give 2 weeks notice. Keep in mind that last minute scheduling may not always be accommodated. Please note that if your student fails to show up for his/her scheduled exam, AccessAbility Services will return the exam to you.

Students Requiring Extended Time for Written Assignments / Projects

Extensions should be specific and arranged in advance of the original due date. Please let your student know whether or not you are willing to grant an incomplete if work is not turned in by the end of the semester. Faculty members are encouraged to contact AccessAbility Services to discuss options when:

- * Extensions seem incompatible with the format or standards in your course;
- * They appear to interfere with the student's participation in your class;
- * When they may affect your ability to assess the student's work;
- * The student is repeatedly not meeting new deadlines.

This student is responsible for keeping you informed of his/her progress toward completion of extended assignments and meeting newly agreed upon deadlines.

Students Requiring a Note-taker

Please make an announcement at the beginning of class that there is a paid note-taker position available for this course. Explain that the note-taker will be expected to attend all classes and take careful, legible notes and should have a GPA of 3.0 or better. Please ask the interested student to go to AccessAbility Services in order to fill out the hiring paperwork. The student with the disability will let you know if s/he wants to

receive the notes directly from the note-taker after each class, or if s/he would prefer to remain anonymous. In the case of the latter, the note-taker should be instructed to bring the notes to AccessAbility Services. If the assigned note-taker is absent, please find another appropriate student who would be willing to share a copy of his/her notes. In some cases, the note-taker will need to use a laptop and will provide the notes either on a CD or via e-mail or a Flash drive.

Students Requiring CART Service

CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation) is a captioning program for people with hearing impairments. The student will give you a small, wireless microphone to attach to your shirt neckline or collar. The student will use a laptop with a receiver and will need to sit next to an electrical outlet. A Captioner will type verbatim everything you say. There is on average a 2-3 second lag time before your words will appear on the student's computer screen. Please check in with the student at the beginning of class to ensure that your microphone is set to the same channel as the student's receiver. Please instruct all students to turn off their cell phones as even a phone set to vibrate can interfere with CART's reception. Please repeat any questions or statements made by students in the class as the microphone signal is not strong enough to pick up distant voices. If your lesson involves small group activities, place the microphone on a desk in the middle of the group. Please remember to return the microphone to the student at the end of each class.

Students Requiring a Sign Language Interpreter

Interpreters may stand at the front of the room a short distance from the speaker or they may sit beside the Deaf student. To prepare for a lecture, interpreters generally consult with the student ahead of time about the subject matter in order to learn any vocabulary particular to the course. When communicating with a Deaf student who uses an interpreter, look at and speak directly to the student. If you are showing a movie, keep some light on so the student can still see the interpreter. If a course or activity is 2 hours or longer, there will be 2 interpreters who will alternate. Please assist the interpreter/s in arranging appropriate seating.

Accommodating Students With Disabilities in a Science Lab

Please meet privately with the student to discuss classroom logistics and how to modify the classroom layout, equipment and procedures to best accommodate the student's needs and ensure safety. Here are examples of some accommodations that might help a student with a disability:

- Wheelchair accessible classroom, lab and field sites

- Adjustable height desk
- Lab assistant or partner
- Sign language interpreter or CART
- Extra time to set up and complete lab assignments
- Large print, high-contrast or Braille labels and signs
- Magnifier
- All instructions in writing; e-mail instructions ahead of time
- Verbal descriptions of equipment, charts, demonstrations, illustrations
- Plastic instead of glass containers
- Preferential seating
- Repetition of procedures, review sessions
- Alternate assignments