

# WESTMONT



# Disability Services

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## Faculty and Staff Handbook

2013-2014

This is a handbook for all staff and faculty who work directly or indirectly with students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities are required by law under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans With Disabilities Act of 2008. An online version of this handbook is available on the Office of Disability Website as well as additional resources accessed with user name and password.

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## **PART ONE**

### **Office of Disability Services, Role and Overview**

#### **COLLEGE POLICY**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, it is the policy of Westmont College to provide reasonable accommodations that afford equal opportunities for all students.

#### **FUNCTION AND ROLE OF THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES**

The Office of Disability Services (ODS) collaborates with students with disabilities to ensure that all programs and activities are accessible. We coordinate support to provide equal access to education and college life. This charge is fulfilled as the Office of Disability Services encourages student self-advocacy while collaborating with college faculty and staff who provide opportunities for academic, emotional and spiritual development. This goal is achieved when responsibility is shared between students, faculty and staff.

#### **THE ROLE OF DISABILITY SERVICES**

Academic integrity is of the utmost importance to the college and ODS wants to hear from faculty with any questions or concerns. These conversations are welcome and essential to coordination of special arrangements for the student, while maintaining essential course requirements. We provide many different accommodations according to the disability. No two students have the same needs. ODS does not conduct psycho-educational assessments or psychological evaluations. We maintain a list of local resources in the community that students can contact. The student pays for these independent assessments. The ODS does not monitor class attendance or grades. We do not have the authority to grant extensions on assignments or reschedule exam dates.

#### **DETERMINATION OF ACCOMMODATIONS**

Student's accommodations are considered individually. While some students have the same diagnoses, it is not indicative of the same or similar service.

Accommodations are based on what is known about the course requirements, test formats, and the specific disability needs of ODS registered students. A treating physician or registered/licensed professional or diagnostician provides the disability documentation. The documentation is carefully reviewed by the ODS prior to discussion about possible accommodations. The ODS reserves the right to contact these professionals for additional information needed to verify a disability or to provide further recommendations. The student and the Director of Disability Services meet each semester in which accommodations are expected. For further clarification, view our website for lists of criteria for documentation, as well as the forms used to verify a disability.

<http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability/>

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES**

The ODS is composed of a Director, a half-time Administrative Assistant and a part-time Test Proctor. The ODS is under the direction of the Provost's Office. The priority of the ODS is to coordinate and provide quality services to students with disabilities. This Office provides resources in general and in specific disability issues for the College.

## **BACKGROUND OF DISABILITY SERVICES**

Most students enter college aware of the services and accommodations they need to succeed in higher education. Many have already been served in public school with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or access to 504-based services. Yet some students are unaware of a presenting disability and related services upon entering post-secondary settings. Fig. 1.1 reviews recent statistics from survey results regarding the number of students with disabilities in higher education and the types of disabilities served. The presence of a disability is not a predictor of future success or failure for a student's education. It is important for all faculty and staff to understand that each student admitted to Westmont College, including those with disabilities, have met the same rigorous standards for admission, i.e. their grade point averages and college entrance exam scores were high. This is the validation for providing services to disabled students. They can be equally as intelligent and motivated and therefore successful as students with no presenting disability.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

All students requesting disability-related accommodations are required to meet with ODS each semester. Students must contact our office or website for registration materials, guidelines and forms for documenting a disabling condition. Once ODS receives the registration materials and appropriate documentation, the student must meet with the Director of Disability Services to engage in an interactive process, discussing appropriate accommodation(s). Students learn the registration procedures, policies and sign any needed agreements.

Previously registered students must report to the Director of Disability Services every semester accommodations are needed. This contact usually occurs in the first few weeks of a semester, however, new registrations are accepted at any time. This process allows for consideration of recent diagnoses and temporary injuries. It also allows for students with documented disabilities who have not availed themselves of services in the past. A student may decide it is in his academic interest to seek those accommodations later in the semester. The majority of the students served by ODS have a permanent disability but the Office also serves the needs of students with a temporary illness or injury that impacts academic progress.

Students qualified for course related accommodations are responsible for providing a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Services office to the faculty member responsible for the course. The Letter of Accommodation is designed to be an action plan for the individual needs of each student with a disability. ***See a sample Letter of Accommodation, Fig 1.2***

Students are responsible for reporting any concerns or problems with services or accommodations as they occur. Students must speak with the Director of Disability Services to request any changes in accommodations already implemented. Students with temporary injuries are expected to notify ODS of any changes as they occur.

As with all students, those with disabilities are expected to comply with Westmont's behavioral expectations as stated in the Student Handbook.

## **FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Support and efforts made by faculty are essential to a student's emotional, spiritual and academic growth. The ODS registered student and the Director determine what accommodations are required for every course each semester. This information is communicated to the faculty member in a Letter of Accommodation, written on Westmont letterhead. The decisions made and listed are determined by what is known about course requirements as stated in the course syllabus. The student usually delivers this letter directly to the faculty member. There may be instances when it is delivered through other means.

The Letter will state the semester and course number and the name of the faculty member. A faculty member should not accept a Letter for a different semester or course. Faculty members are responsible to provide the accommodation(s) indicated but are not required to alter any fundamental requirements of the course. If an accommodation is unclear or fundamentally alters the course curriculum, please contact the ODS Director immediately. Excessive requests, unexcused delays, or alterations should be reported to the ODS Director. This is important to investigate, since not all behavior is related to the student's disability. Always feel free to contact ODS with any questions or concerns.

Letters of Accommodation are usually delivered in the beginning of the semester. After a course schedule change or if determination of a disability occurs mid-semester, a Letter may be delivered later in the semester. Accommodations, however, are not retroactive for previously completed course requirements.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY BY FACULTY MEMBER**

Any communication with the student or on behalf of the student submitting a Letter of Accommodation must be confidential. The student's disability is only shared if the student chooses to disclose it to a staff or a faculty member. The student should never be asked to disclose his disability. The Director of Disability Services can only discuss the student's disability if the student has signed written permission to do so. Never use the student's name when providing classroom support, such as asking for volunteer note takers or with test taking accommodations in an alternate location. Making assumptions regarding the reason for the requested accommodation should be avoided, as well as any comparisons with other students submitting Letters of Accommodation. Students may have a "hidden disability" such as a

chronic medical condition, learning disability or mental health diagnosis that may not always be present or visibly noticeable, although the accommodations may be similar.

When faculty receives a Letter of Accommodation it needs to be placed in a safe location to ensure student privacy. The student's accommodations should only be discussed with other staff associated with the course or department on a "need to know" basis to allow for required special arrangements. These discussions are to be held in a private setting and must not be over-heard by others, including student workers. Faculty should be alert regarding email communication regarding student accommodations. Email communication should be done without revealing one registered student's name to another and forwarding of emails should demonstrate confidential consideration.

### **CRITICAL WAYS FACULTY CAN SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Faculty can support the continued success of students with disabilities by implementing certain practices. It is important that faculty include in each syllabus a statement about serving students with disabilities. A further recommendation is that the statement be read aloud by the faculty member during the first week of class. This approach demonstrates to students that you are someone who is sensitive to and concerned about meeting the needs of ALL students you teach. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for students to make their accommodation needs known to faculty early in the semester and allows faculty to refer the student to ODS in a timely manner.

#### **Syllabus Statement**

##### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

If a student has a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she should contact the Office of Disability Services for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by ADA may include, but not limited to, learning, physical, psychological or chronic health conditions. Students may contact the Office of Disability Services if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies. Contact Sheri Noble, Director of Disability Services for further information: [snoble@westmont.edu](mailto:snoble@westmont.edu), 805-565-6186 Information is also available at <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability/>. The Disability Services office is located upstairs in the Voskuyl Library, room 310A.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

The most common type of accommodations as stated in the Letter of Accommodation are requests for note taking support and special testing arrangements.

#### **NOTE TAKING**

The ODS will make the initial attempt to find a note taker for your class, using the class list and emailing the entire class for a volunteer note taker. If a student volunteers, then we ask that they view a PowerPoint presentation about the note taker's duties and responsibilities. The student note taker must also sign a form indicating his or her awareness of this responsibility, as well acknowledging the confidential nature of this job. In turn, the student requesting a note taker also signs an agreement

stating that they understand their responsibilities in obtaining the notes. It is the responsibility of the student who receives the note taking support to notify ODS if there is any problem or difficulty receiving the notes.

After one attempt of seeking a note taker, with no volunteers, the ODS will ask the faculty to make an announcement in class: *"The Office of Disability Services seeks a volunteer note taker for this class. If you are interested in providing this service, please see me after class."*

The faculty member will forward the name(s) of volunteers to the ODS and we will make arrangements with the student to provide this service. Instructors do not need to facilitate the note taking services after one is located. Student note takers either transfer their notes electronically or are provided with a copy card to pay for making copies of handwritten notes. Note takers are given a "Thank You" gift at the end of each semester.

If there are no volunteers for a note taker, the faculty member is asked to provide copies of his or her own notes.

### **SmartPens**

ODS has purchased several note taking devices that provide both audio and written support. The *Livescribe Smartpens* record audio and transcribes it in written format onto specialized paper. The *Smartpen* also allows the student to easily transfer and organize these notes onto a computer or other device. To record more precise audio, a student may have "ear buds" placed on his shoulder that are small microphones designed to capture lecture and discussion information more clearly. Students are instructed to use the audio portion of the notes *only for their own purposes*.

## **TEST TAKING ACCOMMODATIONS**

If the Letter of Accommodation states that special testing arrangements are requested, the faculty members are expected to aid in the arrangements. The student may be provided extended test time with the faculty member or schedule the exam with the ODS. If the test is taken in the library with ODS, students are assigned individual cubicles equipped with video monitoring. The students receiving extended time accommodations and who prefer to take an exam in the classroom will need more coordination between the faculty member, ODS and the student. In these circumstances it is helpful for the professor to provide this extended time in the classroom or walk with the student to another office area following the regular scheduled exam time. These students will discuss these arrangements with faculty prior to each test.

When Disability Services assists with test administration, the office requests delivery of the exam to the ODS located in the Voskuyl Library, room 310A. This may be accomplished in person or delivered electronically prior to 3:00 PM the day before the test. Nevertheless, we prefer to receive the test as soon as it is available. We place all exams in a locked cabinet to ensure security.

The completed test can either be picked up in the afternoon or delivered to the department office before 5:00 PM on the day of the exam. Faculty should communicate clearly how the test will be

delivered and how they wish the completed exam returned. Our personnel resources are limited in time of high demand and we ask for collaboration in this effort.

Please include:

- Specific instructions.
- The regular test time allotted for the class.
- Any devices or notes allowed in the exam.
- Professor contact information during the examination period. Contact with the instructor may be necessary during the exam if students have questions.
- In cases of an exam date change, please notify ODS if you know of a student who is scheduled to take the test with our office.

The use of a computer is required by some students to complete essay portions of the exam. This will be stated in the Letter of Accommodation. Our office has two computers that do not contain any stored information or access to the Internet. Reservations are required to ensure availability for this service. Advance planning is necessary to coordinate arrangements for those students who need enlarged font, a scribe, a reader or use of specialized equipment for examinations.

Last minute requests for test taking in ODS are challenging and will only be permitted in rare circumstances. ODS will attempt to schedule exams as close to the regular exam session as possible. However, due to conflicting class schedules and impacted student schedules, combined with the extended time, the test may be arranged at a time different than the regular exam period. We attempt to gain professor approval when a test is scheduled at an alternate time. Additionally, we are staffed for regular business hours, although there will be situations when we will not be available; however, all tests must conclude by 4:45 PM. ODS will need to proctor any night class exams during regular hours. We close for chapel. Exceptions are made for unavoidable scheduling conflicts. Contact information for staff is available on the website.

### **Test Proctor**

ODS has the services of a part-time test proctor. This is a non-student staff person who is trained in all aspects of test monitoring, test scheduling and upheld to the same ideals of academic integrity in the testing environment.

### **Final Exams**

Students registered with the ODS who have more than one final examination per day are allowed to petition the Registrar to change the date(s) of the exam. Faculty must sign this petition in advance (date to be set by the Registrar's Office) and arrange with the student an alternate time to take the exam. Students may download this form from the Registrar website. Upon Registrar approval, ODS will be notified and make the schedule change. Neither the ODS or faculty members have the authority to approve a date change for the student without this petition process.



## **ADVANCE PLANNING**

Students with mobility issues will be asked to provide a course list in advance to allow for scheduling of classes in accessible classrooms. ODS may also request the list of course readings in order to arrange for accessible forms of the text. This lead-time is essential in order to provide the accommodation in a timely fashion.

Occasionally ODS will request a copy of the instructor's lecture notes and visual materials prior to a class meeting. Some students need to review the material prior to the lecture and other students may require repeated review after the class presentation. We will make these requests and welcome discussion when these arrangements are not possible.

## **SIGNS OF AN UNIDENTIFIED DISABILITY**

Faculty members and staff can contact the Office of Disability Services concerning a student if there are indications of a disability. ODS is available to listen to the facts and descriptions of a student's behavior or academic progress that may suggest the possibility of a disability. Suggestions and plans may be discussed. It is important, however, to remember that it is a student's right to choose whether to pursue disability determination and/or accept services.

## **TEACHING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students are not required nor should they be requested to discuss or reveal his or her disability with instructors. Some will choose to self-disclose and have a dialogue about their disability and accommodations while others will not. If a student chooses to discuss his disability, the content and discussion must be kept confidential. Avoiding stereotypical images and comparisons with other students needing the same accommodations must be avoided. Students with disabilities seek professors who are willing to recognize and encourage his or her abilities, regardless of disability.

## **HOW TO HELP YOUR STUDENT**

- Write clear course syllabi, available in advance and posted on the web during the semester.
- Make clear and documented notifications of any changed assignments or test dates.
- If certain course activities are impossible for a student, alternative but equal assignments may be considered.
- Invite the student to participate in discussion of alternative assignments to determine what is feasible.
- Do not lower the standards for testing or reduce the course load.
- Modifying the manner in which the student is evaluated is appropriate when necessary. The ODS can offer suggestions of alternative ways a student can participate in a modified activity.

Fig 1.1

### STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AT DEGREE-GRANTING POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

NCES 2011–018 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

First Look June 2011-Key excerpts: entire study findings at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011018.pdf>

*Growing enrollments of students with disabilities in postsecondary education (Newman et al. 2010; Snyder and Dillow 2010), along with recent key legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 and the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act,<sup>1</sup> have generated considerable interest in research on accessibility of higher education for students with disabilities. This report provides national data collected from degree-granting postsecondary institutions about students with disabilities, the services and accommodations provided to these students, and various aspects of institutional accessibility. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) previously reported results from a similar survey conducted in 1998 (Lewis and Farris 1999).<sup>2</sup> The estimates presented in the current report are based on a survey of 2-year and 4-year degree-granting postsecondary institutions conducted during the 2009–10 academic year. **For the current study, a disability was defined as a physical or mental condition that causes functional limitations that substantially limit one or more major life activities, including mobility, communication (seeing, hearing, speaking), and learning.** Information in this report about students with disabilities represents only those students who had identified themselves in some way to the institution as having a disability, since these are the only students about whom the institutions could report. The survey also included questions about institutional practices and accessibility that were completed by all institutions regardless of whether they enrolled any students with disabilities.*

- *A large percentage of institutions that enrolled students with disabilities during the 12-month 2008–09 academic year reported enrolling students with specific learning disabilities (86 percent), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (79 percent), mobility limitations or orthopedic impairments (76 percent), or mental illness/psychological or psychiatric conditions (76 percent).*
- *Regarding the types of student disabilities reported by institutions, about one-third of disabilities reported by institutions were specific learning disabilities (31 percent). Eighteen percent of disabilities reported by institutions were for students with ADD/ADHD, 15 percent of disabilities were mental illness/psychological or psychiatric conditions, and 11 percent of disabilities were a health impairment/condition. For the institutions reporting duplicated counts, students with more than one disability were counted more than once.*
- *Among institutions that enrolled students with disabilities during the 2008–09 academic year, 93 percent provided additional exam time as an accommodation to students with disabilities. Large percentages of institutions also provided classroom note takers (77 percent), faculty-provided written course notes or assignments (72 percent), help with learning strategies or study skills (72 percent), alternative exam formats (71 percent), and adaptive equipment and technology (70 percent).*

<sup>1</sup> The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 broadened the interpretation of disability relative to the original law. More information can be found at <http://www.access-board.gov/about/laws/ada-amendments.htm>. The 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act reauthorized the Higher Education Act of 1965 and included financial assistance for individuals with intellectual disabilities and the creation of new programs for students with disabilities. More information can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> While some items across the surveys are comparable, the specific disability categories are different. Only data from the current survey are included in this report.

- Raue, K., and Lewis, L. (2011). *Students With Disabilities at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions* (NCES 2011–018). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.



# WESTMONT COLLEGE

## SAMPLE LETTER OF ACCOMMODATION

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PROFESSOR: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CLASS: RS-000-0  
 STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_  
 FROM: Sheri Noble, Director of Disability Services

I am writing you regarding the student named above to alert you to his or her need for accommodations in your class for this semester. Providing academic accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared responsibility of the college and your help in this matter is essential. The above named student has fulfilled his or her responsibility to register with my office and provide the appropriate documentation for his or her disability or impairment. This documentation allows for the following accommodations, marked with an 'X':

X	<b>Note taker</b>	ODS will make the initial attempt to seek a note taker. If one is not found you may be asked to make an announcement in class for a volunteer or provide a copy of your own notes.
X	<b>Extended test time</b> Time and a half unless otherwise noted.	For students wishing to take the test in the classroom, it will be helpful if you or your department can arrange for the student to have extended time. Otherwise, the ODS is available to arrange for the test to take place in our secure library cubicles. Three day's notice is requested.
X	<b>Separate testing location</b>	The student benefits from taking the exam in a distraction-free environment.
	<b>Essay portion of exams will need extended time</b>	
	<b>Essay portion of exams requiring handwriting may use word processing</b>	Disability Services has secure computers, without internet access, to be used for this purpose.
	<b>Reader/Books on tape</b>	Reading list may be requested in advance of semester
	<b>Altered exam format</b>	
X	<b>Additional equipment</b>	Use of computer for lecture notes and/or use of <i>Smartpen</i>
	<b>Other:</b>	

Students with disabilities must maintain the academic and behavioral standards of Westmont. If you have additional questions or concerns about this student, please call me at the number below. Thank you for your help in serving our student.

Sincerely,

Sheri Noble

Fig. 1.2

## PART TWO

### Individual Disabilities and Impairments Descriptions, Strategies and Suggested Accommodations

Interactive web-version available at:

<http://www.washington.edu/doi/Faculty/Resources/Doit/>

In part, reprinted with permission, University of Washington

**Learning Disabilities** are documented disabilities that may affect reading, processing information, remembering, calculating, and spatial abilities.

Examples of accommodations for students who have learning disabilities include:

- Note takers.
- Audio taped or video taped class sessions.
- Extended exam time and a quiet testing location.
- Visual, aural, and tactile demonstrations incorporated into instruction.
- Concise course and lecture outlines.
- Books on tape.
- Alternative evaluation methods (e.g., portfolio, oral or video presentations).
- Providing projects or detailed instructions on audiotapes or print copies.
- Reinforcing directions verbally.
- Break large amounts of information or instructions into smaller segments.
- Computer with speech output, spell checker, and grammar checker

Students with specific learning disabilities have average to above average intelligence but may have difficulties acquiring and demonstrating knowledge and understanding. This results in a lack of achievement for age and ability level and a discrepancy may be evident between achievement and intellectual abilities.

According to the *National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities*, learning disabilities are a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. The specific causes of learning disabilities are not clearly understood. However, these disorders are presumably related to central nervous system dysfunction. The effects of a learning disability are manifested differently for each individual and can range from mild to severe. Learning disabilities may also be present with other disabilities such as mobility or sensory impairments. Often people with Attention Deficit Disorder also have learning disabilities. Specific types of learning disabilities include:

- **Dysgraphia**  
An individual with dysgraphia has a difficult time with the physical task of forming letters and words using a pen and paper and has difficulty producing legible handwriting.
- **Dyscalculia**  
A person with Dyscalculia has difficulty understanding and using math concepts and symbols.
- **Dyslexia**  
An individual with dyslexia may mix up letters within words and sentences while reading. He or she may have difficulty with spelling. Letter reversals are common. Some individuals with dyslexia have a difficult time with navigation and route-finding tasks. Directions and spatial information may easily confuse them, such as left and right.
- **Dyspraxia**  
A person with dyspraxia may muddle words and sentences while talking. There is often a discrepancy between language comprehension and language production.
- **Non-verbal Learning Disorder**  
Poor motor coordination, visual-spatial organization and/or a lack of social skills may characterize non-verbal learning disorders.
- **Auditory Processing Disorder**  
A person with an auditory processing disorder intermittently experiences an inability to process verbal information.

For a student with a learning disability, auditory, visual, or tactile information can become muddled at any point during transmission, receipt, processing, and/or re-transmission. For example, it may take longer for some students who have learning disabilities to process written information. Lengthy reading or writing assignments and tests may, therefore, be difficult to complete in a standard amount of time. This may be due to difficulty discriminating numerals or letters because they appear jumbled or reversed. Inconsistencies between knowledge and test scores are also common.

Some students who have learning disabilities may be able to organize and communicate their thoughts in a one-on-one conversation but find it difficult to articulate the same ideas in a noisy classroom. Other students may experience difficulties with specific processes or subject areas such as calculating mathematical problems, reading, or understanding spoken language. People with learning disabilities may have difficulty spelling and consequently have difficulty creating or editing text or otherwise communicating in writing. Difficulties with attention, organization, time management, and prioritizing tasks are also common.

Computers can be adapted to assist students with learning disabilities. A student with learning disabilities might find these accommodations useful:

- Computers equipped with speech output, which highlights and reads text on the computer screen (via screen reading software and a speech synthesizer).
- Word processing software that includes electronic spelling and grammar checkers, software with highlighting capabilities, and word prediction software.
- Software to enlarge screen images.

For math and science classes, examples of specific accommodations that are useful for students with learning disabilities include:

- The use of scratch paper to work out math problems during exams.
- Talking calculators.
- Fractional, decimal, and statistical scientific calculators.
- Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) software for math.
- Computer Assisted Design (CAD) software for engineering.
- Large display screens for calculators and adding machines.

Accommodation needs of students with learning disabilities vary greatly by individual and by academic activity. Specific academic activities that may pose challenges and suggested accommodations in each area can be found in the following resources:

*DO-IT publication [Academic Accommodations for Students with Learning Disabilities](#)*

**Mobility Impairments** may make walking, sitting, bending, carrying, or using fingers, hands or arms difficult or impossible. Mobility impairments result from many causes, including amputation, polio, clubfoot, scoliosis, spinal cord injury, and cerebral palsy. Typical accommodations for students with mobility impairments include:

- Accessible locations for classrooms, labs, and field trips.
- Wide aisles and uncluttered work areas.
- Adjustable height and tilt tables.
- All equipment located within reach.
- Note takers, scribes, and lab assistants.
- Group lab assignments.
- Extended exam time or alternative testing arrangements.
- Computers with speech input and alternative keyboards.
- Access to handicapped parking spaces, wheelchair ramps, curb cuts, restrooms, and elevators.
- Course materials available in electronic format.
- Access to research resources available on the Internet.
- When speaking with a student in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, sit down or move back to create a more comfortable facial angle for conversation.

There are many types of orthopedic or neuromuscular impairments that can impact mobility. These include but are not limited to amputation, paralysis, cerebral palsy, stroke, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, arthritis, epilepsy and spinal cord injury. Mobility impairments range from lower body impairments, which may require use of canes, walkers, or wheelchairs, to upper body impairments that may include limited or no use of the upper extremities and hands. It is impossible to generalize about the functional abilities of students with mobility impairments due to the wide variety of types of disabilities and specific diagnoses.

Mobility impairments can be permanent or temporary. A broken bone or surgical procedure can temporarily impair a student's ability to walk independently and travel between classroom buildings in a timely manner. Likewise, some students may be ambulatory with a walker for short distances within a classroom, but may need a wheelchair or scooter for longer distances.

Mobility impairments can impact students in several ways. Some students may take longer to get from one class to another, enter buildings, or maneuver in small spaces. In some cases physical barriers may inhibit entry into a building or classroom. Accessible transportation is also required for students to get to fieldwork sites.

A mobility impairment may impact, to varying degrees, a student's ability to manipulate objects, turn pages, write with a pen or pencil, type at a keyboard, and/or retrieve research materials. Medical conditions such as arthritis or repetitive stress injuries can impact fine motor abilities and decrease endurance for longer assignments. A student's physical abilities may also vary from day to day. Accommodation needs of students with mobility impairments vary greatly by individual and by academic activity.

In all cases, it is important to remember that the student is responsible for requesting an accommodation and providing necessary documentation to the ODS. This office can, when involved in the process, assure that the accommodations you provide are appropriate and reasonable.

**Health Impairments** affect daily living and involve the lungs, kidneys, heart, muscles, liver, intestines, immune systems, and other body parts (e.g., cancer, kidney failure, AIDS). Typical accommodations for students who have health impairments include:

- Note taker or copy of another student's notes.
- Flexible attendance requirements and extra exam time.
- Assignments made available in electronic format or use of email to facilitate communication.
- Instructor flexibility plays a key role in supporting the success of students with health impairments, as many conditions by nature are unpredictable. The provision of course outlines with clear and well-organized information regarding readings, materials, assignments, and exams can help the student plan, organize, and prioritize his course requirements.
- Posting information on the Web is another way for a student to acquire important information without the need to be physically present in class.
- Prior knowledge of deadlines and exams may help the student plan doctor appointments and/or medical procedures around important class dates.
- Computer-based instruction and other options that minimize travel and classroom-based instruction provide feasible alternatives for students with illnesses that make regular class attendance difficult.
- Note takers.
- Audio or video taped class sessions.
- Flexible attendance requirements.
- Extended exam time or alternative testing arrangements.
- Assignments available in electronic format.
- The use of electronic mail for instructor-student meetings and discussion groups for class discussions.
- Web page or electronic mail distribution of course materials and lecture notes.
- An environment that minimizes fatigue and injury.



- Ergonomic workstations with adjustable keyboard trays, monitor risers, glare guards, foot rests, adjustable chairs, and/or anti-fatigue matting.
- Speech recognition computer input devices, ergonomic keyboards, one-handed keyboards, expanded keyboards, or miniature keyboards. .

There are a range of medical diagnoses and subsequent health problems that can have a temporary or chronic impact on a student's academic performance. Common diagnoses include arthritis, cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, asthma, AIDS, and heart disease. Unless the condition is neurological in nature, health impairments are not likely to directly affect learning. However, the secondary effects of illness and the side effects of medications can have a significant affect on memory, attention, strength, endurance, and energy levels.

Health impairments can result in a range of academic challenges for a student. Problems may include missing class for unpredictable and prolonged time periods and difficulties attending classes full-time or on a daily basis. Health problems may also interfere with the physical skills needed to complete laboratory, computer, or writing assignments. Individuals with arthritis, for example, may have difficulty writing due to pain or joint deformities, making it a challenge for them to meet the writing requirements for some classes. Students with Multiple Sclerosis may not be able to manipulate small laboratory equipment or complete tasks that require precise measuring, graphing, or drawing. Prolonged sitting may pose challenges for an individual with chronic pain or back problems. Illness or injury may result in limitations in mobility that requires the use of a wheelchair or scooter. Some students must avoid specific activities that trigger their conditions. For example, a student with asthma may need to avoid certain inhalants in a lab.

**Mental Illness – Psychological Disability** includes mental health and psychiatric disorders that affect daily living. Examples of accommodations for students with these conditions include:

- Note taker, copy of another student's notes, or audio recording of lectures.
- Extended time on assignments and tests.
- A non-distracting, quiet setting for assignments and tests.
- Early notification of projects, exams, and assignments to reduce stress.
- Flexible attendance requirements.
- An encouraging, validating, academic environment.
- Alternative testing arrangements in a quiet room.
- Assignments available in electronic format.
- Web page or electronic mail distribution of course materials and lecture notes.

Psychiatric or mental health impairments are broad and range from mild depression to chronic disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. Negative stereotypes and the fact that these disabilities are typically "invisible" further complicate making accommodations for students with these disorders.

Students with mental health or psychiatric impairments can be affected in many ways. They may be more susceptible to the common stressors of school involving academic demands as

well as interpersonal relationships. Students may have particular problems receiving, processing and recalling information during times of stress.

Side effects from medication may also impact attention, memory, alertness, and activity level. The episodic and unpredictable onset and recurrence of illness can also interrupt the educational process.

Individuals with psychiatric impairments may be treated with a combination of medication, counseling, and behavioral therapy. A student with a psychiatric impairment may need to build time into his schedule for therapy and/or support services.

**Hearing Impairments** may make it difficult or impossible to hear or understand lectures, access multimedia materials, and participate in discussions. Examples of accommodations for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have an auditory processing disorder, include:

- Interpreter, real-time captioning, FM system, note taker.
- Open or closed-captioned films, use of visual aids.
- Written assignments, lab instructions, and demonstration summaries.
- Visual warning system for lab emergencies.
- Use of electronic mail for class and private discussions.
- Preferential seating and the elimination of unnecessary background noise.

Often, people who have very little or no functional hearing refer to themselves as "deaf." Those with milder hearing loss may label themselves as "hard of hearing." There are also people who may have an auditory processing disorder (APD), which causes difficulty in processing verbal information. When these two groups are combined, they are often referred to as individuals with "hearing impairments," or "hearing loss," or "hearing impaired." When referring to the Deaf culture, "Deaf" is capitalized. Accommodations for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have APD can be classified as "visual" and "aural." Visual accommodations rely on a person's sight; aural accommodations rely on a person's hearing abilities. Examples of visual accommodations include sign language interpreters, lip reading, and captioning. Examples of aural accommodations include amplification devices such as FM systems.

• **Hard of Hearing** is the condition of some students who may hear only specific frequencies or sounds within a certain volume range. They may rely heavily upon hearing aids and lip reading. Some students who are hard of hearing may never learn, or only occasionally use, sign language. Students who are hard of hearing may have speech impairments due to their inability to hear and monitor their own voices clearly.

Being deaf or hard of hearing can affect students in several ways. They may have difficulty following lectures in large halls, particularly if the acoustics cause echoes or if the speaker talks quietly, rapidly, or indistinctly. People who have hearing impairments may find it difficult to simultaneously watch demonstrations and follow verbal descriptions, particularly if they are watching a sign language interpreter, a captioning screen, or a speaker's lips. In-class discussions may also be difficult to follow or participate in, particularly if the discussion is fast-paced, since there is often lag time between a speaker's comments and interpretation.

Students who are hard of hearing may use hearing aids. Students who use hearing aids will likely benefit from amplification in other forms such as Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) like hearing aid compatible telephones, personal neck loops, and Audio Induction Loop Assistive Listening Systems. Some students use FM amplification systems that require the instructor to wear a small microphone to transmit amplified sound to the student.

- **Deafness** is an impairment of people who may have little or no speech depending on the severity of the hearing loss and the age of onset. They will often communicate through a sign language interpreter. *American Sign Language (ASL)* is widely used and has its own grammar and word order. Other students may use *Signed Exact English (SEE)*, which is sign language in English word order. A certified interpreter is used for translation into either language. Students who are deaf may also benefit from real-time captioning, where spoken text is typed and projected onto a screen.

It is important to remember that a student who is using an interpreter, who is lip reading, or who is reading real-time captioning cannot simultaneously look down at written materials or take notes. Describing written or projected text is therefore helpful to this student. Handouts that can be read before or after class are useful, but create challenges when referred to during the class session.

- **Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)** is a disability in which people may intermittently experience an inability to process verbal information. When people with APD have an auditory processing failure, their brains are not processing logically what is being said to them. People with APD do not often recognize subtle differences between sounds in words, even though the sounds themselves may be loud and clear. Problems in processing auditory information are more likely to occur when a person with APD is in a noisy environment, when he or she is listening to complex information or when the teacher speaks quickly or with an unfamiliar accent. Therefore, it is important to reduce background noise in the classroom whenever possible. If the teacher happens to be one who normally speaks rapidly or with an accent, it would be helpful for him or her to be aware that this may present a problem for some APD students. As with other hearing impairments, supplemental text materials that accompany a lecture may be helpful.

### **Accommodations for Students Who Are Hard of Hearing, Deaf, or Who Have APD**

Examples of accommodations for students who have hearing impairments include:

- Interpreters.
- Sound amplification systems.
- Note takers.
- Real-time captioning.
- Electronic mail for faculty-student meetings and class discussions.
- Visual warning systems for lab emergencies.
- Changing computer auditory signals to flashes or contrast changes.

There are also several ways you can direct your speaking style and adjust the "pace" of the classroom to make information more accessible to a student with a hearing impairment:

- When speaking, make sure the student can see your face and avoid unnecessary pacing and moving.
- When speaking, avoid obscuring your lips or face with hands, books, etc.
- Repeat discussion questions and statements made by other students.
- Write discussion questions/answers on the board or overhead projector.
- Speak clearly and at rate that is not rapid.
- Use visual aids with few words and large images and fonts.
- Allow for preferential seating.
- Eliminate unnecessary background noise.
- Provide written lecture outlines, class assignments, lab instructions, and demonstration summaries and distribute them before class when possible.

### **Vision Impairments**

• **Blindness** refers to the disability of students who cannot read printed text, even when enlarged. Typical accommodations include:

- Audio taped, Braille or electronic-formatted lecture notes, handouts, and texts.
- Verbal descriptions of visual aids.
- Raised-line drawings and tactile models of graphic materials.
- Braille lab signs and equipment labels, auditory lab warning signals.
- Adaptive lab equipment (e.g., talking thermometers and calculators, light probes, and tactile timers).
- Computer with Optical Character Reader (OCR), speech output, Braille screen display and printer output
- Students who have no sight cannot access standard printed materials. Students who have had no vision since birth may also have difficulty understanding verbal descriptions of visual materials and abstract concepts. Individuals who are "legally blind" may have some functional vision, making the same accommodations for students with low vision appropriate.
- Consider the description, "This diagram of ancestral lineage looks like a tree." If one has never seen a tree then one has no mental image upon which to comprehend this statement. However, students who lost their vision later in life may find it easier to understand such verbal descriptions. Additionally, demonstrations based on color differences may be more difficult for students with blindness to participate in and understand than demonstrations that emphasize changes in shape, temperature, or texture. In some cases, the assistance of a sighted person is required in order for the blind student to gain access to the content of your course.
- Ready access to printed materials on computer disk, via email, or on websites can allow a blind student, who has the appropriate technology, to use computers to read text aloud and/or produce it in Braille. Some materials may need to be transferred to audiotape. Since it may take weeks or even months for support staff to procure course materials in Braille or on audiotape, it is essential that instructors select and prepare their materials well before they are needed. Typically, school staff that support disabled students coordinates Braille and audiotape production in collaboration with instructors and the student.

- During lecture demonstrations, clear, concise narration of the basic points being represented in visual aids is important. This technique benefits other students as well.
  - Other examples of accommodations for blind students include tactile models and raised-line drawings of graphic materials. Staff that support disabled students can help locate or create these materials. It is most helpful when the instructor identifies the specific learning objective when an accommodation is needed. This clarifies the academic accommodation required.
  - Adaptive lab equipment such as talking thermometers, calculators, light probes, and tactile timers can maximize access to labs for students who are blind. In addition, computers with Optical Character Readers, speech output, Braille screen displays, and Braille printers allow students who are blind to participate in computer exercises and on-line research. In addition, web pages used in your course should be designed so that they are accessible to those using Braille and speech output systems. The ODS and/or computing services staff on your campus can be consulted when addressing computer access issues.
- **Low Vision** refers to students who have some usable vision, but cannot read standard-size text, have field deficits (for example, cannot see peripherally or centrally but can see well in other ranges), or other visual impairments. Typical accommodations include:

- Front-row or preferential classroom seating in well-lit areas with full view of the instructor and visual aids.
- Large print handouts, lab signs, and equipment labels.
- TV monitor connected to microscope to enlarge images.
- Class assignments made available in electronic format.
- Computer equipped to enlarge screen characters and images.
- Large-print reading materials (e.g., books, handouts, signs, and equipment labels). Large print is typically 16 to 18 point bold type, depending on the typeface used.
- Class assignments in audio taped or electronic formats.
- Computers with screen enlargers, Optical Character Readers or speech output.
- The use of a reader or scribe for exams or class assignments.
- The use of recorders and laptop computers for note taking.
- Extended time for exams and assignments.
- Verbal descriptions of visual aides.

Examples of accommodations for laboratory or strong visual instructional content for students with low vision include:

- Large-print instructions.
- Large-print laboratory signs and equipment labels.
- Enlarged images through connecting TV monitors to microscopes.
- Raised line drawings or tactile models for illustrations.

The following are some examples of different ways low vision may affect the ability to learn. For some students with low vision, or partial sight, standard written materials are too small to read and small objects are difficult to see. Other students may see objects only within a specific field of vision, or see an image with sections missing. Text or objects may appear blurry.

Learning via a visual medium may take longer and may be more fatiguing for people who have low vision. Some people with low vision may be able to read enlarged print for a long time period, while others may only be able to tolerate reading for a short time and require readers or audio taped material.

Visual abilities may also vary in different situations. For example, reduced light or strong glares may affect visual abilities during different times of day or in different classrooms.

Students with low vision may face challenges in locating large-print materials, getting around in an unfamiliar setting, finding transportation, hiring readers for library work, researching reports and short articles, as well as getting recorded textbooks on time.

**Attention Deficit Disorder** is a neurological impairment characterized by inattention, impulsivity, and/or hyperactivity. Individuals may be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Other learning and social-emotional problems can co-occur with ADHD. Individuals with ADHD may appear easily distracted, disorganized, and lose things frequently. Employment, relationships, and other areas of life may be affected by attention deficits and associated difficulties. Psycho-educational or medical professionals make a diagnosis of ADD or ADHD based on a comprehensive evaluation.

Attention deficits may impact a student in a variety of academic activities such as lectures, discussions, test taking, writing assignments, or fieldwork. Some students with ADHD will need academic accommodations to succeed in academic pursuits. For example, a student with ADHD might need to tape record lectures to review information that might be missed in written notes, or he/she might need a quiet room to eliminate distractions during a test. Students often are the best source of information about their needs. Instructors should work with each student and school disability support staff to determine appropriate accommodations.

Accommodations for students with ADD or ADHD may include:

- Extended time to complete tests or assignments.
- Note takers.
- Tutors or other organizational supports.
- Reduced course loads (units taken per semester).
- Preferential registration for smaller classes.
- Preferential seating near the front of class.
- Copies of overheads/class notes.
- Private, quiet rooms for test taking.
- Tape-recorded lectures and/or books.
- Printed course material on audiotape.
- Written directions.

**Traumatic Brain Injury** (TBI) is a head injury typically caused by an accident (e.g., motor vehicle accident or fall) that results in physical, cognitive, and/or psychosocial impairment. Individuals with a TBI face various difficulties and functional limitations based on the nature and location of the head injury. Some common consequences of head injuries include changes in cognition, attention, memory, judgment, organization, physical, sensory, and perceptual impairments. In addition social, behavioral, and personality changes may be evidenced. Students with a TBI may regain function, or must cope with permanent loss of function. Any one or a combination of these problems can impact learning and academic performance. Students with a TBI may require academic accommodations such as extended time during tests and reduced course loads. Students with head injuries may also benefit from instructional strategies that involve repetition, routine, and step-by-step instructions. Students are often the best source of information about their needs. Instructors should work with each student and disability support staff to determine appropriate accommodations.

Accommodations for students with traumatic brain injuries may include:

- Extended time to complete tests or assignments.
- Note takers/scribes/readers.
- Reduced course loads.
- Preferential registration for smaller classes.
- Copies of overheads/class notes.
- Accessibility to classroom, labs, facilities and field experiences.
- Seizure precautions.
- Tape-recorded lectures, books, and printed course material on audiotape.

See: <http://www.washington.edu/doi/Faculty/Strategies/Disability>

**Note:** The term "Asperger Syndrome" will not appear in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), the latest revision of the manual, and instead its symptoms will come under the newly added "autism spectrum disorder". The descriptive aspects of Asperger Syndrome are still useful to described students on the milder end of the autism spectrum.

**Asperger Syndrome** is a developmental disorder disability that is characterized by social interaction deficits, impaired communication skills, and unusual behaviors. It is sometimes referred to as "high functioning autism." Tony Attwood, one of the foremost authorities in the field of Asperger Syndrome, describes it as: "*A neurological disorder that affects one's ability to understand and respond to other's thoughts and feelings.*"

The following characteristics may be present in an individual with Asperger Syndrome. Due to the diversity and complexity of this disability, some of the characteristics or problems discussed may not be evident in a particular individual. An understanding of these characteristics is important, because the behavior of these individuals is frequently misinterpreted. Many behaviors that seem odd or unusual are due to the disability and not the result of intentional rudeness.

[Taken from "Faculty Guide for Working with Students with Asperger Syndrome", an appendix in [\*Students with Asperger Syndrome: A Guide for College Personnel\*](#), by Lorraine E. Wolf, Jane Thierfeld Brown, and G. Ruth Kukiela Bork]

## **General Characteristics**

- Frequent errors in the interpretation of body language, intentions or facial expressions of others.
- Difficulty understanding the motives and perceptions of others.
- Problems asking for help.
- May display motor clumsiness, unusual body movements and/or repetitive behavior.
- Difficulties with transitions and changes in schedule.
- Wants things "just so".
- Problems with organization (including initiating, planning, carrying out and finishing tasks)
- Deficits in abstract thinking (concrete-minded, misses the "big picture", focuses on irrelevant details and has difficulty generalizing, i.e. "can't see the forest for the trees").
- Unusual sensitivity to touch, sounds, and visual details; may experience sensory overload.

## **Functional Impact**

### ***Communication and Social Skills***

- Difficulty initiating and sustaining connected relationships with people.
- Poor quality eye contact.
- Problems understanding social rules, such as personal space.
- Impairment of two-way interaction. May seem to talk "at you" rather than "with you".
- Conversation and questions may be tangential or repetitive.
- Hyper-focused interests that may be unusual and sometimes become a rigid topic for social conversation.
- Unusual speech intonation, volume, rhythm and/or rate.
- Literal understanding of language i.e. difficulty interpreting words with double meaning, confused by metaphors and sarcasm. Therefore, speaker should not use absolute words such as "always" or "never" unless that is exactly what you mean.
- Clear directives should be used when:
  - A student invades your space or imposes on your time.
  - Giving assignments or specifying revisions to submitted work.
  - The student's classroom comments or conversational volume become inappropriate.

### ***Writing***

- Papers may be redundant, as the student may return to the same topic repeatedly.
- Able to state facts and details, but will be greatly challenged by papers requiring:
  - Taking another's point of view.



- Synthesizing information to arrive at a larger concept.
- Comparing and contrasting to arrive at the "big picture".
- The use of analogies, similes or metaphors.
- Clear, detailed directives should be used when referring to revisions that need to be made to a piece of writing:
  - Ask the student make a "to do list" of what needs to be changed.
  - Number the changes on their writing so they have an order to follow.
  - If modeling writing rules, write them on a separate sheet for future reference.
  - Keep directions simple and direct. **Example:** *(Student arrives at your office at 1:40). "We have only 20 minutes to work together. At 2:00, I'm going to ask you to take my suggestions home and start making changes to your paper. Come to my office tomorrow afternoon at 3:00 and show me what you've done."*
  - Ask students to repeat directions in their own words to check comprehension.

### **Some Considerations for Autism Spectrum Students:**

These students may have impressive vocabularies and excellent rote memory, but may have difficulty with high-level thinking and comprehension skills. They can give the false impression that they understand, when in reality they may be merely parroting what they have heard or read. Many individuals with Asperger's Syndrome are visual learners. Techniques suggested for students with learning disabilities who are visual learners are often helpful.

### **Instructional Strategies:**

- Clearly define course requirements, the dates of exams and when assignments are due. Provide advance notice of any changes.
- Teach to generalize and to consolidate information.
- Go for gist, meaning and patterns. Don't get bogged down in details.
- Use scripts and teach strategies selectively.
- All expectations need to be direct and explicit. Don't require these students to "read between the lines" to glean your intentions. Don't expect the student to automatically generalize instructions. Provide direct feedback to the student when you observe areas of academic difficulty.
- Encourage use of resources designed to help students with study skills, particularly organizational skills.
- Avoid idioms, double meaning and sarcasm, unless you plan to explain your usage.
- If the student has poor handwriting, use of a computer may be easier for them.
- Use their preoccupying interests to help focus and motivate the student. Suggest ways to integrate this interest into the course, such as related paper topics.
- The setting for tests should account for any sensitivity to sound, light, touch etc.

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<http://www.mnsu.edu/dso/faculty/students/asperger.html>