

# **Academic Access**

## ***A Desk Reference for Accommodating Students with Disabilities***

### **University of Maine System**

**A Project of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs,  
System Office of Human Resources, and  
Campus Offices Serving Students with Disabilities  
Revised 2008**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Brown University  
*Accommodations for Students with Learning Disabilities*

University of Florida  
*Handbook for Teaching Assistants*

University of Maryland at College Park  
*Reasonable Accommodations*

Mississippi State University  
*College Students with Disabilities: A Desk Reference Guide for Faculty and Staff*

University of Nevada, Reno  
*Academic Access: A Guide for Instructors of College Students with Disabilities*

University of Rhode Island  
*Faculty Handbook*

University of Washington  
*Working Together:*

University of Washington  
*Working Together: Faculty and Students with Disabilities*

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973-3370 (voice) or 973-3300 (TDD)**

## TEACHING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: AN OVERVIEW

Students with disabilities constitute a population of scholastically qualified students who present some special instructional needs to the University as a whole and to individual instructors and staff. This resource guide provides University of Maine System faculty and staff with practical information about teaching and assisting these students. Students with disabilities are a growing group within the University community. Nationally, the number of first-year students with disabilities who have enrolled in college in the last 15 years has tripled to between 7 and 8 percent.

The University of Maine System is committed to reflecting and respecting the diversity of citizens of Maine in academic programs and in the composition of the faculty, administration, and student body. This commitment translates into proactive services for providing the reasonable accommodations needed to ensure students with disabilities equal access to educational opportunities.

### Disabilities and the Law

The obligation to accommodate students with disabilities goes beyond the University's commitment to diversity. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and the Maine Human Rights Act are federal and state laws mandating the elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities and requiring institutions such as the University to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals unless they pose an undue hardship for the institution. The purpose of these laws is not to guarantee individual success, but to provide equal access.

A person with a **disability** is anyone who either has, used to have, or is regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially affects a major life activity (such as seeing, walking, learning, or working); or significantly impairs physical or mental health for six months or more; or requires special education, vocational rehabilitation, or related services; or is on a list of health conditions established by Maine law. A **qualified** person with a disability is someone whose experience, education, and training enable the person to meet program requirements, with or without a reasonable accommodation. An **accommodation** is any change in the learning environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables a person with a disability to have equal educational opportunities. Essential course requirements do not need to be altered in the accommodation process.

Some disabilities are readily apparent, such as mobility impairment or hand limitations -- although these disabilities may not be visible to faculty teaching distant learners. Hidden disabilities that are not usually noticeable through casual observation include learning disabilities, chronic illnesses, hearing or visual impairments, and psychological disorders.

Despite physical, learning, sensory, or behavioral differences, students with disabilities are, first and foremost, students. Each comes to college with a unique set of abilities

and experiences. Although students with disabilities may learn in different ways or use different tools, these differences in no way imply that their capacity for college-level work is inferior or limited.

Students with disabilities who have been admitted to the University have matriculated through the same process and have met the same admissions requirements as other students. Accommodating students with disabilities does NOT mean setting different standards for them than for other students. It MAY mean, however, for example:

- Modifying the way course information is presented.
- Modifying methods of testing and evaluation to allow students to demonstrate what they know.
- Allowing students to use assistive technology such as tape recorders or voice recognition software.
- Adapting administrative procedures or removing architectural barriers.

### Developing a Partnership

The first step in teaching students with disabilities seems obvious: treat these students as you would other students. They have come to college for the same reasons others do and, like other students, they present a wide variety of backgrounds, abilities, and academic skills. Despite good intentions, faculty sometimes treat students with disabilities differently than they treat other students. **Revising our perceptions and attitudes is perhaps the most important accommodation for a student with a disability.**

Encourage students to talk to you about their academic needs and problems to the extent they are comfortable. Up to this point in their education, teams of specialists, classroom teachers, and parents may have planned any help needed by students. At the college level, seeking disability accommodations becomes the responsibility of the student. Students who fear possible discrimination on the part of faculty may find this responsibility difficult. Making a general announcement in class and including a statement in your syllabus that you are willing to work with any student who needs accommodation for a disability can be of great help to these students.

Sample statements that can be included on the course syllabus include:

- *Support for Students with Disabilities – Students who may need assistance due to a disability are encouraged to contact me or the Disabled Student Services Office (campus office name, location, telephone).*
- *If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the DSS Office (campus office name, location, telephone).*

## LEGAL MANDATES

Lawsuits brought under the Rehabilitation Act or the ADA have created a growing body of case law clarifying the academic obligations of universities to students with disabilities.

### **The University Must Provide the Accommodation**

Students are not required to assume the responsibility for securing a necessary accommodation. The university is required to provide reasonable accommodations for a known disability when requested by the student so that the student has an equal opportunity to participate in the courses, activities, or programs. A university may not charge students for necessary accommodations.

### **Expense of Accommodation is Rarely Undue Hardship**

Providing an auxiliary aid (such as a taped textbook) or incurring an expense to ensure access seldom constitutes undue hardship for the university. In determining what constitutes an undue hardship, courts and regulatory agencies view the entire financial resources of the university rather than any single department or college.

### **Classroom Must be Accessible**

If a classroom is inaccessible, its location must be changed to provide accessibility for a student with a mobility impairment. The university does not need to make every classroom accessible but must provide for the participation of students with disabilities when "viewed in its (university) entirety."

### **Extended Time**

Extended time is a reasonable accommodation for a student whose medical or psychological documentation specifically calls for that accommodation. The university is required to ensure that the student is provided additional time to complete tests and/or course work in order to provide an equal opportunity for that student, unless the purpose of the assignment is to assess performance under time constraints.

### **Altered Form of Exam**

The form of an exam must be altered if the testing procedure puts a student with a disability at a disadvantage based on the student's documented disability, unless the purpose of the testing format is to measure a particular skill.

### **Accommodation Must be Documented**

The university may refuse to grant a student's request for an accommodation that is not specifically recommended in the student's documentation.

### **Handouts in Alternate Format**

If a student with a visual impairment is enrolled in a class, the instructor or the office that coordinates academic accommodations must provide all handouts in an alternate format, normally the format requested by the student (for example, large print or computer disk). Handouts must be made available on the same day they are distributed

to non-disabled students, provided that the student with a disability made the request in a timely manner.

### **Material on Reserve in Library**

Course material placed on reserve in the library must be made available in alternate formats for students with visual impairments enrolled in the course.

### **Academic Freedom**

Academic freedom does not permit instructors to deny special aids and services in the classroom for students with documented disabilities.

### **Testing Accommodations**

Accommodations for testing such as readers, scribes, or the use of assistive technology must be provided for a student with a documented disability.

### **Personal Services and Aids**

The university is not required to provide personal services such as attendant care, or personal aids such as wheelchairs or eyeglasses.

### **Integrated Programs**

The university must operate its programs in the most integrated setting appropriate.

### **Preadmission**

Preadmission inquiries by the university as to whether an applicant has a disability are not permissible.

*This section is taken with permission from College Students with Disabilities: A Desk Reference Guide for Faculty and Staff, Anne R. Thompson, PhD and Leslie Bethea, MS, Project PAACS, Mississippi State University.*

## DISABLING STEREOTYPES

Negative attitudes toward students with disabilities are often more disabling than the disability itself. Negative attitudes are often based on the following myths and stereotypes about students with disabilities.

Stereotype or Myth	Fact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with disabilities who request accommodations are looking for a way to do less work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most students with disabilities have to work much harder than non-disabled students. Many disabled students don't want to ask for help.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing accommodations means lowering academic standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The law does not require lowering standards for students with disabilities. Accommodations allow students with disabilities to meet the University's standards.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodations give students with disabilities an unfair advantage over other students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing accommodations simply "levels the playing field" for students with disabilities. Barriers created by a student's disability must be removed in order to fairly evaluate the academic performance of disabled students.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a student with a disability can't perform like non-disabled students, she or he doesn't belong in college.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with disabilities have the same intellectual potential as non-disabled students. If they meet admissions and program standards, they are entitled by law to attend and to receive accommodations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with learning disabilities aren't intellectually capable of doing college work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with learning disabilities have average to above average intelligence. The process by which they learn, not their ability to learn, is what is impaired.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing accommodations takes too much time for faculty and costs too much.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90% of all accommodations require minimal time and money.</li> </ul>

## IDENTIFYING STUDENTS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR ACCOMMODATIONS

A student with a disability is responsible for informing the campus's designated disability service provider about the disability, requesting accommodations in a timely manner, and at his or her expense, providing current, appropriate documentation of the disability from a qualified medical or other licensed professional.

The student's documentation and related information about his or her specific disability are regarded by law as confidential medical information and are maintained by the office that has been designated to coordinate services for students with disabilities (referred to as the DSS office in this handbook). This office reviews the documentation to verify the student's disability and need for accommodations. Faculty are not expected to evaluate the appropriateness of a student's documentation. The role of a faculty member is to work with the student and the campus disability services coordinator to eliminate barriers to the student's education. **If a student chooses to share information about his or her disability with a faculty member, the information must be treated as confidential and not disclosed to others.**

If a student asks for accommodations because of a disability and has not contacted the campus DSS office, refer the student to that office. Contact information for the DSS office is listed in **Appendix 2**.

### Distant Learners

Academic accommodations for any course taught via distance technologies are the responsibility of the campus from which the course originates. Students taking courses at University College Centers and high school ITV sites across the state work with the Coordinator of Student Services at their local University College Center to facilitate accommodations. If a student calls a faculty member directly to request an accommodation, the faculty member should refer the student to their local University College Center. See **Appendix 2** for a list of centers and sites.

The Coordinator of Student Services consults with the DSS office staff at the faculty member's home campus who determines the appropriate accommodations for distant learners.



## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT AND FACULTY MEMBER

### Responsibilities of the Student

A student with a disability has the responsibility to:

1. Self-identify concerning disability status to DSS in a timely manner. (All references to the student's campus DSS office also include the local University College Center Coordinator of Student Services for distant learners.)
2. Provide disability documentation, when requested.
3. Request necessary accommodations.

### Responsibilities of the Faculty Member

#### If Notified by DSS in Writing about Accommodations

A faculty member has the responsibility to cooperate with DSS in providing authorized accommodations in a reasonable and timely manner. Upon receipt of an accommodation request letter from DSS, the faculty member and student may need to meet to coordinate logistics of the accommodation. DSS staff facilitate arrangement of most accommodations, such as relocating a class to an accessible location, arranging services such as notetakers or readers, obtaining adaptive equipment, and providing course materials in alternate formats.

#### If Not Notified in Writing by DSS about Accommodations

If a student requests accommodation and the faculty member has not been notified by DSS of the student's need for accommodation, the faculty member should refer the student to DSS.

#### If Question Appropriateness of Accommodation Identified by DSS

If a faculty member has questions about the appropriateness of certain accommodations, DSS should be contacted for further clarification. **The faculty member should continue to provide accommodations while the issue is being resolved.** When a student uses a tape recorder in the classroom, it is appropriate to ask the student to sign an agreement not to release the recording or otherwise obstruct the copyright if desired by the faculty member.

## Shared Responsibilities

The accommodation process is a partnership between student and faculty. The DSS office serves the role of consultant, facilitator, record keeper, and mediator.

Students with disabilities have the responsibility to communicate with faculty in a timely manner as faculty are not required to anticipate student special needs. The syllabus should state that students need to inform faculty of any special needs as soon as possible to ensure that those needs are met in a timely manner. For example, if DSS has approved the accommodation of extended time or a separate testing area for tests and quizzes, the student and faculty member need to work out the details in a timely manner. If the student does not ask for extended time until late in the semester, the instructor is required to provide accommodations only from that time on and does not need to offer make-up exams.

Faculty members should keep students with disabilities in mind when making special class arrangements such as field trips, audio/visual presentations, or outdoor activities. Faculty should discuss potential difficulties with the student in order to plan for any needed accommodations.

Faculty members may not discourage students from specific fields of study if the student meets the admissions requirements, maintains the appropriate grades, and is otherwise qualified. Faculty are responsible for providing an education, and the student is responsible for meeting the academic requirements, with or without accommodations.

*This section is taken with permission from College Students with Disabilities: A Desk Reference Guide for Faculty and Staff, Anne R. Thompson, PhD and Leslie Bethea, MS, Project PAACS, Mississippi State University.*

## ACCOMMODATION PROCEDURE

As part of the continuing effort to provide access, the University has designated an office to coordinate services for students with disabilities. Students are encouraged to meet with DSS staff to develop a plan for their academic accommodations.

The appropriate accommodations for a student with a disability are determined on a case-by-case basis. **DSS is responsible for determining appropriate accommodations and coordinating arrangements for most accommodations.**

A request for accommodation is deemed reasonable if it:

- is based on appropriate individual documentation of non-apparent disability;
- allows the most integrated educational experience possible;
- does not compromise essential requirements of a course or program;
- does not pose a threat to personal or public safety;
- does not impose undue financial or administrative burden on the University;
- is not of a personal nature (e.g., hiring personal care attendants).

**See Appendix 3 for the specific accommodation procedure for your campus.**

The best accommodations are often a result of an interactive process among the student, faculty member, and DSS staff. Faculty are encouraged to suggest creative alternatives when accommodating student needs. Although it is the student's responsibility to request accommodations, a faculty member can make the student comfortable by being receptive to discussing special needs in the classroom, laboratory, fieldwork, and testing.

A faculty member who believes that a request for a specific accommodation is unreasonable should contact DSS to discuss concerns. If a mutually acceptable accommodation cannot be found, the parties will consult with the campus Equal Opportunity Director.

**Denying an accommodation request is a decision with potentially significant legal implications for the University as a whole.** Refusal to provide reasonable accommodations in a timely manner is a form of illegal disability discrimination. Thus, there must be consultation with the Equal Opportunity Director before an accommodation is denied to assure that the decision complies with federal and state laws and University policy.

A student who believes that a faculty member, administrator, or DSS has denied a reasonable accommodation may appeal the decision, or file a formal or informal complaint under the University's Equal Opportunity Complaint Procedure. For additional information, see the campus procedure in **Appendix 3**. The complaint procedure is available from the campus DSS or Equal Opportunity office.

## DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Effective communication that reflects respect for the individuality and dignity of students with disabilities is a prerequisite to effectively teaching these students. Most people with disabilities prefer that others focus on their individuality, not their disability, unless of course it is the topic of discussion.

Positive language empowers people with disabilities. When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, put the person first, not the disability. Group designations such as “the blind”, “the deaf,” or “the disabled” are inappropriate because they do not reflect the individuality, equality, or dignity of people with disabilities. The term "handicapped" is falling into disuse and should be avoided. The terms "able-bodied," "physically challenged," and "differently abled" are also discouraged.

Avoid implying either that people with disabilities are to be pitied, feared, or ignored, or that they are somehow more heroic, courageous, patient, or "special" than others, or that they are "abnormal."

Following are examples of positive and negative phrases. Note that the positive phrases put the person first.

<b>NOT</b>	<b>BUT</b>
Trina held her own while swimming with normal students.	Trina qualified for her "Swimmer" certificate last week.
<b>NEGATIVE PHRASES</b>	<b>AFFIRMATIVE PHRASES</b>
retarded, mentally defective	person with mental retardation
the blind	person who is blind, person who is visually impaired
the disabled, handicapped	person with a disability
suffers a hearing loss	person who is deaf, person who is hard of hearing
afflicted by MS	person who has multiple sclerosis
CP victim	person with cerebral palsy
epileptic	person with epilepsy, person with seizure disorder
confined or restricted to a wheelchair	person who uses a wheelchair
stricken by MD	person who has muscular dystrophy
crippled, lame, deformed	physically disabled
normal person (implies that the person with a disability isn't normal)	person without a disability, non-disabled person
dumb, mute	unable to speak, uses synthetic speech
fit	seizure

- Speak directly to the person rather than to a companion or interpreter who may be along.
- When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People who have limited hand use or wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
- Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others.
- Offer assistance if you want, but wait until your offer is accepted before you help. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- Give whole, unhurried attention when talking with someone who has difficulty speaking. When necessary, ask short questions that require short answers or a nod of the head. Don't pretend to understand if you're having difficulty doing so. Repeat what you do understand to confirm it.
- Be considerate of the extra time it may take a person with a disability to get things done and said. Let the person set the pace in walking and talking.
- When talking with someone who uses a wheelchair, position yourself at the person's level, if possible. Don't lean against the chair -- it is a part of the personal body space of the person who uses it. Never patronize someone who uses a wheelchair by patting the person on the head or shoulder.
- When greeting someone with a severe loss of vision, identify yourself and others with you. Before walking with the person, alert him or her to your presence, then let the person take your arm. This will allow you to guide rather than propel the person.
- To get the attention of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. If the person can read your lips, look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively. Face the light source and keep hands, cigarettes, and food away from your mouth when speaking.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Web Access

Accessibility requirements apply to Internet resources. However, because of the multi-media nature of the Web, many students with disabilities cannot use the full range of resources the Web provides. Some students cannot see graphics due to visual impairments; some cannot hear audio because of auditory impairments; some have difficulty navigating sites that are poorly organized or have unclear directions because of cognitive disabilities.

While some special considerations for disabled students are needed in developing on-line courses and Web sites, the computer provides a wonderful communication and learning tool. An inability to speak, hear, see, move, or efficiently process information does not need to be a limitation in electronic communication. A challenge for any instructor is ensuring active participation by all students.

The use of **universal design elements** can create greater opportunities for all students to successfully utilize technology and to be active learners in your course. Universal design refers to the process of creating structures and products that are conceived, designed, and developed to accommodate the widest spectrum of users, including those with disabilities, without the need for subsequent adaptation or specialized design (definition courtesy of CAST, [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)). Universal design techniques can be applied in designing on-line courses and web sites to ensure that all students can access computer information regardless of their abilities.

An outgrowth of universal design is the Bobby project ([www.cast.org/bobby](http://www.cast.org/bobby)), a system for evaluating web sites for ease of accessibility. Individualized site assessments that provide information about how to make your web site accessible and Bobby certification are available through this address.

**The University of Maine System has adopted standards for accessibility of information on the web.** All public web sites must comply with these standards, and it is strongly recommended that on-line courses also meet the standards. Information about the UMS web accessibility standards is available at ([www.maine.edu/oft/apl08.pdf](http://www.maine.edu/oft/apl08.pdf)).

### Audio-Visual Materials

When purchasing new audio-visual materials, give preference to materials that are in an accessible format, such as close captioned films or descriptive videos. Descriptive videos provide an audio description of the visual elements of the movie – the action, characters, locations, costumes, and sets – without interfering with the movie's dialogue or sound effects. These videos can be played on a regular VHS video cassette recorder and a monitor.

When taping television programs, engage the close captioned option. When you show the tape to students, close captioning will be available.

If non-accessible audio-visual materials need to be made accessible for specific students, contact the campus DSS provider.



## BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

Society varies in what it considers to be acceptable behavior. Thus, we can no longer assume there is a commonly understood set of behavioral norms. Establishing general guidelines for classroom behavior provides a learning environment that supports all students whether or not a disability is involved. Students with disabilities are expected to meet both academic and behavioral standards.

- **Establish proactive behavior standards** – Set behavioral expectations the first day of class and/or put them on the syllabus. Similarly, set boundaries regarding phone messages and e-mails.

Example statements:

*You are expected to be on time. Class starts promptly at \_\_\_\_. Class ends at \_\_\_\_.*

*Packing up your things early is disruptive to others around you and to me.*

*Raise your hand to be recognized.*

*Classroom discussion should be civilized, respectful of everyone, and relevant to the topic we are discussing. Everyone is entitled to her or his opinion.*

*Obscenities and vulgarity are inappropriate and unacceptable.*

- **Consistently enforce standards of behavior** – Address any act of uncivil or challenging behavior as soon as it arises or consult an appropriate campus resource for assistance.

- ↪ Always be honest and respectful (avoid sarcasm).

- ↪ Talk with the student privately during break or after class so as not to shame the student in front of peers.

- ↪ Be caring but firm.

- ↪ Focus on objective behavior, not personality.

- ↪ Brainstorm solutions with the student.

- ↪ Know your limits. If you sense that discussion with the student would not be effective, or if the student approaches you for therapeutic help, refer the student to the counseling center or the disability office. If disruptive behavior continues, refer the matter to the campus Conduct Officer.

## PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

The degree to which physical disabilities affect students in the academic setting varies widely. In some cases the degree of impairment may vary from time to time because of the nature of the disability. Some conditions are progressive, while others may be stable. Many physical conditions, such as spinal cord injury (paraplegia or quadriplegia), cerebral palsy, spina bifida, cardiac disorders, and polio/post polio, result in orthopedic/mobility-related disabilities. Functional limitations and abilities vary widely even within one group of disabilities. At times it is not the condition itself but the medication needed to control symptoms that impairs academic performance. Common side effects of medications include fatigue, memory loss, shortened attention span, loss of concentration, and drowsiness. Accommodations vary greatly and are determined on a case-by-case basis.

### A Partial List of Other Physical Disabilities Includes

AIDS	Cardiovascular disorders	Epilepsy	Muscular dystrophy
Arthritis	Carpal Tunnel Syndrome	Hemophilia	Renal-kidney disease
Asthma	Cerebral palsy	Lupus	Respiratory disorder
Burns	Chronic pain	Motor neuron diseases	Sickle cell anemia
Cancer	Diabetes mellitus	Multiple sclerosis	Stroke

### Accommodations May Include

- ✎ accessible location for the classroom and place for faculty to meet with student
- ✎ extra time for assignments due to slow writing speed
- ✎ extra time to get from one class to another, especially in inclement weather
- ✎ adjustable lab tables or drafting tables
- ✎ special seating in classrooms
- ✎ lab assistance
- ✎ note takers, use of tape recorders, laptop computers, or photocopying of peer notes
- ✎ audio texts
- ✎ test accommodations: extended time, separate place, scribes, access to word processors, readers
- ✎ advance planning for field trips to ensure accessibility; if the University provides student transportation, it must also be accessible
- ✎ special computer equipment/software: voice activated word processing, word prediction, keyboard modification
- ✎ enlarged printed materials
- ✎ accommodating the use of service animals or Personal Care Attendants
- ✎ flexibility in attendance requirements in cases of documented health-related absences; however, a student is required to make up missed assignments and tests (see page 22, *Frequently Asked Questions*, for more on attendance)

This section is taken with permission from *College Students with Disabilities: a Desk Reference Guide for Faculty and Staff*, Anne R. Thompson, PhD and Leslie Bethea, MS, Project PAACS, Mississippi State University.

## LEARNING DISABILITIES

A learning disability (LD) is a permanent neurological disorder that affects the manner in which individuals with normal or above-average intelligence receive, organize, remember, and then retrieve or express information. Like interference on the radio or a fuzzy TV picture, incoming or outgoing information may become scrambled as it travels between the eye, ear, or skin and the brain. Identification of a learning disability is complex and requires diagnosis by a professional who can interpret the appropriate tests. A learning disability is commonly recognized in adults as a deficit in one or more of the following areas: reading comprehension, spelling, written expression, math computation, and problem solving. Many adults with LD may also have language-based and/or perceptual problems. Persons with learning disabilities often have to deal not only with functional limitations, but also with the frustration of having to "prove" that their hidden disability may be as disabling as paraplegia.

**A learning disability IS NOT a form of mental retardation or a psychological disorder.**

### Accommodations May Include

**(No student will need all of these, and specific accommodations are based on a careful review of the diagnostic information that is on file in DSS.)**

<p><b><u>General</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>↵ extended time to complete assignments</li><li>↵ course substitution for non-essential course requirements in major</li></ul> <p><b><u>Note taking</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>↵ tape recorders</li><li>↵ peer note taker</li></ul> <p><b><u>Testing</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>↵ extended time</li><li>↵ proctored testing in a quiet, separate area</li><li>↵ test read to student</li><li>↵ student respond orally to essay test</li><li>↵ alternative type of exam</li><li>↵ scribe</li><li>↵ blank card or paper to assist in reading</li><li>↵ calculator</li><li>↵ voice recognition software</li></ul>	<p><b><u>Reading</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>↵ printed material in audio format</li><li>↵ reader</li></ul> <p><b><u>Writing</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>↵ extended time for in-class assignments to correct spelling, punctuation, grammar</li><li>↵ word processor with spell check</li></ul> <p><b><u>Math</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>↵ calculator for a student with a disability in the area of math processing (the Educational Testing Service allows the use of a standard four function calculator as an accommodation during the SAT)</li></ul>
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## BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Visual impairments include disorders in the sense of vision that affect the central vision acuity, the field of vision, color perception, or binocular visual function. Legal blindness may be caused by tumors, infections, injuries, cataracts, glaucoma, diabetes, vascular impairments, or myopia. The effect of visual disabilities varies widely. Some students may use a guide dog, others a white cane, while others may not require any mobility assistance. Persons with low vision may rely on residual vision with the use of adaptive equipment such as magnification devices or closed circuit television.

### Accommodations May Include

- reading lists or syllabi available in advance to permit time for transferring into alternate format
- printed materials provided in alternative format, such as audio tape, large print, computer disk, or Braille
- seating in the front of the class without glare from windows
- tape recording of lectures and class discussions
- note taking devices such as pocket Braille computers
- handouts in the medium that the student prefers
- clear black print on white or pale yellow paper for students with visual impairments
- testing accommodations: taped tests, reading of tests, scribe, extended time, separate testing area, enlarged print, computer software with speech access
- materials presented on the board or on transparencies read out loud
- lab assistance
- advance notice of class schedule changes
- accommodating the use of service animals in classroom

This section is taken with permission from *College Students with Disabilities: A Desk Reference Guide for Faculty and Staff*, Anne R. Thompson, PhD and Leslie Bethea, MS, Project PAACS, Mississippi State University.

## DEAFNESS AND HARD OF HEARING

More individuals in the United States have a hearing impairment than any other type of physical disability. A hearing impairment is any type or degree of auditory impairment, while deafness is an inability to use hearing as a means of communication. Hearing loss is measured in decibels and may be mild, moderate, or profound. Since much learning is acquired orally, persons born with a hearing loss may have language deficiencies and exhibit poor vocabulary and syntax. Students who are hard of hearing or deaf miss a great deal of crucial information usually learned incidentally by non-hearing impaired students. Hard of hearing or deaf students do not hear environmental noises and day-to-day conversation. Many students with hearing loss use hearing aids and rely on speech reading. Under the most favorable conditions, only 30 to 40 percent of spoken English is distinguishable on the lips even by the best speech readers. Some students may require an interpreter. Faculty should be aware that sign language does not provide a word-for-word translation of the English language, and students using an interpreter may still miss information.

### Accommodations May Include

- ☞ seating in the front of the classroom
- ☞ written supplement to oral instructions, assignments, and directions
- ☞ visual aids as often as possible instructor repeating questions asked by other students
- ☞ note taker for class lectures
- ☞ test accommodations: extended time, separate place, proofreading of essay tests, access to word processor, interpreted directions
- ☞ unfamiliar vocabulary written on the board or a handout
- ☞ small amplification system
- ☞ interpreter seated where student can see the interpreter and the lecturer
- ☞ excess noise reduced as much as possible to facilitate communication
- ☞ close-captioning for video tapes or copy of script

### Tips for Communication

- ☞ Face the class, not the board, when teaching.
- ☞ Direct your remarks to the student, not the interpreter.
- ☞ Before speaking, attract the student's attention with a cue such as a tap on the shoulder or a wave.
- ☞ Speak clearly and naturally without exaggerating lip movements or volume.
- ☞ Avoid standing in front of a light source like a window -- the glare from behind makes it difficult to read lips.
- ☞ Avoid chewing gum, smoking, or otherwise obstructing the area around your mouth with your hands or other objects that interfere with speech reading.
- ☞ Provide the interpreter in advance of class with information about technical terms, special vocabulary, and names to be used

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## PSYCHOLOGICAL DISABILITIES

Psychological disabilities cover a wide range of disorders such as neuroses, psychoses, and personality disorders. The majority of psychological disorders are controlled using a combination of medications and psychotherapy. These medications may cause side effects, such as drowsiness, disorientation, and concentration and memory difficulties, which can affect academic performance. Like students with other disabilities, the impairments of students with psychological disabilities may be hidden or latent, with little or no effect on their learning.

### Accommodations May Include

- extended time for exams, quiet testing area with a proctor
- note takers, readers, or tape recorders in class
- incompletes or late withdrawals in place of course failures in the event of prolonged illness
- flexibility in attendance requirements in cases of documented health-related absences; however, a student is required to make up missed assignments and tests (see page 22, *Frequently Asked Questions*, for more on attendance)

### Behavior

A psychological disability does not necessarily mean a risk to self or others exists. However, some students with psychological impairments may exhibit negative behavior such as indifference or occasionally disruptive behavior. It is necessary to address disruptive behavior when it occurs. See page 16, *Behavioral Expectations*, for guidance about how to deal with disruptive behavior.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Q** Who is responsible for obtaining equipment and services for the student?
- A** After the student is approved for services, a DSS staff person makes arrangements for assistive technology, special furniture, or services. If a student experiences any problems with the accommodations or finds the special furniture is not in the appropriate location, the student should contact the DSS office. At no time should the student risk injury by moving the furniture.
- Q** Can I see the documentation of a student's disability?
- A** Under the law, only those with a "need to know" may see the documentation. Faculty do not need to review diagnostic information about a student's disability. Faculty do need to know what accommodations are necessary to provide the student with an equal educational opportunity.
- Q** May I talk with the student about his or her disability?
- A** Yes, but only if the student initiates the discussion. Focus on the need for accommodations. Be wary about appearing to probe for information about the disability itself, and do not discuss the disability in class. Information about the student's disability is confidential and should not be discussed with other faculty members.
- Q** Does extra time to complete assignments or exams give the student with the disability an advantage?
- A** Extra time as an accommodation for a student with a disability gives that student the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of the subject by removing the barrier posed by the disability. Although many students are concerned about the amount of time allotted to complete exams, there is a distinction between the need for extra time due to a disability and the preference for extra time shared by many non-disabled students.
- Q** Can a student request an accommodation after an exam or assignment has been completed?
- A** The student is responsible for requesting an accommodation in a timely manner, prior to the date of an assignment or exam. If a student asks for an accommodation after the fact, a faculty member may allow the student to redo the assignment or take another test with the requested accommodation, but is not obligated to do so.

- Q** When a deaf or hard of hearing student has an interpreter, what are the interpreter's responsibilities in the classroom?
- A** The interpreter is there to facilitate classroom communication. The interpreter is not an extra pair of hands to pass back exams or tutor the student who is hearing impaired.
- Q** Does a faculty member need to give a copy of his or her lecture notes to a student as a reasonable accommodation?
- A** This can be beneficial, but faculty are not obligated to provide lecture notes if another effective accommodation, such as an audio tape or a note taker, can be provided.
- Q** Does a faculty member need to provide flexibility in attendance as an accommodation?
- A** Flexibility in attendance may be considered an accommodation if it does not interfere with the essential nature of the course. The following factors should be considered in determining whether attendance is an essential aspect of the course.
- ↗ Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students, and among students?
  - ↗ Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
  - ↗ Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon student participation as an essential method for learning?
  - ↗ To what degree does a student's failure to attend constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
  - ↗ What do the course description and syllabus say?
  - ↗ Which method is used to calculate the final grade? And what are the classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?



## APPENDIX 1: EASY TO DO INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Many faculty report that instructional strategies designed for students with disabilities not only benefit these students, but help all students learn and demonstrate their learning better.

### Course Organization

- Design web site to be accessible to all students. Information about how to design accessible web sites is available at:  
  
[www.umaine.edu/insider/accessibility/default.htm](http://www.umaine.edu/insider/accessibility/default.htm)
- Order textbooks on time – use textbooks with study guides when possible
- Syllabus should include:
  - ↪ Office location, office hours, phone number, e-mail, web site
  - ↪ Titles of all required textbooks, readings, and optional materials
  - ↪ Course objectives
  - ↪ Course requirements
  - ↪ Dates when material will be covered, exams given, projects due
  - ↪ Grading criteria
  - ↪ Guidelines for completing projects
  - ↪ Statement regarding process for requesting accommodations
  - ↪ Expected standards for classroom behavior
- Facilitate the formation of study groups for students who wish to use this tool
- Consider giving frequent quizzes to provide external structure and focus

### Content Organization

- Each class:
  - ↪ Review material covered in previous class
  - ↪ Preview material to be covered
  - ↪ Summarize material just presented prior to introducing new information
  - ↪ Identify time frames or deadlines for assignments or tasks; when giving extensions, set a specific due date

## **Content Presentation**

- Use multi-sensory/multimedia approach
- Use visual organizers to show relationships, sequence of content (e.g., graphs, diagrams, timelines, mapping)
- Use chalkboard, white board, or large print transparencies to highlight major concepts/terminology and outline presentation
- Provide handouts that are well spaced, typed, and printed in black ink
- Provide directions orally and in writing
- Speak clearly and slowly while facing the class
- Avoid talking while facing and writing on the board
- When appropriate: use concrete examples, avoid using jargon, control level of language
- Put lecture notes on web site

## **Content Clarification**

- Clarify points, new vocabulary, terms
- Clarify figurative and abstract language
- Provide frequent repetition of key information
- Provide frequent examples
- Include time for questions or discussion; ask open-ended questions to check for understanding

## **Evaluation**

- Provide varied opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery, such as:
  - ↻ Oral presentations
  - ↻ Videotaped projects
  - ↻ Research projects
  - ↻ Creative projects
  - ↻ Extra credit assignments
- Provide frequent feedback opportunities, such as:
  - ↻ Regularly scheduled quizzes

- ↵ Faculty-student conferences
- ↵ Error analysis of a test if requested by student
- ↵ Meetings to review rough drafts prior to due date
- Evaluate the process as well as the final solution (e.g., math, chemistry, physics)
- Provide extensions to complete class projects; set specific due dates

## Test Construction

- Be clear about the format and type of exam questions to be included (the manner in which students with some kinds of hidden disabilities are asked to demonstrate their knowledge has an impact on whether they will need accommodations)
- Word tests clearly and concisely; avoid double negatives (they assess test savvy more than knowledge)
- List multiple-choice response items vertically instead of horizontally  
*e.g., How many legs does a horse have?*
  - A. *one*
  - B. *two*
  - C. *three*
- Limit the number of dual choice response items (*a and e; a and c*) on multiple choice exams
- Use questions requiring recognition rather than recall.
- Group similar types of questions together (all true/false, all multiple choice, etc.)
- Identify which questions are from the text, which are from lectures
- Consider alternative methods for students to present test answers, for example, allowing a student to use voice recognition software to dictate answers, edit, and submit as an e-mail attachment
- Math tests:
  - ↵ Space problems to reduce extraneous stimuli (e.g., four problems per page)
  - ↵ Permit students to use graph paper or lined paper used horizontally when doing mathematical calculations
  - ↵ Have students divide math page in half with vertical lines; students perform calculations on left, record solution steps or reasons for calculations in their own words on right

## APPENDIX 2: CAMPUS RESOURCES

Each campus and University College Center has staff who are responsible for working with students and faculty to coordinate accommodations. Each university also has an Equal Opportunity Director who is responsible for addressing questions and complaints about possible disability discrimination. Contact information for these and other resources appears in this Appendix.

### University College Resources

University College Centers	Contact / Telephone	Sites Served
Bath / Brunswick	Coord. of Student Services (800) 696-2329 or (207) 442-7736	Falmouth, Wiscasset
Dover-Foxcroft	Center Director (800)590-2942 or (207)564-2942	Dexter, Greenville, Guilford, Hermon, Jackman, Newport
East Millinocket	Coord. of Education Services (800) 498-8200 or (207) 746-5741	Lincoln, Sherman Station
Ellsworth	Coord. of Student Services (800) 696-2540 or (207) 667-3897	Bucksport, Deer Isle, East Sullivan, Isle au Haut, Mt. Desert, Swans Island
Houlton	Coord. of Student Services (800) 584-0874 or (207) 521-3100	Caribou, Danforth, Fort Fairfield, Island Falls
Hutchinson Center	Coord. of Student Services (800) 753-9044 (207) 338-8020	
Norway / South Paris	Center Director (888) 677-3377 or (207) 743-9322	
Rockland	Coord. of Student Services (800)286-1594 or (207) 596-6906	Camden, Isleboro, North Haven, Vinalhaven
Rumford / Mexico	Coord. of Student Services (800)696-1103 or (207)364-7882	Bingham, Farmington, Kingfield, Livermore Falls, Rangeley
Saco / Biddeford	Coord. of Student Services (800)696-3391 or (207)282-4111	Scarborough, South Berwick
Sanford	Coord. of Student Services (800)696-3075 or (207)324-6012	Marshwood

University of Maine at  
Augusta

University of Maine at Fort  
Kent

University of Maine at  
Machias

Fairfield, Lewiston/Auburn,  
Lisbon, Skowhegan,  
Winthrop, Thorndike

Eagle Lake, Madawaska, Van  
Buren

Eastport, Lubec

## University of Maine Resources

University of Maine, Orono, Maine Connecting All Departments:	581-1110
Director of Disability Support Services 121 East Annex	581-2319 (voice) 581-2311 (TTY)
University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04469	581-4252 (Fax)
Office of Equal Opportunity	581-1226 581-1214 (Fax)
University Counseling Center	581-1392 581-4975 (Fax)
Employee/Job Applicant Needs: Human Resources Employee Disability Services	581-1581 581-3156
Cutler Health Center	581-4010 581-3997 (Fax)
Physical Facilities Modifications: Executive Director Work Control	581-2638 581-4400
Space and Scheduling (for room relocation)	581-1311
Housing Services, Director	581-4503
Dining Services, Director	581-4706
Technology Assistance Information Technologies, Director	581-1602
Help Center	581-4632
Telecom Issues	581-2577

## University of Maine at Augusta Resources

**Augusta** Director of Learning Support Services  
195J Jewett Hall  
Phone: (207) 621-3066  
or 1-877-862-1234, ext. 3066  
TTY: 1-800-316-3600  
Fax: (207) 621-3491

**Bangor** Learning Support Specialist  
Eastport Hall, Room 101B  
Phone: (207) 262-7806; TTY 621-3107  
Fax: (207) 262-7821

The ADA contact for students taking UMA courses at University College sites and centers is the Coordinator of Students Services for their location; these contacts are listed under University College Resources (see above).

**Equal Opportunity  
Officer for UMA  
Students at All  
Locations** Vice President for Administration  
Office of Administrative Services, Farmhouse  
Phone: (207) 621-3100  
or 1-877-862-1234, ext. 3100  
TTY: (800) 316-3600; Fax: (207) 621-3381

**UMA Student  
Conduct Officer** Dean of Students  
Office of Student Development, Robinson Hall  
Phone: (207) 621-3153 or 1-877-862-1234, ext. 3153  
TTY: (800) 316-3600; Fax: (207) 621-3116

## **University of Maine at Farmington Resources**

Students requesting academic accommodations should be referred to:

Coordinator of Academic Services for Students with Disabilities  
224 Main Street  
(207) 778-9295 (voice) or (207) 778-7000 (TTY)

Questions and complaints about discrimination should be directed to:

Coordinator of Equal Opportunity  
224 Main Street  
(207) 778-7258 (voice) or (207) 778-7000 (TTY)

Inquiries about the application of the Americans with Disabilities Act should be directed to:

ADA Compliance Officer  
Department of Facilities Management  
(207) 778-7009 (voice) or (207) 778-7000 (TTY)



## University of Maine at Fort Kent Resources

Academic and Counseling Services	834-7532
Director of Student Services	834-7513 (voice) 834-7597 (TTY)
Equal Opportunity Coordinator	834-7533
Registrar (for room relocation)	834-7521
Director of Facilities Management	834-7671

## University of Maine at Machias Resources

Student Support Center	255-1228 (voice) 255-1445 (TTY)
Equal Opportunity	255-1228
Counseling	255-1331
Medical	255-1275

## University of Maine at Presque Isle Resources

University of Maine at Presque Isle - Connecting All Departments:	768-9400 (voice) or 768-9732 (TTY)
Academic Needs for Students and Applicants:	768-9613
Director of Student Support Services (SSS)	768-9614
Assistant Director of SSS, South Hall Secretary of SSS, South Hall	768-9615
Director of Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, South Hall	768-9750
Director of Counseling, South Hall	768-9589
Employee/Job Applicant Needs: Director of Human Resources, Preble Hall	768-9551
Health Center: Director, Emerson Annex	768-9586
Physical Facilities Modifications: Vice President of Administration and Finance, Preble Hall	768-9550
Associate Director of Physical Plant, Facilities Support Building	768-9577
Registrar (for room relocation): Registrar, Preble Hall	768-9542
Residential Life: Director, Emerson Annex	768-9560
Technical Access Computer and CCD station: Data Processing Coordinator/Library Assistant, Library	768-9657

Additional assistive equipment, such as regular tape recorders and auditory trainers, can be loaned from Student Support Services. Contact the Secretary at 768-9615.

## **University of Southern Maine Resources**

Students requesting academic accommodations should be referred to:

Office of Support for Students with Disabilities  
Location: 242 Luther Bonney, Portland  
96 Falmouth Street  
P.O. Box 9300  
Portland, Maine 04104-9300  
(207) 780-4706 (voice) or (207) 780-4395 (TTY)

Inquiries about the application of the Americans with Disabilities Act and questions and complaints about discrimination should be directed to:

Executive Director  
Campus Diversity and Equity  
Location: 222 Deering Avenue, Portland  
96 Falmouth Street  
P.O. Box 9300  
Portland, Maine 04038  
(207) 780-5094 (voice) or (207) 780-5646 (TTY)

## APPENDIX 3: CAMPUS ACCOMMODATION PROCEDURES

Each campus has procedures for students to request and receive accommodations. For the procedures at your university, click on the link below or contact the resources listed in **Appendix 2**.

University of Maine	<a href="http://www.umaine.edu/disability/">www.umaine.edu/disability/</a>
University of Maine at Augusta	<a href="http://www.uma.edu/disabilityservices.html">http://www.uma.edu/disabilityservices.html</a>
University of Maine at Farmington	<a href="http://accessibility.umf.maine.edu/">http://accessibility.umf.maine.edu/</a>
University of Maine at Fort Kent	<a href="http://www.umfk.maine.edu/acserv/disability/">http://www.umfk.maine.edu/acserv/disability/</a>
University of Maine at Machias	
University of Maine at Presque Isle	<a href="http://www.umpi.maine.edu/acad/disabilities">www.umpi.maine.edu/acad/disabilities</a>
University of Southern Maine	<a href="http://www.usm.maine.edu/oassd">www.usm.maine.edu/oassd</a>