

Students with Disabilities at Loyola University Maryland: Frequently Asked Questions by Faculty

ELIGIBILITY

- Q.** How does the University determine a student is eligible to receive disability-related accommodations?
- A.** A Loyola student who wishes to receive disability-related accommodations must register with the Disability Support Services (DSS) office. To register, the student must complete an application, provide documentation from an appropriate professional, and have an intake meeting with DSS. The documentation the student submits must provide information about his or her disability and substantiate the need for each requested accommodation or modification. The Disability Documentation Review Committee meets bi-weekly to review requests.

NOTICE

- Q.** How are professors notified that students need academic accommodations?
- A.** DSS reminds registered students to notify the DSS office at the beginning of each semester to request *Faculty Accommodation Letters* if they are going to need academic accommodations. This letter will be sent electronically to faculty members. After the letters have been received by their professors, DSS expects students to meet with their faculty members to discuss how accommodations will be arranged.
- Q.** Do professors have to provide retroactive accommodations?
- A.** In general, professors do not have to provide accommodations prior to the delivery of the accommodation letter from the student.

SYLLABUS STATEMENT

- Q.** How can I encourage students with disabilities to talk with me about their accommodations?
- A.** DSS recommends including a statement on your course syllabus, such as:

Students with Disabilities

To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS), Newman Towers West 107, at DSS@loyola.edu or call (410) 617-2750/2062.

If you already registered with DSS and requested an accommodations letter (and DSS has sent the letter to your professors via email), please schedule a brief meeting to discuss the accommodations you might need in this class.

REFERRAL TO DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

- Q.** How can I encourage students with disabilities to register with DSS?
- A.** You can make a verbal announcement to your class that you welcome students with disabilities in your classroom, and will do your best to accommodate them if they are registered with DSS and provide you with the appropriate accommodation letter. Also, remember to have the statement on your syllabus referring students with disabilities to DSS.
- Q.** Can I ask a student who is having obvious difficulties whether he or she has a disability or to refer the student to DSS?
- A.** DSS discourages professors from asking directly about the possibility of a disability for a number of reasons. The regulations and interpretations of the pertinent disability rights laws forbid unnecessary inquiries into the existence of a disability. A direct inquiry could also be considered intrusive or insensitive. You should tell the student that you notice he or she is having a difficult time and encourage him or her to talk with you about gaining assistance. You can guide the student to the Writing Center, the Counseling Center, or other resources that you would provide to any student. If the student shares with you that he or she has a past history of a disability or suspects he or she has a disability, it would then be appropriate to tell the student about DSS.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Q.** Is the information regarding a student's disability and his or her need for academic accommodations confidential?
- A.** Privacy of student information, including disability status or accommodation needs, should generally be handled according to guidelines of FERPA, (the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). Personal information of this nature should only be shared with those people within Loyola who have an educational need-to-know.

ACCOMMODATIONS

- Q.** How do I know what is a reasonable accommodation?
- A.** DSS suggests reasonable accommodations based on each student's documentation. The student should provide you with a letter outlining these accommodations. If you believe a suggested accommodation isn't reasonable due to the nature of your class, please consult with a DSS staff member.
- Q.** Some students with disabilities are provided extended time on examinations. Is this fair to other students?
- A.** Yes, it is fair. Requests for extra time and other testing modifications are reviewed by Loyola's Documentation Review Committee and only recommended when the documentation substantiates the need.

- Q.** Some students; accommodation letters state they are approved for flexible class attendance. Does that mean I cannot apply my attendance policy to them?
- A.** Flexible class attendance is sometimes recommended for a student when the evaluator indicates there may be situations where the symptoms of the disability flare up temporarily and unexpectedly. It is not intended to be used on a regular basis and DSS advises students with this accommodation to consult with professors about the attendance policy. Also, DSS encourages the student to communicate with the professor after each absence. If class attendance is essential to the course, you should decide what flexibility you may be able to offer and discuss this with the student early on in the semester. Again, contact DSS if you need help.
- Q.** Can a faculty member forbid a student with a disability to use a tape recorder in class?
- A.** An instructor is typically required to allow a student to tape record her course if taping the class is determined to be an appropriate accommodation for a student's disability. Occasionally, classroom discussion reveals items of a personal nature about students. If open discussions tend to reveal personal information, it would be appropriate to ask the student with a disability to turn off the tape recorder during these discussions. Contact DSS with questions or concerns about tape recording lectures.

GRADES:

- Q.** Can I fail a student with a disability, or give him or her a poor grade?
- A.** Yes, students with disabilities can (and do) fail courses and sometimes receive low grades. The laws mandate *access to education*, not guaranteed academic success. If a faculty member provides reasonable academic accommodations, and the student does not meet the course requirements, then failing a student is proper and lawful. Here is a compliance checklist:
- Stand by academic standards and freedoms, which include full and equitable access to academic programs.
 - Provide verbal and written notice to your students of your willingness to accommodate.
 - Communicate clear and concise expectations for performance to your students.
 - Distinguish between essential and non-essential components of the course.
 - Respect requests for reasonable accommodations.
 - Permit students to use auxiliary aides and technologies that ensure access (examples: note takers, sign language interpreters, readers, scribes, tape recorders, etc.
 - Assure that your course materials, whether printed or electronic, are accessible and available in alternative formats (examples: computer electronic text, large print, internet, audio, Braille) when requested. DSS can assist you with these formats.
 - Consult with the DSS office if you have questions regarding accommodations.
 - Keep student disability-related information strictly confidential.

DISAGREEMENTS:

- Q.** What if I do not agree with a recommended accommodation?
- A.** Sometimes a faculty member believes a specific accommodation alters the essential course requirements. Contact the DSS office if a recommended accommodation does not seem reasonable for your class.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES CONTACT INFORMATION:

- Q.** Who should I contact in DSS for more information, or to refer a student?
- A.** For assistance arranging *common accommodations that have already been approved* (such as exams, note-takers, or books in alternative format) please contact:

Michelle Hackley, Accommodations Coordinator
mhackley@loyola.edu
(410) 617-2750.

For assistance with *other accommodations (such as flexible class attendance)*, to refer a new student, or for other assistance, please contact:

Marcia Wiedefeld, Director
mwiedefeld@loyola.edu
(410) 617-2062

Megan Henry, Assistant Director
mmhenry@loyola.edu
(410) 617-5137

Newman Towers, West 107
www.loyola.edu/dss

Written by Loyola University's Disability Support Services Office with information from:

The Faculty Room: FAQ. (2004). Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DO-IT), University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. Retrieved from <http://www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty/Rights/Faq/>