



Accessibility Services Accommodations Reference Handbook: Unlocking Equitable Education

For Faculty and Staff of the University of West Georgia





Accessibility Accommodations Reference Handbook

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
ADA Laws Overview	4
Faculty Responsibilities	5
Student Responsibilities	5
Testing Center Protocol	7
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)	9
Disability Etiquette	14
Conclusion	17
Contact Information	18
References	19

Introduction

The Office of Accessibility Services at the University of West Georgia is committed to providing optimal access to campus resources and educational experiences for students with disabilities. Accommodations are provided to students with accessibility needs to ensure equitable opportunities.

This guide was created for the UWG's faculty and staff to increase understanding of the accessibility accommodations process. Enclosed information includes an explanation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) laws, as well as 504 laws. A description of faculty and student responsibilities, the most frequently asked questions involving accommodations, and a general overview of disability etiquette are also provided.

We hope the information within this handbook serves as an effective guide when working with students who have accessibility needs. For further information regarding any of the content within this handbook, please contact the Office of Accessibility Services.



Image Source: University of West Georgia

ADA Laws Overview

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in 1990 and provides individuals with disabilities equitable opportunities and prohibits discrimination. The ADA also upholds standards of compliance set forth by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination based on disability. Amendments to the ADA were added in 2008 (ADAAA). This was done in response to a number of decisions made by the Supreme Court based on their interpretation of the ADA's original text.

Title II (Public Services) and Title III (Public Accommodations and Services Operated by Private Entities) of the ADA prohibits discrimination based on disability. Title II, Section 12132 states: "Subject to the provisions of this subchapter, no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of services, programs, or activities." Public universities are covered by Title II.

UWG strives to ensure equitable opportunities for students with accessibility needs by providing accommodations that meet the requirements of the ADA. Faculty and staff are required to comply with ADA standards.



Faculty Responsibilities

Members of faculty are **not** obligated to modify or alter the fundamental nature of their course or assignment(s). However, faculty are required to provide appropriate academic adjustments in line with ADA compliances.

Faculty should thoroughly review the student's Student Accommodation Report (SAR). A meeting should be set up individually with the student to discuss the accommodations and how they will be used.

If a particular accommodation is not clear, please contact the Office of Accessibility Services or the Accessibility Counselor listed on the SAR (please see the Contact Information page).

Student Responsibilities

Students who have accommodations must make their professors aware of their accommodations each semester. Students are encouraged to do this at the **beginning** of the semester. Students should email professors their Student Accommodation Report (SAR) and set up a meeting individually with their professors. Within the meeting, students should explain to the professors what accommodations they will be utilizing within their class.

Students must adhere to the accommodations within their SAR and are not to request additional accommodations from the professor. If you are unsure of any accommodation, please refer to their SAR or reach out to the Accessibility Services counselor.

Students are responsible for the proper use of their accommodations. For example, students must give reasonable notice when requesting to use their Testing Center accommodations (at least **ONE WEEK** prior to the exam).

Students are responsible for attending classes, keeping up with, and completing their assignments. Accommodations are provided to give students equal access to course content and are in no way intended to modify the requirements of the course.



Image Source: University of West Georgia

Testing Center Protocol

The Testing Center is one campus resource available to assist students with documented disabilities requiring special test accommodations. Both students and faculty share responsibilities when it comes to this accommodation.

First, the student must give professors reasonable notice that they would like to take their test in the Testing Center (at least **ONE WEEK** in advance of test date). This conversation should occur at the beginning of the semester. Students are responsible for scheduling their exams with the Testing Center as soon as test dates are provided, but at least 48 business hours in advance of the testing appointment.

Second, it is the responsibility of the professor to get the test to the Testing Center in whatever way is most comfortable (campus mail, fax, personally delivered, e-mail attachment, etc.) at least **ONE WEEK** in advance of the test date. Please include the following information with exam materials: testing time given to class, any allowed materials, how you would like the exam returned (hand delivery, campus mail, scan/email).

Although ideal, it is not always possible to test a student at the same time/on the same day the class is taking the test. Obviously, the more advance notice about a test, the better for all involved. If you have syllabi which include the prospective test dates, tentative testing appointments can be made for an entire semester. Scheduling the appointment is the student's responsibility, but it is helpful if you have already given the student some options with regard to a "testing window." Please also note that a student who receives extended time and has back-to-back classes may have to test outside of

regularly scheduled class time with instructor approval. The Testing Center does not want students to miss any class time while taking tests in the Testing Center.

For online exams, if the student qualifies for extended time, please make sure that you add it to their online exam in advance. The Testing Center has Respondus LockDown Browser on computer stations if you choose to use it. If the student qualifies for stop-the-clock breaks, we recommend simply adding the total amount of time to the online exam with break times included (for example, if the class exam time is 1 hour, and the student receives extended time and a half plus 5-minute stop-the-clock breaks per half hour, you could extend the total testing time to 1 hour and 40 minutes).

If you have any further questions regarding the Testing Center, please contact Dr. Carrie Melius at 678-839-6435 or cmelius@westga.edu.



Image Source: University of West Georgia

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why are accommodations provided to students with disabilities?

A: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008 prohibits discrimination based upon disability. Providing accommodations to students with accessibility needs is not considered special treatment, but rather evens the playing field to provide equitable opportunities.

Q: Which accommodations are mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act?

A: The ADA does **not** mandate specific accommodations. Accommodations are individualized based on each student's disability. Accommodations provided to the student are based on medical documentation submitted to the Office of Accessibility Services and vetted by Accessibility Counselors.

Q: Are there consequences if I do not provide the requested accommodations?

A: If instructors do not comply with ADA Laws, the student can take legal action against the professor, Accessibility Services, the Accessibility Counselor, the University, and the University System of Georgia's Board of Regents.

Q: Will a student's accommodations compromise the integrity of my course?

A: Students who have accommodations are responsible for the same content of your course as all the other students within your class. Their accommodations are provided to give them an equal opportunity. Faculty are asked to provide reasonable accommodations, but the integrity of the course should remain the same.

Q: Am I required to evaluate the work of students with an accessibility need differently than a student who does not have an accessibility need?

A: No, work should not be evaluated differently. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that their work meets the required standards of the course objectives.

Q: How do I decide which accommodations students are allowed to use in my class?

A: Students with a Student Accommodations Report (SAR) have already submitted the proper documentation from a qualified provider (medical doctor, psychologist, or psychiatrist) to the Office of Accessibility Services. Therefore, faculty are not subject to making this determination. It is the responsibility of the accessibility services counselor to recommend the proper accommodations for the student's academic program based on the documented needs of the student, and the impact these needs may have on the student's learning experience.

Q: What is the difference between accommodations provided through the Student Accommodation Report (SAR) and assistance requested through the Health Services Advocate?

A: It is not uncommon for a student to have medical concerns which do not rise to the level of being considered a disability, and therefore will not require an SAR. Some medical issues are addressed in the SAR if they are a documented disability. Other medical illnesses are confirmed and communicated to faculty through the [Advocates](#) in Health Services. For example, If a student misses a considerable amount of class time due to an illness or hospitalization, the student is usually referred to an Advocate in Health Services. The Advocate will meet with the student to discuss their particular needs and will then contact the professor(s) to determine the best way for the student to proceed in the course. If the Advocate determines that the student requires ongoing services, such that their condition rises to the level of a disability, the student is directed to the office of Accessibility Services, to receive consideration for accommodations.

Q: How do I approach a student who is having difficulty in the class, and I suspect they may need accommodations?

A: Faculty may not ask students whether they have an accessibility need, but you may inquire about their difficulty within your class. The student may voluntarily disclose their disability, and at that point the best course of action is to refer them to the Office of

Accessibility Services. If the student does not disclose a disability, encourage the student to take advantage of your office hours if they need assistance.

Q: May I choose to provide an additional accommodation to a student that is not listed on their SAR?

A: Faculty members are strongly advised **not** to provide additional accommodations outside of those listed on the SAR to students. Any modifications or exceptions made to your class that are not based on the student's SAR may set a legal precedent that may put the university at legal risk. Should this type of situation arise, it is important to consider whether you would allow the exception for a student who does not have an accessibility need. If the modification is not a part of provided accommodations, contact the accessibility counselor listed on your student's SAR to discuss your concerns.

Q: May I choose to accommodate a student who is not registered with Accessibility Services and/or who has not provided me with an SAR?

A: Any modifications or exceptions that a faculty member chooses to make on their instructional and/or testing procedures is not deemed an accommodation of a disability. Professors may choose to make exceptions for particular students involved in unexpected situations (e.g., giving the student extra time on a paper due to a family emergency, etc.). However, these exceptions should not be confused with accommodations received by students with documented disabilities.

Q: I feel the requested accommodations are unreasonable. Who can I talk to about this?

A: Contact the Office of Accessibility Services, and request to speak to the specific accessibility counselor listed on the student's SAR.

Q: Can I ask students to disclose what their disability is to me?

A: No; students have the right to privacy and therefore do not have to disclose the nature of their disability or their diagnosis. In some cases, students may freely share

their disability with you. Should this happen, please keep the student's information confidential.

Q: What are some guidelines regarding confidentiality?

A: Any medical records pertaining to the diagnosis of the student remain in the Office of Accessibility Services. FERPA Laws prohibit faculty members from viewing confidential information. Any discussion regarding a student's accommodations should not be held in a public setting such as the classroom. Any information the student chooses to share with you regarding their disability must be kept confidential.

Q: What does "extended time" mean?

A: Extended time can include time-and-a-half or double-time. For time-and-a-half, a test that normally takes 60 minutes, a student would be allowed 90 minutes. Double-time means that the student is allowed double the regular time provided. **Extended time applies to online AND in-class tests and quizzes, as well as IN-CLASS assignments.** Extended time does **NOT** apply to course content assigned outside of class. A student may request extended time for assignments outside of class (e.g., papers, presentations, etc.) however, approval of such requests must be determined by the professor and are not considered a part of the extended time accommodation.

Q: How do I work with the Testing Center?

A: Faculty are responsible for getting the test to the Testing Center in whatever way is most comfortable (campus mail, fax, personally delivered, email attachment, etc.), and the Testing Center is responsible for returning the test to your departmental mailbox (unless you make other arrangements). The test should be sent to the Testing Center at least 48 hours before the test date. Students are responsible for scheduling their appointment with the Testing Center, at least one week prior to the test date. The Testing Center will make every effort to return the test to your departmental mailbox on the day of the test once the student has finished the exam.

Q: What if a student makes me aware of their accommodations the day before an exam? How do I encourage them to talk to me sooner?

A: Students are asked to discuss their accommodations with their professors within the first week of the semester. Faculty members are encouraged to remind them of this by announcing this information on the first day of class. A good mode of practice is to establish reasonable expectations of timeliness regarding any requested accommodations.

These questions cover only a few of the situations that often arise when accommodations are being considered. If further clarification is required, please contact the Office of Accessibility Services.



Image Source: University of West Georgia

Disability Etiquette

UWG is committed to providing a comfortable environment to students with accessibility needs. Faculty are encouraged to assist in this by practicing disability etiquette with their students. The information below will provide tips on how to interact with students with disabilities.

General Tips

- **Don't** hesitate to ask questions when you are unsure how to interact with students who have disabilities.
- **Don't** make assumptions or presume a student's limitations.
- **Don't** ask questions about the student's disability.
- **Speak** directly to the student with a disability.
- **Ask** before you help. If you offer assistance, allow the student to accept the offer first and then listen to the student's instructions on how to assist them.
- **Remember** your student is an individual, refer to them by name.

Students who use Wheelchairs or Other Mobility Devices

- **Don't** push or touch a student's wheelchair or mobility device without permission. Consider their wheelchair or mobility device an extension of their body.
- **Provide** accessible routes through your classroom.
- **Offer** assistance with opening doors, reaching, and grasping if necessary.



Image Source: University of West Georgia

Students who are Hearing Impaired

- **Face** the student when speaking to them.
- **Speak** clearly, as students who are hearing impaired may rely on lip-reading.
- **Don't** shout.

Students who are Visually Impaired

- **Identify** yourself to the student.
- **Offer** assistance if the student appears to need guidance.
- **Provide** front-row seating to the student.

Students with a Seizure Disorder

- **Don't** attempt to stop the seizure.
- **Call** 678-839-6000* for medical assessment from University Police. They will send an officer to your location and call an ambulance if needed.
- **Protect** the student's head while the seizure is in progress.
- **Consider** dismissing the class if necessary.



Image Source: University of West Georgia

**The University Police Department is UWG's 911 connection.*

Students with a Learning Disorder

- **Ask** the student how you can best communicate information with them.
- **Allow** extra time if reading out loud to students who may require it.

Students who have a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

- **Ask** the student how to best communicate information with them.
- **Be** patient. Students who have a TBI often have poor short-term memory and/or impulse control.



Image Source: University of West Georgia

Students with a Speech Impairment

- **Give** the student your full attention. Ask the student to repeat if you have trouble understanding them.
- **Repeat** the student's words for verification if necessary.
- **Don't** interrupt the student.

Students with Mental Health Concerns

- **Treat** each student as an individual.
- **Ask** the student how to make them the most comfortable.
- **Stay** calm and supportive should a crisis occur.
- **Call** 911 if you feel there is an imminent threat to the safety of anyone in the classroom.

Students who use Service Animals

- **Don't** touch the animal without permission.
- **Ask** other students in the class to refrain from distracting the working animal.
- **Offer** optimal seating to the student and their service animal.



Image Source: University of West Georgia

Students with Hidden Disorders

- **Respect** the student's needs and requests when possible, even when you do not understand the purpose for them.
- **Don't** ask the student to specify their disorder or explain their symptoms.



Image Source: University of West Georgia

*Autistic Students**

- **Ask** the student how you can best communicate information with them.
- **Don't** insist on eye-contact. This can be overwhelming for autistic students.
- **Be** clear and direct when communicating with an autistic student.

* Members of the Autistic community generally prefer identity-first language, e.g., "I am Autistic," (United Spinal Association, 2015). When speaking directly with your student(s), ask the student how they prefer to be addressed.

Conclusion

We hope the information within this handbook serves as an effective guide when working with students who have accessibility needs.

For further information regarding any of the content within this handbook, please contact the Office of Accessibility Services.



Image Source: University of West Georgia

Contact Information for Accessibility Services

The Office of Accessibility Services

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Visit our website for more information on Accessibility Services:

<https://www.westga.edu/accessibility/>

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