



AccessAbility Services Faculty/Staff Guide

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Contents

Introduction	3
Legal Overview	3
Confidentiality	3
Accommodations	3
Syllabus Statement	4
Request Process	4
Accommodation Letters	4
Common Accommodations Explained	5
Alteration of Fundamental Requirements	6
Attendance Flexibility Accommodation	7
Public Speaking Accommodation	7
Emergency List Accommodation	7
Audio Recording Accommodation	7
Accommodate Overview	8
Enrolled Students	8
AAS Exam Proctoring Tab	8
Course Notes	8
Navigating Accommodate	8
Referring Students	12

Introduction

AccessAbility Services (AAS) provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students with documented disabilities to ensure equal access to programs, activities, and opportunities.

Accommodations are designed to level the playing field for students with disabilities, while maintaining the integrity and standards of each academic program. WCSU appreciates that everyone is unique; therefore each student who requests accommodations from AccessAbility Services is considered on a case-by-case basis. AAS is also committed to promoting awareness of disabilities and access, and serving as a resource to all members of the college and community.

AAS provides accommodations including academic, temporary, concussion, pregnancy, and housing accommodations for students with disabilities. AAS collaborates with all departments within the university to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to university programs.

Legal Overview

There are several laws that govern the provision of accommodations for students with disabilities in the college environment. These laws include the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Fair Housing Act. Under all of these laws, disability is defined as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life functions.” Major life functions include but are not limited to, speaking, learning, reading, writing, and communicating.

WCSU is covered under Title II of the ADA/ADAAA. The ADAAA was created to protect persons with disabilities from discrimination and improve access. This includes reasonable accommodations in the educational setting. The Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in any program conducted by federal agencies, and any program receiving federal financial assistance. Section 504 applies to all programs that receive federal funding. The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, and nationality. Reasonable accommodations to the living space (including college housing) are covered by this law.

Confidentiality

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students specific rights and protections relative to their educational records, including the record maintained by AAS. Students have the right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information, with exceptions such as legitimate educational need. Under this exception, information specific to the student’s disability is shared with faculty when it is necessary to ensure the student receives their accommodations and/or other support as needed.

Students who register with AAS are given the option to sign a release form allowing the office permission to share information beyond what is necessary to provide accommodations. In this case, more information specific to the student’s disability may be shared on an as needed basis.

Accommodations

The student with a disability can request accommodations at any point prior to or during the semester. Accommodations are not retroactive, and should be provided to the student starting on the date an electronic accommodation letter is sent to a faculty member. Each student will need to follow the process outlined below in order to request accommodations. A student does not have to have received

accommodations in high school in order to be eligible for accommodations at WCSU.

Syllabus Statement

Students with Disabilities: AccessAbility Services engages in an interactive process with each student and reviews requests for accommodations on an individualized, case-by-case basis. Depending on the nature of the functional limitations of the student's documented disability, he/she may be eligible for accommodations. AAS collaborates with students and their faculty to coordinate approved accommodations and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact AccessAbility Services (AAS) as soon as possible. You may contact AAS by calling (203) 837-8225 (voice), (203) 837-3235 (TTY) or by e-mailing aas@wcsu.edu. Detailed information regarding the process to request accommodations is available on [the AAS website](http://www.wcsu.edu/accessibility) (www.wcsu.edu/accessibility). If your request for accommodation(s) is approved and you request accommodation letters, an accommodation letter will be emailed to faculty members. (Note: Student request for accommodations must be filed each semester and accommodations are not retroactive.)

Accommodation Request Process

Reasonable accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis through an interactive process including an interview and review of documentation. Documentation must be current, and clearly state the diagnosis, history, nature, frequency and severity of symptoms that substantially limit a major life activity. In college, students must self-identify to AAS in order to receive accommodations. The steps to receiving accommodations are outlined below.

Step One: Students who have a WCSU Banner ID number can register [online with AAS](https://wcsu-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/) (https://wcsu-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/). Alternatively, students can complete a hard copy Accommodation Intake Form.

Step Two: Obtain appropriate [medical documentation](https://www.wcsu.edu/accessibility/documentation-guidelines) (<https://www.wcsu.edu/accessibility/documentation-guidelines>) relevant to disability.

Step Three: Upload supporting medical documentation to the Accommodate Portal. Documentation may be submitted separately by fax, mail or in person.

Fax: (203) 837-8848

Mail: AccessAbility Services

Western Connecticut State University

181 White Street

White Hall 005

Danbury, CT 06810

Step Four: Students will receive an email or phone notification regarding their request for accommodations and the appropriate next step.

Step Five: Once approved for accommodation, it will be the student's responsibility to request accommodation letters at the start of each semester.

Accommodation Letters

Each semester, students are asked to submit their Semester Accommodation Letter Request on Accommodate. The Semester Accommodation Letter Request informs AAS that the student intends to use their accommodations, and grants permission from the student for faculty to be notified of the student's approved accommodations. Accommodation letters are sent to the faculty member's WCSU email with the student copied on the email.

Each accommodation letter contains unique information regarding the accommodations the student is approved for. Each accommodation is named and described in the letter. Under the description is a list of the courses that the student plans to use the accommodation. Students will not necessarily request or use every accommodation in every class.

Common Accommodations Explained

Listed below are some of the most common accommodations faculty will see on an accommodation letter. The bold text is the official phrasing of the accommodation, which is included on the letter, the text below it is an explanation of what it means, how and when it applies, and any limitations. Please note, that the text below the bold accommodation is customized for some students. As always, accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis and subject to change based on changes in disability, documentation, laws, or best practices. If you have questions about a specific accommodation, please contact AAS.

Extended Time on Timed Quizzes, Tests, and Exams in the Amount of (Double Time or Time and a Half)

Extended time ensures that the student's performance is reflective of the student's mastery of material rather than the speed at which a student performs. This accommodation does not apply to take-home exams that are not timed. Extended time does apply to all quizzes, tests, and exams administered in class or via Blackboard in which a timer is being used. This does not apply to homework or out of class assignments unless specified in the letter.

Quizzes and Exams in a Reduced Distraction Testing Environment

A reduced distraction testing environment is an environment which minimizes distractions experienced in a classroom setting; such as, students getting up to ask questions, or pass in an exam as well as additional external noise. Faculty members can use a department conference room that is quiet to accommodate exams with reduced distraction or opt to have the student test in AAS.

Scribe

With the assistance of a scribe, the student's answers will be written down verbatim, without grammatical assistance. This may be handwritten or typed into a computer depending on the exam and the nature the disability.

Reader

A staff member or computer program (more common) will be used to read the exam verbatim to the student. The reader will not explain or clarify any test items.

Calculator (non-graphing)

A calculator is provided to students who have documented deficits in math fluency or basic math computation to allow the exam to measure the math skills being assessed, rather than

measuring basic math computation. Calculators that are programmable will not be permitted without the approval of the instructor.

Use of a Computer for Written Quizzes/Exams

This accommodation allows students to use assistive technology, such as a computer with dictation software, to respond to exams with a typed, rather than handwritten response.

Voice Recorder/Smartpen

A voice recorder or Smartpen allows a student to tape record a class for review at a later time to fill-in gaps within their notes and/or to allow the student to re-listen to the lecture for comprehension. As outlined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, schools must provide students entitled to accommodations with appropriate auxiliary aids and services such as a tape recorder. Faculty members are not allowed to deny this accommodation. In some cases, a faculty member can request a student stop recording if personal and identifiable information is discussed that is confidential in nature (i.e., social work).

Computer/Tablet in Class

Some students are unable to handwrite notes or require assistive technology due to their disability. These students are allowed to use their devices in class for class purposes. Students should not be working on anything else on the computer/tablet.

Alternate Format Books

Some students require books and other readings in audio or accessible formats for a variety of reasons. Read and Write is the program used to read textbooks and other materials in an audio format. Student must purchase a copy of the book and provide proof of purchase in order to receive the digital copy of the text from AAS. Whenever possible, faculty should post digital copies of handouts on Blackboard for students to access and read using Read and Write software.

[Alteration of Fundamental Requirements](#)

Accommodations are used to level the playing field and allow students equal access to all that WCSU has to offer; however, accommodations cannot alter the fundamental requirements of a course or program. Some accommodations, such as the ability to refrain from speaking publicly, are considered on a class-by-class basis, as the fundamental requirements of the course must be assessed. When a student with an accommodation that may result in a fundamental alteration registers for your course, you will be sent an email explaining the accommodation and asking you to engage in a discussion on the fundamental requirements of your course. If you believe a student's requested accommodation would result in an alteration of a fundamental requirement, please contact the office.

Attendance Flexibility Accommodation (Occasional Absence)

This accommodation is approved infrequently, as attendance is necessary in almost all courses for a student to learn and be successful in the course. Attendance flexibility is approved for some students with chronic medical conditions that may affect the student's attendance, causing absences beyond what is typically accepted. It notifies the faculty that the student has a documented disability of this nature. AccessAbility Services (AAS) asks that faculty members develop an Occasional Absence Agreement in consultation with AAS to develop an agreement of flexibility for the student.

Public Speaking Accommodation

Another accommodation that is approved infrequently is the permission to refrain from speaking publicly. This accommodation is approved on a class by class basis because accommodations cannot alter the fundamental requirements of a course. When a student approved for this accommodation schedules their courses, faculty are contacted via email to discuss the fundamental requirements of the course and to determine whether or not the accommodation is appropriate. This will include a discussion of the course objectives, as well as the course requirements. If the accommodation is deemed a fundamental alteration based on the conversation, alternative accommodations may be considered.

Emergency List Accommodation

This accommodation is listed as a courtesy to inform faculty of the expectations for the student during an emergency scenario. Students with this accommodation may require additional assistance exiting the building during an emergency. The student should remain in the classroom until a fire warden arrives to clear the room. AAS maintains a list of any student who may need assistance during an evacuation, and has shared that list with appropriate personnel so that they can respond to the classroom to assist the student.

Audio Recording Accommodations

This accommodation is referred to as "Voice Recorder/Smart Pen" on the accommodation letter. Students approved for this accommodation will be recording part or the entire lecture on a recording device of their choosing. Section 504, Subpart E of the Rehabilitation Act specifically states that the prohibition of tape recorders in classrooms is discriminatory and can limit the participation of a student with a disability. If you have a concern regarding recording lectures, please contact AAS.

Accommodate Overview

Accommodate is a web-based system used by AccessAbility Services (AAS) to manage all accommodation related requests and information. Faculty members can access accommodation details on students, see who the assigned notetaker is for a particular course, and view testing appointments all through [Accommodate \(wcsu-accommodate.symplicity.com/faculty\)](https://wcsu-accommodate.symplicity.com/faculty). Students with disabilities will use Accommodate to request accommodation letters, request exam proctoring, receive copies of notes, and request their textbooks in alternative formats.

All of the options available to faculty in Accommodate are available in the left navigation menu under the Accommodation Letter and Courses tabs on the home page. Options for faculty include viewing the list of enrolled students, viewing and approving room bookings, uploading exams, and viewing course notes.

Accommodation Letters

On the left navigation menu, you will see a tab called “Accommodation Letters”. To add accommodation letters to your Accommodate portal, follow these [directions](#) or view our [“Adding Accommodation Letters to Accommodate”](#) video.

Enrolled Students Tab

Within each individual class listed in your “Courses” tab, you can view the “Enrolled Students” tab. This will allow faculty members to view a list of every student enrolled in their course. If a student has requested a semester accommodation letter for the course, approved accommodations are shown on this page. You can further filter information to just show students approved for accommodations by selecting “Yes” under “Approved Accommodations for this Course”. If a student has been hired as a note-taker for the course, you will see a large note-taker box next to their name. Faculty members are still responsible for reading the Electronic Accommodation Letter sent through email, but this provides a quick view of all students and their accommodations.

AAS Exam Proctoring Tab

All student requests to take an exam in AAS will appear in the AAS Exam Proctoring tab. Requests shown under the AAS Pending folder are exam requests from students that have not been processed by AccessAbility Services but once processed will need your input. Exam requests under “Faculty Proctoring Instructions” need to be reviewed. Please follow the [step-by-step guide](#) or [video instructions](#).

Course Notes Tab

Some students are approved to receive notes as an accommodation. If a note-taker has been hired for your course, you can see all of the notes uploaded by the note-taker in this tab. If you wish, you can also upload notes or copies of your presentations for the student receiving accommodations.

Navigating Accommodate

When navigating Accommodate, you can move between tabs by clicking on each tab. If you have selected a course, and wish to switch to another course, go to the Course Details tab, and click cancel. This will bring you back to the list of your courses for the semester.

Referring Students

From time to time, a student may disclose their disability to you, or mention receiving accommodations in the past when you have not received an official accommodation letter for the student. If this occurs, the student should be referred to AccessAbility Services so that they can receive the same accommodations in every course. If a student specifically mentions receiving accommodations in the past, or asks for accommodations, such as extended time on an exam, please provide the contact information for AccessAbility Services: White Hall Room 005, Elisabeth Morel, morele@wcsu.edu, 203-837-8225. If a student is struggling and asks for assistance, but does not specifically request accommodations, I recommend sharing all of the support services available at the university with the student, including the Ansell Learning Commons, Tutoring Resource Center, Writing Center, Math Clinic and AccessAbility Services. This allows the student the option to self-identify to AccessAbility Services if they choose.