



Students with Disabilities in the Classroom - Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a disability?

A: A disability, under federal law, is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities. A disability could be apparent, such as a mobility impairment or deafness, or may not be obvious, such as a learning disability.

Q: What are reasonable accommodations?

A: Reasonable accommodations are structural or material modifications made in order to allow a student with a disability equal access to curriculum and facilities. Unreasonable accommodations are any modification that diminishes or compromises the fundamental nature of a course and its learning outcomes.

Q: How do students get accommodations and who determines if the request is reasonable?

A: In order to receive accommodations, a student must register with Classroom Services, part of the Academy Resource Center (ARC). Classroom Services and the Executive Office review all requests on an individual basis to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations based on documentation from a diagnosing professional.

Q: A student has asked for accommodations. How do I know the student truly has a disability?

A: The student should provide you with a current accommodation letter from Classroom Services. The letter outlines all approved accommodations for the current semester only. Specifics of the disability will not be disclosed due to the student's right to confidentiality.

Q: Am I required to provide accommodations? What if I disagree with an accommodation?

A: We are required by law to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities for all AAU programs, services, curriculum, and public events. If you disagree with an approved accommodation, contact Classroom Services. If the accommodation alters the fundamental nature of a class then Classroom Services will reconsider the accommodation and discuss alternatives with you.

Q: Why does my student's letter list accommodations unrelated to my class?

A: A student's letter will include approved accommodations for all classes that they are taking, and some will not apply to every class. For example, if you don't give tests, then disregard accommodations related to tests. Students may also not activate an accommodation right away, but find that their needs change throughout the semester. Keep the letter and acknowledge to the student that you have received it and are open to discussing any issues that come up over the course of the semester.

Q: Should I lower the standards of an assignment because a student has a disability?

A: No. Standards should be the same for all students. The quality of any student's work should be assessed according to class standards. Grade inflation is misleading and a disservice to every student.

Q: A student came to me in the sixth week of the semester requesting accommodations, but I feel this is too late and that arrangements should have been made earlier.

A: There could be numerous reasons why a student makes a late request, for example challenges getting documentation, or wanting to wait and see if accommodations would be necessary in a particular class before drawing attention to the issue. Whatever the reason, students may request accommodations at any time during the semester. However, accommodations are not retroactive and do not apply to past assignments or exams.

Q: I have a student with a disability who is behind in the coursework. This student has missed a number of classes/has not logged in or participated in a number of modules and has not handed in several assignments. At this point, they are not passing the class. Can I fail a student with a disability?

A: A student with a disability has the same right to fail as anyone else. Their work should be evaluated equivalently to their peers. It may be a good idea to discuss your observations with this student just as you would with anyone else in your class who is experiencing difficulties.

Q: A student with a disability said they could take their exam in the Classroom Services office. What do I need to do?

A: The student should give you an *Alternative Testing Request Form*. Fill out your portion of the form and send the exam to Classroom Services at least 48 hours in advance. Our staff will proctor the exam according to the instructions you've outlined on the form and send it back to you for grading.

Q: When I have a Deaf student in my class, am I required to have an interpreter or transcriber at all times? The classroom gets crowded, and communicating is especially difficult on field trips.

A: Yes, sign language interpreters or captioners are necessary to provide Deaf and hard of hearing students equal access to the curriculum. Classroom Services contracts qualified service providers for Deaf students for all classes and AAU-related events. If you have any questions or concerns related to these service providers in your classes, including classroom size issues, please contact Classroom Services. The instructor should notify Classroom Services in advance of any changes to the schedule or location of the class. Please ensure that all course content is being adequately and effectively communicated for the Deaf or hard of hearing student.

Q: I have a Deaf student in my class and have been asked to inform Classroom Services of any media I might use that is not already part of the course content. Why do I need to do this? What if I like to introduce media depending upon the direction that my class goes during the semester?

A: Deaf and hard of hearing students should have the same access to course materials as hearing students. You will receive an email from Classroom Services at the beginning of the semester that will outline the captioning process. Additional audio materials such as audio critiques and videos must be made accessible.

Q: A student's accommodations allow for late work as needed. I'm okay with this, but I prefer that they post to the late work folder instead of sending me an email each week. Is this okay?

A: Students with disabilities may wish to email their assignments in order to protect their privacy, which could be compromised if they consistently post in the late folder that is viewed by the rest of the class.

Q: A student in my class asked me for assistance getting a note taker. What do I need to do?

A: A student who is eligible to have a note taker will provide you with both an accommodation letter and a note taker announcement. Follow the instructions on the announcement. During the first class session you should choose a note taker who is dependable and will best capture the class material. In case of delay, please provide a copy of your own notes to the student. All information about the student requiring a note taker should be kept confidential. Each student may decide if they want to be anonymous or known to their note taker.

Q: One of my students has a note-taker but missed a lecture. Should they still get the notes?

A: Your student should not receive notes for a missed class unless their absence is related to their disability and Classroom Services is notified. The note taker is not paid to take notes on days when the recipient is absent. If the student has a legitimate non-disability-related excuse for the absence, i.e. illness or death in the family, handle the situation as you would with all other students.

Q: I think a student struggling in my class has a disability. What can I do to help?

A: Talk privately with the student to discuss your observations by identifying the problems with their work that you're noticing (along with some positive feedback). While you should not suggest that the student has a disability, the student may reveal this information without further prompting. If this is the case, you may ask the student if they have accommodations through Classroom Services, and if not, suggest that they consider obtaining this kind of support. If the student does not mention a disability, you can refer them to ARC for academic coaching, tutoring, and/or language support. Make an ARC referral by logging into the LMS (online.academyart.edu), and selecting Class Sections > Grades > Grade Detail > Refer Student to ARC. If you suspect that a student has a disability, but their performance/grades are not impacted, there is no need to raise concerns.

Q: What resources are available to me if I have questions or concerns?

A: Please always feel free to call Classroom Services at 415-618-3775 with questions. We are open M-F, 9-5pm. You could also email accessibility@academyart.edu or stop by the Academy Resource Center, located at 79 New Montgomery Street, room 356. We are here to support both students and faculty.