



SUBJECT: Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

PURPOSE: To establish guidelines for Mercy College of Health Science students requesting examination and educational accommodations, which includes testing.

EFFECTIVE FOR: All students

Introduction

Mercy College of Health Sciences is committed to providing accommodative services to physically, emotionally and/or cognitively-challenged students in compliance with federal laws, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. This policy applies to all students with disabilities regardless of location, delivery or time frame of scheduling classes involved.

ADA Services

ADA Services are an extension of the Student Success Center (SSC) at Mercy College of Health Sciences. The ultimate goal of ADA Services is to promote and support students' self-advocacy: the ability of a student to articulate information concerning a physical, emotional, sensory or learning challenge to the appropriate college personnel for the purpose of obtaining accessibility to the programs and services offered at Mercy College of Health Sciences. The following information should guide the college community, working collaboratively with ADA Services, in assisting such students. Accommodations are intended to be used proactively. Instructors are required to work with students and the Student Success Center (SSC) in a good faith effort to determine reasonable accommodations. However, accommodations are not reasonable if they constitute a fundamental alteration of an essential academic requirement of the program or class. Please note that granted accommodations are not effective retroactively. Students will not be able to re-do assignments or re-take exams with accommodations that are originally completed prior to accommodations being asked for and received.

Eligibility

Mercy College of Health Sciences complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act of 2008 (ADAAA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Fair Housing Act, and other applicable federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. These laws define a disability as a physical or mental impairment that *substantially limits* one or more major life activities. Eligibility for academic accommodations is based on documentation that clearly demonstrates a student has one or more functional limitations in an academic setting, and that one or more accommodations is needed to achieve equal access. The

ADAAA is a federal civil rights statute that supports the rights of individuals with disabilities to access employment, state and local government programs and services, and public services. It is the policy of Mercy College of Health Sciences for students with disabilities to register with the ADA Services in the Student Success Center (SSC). Students must register in order to access these rights and to determine eligibility for accommodations. ADA Services takes into consideration the students past history, and supporting documentation related to the disability when making accommodation determinations.

The disability service model in higher education is very different from the one students (and parents) are accustomed to in K-12 school district. Students' self-advocacy responsibilities increase within postsecondary education due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Parents need to foster this change and encourage students to utilize appropriate skills to be self-reliant in advocating for services. Responsibility for the postsecondary experience lies in the hands of the student.

Disability documentation is confidential information from an appropriately certified professional who is knowledgeable about the student's condition. Such professionals include physicians, educational psychologists, therapists, mobility specialists, and rehabilitation counselors. Documentation is used to determine eligibility for disability services and accommodations.

Documentation must include the following components:

Completed by a licensed or credentialed examiner (not a family member);

A description of the disability, including the diagnosis and history;

A description of the current impact in daily living and in an educational setting;

A description of the past use of services.

Examples of disability documentation include but are not limited to:

Educational, psychological, or medical records;

Reports and assessments created by healthcare providers, psychologists, or an educational system;

Documents that reflect education and accommodation history, such as Audiology Reports and Vision Assessments;

Student Success Center (SSC) verification form of a disability;

Statement from a health or other service professional;

Vocational Assessment.

Testing Anxiety Documentation Guidelines

Beginning with the revisions to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 2008, test anxiety is no longer considered a disability under federal law.

Students applying for academic accommodations related to anxiety, must have a diagnosis of an anxiety disorder (such as Generalized Anxiety Disorder) and documentation must include examples of an area of life in which anxiety creates a disability beyond the testing situation.

ADHD Documentation Guidelines

The ADHD Disability Assessment must be completed as thoroughly as possible by a qualified healthcare professional. A qualified healthcare professional is typically a licensed clinical psychologist, neuropsychologist, psychiatrist, or a medical provider trained in mental health assessment. This professional should have comprehensive training and relevant experience in the full range of psychiatric disorders and uses a differential diagnostic practice to arrive at the ADHD diagnosis.

Applying for Accommodations

Step One

The student must complete and submit the *Request for Reasonable Accommodation Consideration* and to the Dean of Student Affairs with the following form.

<https://mchsstudentsuccess.wufoo.com/forms/z1dzh86i0gi6ht1/>

Step Two

Students must provide The Student Success Center (SSC) with documentation from a specialized health care provider. The Dean of Student Affairs will review the documentation regarding eligibility status. In order documentation to be reviewed, students must currently be enrolled, or be a prospective student who has been accepted and plans to start the following term. The Dean of Student Affairs reviews the recommendations in the professional report submitted on the student's behalf and determines eligibility for services. Please allow two weeks from the time all materials have been received for this review to be completed.

Step Three

Once student eligibility status has been confirmed, the student will be invited to schedule an intake appointment to discuss services. During the intake appointment, approved accommodations will be outlined and the Confirmation of Accommodation (COA) form requesting accommodations for specific classes can be completed by the student and the Dean of Student Affairs. <https://mchsstudentsuccess.wufoo.com/forms/m154j6n11w6w45g/>

Step Four

Each semester students must submit a new COA form specifying the student's new classes to renew accommodations. Students work with the instructor individually to determine how the accommodation will best be provided for each class.

<https://mchsstudentsuccess.wufoo.com/forms/m154j6n11w6w45g/>

Rights and Responsibilities

Student Rights

Students have the right to;

Equal access to academic courses.

Receive reasonable accommodations in a timely manner.

Confidentiality regarding disability specific information.

Appeal decisions related to accommodation determinations.

Request changes or additions to current accommodations. Please allow one week from the time materials have been received for the re-evaluation process.

Self-select which approved accommodations is most appropriate to use in each class. **Students must give 24 hours' notice if choosing to utilize different accommodations, unless specified in the COA. (Example, opting to take a quiz in class, not using extra time)**

Request information be available in accessible formats, including accessible instructional materials.

Be free from discrimination and/or retaliation.

Utilize informal and/or formal grievance procedure if one or more of the above rights is not afforded.

Student Responsibilities

Students are required to;

Accurately portray approved accommodations to instructors.

Register with ADA Services as an individual with a disability by contacting the SSC at (515) 218-9687.

Request Confirmation of Accommodation forms (COA) for each class in which the student would like to use accommodations.

Meet with instructors as soon as COA forms are received from the Student Success Center. (Best practice is to meet with SSC and instructors at the beginning of the semester)

Review COA with instructors and discuss implementation of accommodations in the respective class.

Understand that academic accommodations are not retroactive.

Assume any costs associated with obtaining testing, reports, and examinations, etc. associated with documenting a disability.

Talk to the instructor first if problems or concerns arise regarding accommodations. If the situation cannot be resolved then notify the Dean of Student Affairs.

Instructor Rights

Instructors have the right to;

Require that a student provide instructor with a Confirmation of Accommodation form (COA) from the SSC before providing any requested accommodations.

Require that a student meet with the instructor to discuss accommodations at the beginning of the semester or as soon as the student receives the COA form.

Question the SSC regarding accommodations that the instructor believes may result in a fundamental alteration to an essential component of the course.

Limitations to Instructor Rights

It is not the Instructor's right to:

Deny a student reasonable accommodation(s) listed on their Confirmation of Accommodation form (COA).

Ask students questions about a disability including the diagnosis or nature of the disability.

Ask if the accommodation is necessary.

Request documentation of a disability.

Instructor Responsibilities

Instructors are required to;

Ensure instructional materials are in accessible formats, which include captioned videos, text readable documents, etc.

Finalize textbooks and reading lists in a timely manner to allow time for books to be converted into an accessible format.

Include a statement in syllabus as to how students can receive accommodations.

Announce to the class at the beginning of each semester, the preferred method of communication regarding disabilities and accommodations.

Meet with students **individually and privately** to discuss the implementation of approved accommodations, as outlined on the Confirmation of Accommodation (COA) form provided by

the SSC. (*Meeting should not take place in an open classroom with others present or in the hallway where others may overhear the discussion*)

Allow students to self-select which approved accommodations is most appropriate to use in each class. Students must give 24 hours' notice if choosing to utilize different accommodations, unless specified in the COA. (Example, opting to take a quiz in class, not using extra time)

Provide accommodations in a timely manner.

Refer students who self-identify as having a disability but are not registered, directly to the SSC.

Maintain appropriate confidentiality of accommodation notifications and communications regarding students' disabilities.

Contact the SSC with any questions or concerns about an approved accommodation, or how to best work with a student who has a particular disability.

Exam Services

As a student, it is your responsibility to register one week prior to when your exam is to take place in order to be guaranteed space in the testing center. For students with approved ADA exam accommodations, please use the following site to request testing time in the center:

<https://mchsstudentsuccess.wufoo.com/forms/s10e56o71kyjn44/>

The Testing Center is located on the first floor of the ACE building on the College Hill side (at the northeast corner of 6th and Crocker). To find the Testing Room, enter through the double doors on the West side of the building. From the main lobby, take a right to go toward the Josephine Norkaitis Student Success Center. You will need your badge to enter the Student Success Center after hours. The Testing Center is located in Room 185, please see the test proctor in Room 186.

Students that qualify for exam services should be familiar with the following policy and procedures. Student and Instructors, please note the following instructions and guidelines:

Each student is responsible for consulting with his/her instructor regarding exam accommodations by presenting the *Confirmation of Accommodation (COA)* to the instructor. Once the student and the instructor review the COA, the instructor should complete the *Semester Testing Form* and tentatively plot all exams and return the form to the SSC within a week of receiving the form. The instructor should also turn in a *Proctor Test form* at least 24 hours prior to each exam.

Students should return the white copy of the signed COA to the SSC.

All exams must be scheduled with the SSC by the student, one week prior to the exam date. If the request is approved and scheduled through the SSC, both the student and instructor will receive an email confirmation to their Mercy account.

Testing services are available beginning at 7:30 am and must be completed by 7:00 pm.

Exam materials (including the Proctor Sheet) must be delivered to the SSC or to the Dean of Student Affairs' mailbox in the faculty lounge at least 24 hours before the scheduled exam.

If the exam materials are not received 24 hours before the scheduled exam, the SSC reserves the right to cancel the scheduled exam.

The SSC Testing Center will adhere to the test times submitted on the Proctor Sheet. Students must remember the dates and times for exams and are expected to arrive at the SSC 10 minutes prior to the time indicated by the instructor on the form.

If a student is late to a scheduled exam, the end time will not be extended.

If a student is unable to take a scheduled exam, the student must notify the SSC and the instructor as soon as possible. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to reschedule the exam. (The SSC will confirm a rescheduled exam at a time that is agreed upon by all parties.)

All personal belongings and/or any materials not indicated on the Proctor Sheet must be stored in the storage lockers, located outside of the exam area.

Once an exam begins, students may only leave the testing room for a quick restroom break or if breaks are allowed as a designated accommodation.

Limited food or drink is allowed in the testing room unless it is a designated accommodation.

If a student drops a course for which exams have been scheduled at the SSC, the student should notify the SSC as soon as possible. Other students may be able to use the reserved time and space.

All the SSC testing facilities are monitored by closed circuit cameras with recording capabilities.

Mercy College of Health Sciences takes the issue of cheating very seriously. If cheating or other academic dishonesty is observed or suspected, the instructor will be notified immediately. The Mercy College Code of Conduct can be found in the College Student Handbook.

Common Accommodation Descriptions

Allow audio recording of class

Student may audio record lectures and discussions. Video recording classes is not permitted. The student is responsible for providing their own recording device. *The SSC has a limited amount of*

recording devices that can be checked out on a semester by semester basis, according to availability.

Allow short breaks during class or exams

A student may require a short break during class or exams. The nature of the break will depend on the needs of the individual.

Class Notes

The goal of the Class Notes accommodation is to ensure that students with qualifying conditions have notes comparable to what they would take if their disability did not interfere with note-taking. This accommodation is not a substitute for attendance.

It is important to initially determine if note-taking services are needed for a particular course. In some cases, they may not be needed, such as:

Due to the nature of the course, notes are not necessary.

A course pack may be available that contains complete notes for the course.

Notes are already available online through other means, such as the class **CANVAS** or website.

The instructor is responsible for providing a thorough copy of class notes. These notes need to be more thorough and comprehensive than a Power Point or outline.

Here are three options for how that may happen:

1. An instructor may provide a copy of teaching notes.
2. An instructor may arrange for notes to be provided by a volunteer student in the class. For more information about identifying a volunteer student note-taker, contact the SSC.
3. Where practical, an instructor can assign a group or groups of students to take notes and to upload them for access by the whole class, including student(s) with a disability. This can provide the additional benefit of students working together regarding their understanding of the material and provide the instructor with rapid feedback regarding what students are understanding and viewing as important from course lectures.

Disability-Related Absence and Deadline Modification

All disability-related accommodations are designed to provide equal access to the student. A reasonable accommodation preserves both the integrity of the course and the student's right to participate in classroom activities. Appropriate accommodations do not change or lower the essential academic elements of the course.

There are several ways for the student to meet essential course requirements while using this accommodation. Flexibility may be accomplished by adjusting course policies on attendance, work deadlines, or exam or quiz schedules.

Courses have specific syllabus information regarding attendance, exam schedules, and assignment deadlines. This accommodation requires a course-by-course assessment to determine what is reasonable and appropriate. Not every class can or will be flexed in the same way. There may be reasonable limits to flexibility based on the design and structure of each course and the specific course learning objectives. This accommodation should not result in a fundamental alteration of the course. If this accommodation is deemed necessary, the instructor will be contacted by the SSC to discuss reasonable accommodations prior to the student approaching the instructor with the COA form.

Extended time for exams and quizzes

Students will be provided extended test-taking time, (50%) more time for in class tests, quizzes and exams. Unlimited time is not an available accommodation and does not apply to competency skills and check off exams.

Grammar/Spelling

Student has a disability that may impact their ability to produce in-class writing assignments or exams that are correct in terms of grammar and/or spelling. Please do not subtract points for this unless it is a fundamental component of the class to produce writing samples on demand.

Large print

The material should be available with enlarged text such as 18 point with bold font.

Leaving the Classroom When Symptoms Occur

Some students with medical conditions may need to leave the class if problems due to their medical condition occur. It is recommended that students who have issues during class, email or contact their instructor as soon as possible after the incident occurs and then work with the instructor to make up any missed work. If this happens continuously, the SSC recommends that the instructor arrange a conference with the SSC and the student to determine appropriate action.

Occasional Exceptions to the Absentee/Tardiness Policy

The student is required to notify the faculty member and the SSC as soon as possible (prior to the beginning or directly after a class). Each faculty member makes the determination as to how many absences in general are acceptable in order to pass the class.

Preferential Seating

A student's seat is selected in a location that is most beneficial for his/her learning in the classroom. If the student has a visual impairment, his/her seat might be placed closer to the front of the room so that the student can more easily access the instructor and visual aids used for instruction (bulletin boards, posters, etc.). A student with a hearing impairment might need a seat closer to the instructor in order to better hear the instructor's voice. If a student has difficulty obtaining preferential seating in class, please assist them.

Reduced distraction environment for exams and quizzes

A distraction-reduced testing environment is a setting outside the usual classroom that limits interruptions and other environmental influences.

Use of a calculator

In some cases, students with very specific learning disabilities in math may be approved to use a basic 4 function calculator in class and on exams. Instructors can determine if this fundamentally alters course objectives.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Students

What if I need additional accommodations beyond the COA?

Please submit any accommodation additions in writing to the Dean of Student Affairs. Please allow two weeks from the time all materials have been received for this review to be completed.

Is my disability information shared with my professors?

No. It is the students' decision to inform each professor about any disability. Information shared with instructors will be limited to discussing the qualifying accommodations and does not contain information regarding the student's specific condition.

If I register with the Student Success Center, will it show up on my academic record?

No. All ADA information is confidential.

Do I need to make a new request for accommodations each semester?

Yes. Students should request new Confirmation of Accommodation forms each semester since classes and instructors change each semester, the Dean of Student Affairs works with the student to discuss how to obtain updated COA forms.

Is tutoring provided specifically for students with disabilities?

Tutoring is not an academic accommodation at the college level. There are tutor referral sources on campus for use by all students.

I have a temporary disability. Can the SSC help me?

Services for students who have a temporary disability are available. The application process is the same.

Do instructors have a legal responsibility to accommodate qualified students with disabilities?

Yes. Accessibility is essential and should be in the forefront of course planning. If instructors are concerned about accommodations for a class, please contact the SSC immediately at (515) 643-6659. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandate students' rights to accommodations.

Instructors

What accommodations are required if a student discloses a disability after the fact (e.g., after failing an exam or assignment)?

None. Accommodation requests are not retroactive.

How are exams proctored at the SSC?

All rooms at the SSC are proctored remotely using cameras and a test proctor.

Are students required to identify their disability or provide copies of disability documentations to faculty and staff?

No. Students are not required, nor should they be asked to disclose the nature of their disability. Additionally, students should not be asked to provide faculty and staff with copies of their disability documentation. Students requesting accommodations are only required to provide a Confirmation of Accommodation (COA) from the SSC stating that they have a documented disability on file.

The structure of class includes both quizzes and exams. For what tests will the student need to receive the exam accommodations?

Exam accommodations apply to all tests regardless of length. If giving quizzes followed by lecture, devise a plan to include the student's approved extended time on the quizzes without missing lecture.

When students identify themselves as having a disability, what should instructors do?

Students with disabilities should not have interactions any different than students without disabilities. Instructors should listen to the student and ask the students who self-identify with a disability about ADA Service registration and status. Instructors should only ask questions about the requested accommodation, not the disability.

*Student can request ADA Services at any time throughout the semester. It is best practice if students request disability accommodations at the beginning of the semester or within 1 week of receiving a Confirmation of Accommodation form from ADA Services and accommodations should not be granted unless the student presents a COA form. Accommodations are not effective **retroactively**. Students will not be able to re-do assignments or re-take exams with accommodations that are originally completed prior to accommodations being asked for and received.*