



UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI
STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES

Providing Access to the Classroom for Students with Disabilities

Nationwide, students with disabilities are enrolling in post-secondary institutions at record numbers. In 2010, the United States General Accounting Office released a report that stated 10 – 15% of all college students identify as having a disability. The University has seen an increase of 106% in students requesting accommodations for disability-related reasons over the past five years. Ensuring equal access for these students is a university-wide responsibility requiring collaboration among students, SDS staff, faculty, and administration.

Accommodations and policy modifications are designed to provide students with disabilities a level playing field and ensure equal access to course materials and information. This level playing field also allows students to demonstrate their understanding, or lack of understanding, of those materials and information. While approved accommodations must be provided, students with disabilities should be held to the same academic and program standards as all other students.

Once students are admitted to the university, they must self-disclose to SDS if requesting accommodations or modifications. Each student then goes through an individualized, determinative process during which SDS staff members review the information provided by each student (self-report, IEP, psycho-educational evaluations, etc.) to determine the need for accommodations. SDS staff collaborate with the student on what accommodations may best mitigate classroom barriers that may impact access to the course. There must be a nexus between the disability-related impact and the requested accommodations.

The information below will assist faculty in providing equal access to students with disabilities. Faculty must contact SDS with any questions or concerns about the provision of accommodations or the students requesting access.

General Information about Semester Accommodation Process

- Students with disabilities are required to provide each instructor with an Instructor Notification Form if accommodations are needed. New forms are provided each academic term so it is important for faculty the form provided by the student is for the correct term.
- Students have the option to use or not use any accommodation listed on the form.
- Once a student has provided the instructor with an Instructor Notification Form, the student has given notice of the need for accommodations. It then becomes the responsibility of the faculty to facilitate those accommodations and to collaborate the students and with SDS if there are questions about the accommodations.
- If a student requests an accommodation but does not have an Instructor Notification Form, faculty must refer that student to SDS.

- Most importantly, contact SDS must be contacted with any questions or concerns about the provision of accommodations. The telephone number is 662-915-7128 and Email address is sds@olemiss.edu.

Additional Information About Accommodated Students with Disabilities

SYLLABUS STATEMENT. Faculty must include a statement on the course syllabus that addresses accommodations and access for students with disabilities. The following statement has been developed by SDS for use by anyone teaching classes.

Disability Access and Inclusion: The University of Mississippi is committed to the creation of inclusive learning environments for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your full inclusion and participation or to accurate assessment of your achievement, please contact the course instructor as soon as possible. Barriers may include, but are not necessarily limited to, timed exams and in-class assignments, difficulty with the acquisition of lecture content, inaccessible web content or the use of non-captioned or non-transcribed video and audio files. You must also contact Student Disability Services at 662-915-7128 so that office can 1) provide you with an Instructor Notification form, 2) facilitate the removal of barriers and 3) ensure you have equal access to the same opportunities for success that are available to all students.

CLASS ANNOUNCEMENT. An announcement should be made in each class ensuring students faculty are prepared and willing to provide accommodations to those who bring an Instructor Notification Form.

STUDENT MEETINGS. SDS encourages students requesting accommodations to meet with faculty in each class. Because students may be uncomfortable initiating this contact, faculty should schedule a meeting with each student requesting accommodations to discuss needs and expectations. A meeting can go a long way toward avoiding confusion. Faculty must be cognizant of the fact that, once a student provides an Instructor Notification Form, that student has made an official request for accommodations. It is then the responsibility of the faculty, with assistance from SDS if necessary, to ensure the approved and requested accommodations are provided.

DOCUMENT EFFORTS. It is good practice to document efforts to provide. Faculty should note the date and manner in which Instructor Notification Forms are received, save e-mails sent and received regarding accommodations, and briefly detail meetings and conversations related to accommodations.

CONFIDENTIALITY. Students with disabilities have a legal right to confidentiality. Faculty cannot ask a student to disclose his/her disability. Faculty can, however, ask how the disability impacts each student in the classroom. Keep all Instructor Notification Forms in a secure location. Do not identify students as having disabilities. For instance, on test day, do not announce to the class, "All students who get accommodations go to the conference room." Students with disabilities will be identified when they stand up to leave the classroom.

APPEALING AN ACCOMMODATION DECISION. If faculty believe an approved accommodation fundamentally alters the manner in which the course is taught or evaluated, SDS must be contacted to discuss concerns and possible alternative accommodations. Per university policy regarding students with disabilities, faculty **MUST** continue to provide the accommodation while these discussions take place.

Commonly Approved Accommodations that Ensure Access for Students with Disabilities

EXTENDED TIME. At UM, the standard amount of extended time for exams, tests and quizzes, is time and a half. It is at the discretion of faculty to give more time than time and a half, *but faculty cannot give less time.* There are students approved to use double time for their exams. Again, faculty cannot give less time than that, but can give more if they choose to do so. Extended time also extended to any timed, in-class course work.

DISTRACTION-REDUCED TESTING ENVIRONMENT. A distraction-reduced testing environment means a location that is less distracting than the classroom. Several students can be testing in the same location as long as the location provides enough open space that students are not distracted by each other. Faculty should collaborate with academic chairs and deans to locate appropriate space for testing accommodations. SDS provides a test environment *only* to students who are approved for and request physical assistance with test-taking (readers, scribes, assistive technology).

NOTETAKING ASSISTANCE. It is the responsibility of faculty to facilitate the provision of notes to students who are approved for and request this accommodation. SDS will provide up to 35 community service hours to students who volunteer as a notetaker. SDS can collaborate on the provision of this accommodation but ultimately it is the responsibility of faculty to ensure direct classroom accommodations, such as the provision of notes, are provided to students in a timely manner.

ACCESSIBLE FORMAT READING MATERIALS. More and more students with print-related disabilities (blind/low vision, learning disabilities, and traumatic brain injuries) are enrolling in classes. These students may need their reading materials, including syllabi, textbooks, tests, and class handouts, converted to an accessible format. SDS converts reading materials into alternate formats such as Braille, MP3, tagged PDF, and DAISY. This process is time-consuming and delays can negatively impact a student's success in the classroom. Faculty should follow the university's deadline for submitting textbook assignments so students can access that information as early as possible. This allows students to provide SDS with accessible material requests in a timely manner. Faculty notified of the need for accessible format reading materials, must work closely with SDS to ensure that all materials can be provided to the student in a timely manner.

MODIFICATIONS OF ATTENDANCE POLICIES AND ASSIGNED DEADLINES. More students with chronic medical conditions are enrolling on college campuses each semester. UM is no different. Students with chronic medical issues (such as Type I Diabetes, Lupus, Sickle Cell Anemia, Crohn's Disease, etc.) may have unique needs that can be challenging to address. These students can experience periods of health, and then may have an unexpected flare-up that prevents them from attending class and meeting deadlines. Students with these challenges may be approved for flexibility in attendance and deadlines. Like all accommodations, this kind of flexibility is approved on a case-by-case basis depending on the severity of the student's condition. *It also is approved on a class-by-class basis given the essential nature of attendance and deadlines to the curriculum and expected learning outcomes of each class.* Students who are approved for this type of flexibility will deliver to faculty a copy of the university's policy on attendance modifications. Faculty must review the policy and contact SDS to determine if flexible attendance creates a fundamental alteration to the course and expected learning outcomes of the course.