



FACULTY GUIDE

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

135 Killian Annex  
Cullowhee, NC 28723  
828-227-3886

[disabilityservices@wcu.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@wcu.edu)

# About the Office of Disability Services

## Mission and Goals

It is the mission of the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to remove barriers and ensure equal access for all qualified students with disabilities, in keeping with WCU's core values and guiding principles of cultural diversity and equal opportunity.

In support of this mission, the goals of the Office of Disability Services are to:

- Coordinate and provide accommodations and related support services for students with disabilities;
- Serve as advocate for students with disabilities while promoting independence, self-determination, and responsibility;
- Assist the University in compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;
- Provide training and support for faculty, staff, and administration regarding the needs of students with disabilities;
- Provide consultation, information, and outreach to parents and prospective students regarding the needs of students with disabilities;
- Foster awareness and understanding University-wide of the impact of disabilities on individuals.

## Staff, Location, and Hours

Ms. Wesley J. Satterwhite, M.S., CRC, Director

828-227-2716

[wsatterwhite@wcu.edu](mailto:wsatterwhite@wcu.edu)

ODS is located in the ground floor of the Killian Annex, suite 135, next to the OneStop.

Our address is:

Office of Disability Services

Suite 135 Killian Annex

45 Killian Building Lane

Cullowhee, NC 28723

828-227-3886 (main office line)

[disabilityservices@wcu.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@wcu.edu)

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00am-5:00pm

\*hours may be extended during peak times

# Disability Law

There are two legal mandates that protect students with disabilities from discrimination and ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. Those laws include Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and its amendments.

The law defines a person with a disability as someone who: *“1) has a physical or mental impairment that limits a major life activity; 2) has a history of such an impairment; and 3) is regarded as having such an impairment.”* Major life activities include (but are not limited to): speaking, hearing, breathing, seeing, walking, learning, caring for oneself, or performing manual tasks.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act states: *“No otherwise qualified person with a disability...shall, solely on the basis of disability, be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity provided by any institution receiving federal financial assistance.”*

**Under Section 504, Western Carolina University may not discriminate in the recruitment, admission, educational process, or treatment of students. Students who have self-identified, provided documentation of a disability, and requested reasonable accommodations are to receive approved modifications to programs, appropriate academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids that enable them to participate in and benefit from all educational programs and activities.**

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act states: *“A public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of a disability, unless the public entity can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity.”*

Amendments to the ADA, which took effect January 1, 2009, clarify who is covered by the law’s protections. The ADA Amendments Act revises the definition of a disability to more broadly include impairments that limit a major life activity. The amendment also states that mitigating measures, including assistive devices, auxiliary aids, accommodations, medical therapies, and supplies have no bearing in determining whether a disability qualifies under the law.

The Office of Disability Services works to ensure that our services are in compliance with the law. In addition, ODS can be a valuable resource to assist you in making sure that your efforts as an instructor of students with disabilities are also in compliance with the law.

# Process and Procedure

It is the student's responsibility to self-identify, provide documentation of a disability, and to request accommodations. All accommodations are approved on a case-by-case basis after review of the documentation and a discussion and analysis of a student's individual needs.

## The Process

Students must complete a Registration and Request for Services Form available at the ODS office and website (<http://www.wcu.edu/academics/campus-academic-resources/disability-services/how-to-register.asp>)

The student will then:

- 1) Provide documentation of his or her disability (see below)
- 2) Meet with an ODS representative for an intake interview and analysis of needs
- 3) Work collaboratively with ODS to generate Accommodations Letters (see sample in the Appendix)
- 4) Bring the Accommodation Letters to the faculty member
- 5) Make an appointment with the faculty member to confidentially discuss his or her needs

## Documentation

Students seeking services and accommodations must submit documentation that verifies their eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the ADA Amendments Act.

In general, documentation should be typed on letterhead stationery or be in a report format and should include the following:

- A clearly stated diagnosis;
- A description of the diagnostic methodology used;
- A description of the student's current functional limitations in an academic environment;
- The signature, printed name, title, professional credentials, and contact information of the evaluator; and
- The date of the most recent evaluation.

Complete documentation guidelines can be found on the ODS website (<http://www.wcu.edu/academics/campus-academic-resources/disability-services/documentation-guidelines.asp>)

Accommodations may be provided on a provisional basis while the student is undergoing evaluation or as the student is obtaining appropriate documentation.

**Faculty should not receive, evaluate, or maintain documentation of disability.** You can be assured that when you receive an Accommodation Request Letter from ODS, the student's needs have been carefully evaluated and their disability has been appropriately documented.

## Confidentiality

ODS considers all materials pertaining to a student's disability as confidential. Disability information is shared only on a limited basis within the University and then only when there is a compelling educational reason for the individual seeking the information to have knowledge of a specific aspect of this confidential information.

It is the student's right to determine when, to whom, and how much information about their disability is given.

Faculty should respect the privacy and confidentiality of the student's disability information. Maintain Accommodations Request Letters in a secure file. Please do not discuss a student's disability or accommodations in front of the class or other students. Request that students make an appointment with you to discuss such matters.

## Faculty Notification

Students registered with ODS must request Accommodations Request Letters each semester. Students then provide these letters to each instructor, outlining the accommodations for which they have been approved. It is the student's responsibility to deliver this letter and to discuss his or her needs with each instructor.

Please see a sample Accommodations Request Letter in the Appendix.

# Accommodations and ODS Service Areas

## Exam Accommodations

Exam accommodations are designed to level the playing field and mitigate barriers so that students with disabilities are able to demonstrate what they know instead of being tested on their disability. These accommodations typically relate to the time limit and testing environment, but may also include changes in format or administration.

Ultimately faculty is responsible for all student testing for your class. If you have the time, space, and ability to administer accommodated exams, please work with the student to do so. However, ODS does have limited testing facilities and can, as a service to students and faculty, administer accommodated exams and quizzes.

Students are responsible for following the procedure for arranging accommodated testing through ODS. This procedure can be found in the Appendix and on our website (<http://www.wcu.edu/academics/campus-academic-resources/disability-services/accomodated-testing.asp>). The student must request test proctoring three or more business days in advance by sending a request email to [disabilityservices@wcu.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@wcu.edu). ODS will then contact the faculty member with a notification of the request. Faculty are asked to return the proctoring form and submit the exam at least one day prior to the exam date. You may submit the exam via delivery to our office or via email attachment. Exams can be returned to you by email, fax, delivery, or pick-up.

ODS makes every effort to maintain the integrity of exams. Students are asked to leave in our office all belongings and materials not approved by faculty for use on the test. Some (not all) testing rooms are equipped with cameras which are monitored by ODS staff and randomly recorded. Exams are secured in a locked file until administered and completed exams are shredded once we have acknowledgement that faculty has received the file.

If a student is caught cheating by a member of our staff, we will halt the exam and report the incident to the faculty member immediately.

Other testing accommodations we can provide include (but are not limited to):

- Converting exams to Braille
- Enlarged-print exams
- Readers and/or scribes
- Audio-taped exams or exams converted to electronic formats
- Computers
- Assistive technology
- Adjustable tables and chairs

# Classroom Accommodations

Common classroom accommodations include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Preferential seating;
- Alternate seating (accessible table or chair);
- Use of note-takers (please see below for more information);
- Permission to record lectures and discussions using an approved device (such as a digital recorder, SmartPen, tablet, or phone app);
- Permission to use laptop or tablet for note-taking in class;
- Copies of instructor's notes or PowerPoints;
- Enlargement of handouts, notes, and readings;
- Use of amplification equipment;
- Use of computer for in-class writing assignments;
- Permission to leave the classroom to manage medical condition;
- Permission to have food and/or drink on hand to manage medical condition.

## Alternative Media

ODS obtains or converts textbooks, exams, or other print materials in/to a more usable format than the original print version for students who are unable to use traditional print. Students who may use this accommodation include students who are blind or have low vision, students with learning disabilities in reading, or students with upper-body mobility limitations. **Your role in this accommodation is to identify for ODS all print materials used for a given class.** The creation of textbooks in alternative format can be a time-consuming process; therefore, early textbook identification is critical. Delays in textbook identification may mean that students with disabilities are not able to access their books when other students are able to do so.

Alternate formats include:

- **Audio output.** This is most commonly accomplished by using books in PDF or other electronic format and using text-to-speech software to read it aloud. Another option is to obtain an audio-recorded book that can be downloaded in MP3 or other audio format. True audio books are not available for many texts.
- **Enlargements.** Low-vision students may request paper enlargements or texts in PDF to be used with magnification software.
- **Braille.** Exams and handouts can be converted to Braille as requested through ODS. Textbooks can be ordered in Braille when available.
- **Tactile images or Raised-line images.** Some students need to be able to feel graphic images, so tactile images can be created for their use.

# Sign Language/Transcribing Services

Students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can request one of the following classroom accommodations:

- ASL Interpreters/Transliteration.
- Transcription Services. A transcriber provides a script, in real time, through a laptop computer screen for all academic-related activities (such as lecture, labs, or study groups).

Interpreters and/or transcription is arranged through ODS. Please work with our office to ensure that these services are provided smoothly and appropriately.

## Note-taking Assistance

Some students with disabilities need additional assistance in taking class notes. This could be due to a physical disability that prevents the student from being able to write or because the student needs to use cognitive resources to pay attention to events in class. In these cases, ODS may request that you, as the instructor, share your PowerPoint slides or notes with the student. If this is not possible, we ask your assistance in identifying a peer note-taker.

If a student has requested peer note-taking support, we may ask that you please make the following (or similar) announcement in class:

“For reasons of a disability, a student in this class has requested assistance with note-taking. If you are willing to provide copies of your notes so that they may be used by a student with a disability, please contact me.”

When a student volunteers, please ask that student to come to the Office of Disability Services, 135 Killian Annex (right next to OneStop), so that we can arrange details. If no volunteer comes forth, please contact ODS at 227-3886 so that we can take alternate measures.

There are many benefits for volunteer note-takers. We find that students who are taking notes for someone else tend to take better, clearer, more concise notes. In addition, ODS will provide note-taker training and free copying of notes. Note-takers may count their services as three (3) hours community service through the Center for Service Learning.

# Advocacy and Resource Support

The primary goal of each staff member in ODS is to make sure that students with disabilities have equal access to education at WCU. We can also assist instructors in making decisions about reasonable accommodations, curriculum modifications, class adjustments, and instructional strategies for working with students with specific disabilities.

ODS staff may act as advocates for students to ensure equal access to appropriate accommodations or auxiliary aids. We may provide coaching and self-advocacy training for students. We may also serve as consultants to faculty and staff on disability-related issues, provide in-service training for the university community, or participate on various university committees.

## Syllabus Statement

ODS asks that you please include the following statement on all syllabi:

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. Students who require reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and/or medical condition and provide current diagnostic documentation to The Office of Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact the Office of Disability Services for more information at (828) 227-3886, Suite 135 Killian Annex Building.

# Points to Guide Faculty

1. Provide accommodations for students with disabilities by collaborating with ODS and the student. ODS is the designated office to determine appropriate accommodations and auxiliary aids for students with disabilities. Ultimately implementing accommodations is the responsibility of the faculty and department. However, in order for most accommodations to occur faculty, students, and ODS must collaborate, communicate, and follow through on commitments in a timely manner.
2. Meet privately with students regarding disability matters and maintain confidentiality.
3. Work with ODS to provide students with print materials (i.e. handouts, exams, and textbooks) in alternative formats in a timely manner. Students with disabilities need to get class materials at the same time as their peers.
4. Do not feel obligated to provide accommodations if a student with a known disability has not requested them. You are not expected to guess or predetermine what a student may need. Students have a right to choose not to use an accommodation. If a student asks to retroactively fix a problem because he or she has failed to use an accommodation, you are not under any obligation to do so.
5. Do not provide accommodations to a student who has not registered with ODS. Not all students with disabilities are registered with ODS. This office is the only office designated to review documentation of a disability and to determine eligibility for specific accommodations for students. Also, if a request for an accommodation seems questionable or unreasonable, consult with ODS.
6. Ensure that web-enhanced instruction is accessible. If you are using Blackboard for any part of your course, you may contact LMS management (828-227-2930) to ensure accessibility of online instruction. The LMS team can also guide you in providing online accommodations such as extended time on exams and quizzes.

## FAQ's

**Q: How do I know if a student is registered with ODS?**

A: Students registered with ODS should present you with a current Accommodations Request Letter signed by an ODS staff member. The letter will clearly state what accommodations are approved for the student for your class.

**Q: When is a student required to give me Accommodations Request Letters?**

A: ODS encourages, but does not require, students to meet with you at the beginning of the semester to discuss their Accommodations Request Letters. However, a student can register, receive, and present letters at any time during the semester. We do make clear to the student that accommodations are not retroactive and you are under no obligation to allow a student to re-do any exams or work for which he or she did not request accommodations.

**Q: Am I allowed to request documentation from the student?**

A: If a student requests an accommodation, you are allowed to ask them for an Accommodations Request Letter from ODS. However, documentation describing and supporting a student's diagnoses of disability is considered confidential information. **Faculty should not receive, evaluate, or maintain documentation of disability.** You can be assured that when you receive an Accommodations Request Letter from ODS, the student's needs have been carefully evaluated and their disability has been appropriately documented.

**Q: I have a student who is struggling in my class. I think the student may have a disability. Does ODS do testing or diagnostic evaluations to find out? What can I do to help the student?**

A: ODS does not do diagnostic evaluations. However, we can refer to the student to on- and off-campus resources for assessment.

Talk privately with the student to discuss your observations. Do not diagnose or assume that the student's problems are due to a disability. Say what you see is happening. Ask questions. If appropriate, refer the student to ODS or other campus resources (such as Counseling and Psychological Services, The Writing and Learning Commons, or the Math Tutoring Center).

**Q: I have a student with a disability who is falling behind on her schoolwork. She has been using her testing accommodations and still has a D average on exams. She has missed several classes and not turned in major assignments. At this point, she is not passing the class. Do I have a right to fail a student with a disability?**

A: Students with disabilities have the same rights as other students, including the right to fail. Work produced by a student with a disability should be of equal quality to that of her peers. Provision of accommodations is not a guarantee of success.

Talk to the student as you would any student who is struggling in your class. Discuss your observations. If appropriate, refer the student to ODS or other campus resources (such as Counseling and Psychological Services, The Writing and Learning Commons, or the Math Tutoring Center).

**Q: A student has informed me that he has a disability and would like accommodations but he does not have an Accommodations Request Letter. Am I required to provide accommodations?**

A: No. You are not required to provide accommodations without the Accommodations Request Letter from ODS. Please refer the student to ODS for proper documentation of his disability and request.

**Q: Aren't accommodations just a way to give a student an advantage over other students in the class? Are we enabling students with disabilities by giving accommodations? Does this lower standards?**

A: No. Providing accommodations is in fact "leveling the playing field" for students with disabilities, reducing barriers to learning and demonstration of learning. Accommodations allow students with disabilities the same opportunities as their peers to demonstrate mastery.

You will not be asked to lower standards or alter core academic requirements of your classes. Students with disabilities are expected to meet all course requirements.

**Q: What if a student brings a "service animal" into my classroom?**

A: According to the ADA, service animals must be allowed to accompany persons with disabilities in all areas where members of the public are allowed to go. The law recognizes **only dogs** (or in some cases miniature horses) as service animals. A service animal is defined as a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability.

The service animal must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In these cases, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.

**When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. You may ask two questions: 1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability; and 2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform. You cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special ID card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.**

A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove the service animal from the premises unless: 1) the dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it; or 2) the dog is not housebroken.

Please understand that the dog is working. Do not pet, feed, or otherwise distract it from its duties.

In most cases you will be notified by ODS if a student in your class has a service animal. Please contact us for more information. However, students with service dogs are not required to be registered with our office.

**Q: How can I be sure that my students who are receiving testing accommodations at your office are not cheating?**

A: ODS makes every effort to maintain the integrity of exams. Students are asked to leave all belongings and materials not approved by faculty for use on the test in our office. Some (not all) testing rooms are equipped with cameras which are monitored by ODS staff and randomly recorded. Exams are secured in a locked file until administered and completed exams are shredded once we have acknowledgement that faculty has received the file.

If a student is caught cheating by a member of our staff, we will halt the exam and report the incident to the faculty member immediately.

# Instructional and Communication Strategies

**Practice Universal Design for Learning.** Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an approach for designing course instruction, materials, evaluation, activities, and content in such a way that all people can participate in the educational process without adaptation or retro-fitting. Using this concept, accommodations may not be necessary because learning and evaluation are available to everyone participating in a class. This approach to teaching and learning is an ideal, but incorporating some aspects of UDL may be feasible as well as helpful to all students. For more information and examples on UDL, please see <http://udluniverse.com>

**Be responsive to the needs of students with specific disabilities.** For example:

- Don't turn your back on a student who is deaf or hard-of-hearing. He or she may be reading your lips.
- If you have a student who is blind, use words to describe what you and others see. Avoid vague language such as "look at this slide" or "examine this chart".
- Assist with preferential seating when necessary, designating a seat for a sign-language interpreter, for example, or reserving a wheelchair-accessible desk for a wheelchair user.
- Provide students who are blind with orientation to the classroom by describing the physical layout of the room, including obstacles, furniture, lecture position, location of steps, posters or signs on the wall, and any low-hanging objects.
- Assist with making a room change if the room is inaccessible. Do not suggest the student drop the class. All students must have access to all classes.
- Students with disabilities may have other suggestions. Most are knowledgeable about their disability, the strategies and accommodations that work for them, and the assistive technology they use.

**Learning support strategies are especially helpful** for students with learning disabilities, ADD, brain injuries, autism, or other cognitive disabilities. Strategies and aids that provide structure can be particularly helpful. Examples include:

- a comprehensive syllabus that clearly delineates expectations and due dates;
- study guides, study questions, and opportunities for Q & A;
- review sessions to help with repetition.

**Be sensitive to disability-related etiquette.** For example:

- If a student has a guide dog, understand that this is a working animal. The animal must be allowed in the classroom, but do not feed or pet or otherwise distract the dog from its duties.

- Sign-language interpreters are in the classroom to facilitate communication. They must not be asked to do other things like run errands, proctor exams, etc. Speak to the student who is deaf and not the interpreter. The interpreter will voice student questions and statements. Do not ask an interpreter to “not say that” or “skip that.”
- Do not “call out” a student with a disability in an identifying way. Do not discuss disability-related arrangements in front of the class unless it’s in very general terms and there is no chance the student with a disability can be identified.
- It is okay to offer assistance to a person with a disability if you feel like it, but wait until your offer is accepted BEFORE you help. Listen to any instructions the person may want to give.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to get things said or done. Let the student set the pace in walking and talking.
- Understand that any aid or equipment a person uses, such as a wheelchair, cane, walker, or crutch is a part of that individual’s personal space. Do not touch, pull, push, or otherwise interact physically with the student’s body or equipment unless you are asked to do so. Always ask before you move a person in a wheelchair and wait for answer BEFORE doing so.

**Use direct and clear communication.** Use precise language. Be prepared to give information more than once in different ways. When asking questions, phrase them to elicit accurate information. Verify responses by repeating each question in a different way. During class discussions, repeat student responses so that everyone can hear and understand. Give assignments verbally and in writing with clear deadline information.

**Set expectations.** Provide grading rubrics and examples of what you are expecting from assignments. Be open to students meeting with you during office hours for clarification.

# Appendix

Western Carolina University  
OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

ACCOMMODATION LETTER

**CONFIDENTIAL**

SEMESTER: Fall 2015

STUDENT: Sample Student

BANNER ID:

COURSE: Sample Class (e.g. PSY 150)

INSTRUCTOR:

Dear Faculty Member:

The above student is enrolled in your course and has requested academic accommodations. This letter is provided to inform you of the reasonable requests that are approved for this student based on current documentation of a disability or medical condition. Accommodations are intended to minimize barriers and should not be interpreted as an alteration of academic standards. Please contact the Office of Disability Services at 227-3886 if you have any questions or concerns.

**Student** is eligible to request the following (examples):

1. Testing accommodations:
  - a. extended time (time-and-a-half);
  - b. separate, reduced-distraction environment.
2. Note-taking accommodations:
  - a. Permission to record using approved device (SmartPen, digital recorder, etc.); and/or
  - b. Copies of instructor's notes/PowerPoints, where available; OR
  - c. Peer note-taker.
3. Books in alternate format provided by ODS.
4. Permission to use laptop for all in-class or written assignments.

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Student

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Date

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Office of Disability Services representative

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Date

It is the policy of Western Carolina University to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in provision of reasonable accommodations for individuals who voluntarily disclose and provide documentation of a disability or medical condition. The information in this letter is CONFIDENTIAL and is not to be shared with other parties. Instructors are advised not to provide accommodations without notification from the Office of Disability Services.

Western Carolina University  
OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A TEST PROCTORING REQUEST**  
**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY**

Send request no later than 5:00 pm on:	To take the test on:
MONDAY	THURSDAY
TUESDAY	FRIDAY
WEDNESDAY	MONDAY
THURSDAY	TUESDAY
FRIDAY	WEDNESDAY

Email proctoring request (one per test) to: [disabilityservices@wcu.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@wcu.edu)

Type in the subject line of the email: **Test Proctoring Request**

Type the following information as formatted below in the body of the message:

1. Your **first and last** name.
2. Your 92#/ Student ID
3. Class prefix and number (e.g. ENGL 101)
4. Your instructor's **first and last** name.
5. Date and time the **class** will take the test.
6. Date and time **you** will take the test, if this is different from when the class will take the test. (You may need to schedule a different time if you have a class immediately following.)
7. List the accommodations you will need for this exam, such as: extra time (indicate time-and-a-half or double time); reduced-distraction environment; reader; scribe; alternate format test (e.g. Braille); computer and/or other equipment. (Specific accommodations must be listed on your letters and agreed upon ahead of time.)

You will be sent a confirmation email within one business day of the receipt of your request (Friday requests will be confirmed on Monday). If you do not receive a confirmation, please contact the Office of Disability Services at (828) 227-3886.

**IMPORTANT: IF YOU DO NOT FOLLOW THIS PROCEDURE, ODS might not be able to proctor your exam and you will have to take your exam with the rest of the class. In this case, the instructor might not be able to provide your accommodations for that exam.**