



Office of Academic and Student Affairs

Student Access

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Faculty Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What does the Student Access office do?

A: Student Access ensures that qualified students with documented disabilities receive equal access to OHSU programs and services. OHSU is legally required to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities (ADA).

Q: Who is considered a “qualified student with a disability?”

A: The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act define a person with a disability as someone who has a physical and/or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Major life activities include, but are not limited to: breathing, hearing, walking, seeing, lifting, speaking, working, reading, concentrating, learning, and sleeping. A person may have a visible disability (e.g. a person who is blind, Deaf, or uses a wheelchair) or a hidden disability (e.g. a learning disorder, psychological disorder, or some type of chronic health condition, such as epilepsy, diabetes, or cancer.). A qualified student with a disability is a student with a documented disability who, with or without reasonable accommodations, meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission and to participate in a particular program or activity.

Q: What is considered a “reasonable accommodation,” particularly in health and science programs?

A: Accommodations for students with disabilities typically fall into two general categories: 1) program modifications or academic adjustments, and 2) auxiliary aids. Examples of program modifications include extra time to take a test; extended time to complete a program of study; allowing a student time away to check blood sugar levels. Examples of auxiliary aids includes use of an amplified or digital stethoscope; audio recording a lecture; use of a notetaker; using assistive technology, such as text to speech software.

Q: What would be considered an unreasonable accommodation?

A: An accommodation would not be considered reasonable if it 1) caused a fundamental alteration to the program or course of study, 2) jeopardized the health and safety of others, or 3) caused an undue burden to the program. Undue burdens are typically related to administrative burdens rather than financial burdens, such as changing the start time of a class or creating a special clerkship for a student.

Q: How are accommodations decided?

A: Student Access determines appropriate accommodations based on student interviews, evaluating the student's disability documentation provided by a qualified healthcare provider, and consulting with the Program Accommodation Liaison (PAL) and appropriate faculty within the school. If an accommodation request is considered not reasonable, Student Access and the academic program are required to engage in an "interactive process" with the student to ensure that alternative reasonable accommodations are considered.

Q: Am I required to honor a student's request for accommodations if she or he presents official paperwork to me from Student Access?

A: Yes, if you receive a letter from Student Access that outlines disability accommodations, you must provide those accommodations. If a student asks for an accommodation but does not provide documentation from Student Access, you are not required to provide the requested accommodation.

Q: Should I evaluate students with disabilities any differently that I do the rest of the class?

A: All students, including those with disabilities, should be evaluated at the same level as all students. The requested accommodations are not in place to give the student an extra advantage or to raise or lower academic expectations, but are designed to "level the playing field." Some students with disabilities may exhibit their knowledge, production, and other course expectations differently than their peers. For example, a student with a learning disability may read at a much slower rate than his/her peers, thus extra time to take an exam helps ensure that the test is assessing the student's knowledge level and not his/her reading speed.

Q: If I suspect a student may have a disability, what can I do to support the student?

A: Talk privately to the student to discuss your observations. The student may reveal his/her disability, but he or she may also never have been diagnosed with a disability, thus not aware that accommodations may be available. Offer resources relevant to the student's performance issues (e.g. academic support, mentoring, additional readings), including a referral to Student Access. Student Access, in addition to providing disability accommodation, also works with students to improve academic study skills.

Q: What if I disagree with an accommodation or do not understand why a particular accommodation is required?

A: You are encouraged to speak to Dr. Sue Orchard at 503-494-0082 or orchards@ohsu.edu any time. You can also contact the Program Accommodation Liaison for your campus: Portland, Ann Nielsen, nielsena@ohsu.edu; Klamath Falls, Terry Ross, rosst@ohsu.edu; Ashland, Joanne Noone, noonej@ohsu.edu; La Grande, Muriel Shaul, shaulm@ohsu.edu; Monmouth, Bret Lyman, lyman@ohsu.edu. The Student Access website provides additional information for students and faculty at www.ohsu.edu/student-access.