



## OHSU Teaching and Learning Center

### Office of Student Access

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## Student Access Frequently Asked Questions

### How Student Access Works with Students with Disabilities

#### **Q: What does the Office of Student Access 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) and its subsequent amendments.

The responsibilities of Student Access are two-fold: 1) determine if students are qualified and recommend appropriate academic accommodations specific to each student's disability needs and academic program/environment; 2) work closely with academic programs to ensure that accommodations are reasonable, that they are appropriately implemented, and that they do not impose an undue burden.

*Note: Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis; students with the same disability may not have the same accommodations, even in the same program.*

#### **Q: Who is considered a "qualified student with a disability?"**

A: 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.

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).

#### **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 note-taker; 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 as needed. 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.

## **How Faculty Work with Students with Disabilities**

### **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 a letter from Student Access, you are not required to provide the requested accommodation. Please refer the student to Student Access for more information about the accommodation process.

*Note: The accommodation process may several weeks to complete; students should be encouraged to apply well before they anticipate needing academic accommodations.*

### **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 using the same assessment criteria and/or completion of course objectives. 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 a student is struggling and I suspect they may have a disability, what can I do to support the student?**

A: Talk privately to the student to discuss your observations about their performance and/or behavior \*only\* as it pertains to your course. Students may at this time disclose that they have a disability. If this happens, refer them to Student Access directly to discuss options for academic accommodations. Even if you suspect that a student has a disability, do not suggest that they do, as this is sensitive ground for many students, as you might imagine. Rather, in your discussion, provide them with a list of resources relevant to the student's performance issues (e.g. academic support, mentoring/advising, tutoring, additional course materials) and/or behavior issues (e.g. student health center, behavior health resources, peer support groups), including Student Access.

*Note: In the case of learning disabilities and psychological/psychiatric disabilities, if a student has not yet been diagnosed, they should first visit student health which will then refer them to an appropriate specialist for evaluation, as deemed necessary. The cost for disability evaluations are the responsibility of the student. The Student Access Handbook provides detailed information about required disability documentation.*

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

A: Contact Shelby Acteson at 503-494-0082 or [studentaccess@ohsu.edu](mailto:studentaccess@ohsu.edu) for information regarding specific accommodations and working with students with disabilities in general.

You can also contact your Program Accommodation Liaison (PAL), where applicable:

#### **School of Medicine:**

UME – Dr. Molly Osborne at 503-494-0751 or [osbornem@ohsu.edu](mailto:osbornem@ohsu.edu);

GME - Dr. Eilis Boudreau at 503-494-4017 or [boudreau@ohsu.edu](mailto:boudreau@ohsu.edu).

#### **School of Nursing:**

PDX – Ann Nielsen at 503-494-1649 or [nielsena@ohsu.edu](mailto:nielsena@ohsu.edu);

Klamath Falls – Tamara Rose at 541-885-1513 or [roset@ohsu.edu](mailto:roset@ohsu.edu);

Ashland – Joanne Noone at 541-552-8453 or [noonej@ohsu.edu](mailto:noonej@ohsu.edu);

Monmouth – Angie Docherty at 503-838-8124 or [docherty@ohsu.edu](mailto:docherty@ohsu.edu);

La Grand – Carla Hagen at 541-962-3383 or [hagenc@osu.edu](mailto:hagenc@osu.edu)

#### **School of Dentistry:**

Mark Mitchell at 503-494-8778.

The Student Access website provides additional information for students and faculty: [www.ohsu.edu/student-access](http://www.ohsu.edu/student-access). Look for updates to the website in Fal 2014.