

## **ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER**

### **Faculty Information Guide for Students with Disabilities**

The Academic Support Center (ASC) works to coordinate academic accommodations (AA) for students with documented disabilities as recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that are impacting their academic performance, to the extent permissible by available resources.

#### **Definition of a Disability that requires AA**

According to CPRD (2006 UN Commission on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), people with disabilities are those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Some types of disabilities: Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD), visual, mobility, hearing, or speech impairment, neurological conditions, Autism or Asperger's, learning disabilities (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, etc), chronic health conditions, and other mental conditions (depression, anxiety, etc).

What is not considered a disability? Personality traits, environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantages, personal attributes such as advanced age, left-handedness or sexual orientation, or medical / psychological conditions that are well-managed by treatment so that it no longer substantially limits major life functions.

#### **Scope of AA Services Supported by ASC**

ASC can provide consultation services for parents, faculty, staff, or students with questions about disabilities.

ASC has a network of referral sources where students can get a complete assessment done for a variety of disabilities.

In order to receive disability services through ASC, students must present to ASC approved documentation of disability, functional impairment resulting from the disability, and recommended academic accommodations by an authorized medical or mental health professional.

Services for students with disabilities at the ASC are limited to coordinating, assigning, and approving academic accommodations. ASC is not responsible to proctor or implement accommodations.

In order to receive disability services through ASC, students must present to ASC approved documentation of disability, functional impairment resulting from the disability, and recommended academic accommodations by an authorized medical or mental health professional.

ASC provides the student with an official letter outlining the academic accommodations that have been approved for that particular student. This letter serves as an official notice of the approval of academic accommodations.

Goal of accommodations is to provide equal access to educational opportunities and to demonstrate competence. Improving performance/grades is not the reason to get accommodations.

ASC is not able to provide mobility support/assistance.

ASC is not responsible for campus accessibility.

Students are expected to:

- move around independently for their daily activities on the AUS campus
- attend classes and study independently
- meet all course requirements including attendance requirements, deadlines, and complete all assignments/exams as required by the course or by the contract

ASC reserves the right to deny accommodations to individuals based on availability of resources, invalid/incomplete documentation, failure to meet deadlines or follow ASC contract conditions, or other circumstances as seen relevant by ASC.

### **Confidentiality**

The ASC reserves the right to communicate with faculty and staff at AUS as needed to coordinate academic accommodations for the students. Student records will be stored electronically on a secure network. All documents and contents of the student's file are the property of the AUS and the ASC.

Student has a choice whether to disclose disability to instructor or not. The ASC prepares a letter for students to submit to their instructor(s) regarding their disability and their accommodation needs.

ASC will not discuss or disclose a student's medical information unless the student has given written permission to do so.

ASC will discuss with faculty members how needed accommodations can be implemented, but not the nature of the disability.

### **Faculty Rights**

Faculty members have the right to:

- Maintain academic standards for courses.
- Determine course content and how it will be taught.
- Confirm a student's accommodations and ask for clarification about a specific accommodation (listed on the student's accommodation letter) with ASC.
- Deny a request for accommodation – if the student has not been approved for such accommodation or if the student does not provide their accommodation letter to the instructor.
- Award grades appropriate to the level of the student's demonstration of mastery of material.
- Fail a student who does not perform to passing standards.

Faculty members do not have the right to:

- Refuse to provide an approved accommodation for a documented disability.
- Challenge the legitimacy of a student's disability.
- Review a student's documentation, including diagnostic data.

- Inquire about the details of the student's medical condition. You can have a private conversation with the student about the support they may need in your particular course in order to meet the learning outcomes without asking about the specifics of their disability.

### **How to refer a student to ASC**

We have found that instead of us contacting the student directly, it is best when the faculty member discusses the situation with the student and encourages them to see us. As their instructor, you already have a relationship with them and can gently use examples from your observations to make the referral.

We recommend that you ask to speak with the student privately. During this meeting, share with your student your concern about his or her wellbeing. Use specific examples of concerning behaviors that you have observed. Listen actively and empathize with his/her struggle. Inform the student about our services and encourage them to see us for further assistance. If possible and if the student permits, call our office on the student's behalf while he or she is in your office to schedule an appointment or ask any questions.

Please remember that ultimately it is the student's responsibility to follow through on any suggestions or recommendations made by AUS staff and faculty. Neither the faculty nor the ASC can force a student to get an assessment done or to seek further help.

### **What happens in order for a student to be approved for academic accommodations?**

In order for a student to be approved for academic accommodations, they have to provide a medical assessment report with a definitive diagnosis that meets the ADA's criteria for a disability. If their assessment was done outside of AUS, it has to be authenticated by the University Health Center (UHC).

During the process of authentication, the UHC verifies the credentials of the medical provider. Once we get the assessment report, we review it for approval and match the disability to the appropriate academic accommodations. A contract is written for the student outlining the approved accommodations. This contract is then approved by the student's Associate Dean and the Vice Provost.

Once all the approvals are obtained, the ASC provides the student with an official letter outlining their academic accommodations. The student is supposed to give a copy of this letter to each of their instructors during the first week of classes each semester or immediately after first getting the contract approved (new academic accommodations contracts are only approved till the fifth week of a regular semester). This letter serves as an official notice of approved accommodations.

Please note that ASC will not be notifying instructors directly that any of their students have a disability. It is the students' responsibility to inform their instructors by presenting them with the official letter in a timely manner. Faculty members can then work with the student to provide the approved accommodations. The most common accommodations are for additional testing time and/or a quiet testing space. If there are any questions, ASC is available to assist.

## General Recommendations When Dealing with Students with Academic Accommodations

- Don't assume how someone needs help. Offer to help them but let them tell you how specifically you can help.
- Use clear, specific language (avoid slang or regional terms).
- Give specific directions.
- Find out the student's strengths and limitations and advise accordingly.
- Get to know the student so he/she will feel comfortable coming to you with problems.
- Set explicit guidelines for classroom behavior.
- Communicate with the Academic Support Center if you observe any behavior or interactions that you are unsure of how to approach.

Avoid / Inappropriate	Use / Appropriate
<b>Language Usage</b>	
<p><b>Person-first Language</b></p> <p>Language matters in shaping beliefs. Describing people with their medical illness as a label dehumanizes them, creates stereotypes, and diminishes other attributes. Person-first language puts the person first, so their disability is no longer a primary defining attribute.</p>	
Handicap or Cripple. Handicap is derived from "cap in hand" when individuals with disabilities were not allowed to work and were forced to beg by holding their caps in their hands. Cripple comes from German root "kripple" meaning "powerless"	Disability. Lack of particular ability; this is an acceptable term to use in person first language.
Disabled, handicapped, or special needs student	Student with a disability
Cripple, physically handicapped or wheelchair bound. These terms are patronizing.	A person with a physical disability/impairment or wheelchair user
Deaf and dumb	A person with hearing and speech impairments
"Normal"	Avoid making comparisons but if needed, use "People without this particular disability"
Raising your voice or talking as if speaking to a child	Maintain your usual pitch volume and rhythm when speaking
<b>Mobility Disability</b>	
Do not push, lean on, or hold onto a person's wheelchair	Pull up a chair or kneel directly in front of the person when talking with them for longer than a few minutes. It is okay to walk next to them and talk.
If you know a person using a wheelchair is coming over	Rearrange furniture to make space ahead of time.
Looking down to a person in a wheelchair for a prolonged period.	Sit down and talk to them. This makes eye contact easier and means they are not constantly craning their neck to look up to you.

### **Hearing Impairment**

Let the person take the lead in establishing the mode of communication.

If they lip read, face them directly, speak in normal tone and moderate pace and keep hands and objects away from face. No smoking or chewing gum.

If asked to repeat what you said, please do not respond with “never mind” as it implies that the person is not worth the effort.

Only speak in a loud voice if requested by the person.

If in a group, get their attention before talking to them (wave arm or tap on shoulder).

### **Vision Impairment**

Avoid a guessing game - promptly introduce yourself and anyone with you. Mention your role if appropriate.

If in a group, lightly touch arm to indicate that you are talking to them and not someone else in the group.

Never pet or address the guide dog. Walk on the opposite side of the guide dog.

If you regularly interact with someone, notify them of any changes in the environment.

If you are going to warn, be specific rather than saying ‘watch out’.

### **Speech Impairment**

Give your full attention and patience.

Make sure they have a clear view of your face.

Do not interrupt or try to finish their sentences.

If you did not understand, it’s okay to ask them to repeat. Do not pretend to understand.

If you are not sure of what was said, you can paraphrase to confirm.

You can ask to write down what they are trying to say if you continue to have difficulty understanding but ask their permission first.

### **References:**

- A legal Guide for Student Affairs Professionals (2009) by William Kaplin and Barbara A Lee.
- Accommodations in Higher Education under the Americans with Disabilities Act (2000) by Michael Gordon and Shelby Keiser.
- Advising Students with Disabilities by Leslie Hemphill
- College Students and Disability Law (2000) by Stephen B. Thomas • Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook (2008). Virginia N. Gordon, Wesley R. Habley, Thomas J. Grites, and Associates.
- Higher Education and Disability: Education needs a coordinated approach to improve its assistance to schools in supporting students by the US government accountability office
- Texas A&M, Disability Resources
- The Legal Rights of Students with Disabilities: International Perspectives Edited by Charles Russo
- UN Commission on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- University of Washington, Disability Services Office