Question: How will I know if a student in my class has a disability?
Answer:

It is the student’s responsibility to identify herself or himself to you. Students typically do so via the Accommodation Letter generated by our office. Students who identify themselves to you without this letter, should be asked if they have registered with Disability Services. If the student indicates that she or he is registered with our office, and is requesting that you make academic accommodations, tell the student that she or he should obtain an Accommodation Letter from our office. If the student states that she or he is not registered with our office, and she or he is requesting that you make academic accommodations, tell the student that she or he should register with our office to obtain the Memorandum to Faculty form. Note: If a student has been granted testing accommodations, you should also be presented an Exam/Quiz Schedule/Change form and a Testing Conditions form.

Question: Is the information regarding a student’s disability and their needs for academic accommodations confidential?
Answer:

Completely! Instructors and teaching assistants must maintain a policy of strict confidentiality about the identity of a student with a disability, the nature of their disability, and the disability–related accommodations they require.

Question: Can I ask a student disclose her or his disability to me?
Answer:

Absolutely not. We understand that this may be difficult for some individuals who teach; however, requiring that a student disclose her or his disability to you puts the university at great legal risk. Although you may be open to listening if a student chooses to explain her or his disability to you—without your actual or implied solicitation of information, it is very important that you communicate respect for the student’s privacy regarding the specific nature of her or his disability. In that vein, comments such as, “What’s wrong with you?” or “You look normal to me.” are clearly inappropriate and put the university at great risk as they can be interpreted as discriminatory.

It is true that many disabilities covered by the law are not easy to detect visibly. Thus, it is important that verbal and nonverbal responses be monitored. If you ever suspect that a request for accommodation is not legitimate, contact the Director or
Assistant Director of Disability Services.

**Question:** Is it acceptable to ask a student who is having obvious difficulties whether they have a disability?

**Answer:**

A direct inquisition about a possible disability is not recommended for a couple of reasons. First, the Americans with Disabilities Act states that a public entity may not make unnecessary inquiries into the existence of a disability. These inquiries usually relate to hiring or pre-admission screening, but when talking with students such inquiries should also be avoided. A direct inquiry such as this could also be considered intrusive or insensitive. Treat them as you would any student by suggesting a conference with you about the work you feel they are having difficulty with.

**Question:** How can I refer a student to the DS office?

**Answer:**

You may make an announcement to your class and/or print a statement on your syllabus referring students with disabilities to the DS office. You may also encourage students to meet with you to discuss their academic needs.

**Question:** What happens when the student goes to register at DS?

**Answer:**

Students will be asked to complete a general registration form. Their disability, as they understand it, will be discussed with the Director or Assistant Director, as well as their history of accommodation, and possible reasonable accommodations given their stated disability. The student will be informed that to be granted accommodations, she or he will have to submit appropriate documentation of disability from a licensed diagnostician. Once received, the documentation will be reviewed for appropriateness based on guidelines recommended by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). Upon review, the Director will discuss reasonable accommodations based on the documentation available. Students without appropriate or current documentation will be given appropriate referral, if the student so desires.

**Question:** How are instructors informed that a student is qualified to receive disability–related accommodations?

**Answer:**

A student who wishes to receive disability–related accommodations must register with the DS office before services are rendered (How to Register with DS). Once a student is registered, faculty must provide the academic accommodations that the DS office determines reasonable. The student provides each of their instructors with a letter written by the DS Office, which substantiates proof of the disability and identifies approved academic accommodations.

**Question:** How can I encourage students with disabilities to talk with me about their accommodations?

**Answer:**
Announce at the beginning of the course that you are available to discuss instructional methods and appropriate course modifications with students who have disabilities. In addition, you may include a note to this effect on your course syllabus. Two examples are:

- Example 1: “Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible. Please have your accommodation letter from Texas A&M University–CC DS Office with you when you come see me. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Disability Services Office (located in Driftwood 101) at 825–5816.”
- Example 2: “To request academic accommodations due to a permanent or temporary disability, please contact the Disability Services Office at 825.5816, located in Driftwood 101. If you have an Academic Accommodations letter from their office indicating that you have a disability which requires academic accommodations, please present it to me before or after class or during my office hours so we can discuss the accommodations that you might need for this class.”

**Question:** What is a reasonable academic accommodation?

**Answer:**

A reasonable accommodation is a modification that allows the student equal access to the learning opportunity. Reasonable accommodations are determined after reviewing the student’s medical documentation related to her or his disability. The DS Office determines which accommodations are reasonable based on the specific ways the student’s disability affects their ability to access buildings, information, or resources related to their academic experience. The student will provide you with a letter from the DS Office, outlining appropriate accommodations. Academic accommodations include, but are not limited to: testing accommodations, adaptive technology services, and assistance in arranging other support services (e.g., interpreters, note-takers, scribes, and readers).

DS supports students with issues and situations related to advocacy, accessibility, on-campus housing, transportation services, and attendant care.

**Question:** Can I choose to accommodate a student who is not registered with DS and/or who has not provided me with the appropriate DS forms?

**Answer:**

Any exceptions that a professor chooses to make in her or his instructional and/or testing procedures is not deemed an accommodation of a disability. We all know that most professors choose to make exceptions for particular students from time to time (e.g., allowing a student to take a make-up test in the event of a family member’s death). However, any exceptions made based on a students alleged, but undocumented disability, can put the university at legal risk. In these cases, always ask yourself:

1. “Since accommodations for appropriately documented disabilities are made in
the DS office, do I have some other legitimate reason besides the alleged
disability for making an exception for this student?”

2. “Is it an exception that I would be willing to make for any other non-disabled
student?”

**Question:** What if I do not agree with a recommended accommodation?

**Answer:**

Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi is required by federal regulation to establish
formal grievance procedures for providing prompt and equitable resolution of
disagreements. When a dispute involves the conduct of a course or academic
program, those procedures provide for consultation between the faculty member
responsible for the course, the student, and a representative from the DS Office.
Contact the DS Office to learn about the grievance procedure.

**Question:** Do I have any say–so in the manner in which a student is
accommodated?

**Answer:**

Because you are the person most intimately familiar with your own courses, you
may provide very valuable input in the process of tailoring the specifics of several
accommodations for a given student. Also, any prior experience that you have had
with the student or in working with other students with disabilities may be very
valuable. One example of ways in which your input may be used in tailoring
accommodations for a specific student would be the following: A student’s
accommodation states that he is to have examinations read orally. Typically, we
would have a worker in our office read the questions to the student. However, we
have had cases where the professor wanted to record the test questions on audio
tape for the student. Another alternative might be to send the test to the office on
disk and have the student take the test on computer read by the JAWS or Zoomtext
software program. All input from the professor regarding reasonable alternative
ways to accommodate will be given serious consideration.

**Question:** Is the extended examination time accommodation for students with
disabilities fair to other students?

**Answer:**

The Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states: “The
results of an examination should accurately reflect an individual’s aptitude or
achievement level or whatever the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting
an individual’s impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills.” The courts have held
repeatedly that a lengthening of the standard examination period is an appropriate
accommodation for some students with disabilities.

**Question:** Can a faculty member forbid a student with a disability to use a tape
recorder in class?

**Answer:**

An instructor is required to allow a student to tape record the course if taping the
class is determined to be an appropriate accommodation for a student’s disability.
Tape recorders are specifically mentioned in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act as
a means of providing full participation in educational programs and activities. Students who are approved to have this accommodation must sign a Note–taking Support Agreement form at the DS office. This form provides assurance that the student will protect the confidentiality of the recorded information. Contact the DS office with specific questions or concerns about tape recording lectures.

**Question:** Will I be required to give my personal notes or Power Point presentation to a student with a disability?

**Answer:**

Providing personal copies of professor’s notes or presentations cannot be mandated as an academic accommodation. However, if it is a professor’s customary practice to make (her or his) personal notes or presentations available to all students, it may be a reasonable accommodation for DS to provide the student with the notes in an alternate format (e.g., DS may enlarge the notes or record them in audio format—if appropriate to the disability). A student may, however, have as an accommodation “‘Access to presentations outside of class.’” An example might be that a student with a visual impairment may need to have access to a Powerpoint presentation outside of class so that the contents of any text and graphics can be described orally to the student. The professor could choose to go over the presentation with the student, or a Teaching Assistant, another student in the class, or an DS staff member might describe the contents of the presentation to the student. The presentation would remain the property of the faculty member and would not be given to the student to keep without the faculty members’ permission.

**Question:** Can I be required to tutor a student as an academic accommodation?

**Answer:**

Students with disabilities are to be given equal access to you as are your other students. Tutoring is not considered to be an academic accommodation by the Office of Civil Rights. However, any student with a disability who chooses to obtain the tutoring services generally offered by the university, has the right of equal access to those services.

**Question:** Can I refuse to accommodate a student who presents an Accommodations Letter?

**Answer:**

If you have questions about the validity of a letter presented by a student, you are urged to contact the DS office. Although we cannot disclose the specifics about a student’s disability without the student’s consent, the Director can review the files and tell you if the forms you were presented were originated from our office and if the accommodations listed are in fact the accommodations granted. If discussions with the Director indicate that the forms were not originated from our office, or the forms have been inappropriately altered, you are not obligated to accommodate the student at that time and a disciplinary referral may be made to the Dean of Students.

Also, the Director may be able to discuss with you in general terms about the rationale behind certain accommodations without disclosing specifics about a particular student’s disability.
**Question:** How do I accommodate a student whose disability causes them to miss class?

**Answer:**

Determine to what extent class absences may fundamentally interfere with the student completing your course objectives and learning outcomes. Consult with the DS office about note-taking services, exam accommodations, and any other support services that may be needed. It is important to note that you must not lower your academic expectations; ultimately, the student is responsible for gaining the knowledge and skills required in the class.

**Question:** May I fail a student with a disability?

**Answer:**

Yes. The laws mandate access to education for students with disabilities, not guaranteed academic success. When a faculty member has provided reasonable academic accommodations, all that is required to comply with the law, and the student does not meet the course requirements, then failing a student is proper and lawful. The following is a compliance checklist that may be helpful:

- Stand by academic standards and freedoms, which include full and equitable access to academic programs.
- Provide verbal and written notice to your students of your willingness to accommodate.
- Communicate clear and concise expectations for performance to your students.
- Distinguish between essential and non-essential components of the course.
- Respect requests for reasonable accommodations.
- Permit students to use auxiliary aides and technologies that ensure access (examples: note takers, sign language interpreters, readers, scribes, research assistants, tape recorders, assistive listening devices).
- Assure that your course materials, whether printed or electronic, are accessible and available in alternative formats (examples: computer electronic text, large print, internet, CD/cassettes).
- Consult with the DS office if you have questions when a student requests accommodations or on how to provide an accommodation.
- Keep student disability-related information strictly confidential.

**Question:** Are you also the ADA coordinator for faculty and staff?

**Answer:**

No. Faculty and staff with disabilities desiring accommodation should contact Sam Ramirez in the office of Equal Opportunity and Employee Relations, 825–2765, Corpus Christi Hall 130B2.

**Question:** What are the differences between ""low vision,"" ""visual impairment,"" and ""blindness?"

**Answer:**

Standard vision is measured as 20/20. A person is considered ""visually impaired"" if they can see no better than 20/70 with correction in their better eye. This means the person can see at 20 feet what people with standard vision see at 70 feet. If an
individual’s vision is no better than 20/200, they are considered “legally blind” if their central vision is no greater than 12 degrees (i.e., they have limited peripheral vision and appears to be seeing things as if looking through a tube or straw). A person is typically referred to as “totally blind” or “black blind” if they have no usable sight. “Low vision” or “limited vision” usually refers to someone who has a visual impairment but is not totally blind.

**Question:** What are strategies that can be used by students with low vision to access printed materials?

**Answer:**

Printed material can be enlarged with a photocopier for a student able to read large print. Textbooks can be scanned and accessed by a computer with speech and/or magnification software. A closed–circuit television (CCTV) can enlarge the printed material for a student. A reader may read material aloud to the student or provide taped recordings.

**Question:** How can a student who is blind follow a video?

**Answer:**

If all essential information contained in the video is provided verbally and if another person watching the video describes important visual content, the student who is blind can benefit from the video. Ideally, videotapes are available with audio description, which include extra spoken content.

**Question:** How can a person with a visual impairment participate in a class that is computer based?

**Answer:**

A student who has some usable sight may be able to use the computer with screen magnification software and a large monitor. A student with little or no usable vision would benefit most from a screen reading software. The student should know what accommodations will work for them and should be consulted as early in the class as possible so they do not fall behind.

**Question:** In what format can a student who is blind turn in written assignments?

**Answer:**

In most cases, a student who is blind will type written assignments using a computer that is equipped with speech output software. At times, students may also choose to dictate short answers to a reader who will hand–write responses. Students who do not have access to a reader may turn in a cassette recording of their assignment.

**Question:** What can I do to make sure a student who is hard of hearing can access spoken information in a large lecture?

**Answer:**

Do not turn your back to the group. Avoid lecturing against a window since the light through the window may throw a shadow over your mouth, making lip–reading difficult. Finally, avoid obscuring your mouth with books, hands, or other materials.
**Question:** How do I grade written essays when syntax and grammatical errors are evident for students who have a hearing loss and use American Sign Language (ASL)?

**Answer:**

English is a second language for many people who are deaf, and therefore, presents unique challenges for the student and professor when written assignments are evaluated. For students who rely on ASL, transferring thoughts to a written form is difficult because ASL does not have verb tenses. You must provide a reasonable accommodation for a disability, but should not lower your academic standards. Correct the students grammar and syntax and assist the student in developing their English skills. You may wish to refer the student to the Tutoring and Learning Center.

**Question:** How do individuals with hearing impairments communicate by telephone?

**Answer:**

There are three different kinds of technology used for telephone communication. TTY, TDD and TT are acronyms used interchangeably for mechanical teleprinter equipment which consists of a small keyboard and visual display. This equipment is used by a person who does not have enough functional hearing to understand speech even with amplification. Amplification devices can be added to telephones to allow people who are hard of hearing to benefit from enhanced volume. A third method is through a relay system where only the person with a hearing impairment has a TTY/TDD/TT and an operator relays the message to the hearing party.

**Question:** What are Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)?

**Answer:**

This device consists of a microphone/transmitter positioned close to the speaker’s mouth that sends the speaker’s voice through the air or by cable to the receiver worn by the student. ALDs can provide clear sound over distances, eliminating echoes and reducing the distraction of surrounding noises, allowing the student to more easily attend to the instructor.

**Question:** Do I need to make any special adjustments in a laboratory for a student who is deaf?

**Answer:**

Yes. Provide written instructions, captioned video instructions, and/or demonstrations prior to the lab. Safety procedures should also be reviewed with the students and visual lab warning signals (e.g. flashlights) need to be in place. It may also be helpful to provide preferential seating so the student can easily view demonstrations and watch the instructor. It is important to remember that students who use a sign language interpreter or read lips may have difficulty simultaneously observing a demonstration while watching the interpreter or reading lips. Discuss lab activities with the student, as they are the best source of information about their needs.

**Question:** How can I improve the accessibility of my lab for a student who uses a wheelchair?

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi: Disability Services http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/?main=faculty.resources&sub=Faculty...
Principles of universal design promote access for individuals with a wide range of abilities and disabilities and should be considered when planning and organizing the physical environment. Examples of basic universal design guidelines you can readily implement include the following:

- Make sure all routes to the lab are wheelchair accessible.
- Keep aisles wide and clear.
- Provide at least one adjustable table or work space.
- Make sure controls for computer and other equipment can be reached by someone sitting in a wheelchair.

**Question:** In an emergency evacuation, what is my responsibility for a student who uses a wheelchair or who has another mobility impairment?

**Answer:**

Inform the student about emergency procedures. Work with the student and the DS office to develop a clear evacuation plan.

**Additional Information**

Please contact the Disability Services office, at extension 825.5816 or visit Driftwood 101.