

# The Basics: Making your Course Accessible to Students with Disabilities

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## Faculty basics for being prepared for accommodating student(s) with a disability

Don't wait until you receive notification from Testing and Disability Services to begin preparing for accessibility because...

1. You can receive a memo from TDS notifying you that a student in your class requires academic accommodations at any point during a semester.

**WHY?** Students can acquire, or be diagnosed with a disability and be found eligible for academic accommodations at any time. Students with disabilities add, drop and withdraw from classes just like all college students. Students with disabilities may decide to forego accommodations at the beginning of a semester, and later decide that they want to use an accommodation in one or more classes.

2. You never know what accommodations might be required to be provided.

**WHY?** Each student's academic accommodations are individualized. You could have several students with different types of visible or invisible disabilities requiring different accommodations in the class.

### How to be Prepared

1. **Order textbooks early (by the due date in the academic calendar).**
2. **Order from publishers that respond quickly and are committed to making on-line material accessible for diverse learners.**
3. **Ask for an extra desk copy so if an electronic copy is unavailable there is a copy for TDS to chop, scan and make accessible.**
4. **If the book comes with a CD or other digital material used for testing, homework, or other assignments, determine the accessibility of the material prior to purchase.**
  - a. Ask the manufacturer for a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT). When received review the VPAT with someone knowledgeable about software accessibility.
  - b. If the manufacturer does not have a VPAT, ask for a trial version and work with TDS to determine accessibility prior to purchase.

- c. *Most materials associated with textbooks have limited accessibility.* Ask if the publisher identifies questions and exercises that are accessible. This will help you determine what material can and cannot be used in the course.
- d. *Develop a course plan* to supplement questions or exercises that are not accessible and cannot be used. Planning ahead and creating accessible materials enables equal access.

**5. Create accessible course material.**

This is done by creating all materials (class handouts, postings to D2L, PowerPoint presentations, course packets, library reserves and any other materials) as accessible files. Please see Accessible Electronic Text for information and links to tutorials.

6. **Choose captioned audio/visual material-** note auto captioned material, for example YouTube captions are not acceptable, and are not considered “equal access” without significant editing. Please see Captioning for more information about captioned materials.

7. **Syllabus Statement-** please include a statement regarding disability on your syllabus. See attached addendum and feel free to contact TDS for sample syllabus statements.

8. **When you receive an Accommodation Letter from TDS read it carefully.** The academic accommodations listed on the memo must be provided to the student, so it is important that you fully understand each accommodation. If you have any questions about an accommodation, or how it should be implemented, contact TDS (706-737-1469).

## General Facts about Disability at the Post-Secondary Level

### Every person is unique-

The ADA is civil rights legislation, just as there is no list for how a person from a certain race, ethnic background, gender, or sexual orientation wants to be treated; no such list exists for people with disabilities.

### Did you know?

Students with disabilities represented about 11% of all post-secondary students. This population appears to be increasing.

Most students with disabilities have “hidden disabilities” or disabilities that are not immediately apparent, such as learning disabilities, emotional or psychological disabilities, chronic health conditions, or etc.

Recent legislative changes may increase the number and diversity of students with disabilities pursuing higher education.

- ADA Amendments Act 2008
- Higher Education Opportunity Act
- Post 9/11 GI Bill® : “GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.”

The ADA Amendments Act 2008 and subsequent OCR (Office of Civil Rights) findings and case law have clarified the definition of equal access and the responsibilities of universities in providing academic accommodations/adjustments to achieve equal access for student with disabilities.

Academic accommodations/adjustments are mandated by law and are intended to provide equal access without lowering academic standards.

Many accommodations originally intended to benefit students with disabilities often improve the college experience for everyone.

- For example, captioned videos provide a benefit not only to students who are D/deaf or hard of hearing, but also provides all students with two ways to receive instructional materials and can greatly benefit students who are not auditory learners or students for whom English is a second language.

## **HINTS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**

Avoid references, phrases, and words that suggest restrictions, limitations, or boundaries because these phrases tend to carry stereotypes and contribute to discriminating attitudes. Even if a person with disabilities refers to him or herself in particular ways, using phrases like “confined to a wheelchair” reflect poor judgment on the part of the speaker or writer. If you feel awkward in how to refer to a person with disabilities, your best bet may be to ask the person.

Speak directly rather than through a companion or Sign Language interpreter who may be present.

Offer to shake hands when introduced. People with limited hand use or an artificial limb can usually shake hands and offering the left hand is an acceptable greeting.

Always identify yourself and others who may be with you when meeting someone with a visual disability. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.

Please note that not all persons with disabilities will require assistance. Be aware that specialized services should not be forced on an individual simply because of a disability. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen or ask for instructions.

Treat adults as adults. Address people with disabilities by their first names only when extending that same familiarity to all others. Never patronize people in wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.

Do not lean against or hang on someone’s wheelchair. Bear in mind that people with disabilities treat their chairs as extensions of their bodies. And so do people with guide dogs and assistance dogs. Never distract a service animal from their job without the owner’s permission.

Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking and wait for them to finish. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, or a nod of the head. Never pretend to understand; instead repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.

Generally when having an extended conversation it is appropriate to place yourself at eye level when speaking with someone in a wheelchair or scooter.

Tap a person who has a hearing disability on the shoulder or wave your hand to get his or her attention. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to establish if the person can read your lips. If so, try to face the light source and keep hands and food away from your mouth when speaking. If a person is wearing a hearing aid, don’t assume that they have the ability to discriminate your speaking voice. Never shout at a person. Just speak in a normal tone of voice. Many D/deaf/ hard of hearing students can communicate by texting on a cell phone, writing on a piece of paper or typing on your computer.

Relax. Do not be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as “See you later” or “Did you hear about this?” that seem to relate to a person’s disability.

## Accessible Electronic Text

### Textbooks

Ask your publisher sales representative if an accessible electronic version of the book is available. Whenever possible, order books from publishers that respond in a timely manner and will make an electronic (PDF or Word) copy of the book available. This will allow Testing and Disability Service to edit and create an accessible version for students with disabilities (if a textbook cannot be obtained from the Alternative Media Access Center in a timely fashion). Suggested publishers are:

- a. Cengage
- b. CQ Press
- c. F.A. Davis Company
- d. John Wiley & Sons
- e. McGraw-Hill Education
- f. Pearson Education
- g. Reed Elsevier, Inc.
- h. W.W. Norton

Make your book selection early. It is important to order books by the due date listed in the Academic Calendar.

### Course Materials/Syllabus

Ensure that your course materials are accessible to all students in your class. This includes course packets, materials in library reserve, materials posted to or linked from course specific websites, sent by email, or given out in class.

#### **Scanning materials**

Did you know that PDF files have screen reading software embedded and so can be read without any adaptive software? In order for the “Read Out Loud” functionality to work:

- a. Scan original documents. The printing must be very clear in order for optical character recognition software to identify the letters. Copies that have any marks, underlining, shadows, writing in margins, blurred, light, or specked printing will not scan appropriately, and should be re-typed.
- b. If scanning portions of a book, we suggest you use a book scanner to avoid “binder shadows” that are caused when the binding of the book is pressed down to scan using a flatbed scanner. Please contact TDS if you need assistance with scanning portions of books.

- c. Scan the document as a PDF Image/Text file. **PDFs scanned as image files will not read.**
- d. Check the file after scanning to ensure that:
  - i. The magnifying glass function works.
  - ii. The “Read Out loud” function works (View:: Read out Loud :: Activate Read Out Loud: Read to end of Page or Read to End of Document)

NOTE: If you need additional assistance with creating accessible material, please contact ITS or TDS. TDS staff will help you identify instructions on creating appropriate documents.

### **Material in Library Reserve**

When giving hard copy materials to the library reserve staff to scan and post, please send original documents. Copies that have any marks, underlining, shadows, writing in margins, are blurred, light, or specked generally do not scan properly. Please inform the library reserve staff that the materials need to be accessible to a student who requires accessible e-text. Ask them to check the final product for accessibility. Work with library reserve staff to ensure any material used is accessible prior to being made available to the class.

### **D2L and web assisted materials**

Desire2Learn itself is an accessible platform, however, you must post accessible documents to the platform. If you post an inaccessible document it will remain inaccessible. Remember if you link to another website or document, it must also be accessible.

### **In-class Handouts**

In-class handouts/assignments must also be accessible. If you use handouts or conduct in-class assignments here are some options:

1. Make an electronic version of all in-class handouts available via an email to the class list or a course website before the material is passed out in class.
2. If a student has enlarged materials as an accommodation as well as e-text, ask the student confidentially which works best for him/her for in-class handouts/assignments. If the student chooses enlarged materials ask what font size would be best.
3. Ask blind/low vision students if he/she can bring a laptop computer and headphones or BrailleNote to class. If the student has access to a laptop, or BrailleNote you can create and save the document to a flash drive and give it to the student during class, or email the material to the student. The student will then be able to listen to the material their classmates read.
  - a. If using an electronic version in the classroom is not an option for a blind student and Braille is an accommodation listed on the students Accommodation Letter you may send the document to TDS to be converted to Braille. Conversion to Braille can be a complicated and time consuming process. Please submit materials to be converted to Braille far in advance of the date of expected use. Each submission will be evaluated to determine if the material can be converted in-house, and a time frame for completion determined.



## Note-taking

### **Note taking... A collaborative effort**

It is important to remember that note-taking is a collaborative effort between you and Testing and Disability Services. Only by working together we can provide access to the note-taking accommodation.

### **Remember that there are different types of note-taking accommodations**

Note-taking accommodations are different for each student. One student may require an actual note-taker who takes notes throughout the lecture, while another student may simply require a tape recorder, Smarten, etc. to record the lecture for future review. The accommodation that a student requires will be outlined in his/her Accommodation Letter. It is important to review this document thoroughly as soon as you receive it.

### **Some things to remember when you have a student in your class who requires a note-taker**

- The student will always benefit from any instructor notes that you may have. These include personal lecture notes, notes written in the notes section of a PowerPoint presentation, etc. A PowerPoint presentation itself is not acceptable as a form of notes.
- Try to make time periodically after class to review the note-takers notes. Notify TDS if you have any concerns about the quality of the note takers notes.
- Be open to reviewing the notes provided by the note-taker with the student receiving the notes.

## Testing

The student's testing accommodation(s) will be listed on his/her Classroom Authorization Accommodation Form. If a reader/scribe is recommended, it is often in everyone's best interest if the reader/scribe is either one of the teaching assistants for the course, the professor, or another member of the academic department who is familiar with the vocabulary used in the discipline. This practice also allows students to address any problems or questions they may have to someone with knowledge of course content and departmental procedures. If you are unable to administer a test using resources within the department, tests may be administered at Testing and Disability Services.

- Students may choose to waive any individual testing accommodation on any given test. For example, a student may be eligible to use extended time in a distraction reduced environment, but on a short 5 question quiz may decide to take the test in class with the class. Therefore, it is important to discuss testing accommodations with each student in advance of each test to ensure coordination of the testing process.
- If a student's accommodations include, and the student requests, a test be converted to an alternative format, the test must be received in TDS at least 3 days prior to the expected test date. Tests can be sent to [tds@augusta.edu](mailto:tds@augusta.edu) or dropped off in Galloway Hall.
- Tests should not be scheduled in a way that extended test time would interfere with attendance in another course. If students will be testing in TDS, tests should be scheduled during office hours Monday through Friday 8:00am - 5:00pm whenever possible.
- If the student is unable to take a test on the same date as the class and is allowed a make-up exam, contact the student to reschedule the make-up exam and inform TDS if the student will be testing in our office.

## Captioning

Uncaptioned materials may NOT be used in a course where captioning is an academic accommodation. This includes videos posted or linked to online. However, please keep in mind that captioned materials are not only a benefit to students who are D/deaf or Hard of Hearing but can also greatly benefit students who are not auditory learners or for whom English is a second language. If students will be showing videos as a part of class projects those also need to be captioned.

Please ask students to choose captioned videos or contact TDS as soon as possible for captioning options.

Because a student can request academic accommodations at any point during the semester TDS suggests:

When ordering video materials you choose captioned versions. If a captioned version is not available (YouTube captioning/transcribing is not captioning), consider using a different video that would have a similar impact, but is available in a captioned version.

If it is impossible to find an appropriate captioned video and you have received an Accommodation Letter informing you that a student in your class must receive a captioning accommodation, please contact the Educational and Collaborative Technology Center (ECTC) (706-737-1703) to see if they can help. If they can't, then contact TDS so appropriate alternatives can be made.

(Timeframes for captioning videos varies based on the length, content of the video, and the number of other videos in the cue. On average a 30-minute video takes approximately 10-15 hours to caption.)

- When requesting audio-visual equipment, make sure you request equipment with a captioning decoder.
- To acquire TV/VCRs with closed captioning capabilities please call ECTC (706-737-1703).
- Please make sure you can open the captions on the video(s) you plan on using prior to the day of class.

## **ADDENDUM – Syllabus Statement**

Below is the statement regarding access to academic accommodations that are available for you to include on your syllabus:

### STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Augusta University is committed to ensuring all students have equal access to all services and benefits of Augusta University. If you are a student with a disability and require accommodations due to a diagnosed disability, you must register with Testing and Disability Services (TDS) and submit the appropriate documentation. Requests for accommodations should be made as early in the semester as possible, as accommodations are not retroactive. Contact us at [tds@augusta.edu](mailto:tds@augusta.edu) or by telephone at 706-737-1469, for additional information. All accommodations are confidential.