



# Disability Services

## Principles of Accommodation

General eligibility for specific accommodations are determined for each student on an individual basis through an interactive process between Disability Services and the student. Requested accommodations must be supported by the documented effects of the disability. Students must then request accommodation in each instructional situation and work with the faculty member to implement. To help faculty understand how to implement these approved accommodations in a wide range of situations, these 'Principles of Accommodation' provide a few fundamental guidelines to consider when working with students with disabilities.

### Access (not Advantages)

The goal of accommodations is to give students with a disability equal access to the learning environment. Accommodations are not designed to give the student an advantage over other students, to lower academic standards, or to weaken academic rigor. All students should be graded according to the same standards.

### When Reasonable Accommodations are Unreasonable

Accommodations should not fundamentally alter or significantly change your requirements to complete a class or program. The determination that an accommodation is a 'fundamental alteration' is made by Disability Services in consultation with your dean and others who are trained, knowledgeable, and experienced in the program field. The decision will be a careful, thoughtful, and rational review of the program and its requirements. If you believe an accommodation fundamentally alters the essential elements of your class or program, please contact Disability Services.

### No Penalties for using Accommodations (or Beware Unintended Consequences)

Ideally, accommodations are provided in a manner that provides all students an equivalent experience. When this can't be achieved, you must be certain that there is not an adverse impact on students with disabilities. When scheduling conflicts prevent students from taking their exams at the same time as the rest of the class, students with disabilities should not, for example, be uniformly required to take tests a day early. While in some cases this might be the most appropriate solution, students with disabilities should not routinely receive less time to study than the rest of the class.

## Too Much Information Can Be a Bad Thing

As you discuss accommodations with students, you should focus on what barriers they may experience and how approved accommodations will be implemented. You should not ask what is *wrong* with the student or ask for details about their disability. Direct inquiries about a student's disability are intrusive and insensitive. Having information about a student's diagnosis is risky. It may inspire you to treat that student differently in an attempt to be helpful or out of a sense of sympathy. It may also elicit unconscious bias.

## Privacy, Not Secrecy

Information about a student's disability and accommodations is private and should not be discussed in front of peers or shared with other faculty unless they have "legitimate educational interests." This information is part of a student's educational record and protected by FERPA. Faculty are not responsible if other students (with or without disabilities) are able to figure out that a student is using accommodations.

## Student Choice

While you and the university are obligated to provide students with disabilities equal access to education to the maximum extent possible, students are not legally required to disclose their disability. Nor are they required to use the accommodations they are eligible to receive. If students do not disclose a disability, you do not have to provide accommodations.

Students who disclose a disability to faculty, or request accommodations directly from faculty, should be directed to contact Disability Services.

Students may request accommodations at any point in the quarter, but accommodations are not retroactive.

Disability Services advocates for equal access. In some cases this means supporting students; in other situations, it means supporting faculty. In every situation, the goal is the same: to ensure students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate.

## When in Doubt, ASK

Disability Services serves as a resource to the CWU community.

If you have questions or concerns about how to properly accommodate a student, or if you have concerns about the appropriateness of an approved accommodation, please contact Disability Services.

Disability Services (509)963-2214 [ds@cwu.edu](mailto:ds@cwu.edu) or  
Wendy Holden (509)963-2149 [holdenwe@cwu.edu](mailto:holdenwe@cwu.edu)