

Faculty Guide

TO DISABILITY
SERVICES

Alvernia University

Faculty Guide to Disability Services

CONTENTS

Letter to Faculty.....	3
Notice of Non-Discrimination.....	3
Commitment and Mission Statement.....	4
ADA Syllabus Statement.....	4
ADA Definitions.....	5
Academic Accommodations.....	5
Notification to Faculty.....	6
Confidentiality and Release of Information.....	6
Faculty Rights and Responsibilities.....	7
Student Rights and Responsibilities.....	7
University Rights and Responsibilities.....	8
Testing Accommodations Policy and Procedures.....	8
Frequently Asked Questions.....	9

From the Disability Services Coordinator

Dear Faculty Member:

Disability Services at Alvernia University has a strong commitment to compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which provides that:

“No otherwise qualified individual with a disability... shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance...”

In 1990, this act was extended through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandates equal access and treatment of persons with disabilities. Our Disability Services program exists to serve students in ways that are consistent with the current and emerging legislation and regulations.

To support our efforts, we look to faculty to be especially sensitive to the needs of this population, particularly to the accommodations approved for our students who have a range of psychological, physical, and learning disabilities. Accommodations should not be seen as changing the academic standards; instead, the intent is to ensure that students with disabilities are presented with equal opportunities in the classroom.

Currently, over 135 students have identified disabilities and are registered with our program. Through our joint efforts, we can meet the needs of all students by providing the appropriate and effective support for both visible and less observable forms of disability.

Sincerely,

Darla Timberlake MA
ADA Coordinator
Academic Learning Specialist-Academic Intervention
105 C Bernardine Hall

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended, Alvernia University does not discriminate against students or employees with disabilities. Efforts are made to arrange reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons. Alvernia University is not only committed to the legal requirements of the ADA, but also to the ethical and moral responsibility to treat all members of the campus community with fairness, dignity, and respect.

OUR COMMITMENT

Disability Services at Alvernia University is committed to working with students, faculty, and staff to develop and implement reasonable accommodations and strategies for successful learning while preserving the integrity and academic standards of the University. We are committed to compliance with legal requirements that mandate equal opportunity and access for individuals with disabilities.

OUR MISSION

The Office of Disability Services is part of Alvernia University's Educational Planning Center. Our mission is to enhance the educational opportunities for students with disabilities at Alvernia University.

Our staff is committed to assisting students with disabilities achieve his or her personal and academic goals by authorizing reasonable academic accommodations within the student's classes under appropriate circumstances.

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ADA SYLLABUS STATEMENT

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"), the University offers accommodations to students with documented learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the Disability Services Coordinator, prior to the beginning of the semester, to initiate the accommodation process and to notify instructors as soon as possible so accommodations can be made early on in the semester.

Course requirements will not be waived but, if possible, reasonable accommodations will be made to allow each student to meet course requirements. Students needing assistance should contact Darla Timberlake (610.568.1499) in The Office of Disability Services or e-mail (disability.services@alvernia.edu).

ADA DEFINITIONS

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Under these laws, a person with a disability is defined as: 1) having physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, 2) having a record of such an impairment, or 3) being regarded as having such an impairment.

Physical impairment is any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the body's systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, sensory organs, respiratory, cardiovascular, digestive, reproductive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine.

Mental impairment is any mental or psychological disorder such as mental illness, organic brain syndrome, intellectual disability, or specific learning disability.

Substantially limits is defined as being unable to perform or being significantly limited in ability to perform a major life activity when compared to the average person in the general population.

Major life activities are functions such as caring for one's self, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, and participating in community activities.

Examples of common disabling conditions include a number of learning disabilities, anxiety and other psychological disorders, blindness and low vision, deaf or hard of hearing, traumatic brain injury and concussion, mobility limitations, and attention disorders. These conditions must substantially limit one or more major life activities.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Requests for academic accommodations must be reasonable and are determined on a case-by-case basis. Reasonable accommodations may include exam modifications, academic modifications, and auxiliary services.

Exam accommodations may include extended test time, distraction reduced testing, use of a reader or a scribe, use of a calculator, and arrangements to take exams at an alternative time.

Academic accommodations may include a reduced course load, priority registration, course meetings in accessible locations, and course substitution.

Auxiliary services may include assistive technology, note takers, materials in large print, readers, and alternative forms of text.

Accommodations that fundamentally alter the nature of the course work, or the materials assigned, or are unduly burdensome financially or administratively do not qualify as reasonable accommodations.

NOTIFICATION TO FACULTY

Students requesting academic accommodations in the classroom must present a Letter of Accommodation verifying the need for accommodations to each of their instructors. Disability Services staff will provide students with this written verification. It is the student's responsibility to pick up the letters from Disability Services and deliver them to instructors. Disability Services does not mail letters to faculty members.

The student should meet with each professor to deliver the letters and discuss the accommodations that will be necessary in each class. It is recommended that students provide their instructors with these letters at the beginning of each semester. If testing accommodations have been approved, students should remind instructors of their need for testing accommodation in advance of each exam. Instructors are under no obligation to provide accommodations for a student who does not identify oneself as a student with a disability.

EXCUSED ATTENDANCE AGREEMENTS

Many factors must go into consideration with regards to being excused from attendance in a University class due to health or disability, for instance: written attendance policies of a class. Documentation provided by a licensed professional must document that your long term disability warrants these accommodations on a college campus.

If attendance is essential to the class, an excuse not to attend and/or a request for an attendance accommodation may not be a viable option. The decision to modify attendance requirements is thusly based upon many factors.

If the class requires a degree of attendance that cannot be met by the student, withdrawal from the class may be a consideration. The Alvernia University Office of Disability Services must consider all elements of a situation to determine if an instance exists that would warrant absences above the number determined appropriate by the instructor.

An Attendance Agreement between the student and each faculty member MUST be completed for the excused attendance accommodation to be used within the course. The Attendance Agreement Form will be included with each student's letter of accommodation that refers to that specific accommodation.

Attendance policies for individual classes (as stated on the course syllabus) and Alvernia University wide attendance policies are stated in the handbook for each individual major. Each academic major has a list of core performance standards that need to be met for completion of requirements of that academic program. **Those core requirements apply to all students, regardless of disability status.** *The Office of Disability Services does not issue excuses for absences.* **Please note that accommodations are not retroactive.**

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Disability Services respects the confidential nature of student records and personally identifiable disability-related information. Letters of Accommodation for instructors, therefore, do not disclose the specific nature of a student's disability. Instead, the letters explain that the student has provided documentation of a disability and lists the approved accommodations for that student. On a legitimate, need-to-know basis, Disability Services may at times discuss the impact of the disability and the accommodations required with appropriate individuals on campus. Documentation provided to Disability Services by the student will not be released to any person or agency unless the student provides written permission by signing a Release of Information Form, or unless there is a court order.

Faculty and staff are especially encouraged to be mindful of student confidentiality. Here are a few suggestions for how faculty may avoid confidentiality issues or creating uncomfortable situations for their students with disabilities:

Faculty should:

- Avoid implications or making statements that a student with a disability is any different from the general student population.
- Avoid disclosing or drawing attention to a student's disability in front of the class.
- Make testing arrangements early rather than asking the student to come to the classroom and then leave with the test in hand.
- Arrange for testing in a private, quiet space when proctoring an accommodated exam for a student with disabilities.
- When asking for a volunteer note taker, say this service has been approved by the University for "another student in class" without giving the name of the student needing the notes.
- Always discuss a student's disability, needs, or accommodation in a private place.

FACULTY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Faculty at Alvernia University have the right to:

- Know that a request for accommodation is valid;
- Hold all students to the same essential course requirements and grading standards;
- Expect the student to initiate accommodation requests;
- Receive official and, when possible, advance notice of the need for accommodation;
- Request that exams be proctored in a secure and monitored environment;
- Suggest or consult with Disability Services regarding an alternative to a requested accommodation, if a better method is available;
- Disagree with a request that would require a fundamental change in the program, creates undue financial burden on the University, or significantly and negatively impacts the rest of the students in the class.

Faculty at Alvernia University have the responsibility to:

- Work collaboratively with Disability Services when a request for accommodation is made;
- Identify and establish essential functions, skills, abilities, and knowledge of their courses and evaluate ALL students on this basis;
- Work to ensure that all audio-visual materials used in class are accessible;
- Clearly communicate your testing procedures with the student and with Disability Services by completing a Testing Accommodation Request Form, and delivering the test to Disability Services in a timely manner;
- Explore and consider incorporating principles of Universal Design for Learning in their teaching;
- When possible, accommodate the student's testing needs in the classroom or during office hours (having access to the instructor during testing is the ideal method for accommodated testing);
- Respect and maintain student confidentiality at all times.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students with disabilities at Alvernia have the right to:

- Equal participation in and access to the courses, programs, services, and activities offered through the University;
- Receive reasonable accommodation, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services;
- Appropriate privacy and confidentiality of information regarding their disabilities;
- Reasonably available academic information in accessible formats.

Students with disabilities at Alvernia have the responsibility to:

- Meet institutional qualifications and maintain institutional standards for courses, programs, services, and activities;
- Identify, in a timely manner, as an individual with a disability when an accommodation is needed and seek information, counsel, and assistance as necessary;
- Demonstrate and/or document (from an appropriate licensed professional) the nature of the disability and how such disability limits their participation in courses, programs, services, and activities;
- Follow published procedures for obtaining reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.

UNIVERSITY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Alvernia University has the right to:

- Identify and establish function, abilities, skills, knowledge, standards, and criteria for courses, programs, services, and activities, and evaluate and determine reasonable accommodations on this basis;
- Request and receive through, Disability Services, current documentation from an appropriate licensed professional that supports requests for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services;
- Refuse an unreasonable accommodation, adjustment, and/or auxiliary aid or service that creates an undue burden for the University, or fundamentally alters the courses, programs, services, or activities of the University.

Alvernia University has the responsibility to:

- Provide academic information in accessible formats to persons with disabilities upon request, unless to do so would constitute an undue burden for the University;
- Ensure that courses, programs, services, and activities, when viewed in their entirety, are available and usable in the most integrated and appropriate settings;

- Evaluate students and applicants on their abilities, not their disabilities;
- Provide or arrange for appropriate and reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services for students with identified disabilities in courses, programs, services, and activities;
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication concerning students with disabilities.

TESTING ACCOMMODATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Only students who have been approved for testing accommodations are entitled to proctored exams through Disability Services. Disability Services does not provide proctored testing for short term injuries, such as concussions, during the active semester.

Scheduling Exams

To schedule an exam with Disability Services, **students must submit a request for testing using the Testing Accommodation Request Form**, which must be hand delivered to Disability Services by the student at least **THREE (3) FULL WORKING DAYS** prior to the requested exam date. Testing times are Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

For exams scheduled on...	Testing requests must be received by...
Monday	The previous Wednesday
Tuesday	The previous Thursday
Wednesday	The previous Friday
Thursday	Monday of the same week of the exam
Friday	Tuesday of the same week of the exam

Each section of the Testing Accommodation Request Forms must be completed (including the instructor section) before a test will be scheduled. The exam should be delivered to the Disability Services Office at least the day prior to the scheduled exam.

Rescheduling Exam/Missed Exams

Students are responsible for notifying Disability Services staff and their professor if an exam is to be missed for any reason.

Arrangements to reschedule the exam must be discussed with the faculty member directly. Faculty must then email Disability Services to confirm permission for a student to reschedule a missed exam.

Delivering and Returning Accommodated Exams

Disability Services must receive exams **no later than the day before the scheduled test date**, unless the faculty member indicates on the request form that the student will bring the exam with them to their testing appointment.

Disability Services will not use interoffice mail for delivery or return of exams.

The following options are available for exam delivery:

- Hand delivery to DS by faculty
Delivery can include handing it directly to DS staff or placing it in the exam lock box located on the wall between offices 105A and B.
- Email to: disability.services@alvernia.edu
- By student in a sealed envelope

The following options are available for exam return to faculty:

- Delivery to department secretary (beginning of the following day of the proctored exam)
- Scanned and sent by email to faculty's Alvernia email address (be very specific as to what needs to be scanned on the permission form)
- Delivered by student in a sealed envelope
- Pick up by faculty during DS hours of operation

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will I know that a student with a disability is enrolled in one of my courses?

Students registered with Disability Services should present you with a current Letter of Accommodation provided by our program that outlines what accommodations have been approved. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with you at the beginning of each semester to discuss this letter. However, a student can register with Disability Services or present their accommodation letter to you at any time during the semester.

What types of accommodations will I have to provide?

Reasonable accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis, and depend greatly on the nature of the disability. Often students receive accommodations such as extended time on tests, testing in a quiet environment, preferential classroom seating, or note taking assistance.

Why should I take extra time to accommodate students?

The University at large, not one particular person or program, is legally responsible for providing accommodations to students with disabilities. Because many accommodations are related to course requirements, it is necessary for faculty to play an active part in providing accommodations.

If my student needs testing accommodations, what should I do?

When possible, faculty may administer the exam accommodations in the classroom, their department, or during office hours. Alternatively, the student may arrange to take the exam with a proctor through Disability Services. In this case, the student must present the instructor with a Testing Accommodation Request Form, which indicates preferences for test delivery and return, scheduling, and other instructions. Accommodated tests will not be scheduled with Disability Services without a written and signed approval from the instructor on the Students Testing Accommodation Request Form. Please provide specific exam instructions on this form for the proctor to implement.

What are invisible disabilities?

Some disabilities are visibly apparent while others are not. Many students with disabilities have hidden disabilities that are less observable such as traumatic brain injury or other medical conditions, psychological and learning disabilities. Whether a disability is visible or invisible, the most important consideration is that each disability varies from person to person. For this reason, each student's needs must be evaluated on an individual basis.

I have a student who is having difficulty in my class, and suspect the student may have a disability. What should I do?

Speak privately with the student to discuss your observations. After speaking with the student, if appropriate, encourage the student to contact or visit the Health Services Center and/or Disability Services directly for further assistance. Not all situations will result in accommodations, but referrals to the appropriate resources will be given to the student during the discussion with Disability Services.

By providing accommodations for a student with a disability, am I giving them an advantage over other students in my class?

Offering accommodations provides educational equity, not advantage—it is, in fact, “leveling the playing field.” Academic accommodations allow students with disabilities the same opportunities as their peers to demonstrate their academic potential.

What are the rules for testing in disability services?

Generally, students must take their test at the same time of the in-class exam, unless other arrangements are made with the instructor or there are scheduling conflicts. Walk-in exams will not be administered. Exams must be completed between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM. *To accommodate the amount of midterm and final exams, testing hours will be extended at that time period only.* Tests are proctored according to the specifications outlined by the instructor on the testing request form. All exams are monitored by camera, and personal belongings and cell phones are not allowed in the testing space.

What about the attendance policies?

A written Attendance Agreement Form will be filled out by you, the instructor, and the student. This document outlines your expectations to ensure the fidelity of the course but still allows the student to keep their protections under the law when their symptoms exacerbate unexpectedly.

If the class requires a degree of attendance that cannot be met by the student, withdrawal from the class may be a consideration. The Alvernia University Office of Disability Services must consider all elements of a situation to determine if an instance exists that would warrant absences above the number determined appropriate by the instructor.

Each academic major has a list of core performance standards that need to be met for completion of requirements of that academic program. **Those core requirements apply to all students, regardless of disability status.** *The Office of Disability Services does not issue excuses for absences.*

What if a student needs to record my lecture?

Recorded lectures are a reasonable accommodation for certain disabilities. A written Recording Agreement will be filled out by you, the instructor and the student. This agreement ensures that recordings taken during class are for the use of individual students and are not to be replicated or shared. All recordings must be destroyed after the completion of the semester.

What if I need a proctor to help with a student who has missed an exam because he/she was ill or injured?

Faculty should administer the exam accommodations in the classroom, their department, or during office hours. The Office of Disability Services proctors exams during the semester for **only** those students who are registered with Disability Services and are approved for that specific accommodation.

****Special arrangements may be made between the instructors, health services and ODS to accommodate final exams that need to be postponed due to an injury or illness. These proctoring sessions will occur during the semester breaks only.***

*****Signed Attendance and Recording Agreements are kept in the Disability Services Office.***