Mission Statement

Disability Support Services (DSS) is committed to making UAB programs and services accessible to students with disabilities. To prevent discrimination based on disability in all UAB student programs and services, the primary goal of DSS is to ensure an accessible university environment by working with students, faculty, staff and community agencies to provide appropriate accommodations.

This resource guide for faculty and staff has been developed to answer questions about faculty responsibilities to students with disabilities, and to offer recommendations concerning accommodations for students with disabilities. DSS staff members can provide additional information and resources regarding services for students with disabilities.
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www.uab.edu/dss
If you only read one page…

- Faculty play a key role in the success of students with disabilities in college.

  While Disability Support Services determines appropriate accommodations, it is the responsibility of the faculty to provide the accommodations in the academic setting.

  For example, if a student is eligible to receive extended time on tests, it is up to you and the student to determine how that accommodation will be provided. You may decide that having your test proctored in DSS is the best option or you may decide that you can proctor the test yourself. In either case, you need to work with the student to determine how to best provide the accommodation. As always, remember that DSS is available as a resource to assist you if you need help figuring out the best way to provide an accommodation.

- You are not alone when it comes to accommodating students with disabilities. Nor are you expected to be an expert on disability.

  Call DSS to request help, to get answers to questions, to raise concerns, or to get clarification on DSS policies and procedures relating to students with disabilities.

- The design and implementation of disability-related accommodations is a collaborative process involving the student, DSS, and often the faculty member.

- There are four main implications for faculty regarding the laws governing disability-related services in higher education.

  Students with disabilities must meet the same admission standards as other students. Once admitted, they have the same rights to all programs and facilities and are eligible to receive reasonable accommodations that relate to their disability. They have a right to confidentiality of all disability-related information.

- Students with disabilities are responsible to meet the same academic standards as other students.

  While students with disabilities may receive some reasonable accommodations intended to mitigate the educational impact of their disabilities, these accommodations should not water down the curriculum, alter the standards for performance, or waive any course or class activity that provides the students with essential knowledge or skills.
When a Student Requests Accommodations

It is a student’s responsibility to self-identify and request accommodations. Faculty are not responsible for identifying students with disabilities.

1. Verify that the student is registered for services with Disability Support Services (DSS). If they are registered, they can provide you with a DSS accommodation letter.

   If the student is not registered with DSS:
   Refer the student to DSS so that the disability can be documented and appropriate accommodations determined. Do not provide any disability-related accommodations until you have received a DSS accommodation letter from the student, even if it seems like an obvious disability. Contact DSS if you have questions or concerns.

   If the student is registered with DSS:
   The student should provide you with an accommodation letter from DSS that lists his or her accommodations. If the student does not have this, ask the student to obtain it before providing the accommodation.

2. Once the student provides you with the DSS accommodation letter…
   - Talk with the student about how best to implement the accommodations. Remember it is essential to maintain the confidentiality of this student, so talk with him or her in private. We recommend that students schedule an appointment with faculty during office hours to discuss accommodations.
   - Verify which accommodations the student intends to use.
   - Complete and sign the 2nd page of the accommodation letter and return it to DSS.
   - Please keep the top copy with the list of accommodations for your reference. Remember that this document contains confidential information (student name, SSN), so make sure it is kept in a secure area and please destroy it when you no longer need it.

3. If at any time you have questions regarding the accommodations, call DSS.

   Continue to provide the accommodations to the student unless DSS instructs otherwise. This includes if you believe that providing a particular accommodation would substantially change any essential elements or requirements of the curriculum or academic program.
The Law

Of the applicable federal laws and regulations, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 most completely define the obligation of colleges and universities toward students with disabilities. These laws provide for accommodations and academic adjustments, including auxiliary aids and services, to ensure there is no discrimination on the basis of disability.

Under the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act, a person with a disability is defined as any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity as compared to the average person in the general population. Individuals who have a record of a disability, or are regarded as having such a disability, have certain protections under the law and cannot be subject to discrimination.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act:

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was the first law to specifically address the needs of students with disabilities. It states in part: “No otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities in the United States...shall solely by reason of his or her 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.” Section 504 and subsequent amendments require that institutions of higher education provide students with disabilities the same opportunity to engage in educational experiences as non-disabled students. Students who voluntarily disclose that they have a disability (self identify), provide documentation of that disability, and meet the eligibility requirements are entitled to receive approved accommodations (referred to as appropriate academic adjustments in Section 504), such as modifications of programs or auxiliary aids, in order to participate in programs and activities.
The Americans with Disabilities Act, the “ADA”:

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a wide-ranging legislation intended to make society more accessible to people with disabilities. It protects fundamental rights and extends equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to the areas of public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

Under the ADA, a person with a disability is defined as any person who:

1. has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities;
2. has a record of such impairment; or
3. is regarded as having such an impairment.

The ADA also clarifies the Section 504 phrase “otherwise qualified” individual with a disability, as one either:

“with or without reasonable modification to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities.”

Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act applies to colleges and universities receiving federal financial assistance. The mandates of the ADA apply to all institutions of higher education, regardless of the receipt of federal funds.
**Four Important Implications of Disability Laws for Educators**

First, students with disabilities have the right to be in higher education if they are otherwise qualified to be there.

Once a student with a disability has met the university entrance or admission criteria, with or without the use of accommodations, he or she has the same right as any other student to the educational experience. Just like any other student, those with disabilities are responsible for determining their own level of success.

Second, once they are enrolled, students with disabilities have the right to access all of the programs, academic and non-academic, that are available to other students.

Instructors cannot refuse to work with a student simply because they know he or she has a disability or because they are concerned that having a disability would prevent him or her from being successful. Furthermore, students with disabilities should be held to the same set of standards and criteria as students without disabilities.

Third, students with disabilities are eligible for some accommodations that relate to their disabilities.

Instructors need to be prepared to make adaptations or reasonable accommodations to their procedures and practices so that students with disabilities are able to do the same things that other college students are required to do. This may include altering or making changes in the delivery of lecture or course materials or in the assessment of knowledge in order to counter the effects of the disability.

Fourth, students with disabilities have a right to confidentiality of all disability-related information.

As a result, there may be times when faculty and instructors may receive a request for accommodation without being told who the accommodation is for.

Other times, the student may approach their instructor and tell them that he has a disability that will require some accommodation.
Important Information about Confidentiality

What about confidentiality? How much information am I allowed to know about a student’s disability? If I knew more, maybe I could be more helpful or design a better accommodation.

All disability-related information is confidential. There may even be times when you receive a request for an accommodation from DSS without knowing which student in your class will be receiving the accommodation. Accommodations such as note takers may not require any intervention from you and DSS may be able to handle the services without notifying you. However, most of the time a student will approach you and tell you that he or she has a disability that will require some accommodations.

Information about a student’s disability or accommodation should not be shared with others without the student’s permission. It is up to the student to decide how much information to share about his or her disability.

Faculty do not have the right to challenge the legitimacy of a student’s disability, demand to review diagnostic information, refuse to provide accommodations, or refuse to work with a student because he or she has a disability. Please discuss concerns regarding accommodation requests with DSS.

You cannot ask someone if he or she has a disability. What you can do is let them know that you notice they are having difficulties completing tests, difficulty in class, etc. Let them know about campus resources, i.e. tutoring labs, DSS, counseling services, or academic advising. Do not just recommend DSS.

If you know a student has a disability, you cannot ask them to disclose it to you. They are not required to inform you of the nature of their disability. One instance when a student may choose to disclose his or her disability is if the student has a history of a seizure disorder. He or she may disclose so that you can be informed of the appropriate action to take should the student have a seizure in class.

If you suspect a student has a disability (or if the student suspects he or she has a disability). The appropriate thing to do in this case is to let the student know what you are observing behaviorally. Cite specific examples (e.g. from writing samples, test taking experiences, behavior in class) that illustrate your concern. You can ask the student if he or she can explain the difficulties. If the student cannot, then it may be a good idea to refer him or her to DSS to discuss the limitations further. DSS will discuss assessment options with a student to determine whether or not the student has a disability.
Frequently Asked Questions About the Law

Are students with disabilities required to meet the same academic standards as other students?
Yes! Students with disabilities must meet the same admission and retention standards that are required of other students. Students who have academic difficulty due to a disability or illness may appeal a denial of admission or a retention decision at which time disability information may be used by the appeal committee to make a final decision. The appeal committee may offer provisional admission or retention. There are no quotas related to students with disabilities.

How will these students cope in the workforce if accommodations are provided at the university?
The purpose of accommodations in postsecondary education is to level the playing field for students in an academic setting and allow the student to receive an education without discrimination. Accommodations in employment are often similar to those in postsecondary education. Employers also provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Individuals with disabilities must meet the same performance criteria as others.

What is a disability and who is eligible for services from the DSS?
The ADA defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Individuals who have a history of such impairment or have been regarded by others as having impairment are also protected from discrimination under the ADA. DSS serves students who meet the eligibility guidelines of the institution. These guidelines are defined by each institution based on several factors, including the definition of disabilities set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

While it is not possible to list all of the possible conditions that qualify as disabilities under ADA, some common ones include:

- Epilepsy
- Specific Learning Disability
- Cancer
- HIV / AIDS
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Attention Deficit Disorders
- Cerebral Palsy
- Mobility Impairment
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Diabetes
- Asperger’s Syndrome
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment
- Speech/Language Impairment
- Psychiatric Disability

Conditions such as test anxiety and pregnancy are not considered disabilities by law. DSS cannot provide services to students with temporary conditions such as broken arms or hospitalization not related to diagnosed disabilities.
Responsibilities

Student responsibilities
- Voluntarily identify disability-related needs to DSS
- Provide current and complete documentation of disability to DSS
- Formally request needed accommodations and services in a timely manner
- Notify DSS of any changes or concerns in needed services or accommodations
- Abide by the student code of conduct set by UAB
- Attend class and maintain the academic standards set by the university, the college, and the department

- Use services responsibly and treat service providers and faculty with respect and courtesy
- Abide by the policies of DSS

Faculty & instructor responsibilities
- Refer students to DSS to have the disability documented and determine accommodations
- Include a statement in your syllabus informing students about reasonable accommodations
- Help provide reasonable accommodations
- Provide instruction to students with disabilities in a fully accessible environment
- Show confidence in students’ abilities to achieve their intellectual, personal, and professional potential
- Keep disability related information confidential
- Discuss all student-related information directly with the student

Students who choose not to self-identify when they enter UAB do not forfeit their right to identify themselves and to request accommodations later. However, UAB is not obligated to provide accommodations and services for students with disabilities until they register with DSS and request academic accommodations. Accommodations are not retroactive and can be used only once the student has become registered with DSS.
Disability Support Services (DSS) Responsibilities

- Provide information and services so that students with disabilities may participate in all of the programs, services, and activities of the institution
- Provide services in a timely fashion
- Review documentation of a disability for eligibility and determine on behalf of the institution what types of accommodations are appropriate
- Keep disability-related information confidential, discussing it only with those who have a valid reason to know
- Help faculty and staff provide reasonable accommodations
- Consult with university administration, faculty, and staff on the provision of services, accommodations, and access as required under current federal and state law
- Advocate responsibly for the rights of persons with disabilities

Institutional Responsibilities

- Provide a campus in which educational, cultural, and extracurricular activities are physically and programmatically accessible
- Create policies that encourage the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all programs and activities
- Provide a process so students with disabilities may address their grievances with the institution and the office(s) that provides services

Grievance Process

According to federal law and UAB policies, instructors cannot deny accommodations for students who present accommodation letters from DSS without input from the student, DSS, department or college administrators, and/or other appropriate UAB administrators. The purpose of the grievance process is to arrive at a final determination of what accommodations are appropriate for a specific situation if accommodations recommended by DSS are questioned.

1. Consult with appropriate DSS staff member(s). If not resolved, then
2. Meet with DSS director, the Associate VP of Enrollment Services. If not resolved, then
3. Submit a written appeal to the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Reminder: During the Grievance Process, the student is entitled to receive the accommodations recommended by DSS.
**Frequently Asked Questions About Responsibilities**

What kind of disability documentation is required? Is a letter from a physician enough?

Students must provide full medical evaluations prepared by professionals with expertise in the specific disability. For example, documentation of a learning disability must include this diagnosis, information related to the history of the problem, specific reports of the standardized testing and other instruments used to make the diagnosis, a statement of the limitations presented by the disability in the educational arena, and recommendation for remediation and accommodation. The report must be submitted by an appropriate licensed professional. Further, the professional must include his or her professional credentials.

In the case of a medical condition or psychiatric disability, DSS seeks information related to the medical condition, the limitations the condition imposes, side effects of medications and treatments and other information needed to determine appropriate accommodations.

How is DSS funded? Who pays for accommodations - the student, the department, or the institution?

The university is not permitted to charge students for accommodations or services needed because of a disability. The university is not required to provide items of a personal nature such as wheelchairs, personal computers, readers or tutors for personal study, or personal care attendants. The institution is responsible for insuring that all “programs, services, and activities” are accessible and appropriate and that disability-related adjustments are available.

Who decides whether a student meets eligibility requirements for disability related adjustments and services and how is it done?

In order to receive services from DSS, a student must meet the criteria for eligibility as defined by the institution (i.e. the ADA definition of a disability) and have limitations related to the physical or academic environment. The services provided are determined on a case-by-case basis by DSS counselors after a careful review of the medical or psychological documentation and interviews with the student.
Should I grade students with disabilities differently than other students?

Students with disabilities need to be held to the same academic standards as other students. It would indeed be unfair to them to do otherwise. It would also violate the intent of the ADA and institutions could be held liable for “watering down the curriculum” for students with disabilities.

What about the student’s behavior? What do I do if a student with a disability needs so much assistance it is affecting the whole class? What if the student is disruptive in class?

First, understand that most accommodations are not time-consuming to the instructor. Most time-consuming services are provided through DSS. It is important to note that the law does not obligate instructors to tutor students. Individual tutoring is not considered to be a “reasonable” accommodation under the ADA.

Regarding classroom behavior, students with disabilities are bound, just as all students are, by the institution’s code of conduct and should be held to that code. If a student’s behavior becomes very disruptive, dangerous or threatening, the instructor has the option of calling campus security for assistance, just as he or she would with any other student. Faculty can also refer students for tutoring, counseling, and other services and programs offered by their institution.
Post secondary institutions do not actively set out to identify students with disabilities. Rather, students must voluntarily disclose that they have a disability, provide documentation of the disability, and meet DSS eligibility criteria.

There are five steps in the accommodation process:

1. Getting to DSS
2. Meeting the eligibility requirements
3. Deciding on specific accommodations
4. Implementing the accommodation plan
5. Revising the accommodation plan

Step 1: Getting to Disability Support Services (DSS)

There are a variety of ways that students may come into contact with DSS once they come to college. Those who received accommodations in high school may be referred by their high school counselors or parents.

Students may not be aware of the services available through DSS. Some students may not even realize that they have a disability. This puts faculty members and instructors in a good position to inform students about DSS.

Include a statement on your syllabus about how to request accommodations for your classes. Inform your students about services available on campus. This creates an open and approachable climate and also provides clear direction to students on the steps to follow to receive accommodations. It also reminds students that all disability related accommodations are coordinated through DSS.

Sample Syllabus Statements:

If you are registered with Disability Support Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability but have not contacted Disability Support Services, please call 934-4205 or visit DSS at 1701 9th Ave S.

Students who may need course accommodations are welcome to make an appointment to see me during office hours. Students with disabilities must be registered with Disability Support Services, 1701 9th Ave S or 934-4205, and provide an accommodation request letter before receiving academic adjustments.
Step 2: Meeting the eligibility requirements

In this step, the student brings documentation of his or her disability and sits down with a counselor from DSS. DSS staff then evaluates the documentation to determine whether the student meets the eligibility requirements. If the student has met the eligibility requirements, he or she moves to Step 3. Students who do not meet the eligibility requirements are guided to other appropriate services available at the university. UAB’s documentation guidelines are available in our office or through our website at www.uab.edu/dss.

Step 3: Deciding on Specific Accommodations

In this step, the student and DSS counselor look at the student’s limitations and take into consideration how these limitations affect the student’s ability to meet the course requirements. DSS counselors then make individual recommendations for accommodations for courses.

DSS provides numerous accommodations. Some of these include:

- Interpreters for the deaf
- Readers
- Scribes
- Note takers
- Testing accommodations
- Absences due to a disability
- Assistive technology laboratory
- Alternate format materials
- Priority registration

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- Priority registration

Step 4: Implementing the accommodation plan

This step begins when the student approaches the instructor and says that he or she will need some accommodations. The student should provide you with a letter from DSS recommending accommodations for your course. If the student has not been to DSS or does not have this letter, there is very little you should do. Remind them that all disability-related accommodations must be coordinated through DSS and encourage them to resume the discussion with you after they have been to DSS and have the accommodation letter.
Once the student provides you with the DSS accommodation letter

- Talk with the student about how best to implement the accommodations. Remember, it is essential to maintain the confidentiality of this student, so talk with them in private. We recommend that students schedule an appointment with faculty during office hours to discuss accommodations.
- Verify which accommodations the student intends to use.
- Sign the 2nd page of the accommodation letter and return to DSS.
- Please keep the top copy with the list of accommodations for your reference. Remember that this document contains confidential information (student name, SSN), so make sure it is kept in a secure area and please destroy it when you no longer need it.

Accommodation letters delineate all services for which a student is eligible. Students are responsible for discussing with their instructors which accommodations they intend to actually use in each class.

If at any time you have questions regarding the accommodations, call DSS

Continue to provide the accommodations to the student unless DSS instructs otherwise. This includes if you believe that providing a particular accommodation would substantially change any essential elements or requirements of the curriculum or academic program.

Step 5: Revising the Accommodation Plan

This step is only necessary when, for one reason or another, there is a need to make adjustments or set some conditions on the original accommodation. For example, lab or clinical settings may require adjustment and reconsideration of accommodations. Keep in mind that not every student will go through the fifth step of the process because most of the time accommodations go smoothly.

While the adjustments are being worked out, continue to provide the accommodations that you originally agreed to. Most often, small adjustments can be handled between you and the student. Other times, it may be helpful to consult with DSS. In any case, continue to provide the original accommodation and communicate in writing any changes you and the student make with DSS. This step is designed to protect both you and the student.
Sample Accommodations Memo – Page 1

Disability Support Services
Accommodation Letter

The student whose name appears below is registered with Disability Support Services (DSS). The following is a request for accommodations, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have any questions or need any further information about academic accommodations, please feel free to contact DSS at 934-4205.

Allison Solomon, M.S., CRC
Director

Valerie DuBose, M.Ed., CRC
Assistant Director

Name ___________________________  ID # ___________________________

Course and Section # ___________________________  Instructor ___________________________

This student is eligible for the following academic accommodations:

- Reduced-distraction testing environment
- Peer notetaker
- Extended time on exams (double)
- Permission to use a tape recorder

Access to assistive technology

This student may or may not use all of the above-mentioned accommodations in your class.
PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS PAGE

DSS HUC 516 1150 (Campus Mail)

Name: John Doe
ID #: 800#
Course and Section #: MA400
Instructor: Smith

This student is registered with Disability Support Services and is eligible for reasonable academic accommodations under UAB policy and federal law. Reasonable accommodations are intended to give equal access to the course content and to minimize the impact of a disability on the student's performance.

Please sign below to indicate that you have received this letter and intend to provide the accommodations requested. Faculty are required to provide accommodations for students who present an accommodation letter from DSS. If you have any questions or concerns about implementing the accommodations, please contact DSS as soon as possible.

Please return this from via intra-campus mail to:
Disability Support Services
HUC 516 - 1150

For more information, please contact Mrs. Allison Solomon at 934-4205 or dss@uab.edu

Instructor's Signature: ___________________________ Date: ________________
Frequently Asked Questions about the Accommodations Process

DSS’s involvement in the accommodation process is intended to give students with disabilities appropriate and legally mandated supports to work toward a higher education. It is also there to provide legal protection for the faculty member or instructor. **Bypassing DSS can be a mistake that can have serious consequences for the students, faculty member, and institution.**

**How do I respond to a student for whom the specified accommodations do not seem to be effective?**

If the accommodations recommended through DSS are not working, you may wish to meet with the student again privately and discuss these concerns. It may be that you and the student can reach a more workable solution. If so, document your new agreement and send a copy to DSS, keeping a copy for your records. It may also be helpful to meet with the student and a DSS counselor to address your concerns and work out a better plan. It is important that you never argue with the student or do anything that might jeopardize the student’s confidentiality. It is also important to maintain the accommodations that were previously recommended until a new solution is agreed upon.

**What if a student with a disability has problems with regular attendance in the class?**

There may be times when attendance accommodations may be requested if the student’s disability interferes with attending class. For example, a student with a medical condition such as epilepsy or diabetes; a psychological disability such as anxiety or panic disorder; or, a physical limitation such as cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis; may not be able to attend class on some occasions. The presence of a note taker or tape recorder will be of assistance to these students. On the other hand, it is not reasonable for a student not to go to class because he or she has a note taker or tape recordings of classes. Students with disabilities are required to meet the same academic requirements of the class as the other students, including attendance. If regular attendance is a problem related to a student’s disability, please contact DSS to discuss these concerns.
What are the goals of accommodation?

The goal of accommodation is to provide equal access to education and to the academic experience of the institution to qualified students with disabilities. In no way should academic standards be altered. However, at times faculty may need to change the way in which they measure a student’s competency in a subject. For example, a student with a visual impairment may need to have materials read to them or have examinations made available in large print, Braille, or digital format. A student without the use of his or her hands may need an aid in a laboratory or a scribe for a quiz or a computer with special assistive technology devices. Some students may need note takers or tape recorders in the classroom, wheelchair-equipped vans for field experiences or sign language interpreters.

Other students in the class express resentment that accommodations are being provided to another student who appears “normal” but who claims to have a disability. How should I respond?

This situation can be uncomfortable, but can be handled by simply explaining to them that all students have the right to confidentiality. You are not at liberty to discuss any student’s academic situation with others. However, express that you would be happy to meet with him or her individually to discuss his or her needs.

Are institutions expected to waive courses or write individualized education plans (IEP) for students with disabilities?

Postsecondary educational institutions are not required to write Individualized Education Plans for students with disabilities as public (K–12) schools do. In postsecondary education, academic programs are required to consider reasonable adjustments or accommodations that do not compromise the integrity of the program. Modifications should not substantially alter the essential skills of a course. It is unusual for courses to be waived for students with disabilities, especially in their chosen fields of study.


**Arranging for the Accommodations**

Providing academic accommodations for students with disabilities is a collaborative effort between the student and his/her instructor. For example, extended time for exams should be arranged to match both the student’s and the instructor’s schedules. A student might start a test before the rest of the class, finish a test after the rest of the class, or take a test in two halves at two different times. Extended time adjustments should be appropriate and efficient for both the student and the instructor.

The same is true for reduced-distraction settings for exams. The instructor should arrange a location close to the regular classroom (with a minimum of distractions) so that the instructor is available if the student has questions. Reduced-distraction settings do not have to be private, isolated locations and testing does not have to coincide with the scheduled exam time. Instructors are encouraged, if at all possible, to provide academic adjustments in their own departments. While DSS has very limited space and personnel to administer exams, we are available to provide test proctoring services when needed.

**Academic Accommodations**

DSS may recommend the following academic accommodations, based on appropriate documentation and individual class requirements:

**Academic Classroom Aids**
Students may use calculators, dictionaries, word processors, spell checkers, and/or grammar checkers for in-class and out-of-class work.

**Alternate Formats for Assignments**
Assignments may be submitted in formats other than those stated in course requirements, if appropriate (i.e., on cassette tape rather than in writing).
Testing Accommodations

Testing accommodations are the most common type of accommodation. They may include extended time, reduced-distraction testing environments, orally administered tests, readers and/or scribes. Students should discuss testing accommodations with instructors at the beginning of each term.

If a student does not discuss his or her desire to use testing accommodations, it is not the instructor’s responsibility to provide testing accommodations. If you are unsure whether a student will utilize testing accommodations, you should check with the student.

Testing accommodations should be arranged to match both the student’s and instructor’s schedules. Faculty and students should work together to determine how testing accommodations will be provided. Sometimes it can be difficult to provide testing accommodations such as extended time or a reduced-distraction testing environment. Because of these difficulties, DSS has always extended use of our office for testing as a courtesy to faculty.

DSS works very hard to provide a secure testing environment. All tests are timed and monitored by one or more of our staff. Tests are only handled by DSS staff and are secured in a locked location at all times. When tests are completed, they are promptly sealed in an envelope and delivered back to the instructor on that day or the next.

Procedures for having tests proctored at DSS

1. Please complete the ONLINE TEST PROCTORING FORM. This gives us specific instructions about how you would like for us to proctor your exam:
   a. After discussing accommodations with the student, if the instructor decides to have the test(s) proctored at DSS, the student will log in to the DSS website and request that a test proctoring approval form be sent to the instructor.
   b. The course instructor will receive an e-mail, informing them of the pending proctor approval request. The e-mail will contain instructions for how to log in and fill out and submit this form.
   c. If the instructor has additional proctoring form approval requests from other students, this will be indicated on instructor page, in order to allow the instructor to conveniently submit the approval forms.
   d. The form(s) will be submitted electronically to DSS, and will be valid for the entire semester. If the instructions for the test(s) change, please notify DSS.

   Click on this link to view the Online Proctoring Form – Instructor page:
   Test Proctoring Form

2. Please hand-deliver, fax, or e-mail the student’s test to our office.
DSS cannot proctor students’ tests without a proctoring form from the instructor. You are discouraged from sending the test through the student.

*** All tests must be delivered at least two full working days in advance of the test. Contact Allison Solomon in DSS if this is not possible

We will be unable to administer tests in our office if we have not received the test in a timely manner. At that point, it is your responsibility to provide the accommodations to the DSS student.

DSS students are responsible for scheduling their tests with our office and making sure you know they want to take tests with accommodations. If you would like the student to take the test at a particular time, please make sure that DSS knows and we will administer the test when you request.
Peer Note taker
This person is a student in the class who provides notes to the student with a disability in the course. These notes are designed to supplement a student’s notes. They are not designed to be a substitute for notes. If a student is not in class, they are not eligible to receive notes from a peer note taker. A note taker needs to be someone who attends class regularly, takes legible notes, and can give notes to the student in a timely manner. Students will decide which method they want to use to obtain a peer note taker. A peer note taker is obtained in 2 ways:

1. **The student chooses a note taker.** The student selects and identifies a note taker on his or her own. In this case, the professor would not be involved in assisting the student with this accommodation. The student and the note taker will make arrangements regarding how the student will receive notes.

2. **The professor assists in helping identify a note taker.** In this instance, the professor is asked to read a statement to the class asking a student to volunteer to serve as a note taker for a student with disabilities who is in the course.
   - It is essential that this announcement is done in such a way as to protect the student’s confidentiality. The best thing to do is ask for this person to stay after class and then the student and note taker can be introduced.
   - The student and the note taker will make their own arrangements about how the student with a disability will receive the notes.
   - If no one volunteers to be a note taker, we recommend that faculty read the announcement for 2 more class periods. After that, contact DSS.

Tape Recording
Students who are eligible to tape record class lectures should furnish their own recorder and cassettes. All tapes are for private use only: the information is to be treated as confidential and may not be shared with any other student, organization, media, or other entity. Failure to abide by the tape recording policy may result in a charge of academic misconduct.

Readers/Scribes
Readers are used for reading material that is not available in alternative formats and for material that is too difficult to access via adaptive computer software. Readers do not provide interpretations or explanations of documents read.

Scribes are used to transcribe oral information. Scribes write, word for word, the message that they are instructed to transcribe. Scribes can only question their sources for clarification of information they may have heard incorrectly.

Readers and scribes are hired, scheduled, and paid through DSS. Students may not arrange for readers or scribes without DSS permission.
Sign Language Interpreters/Captionists Policy

Sign language interpreters and captionists provide services for classroom instruction (e.g., lecture, discussion, lab, etc.) and academic requirements (e.g., group meetings, internships, teacher-student conferences, etc.). Interpreters facilitate communication between deaf/hard of hearing and hearing individuals. Interpreters use a specific language to communicate the spoken word to deaf clients. Captionists provide accurate, real-time transcripts for hard of hearing students. Captionists also may provide unedited transcripts as needed. Captionists use a court reporting stenograph machine that is linked to a laptop computer. Hard of hearing students can read the live transcript of oral communication in the classroom.

Interpreters and captionists are not tutors, instructors, note takers or counselors, and should not engage in these roles. Ultimately, interpreters and captionists are responsible for ensuring that the environment is conducive for interpreting.

Guidelines for Instructors using Interpreters

- Interpreters usually sit in the front of the classroom, where the deaf student can watch both the interpreter and the instructor.
- Interpreters have to adjust to your presentation style and rate. It may be necessary for interpreters to ask you to repeat something or pause a moment to communicate your message clearly.
- If a student in the class asks a question, it is very helpful to repeat the question. This is not only for the interpreter’s benefit, but also because some students lip-read.
- Speak directly to the deaf student in your normal voice and rate.
- Don’t say, “Tell him…” or “Ask her…”. Just talk directly to the student, and the interpreter or captionist will interpret.
- Don’t have discussions with interpreters or captionists unless you need to discuss how something will be communicated.
- Allow for a 5-minute break every 40-45 minutes, if possible.
- In group discussions, it is imperative that only one person talks at a time. Group discussions done in a circle or semicircle are ideal: this allows the deaf student to identify who is talking.
- Please inform interpreters in advance if there are audio-visuals to be used, especially if you are using a video or DVD. All videotapes should be closed-captioned.
- Don’t ask interpreters for their opinions regarding the deaf student. Interpreters are not allowed to provide information about students.

Above all, interact with deaf/hard of hearing students as you would with any student.
**Reading Assistance**
Students may request alternative format materials and/or readers through DSS. In addition, text-to-voice software is available in Stern Library, Lister Hill Library, ETS, and several campus computer labs.

**Personal Services**
Personal services are not considered to be academic accommodations. Examples of personal services include tutoring, transportation, and attendant care. *However, if these services are provided to other students, then they must be made accessible to students with disabilities.*

**Alternative Format of Textbooks and Classroom Materials**
Obtaining books in alternative format is a time consuming, tedious, and costly process. It is essential for faculty to select textbooks at least 6-8 weeks in advance to guarantee that students with this accommodation have the text when the class starts.

Students who are eligible for books in alternative format are instructed to start this process early. These students are required to contact the bookstore and their professors to get information to DSS so DSS can obtain the alternative format texts.

In order to obtain texts, DSS must have the following information for each text: title, author, publisher, edition, ISBN#, format preference (WORD or PDF). **It is important for faculty to decide which books they will use as soon as possible.** This will allow DSS to begin the process of getting the books in alternative format. Once DSS has the information on a book, it can take up to 6 weeks to receive the book in alternative format from a publisher.

If a textbook is not available from the publisher, DSS must purchase the text, remove the binding, scan the entire text, run conversion software and then review EVERY page to ensure the accuracy of the scan.

**Accessibility of Web and Online Content**
More and more courses and programs are offered through distance education and online formats and making that content accessible is required by law. This includes websites, lectures, Power Point presentations, Web CT content, etc. It is best to just go ahead and do this on the front end and not wait. DSS can assist you with this.

- All content should be compatible with assistive technology (screen reading software, voice recognition software, screen enlargement software) and meet legal standards as outlined in Section 508 (see glossary for more information).
- Audio material should have a transcript; videos should be captioned
- If the material is available to the general public, it must be accessible; if it is for a specific course where only the students have access, then it would need to be accessible if someone in the class requests it.
Excused Absence Policy
Some students with disabilities may have an accommodation to excuse “a reasonable number of disability-related absences.” This accommodation is recommended ONLY when a student’s disability makes it impossible to attend class because of debilitating illness, hospitalization, or other professional intervention. Excused absences, like all accommodations, are designed to provide equal access for students with disabilities: excused absences are NOT designed to permit students to receive credit for classes without demonstrating skills required in those classes.

There is no ‘magic formula’ for the number of excused absences a student with disabilities is allowed in addition to absences allowed all students in the class. The most important factors in determining what is reasonable are the essential skills and required performances of the class. For example, if class information is available in class or through peer notes, textbooks, internet resources, etc. absences may not prevent students with disabilities from missing numerous class sessions and completing class assignments outside of class. If certain requirements can be met ONLY in class (such as discussions, oral presentations, or practicum hours), fewer absences can be allowed. The best solution is to talk with the student about class requirements and possible modifications as early in the semester as possible.

Students who miss class because of disability-related absences are responsible for informing instructors that their absences were disability-related, getting notes or other materials from the classes they missed, and arranging to make up any tests or assignments missed. Instructors should talk with the student about the type of assignments missed, the amount of work needed to complete class requirements, and the quality that should be reflected in that work.

When absences prevent students from gaining essential information or completing essential components of a class, instructors can consult with the student and with DSS about options such as a medical withdrawal or grades of N, F, or I.

A copy of our Absence Contract for students is on the next page.
All students who receive “a reasonable number of disability-related absences” as an accommodation are required to sign a contract so that they understand the parameters of this accommodation.

ABSENCE ACCOMMODATION CONTRACT

(Initial)

1. These absences MUST BE DUE TO THE DOCUMENTED DISABILITY FOR WHICH THE STUDENT IS BEING SERVED.

2. It does not cover excessive/ habitual absences (even if these are disability related).

3. This accommodation is not retroactive.

4. It is the student’s responsibility to email both the professor and DSS regarding the reason(s) for the absence on the day of the absence.

5. If no contact is made with the professor and DSS regarding the reason for the absence, a valid excuse from the doctor will be required by DSS.

6. If absences become problematic or excessive the accommodation may be revoked by DSS.

7. The student remains responsible for getting the course material and arranging timely make-ups (i.e. exams, quizzes, etc.)

8. Some classes have a strict attendance policy. It is the student’s responsibility to adhere to this policy. Students who fail to do so run the risk of grade penalty.

9. It is the professor who determines how many absences are reasonable in his/her class.

I have read, understand and agree to abide by this policy. If I am unable to abide by this policy, I will initiate a meeting with DSS to discuss my options. I understand that failing to do so may result in this accommodation being revoked and/or grade penalty.

Student’s Signature: __________________________ Date:______________

DSS Rep. Signature: _______________________________ Date:______________
Indispensable Faculty Role—Essential Skills Concept

Faculty members have a critical role in the accommodation process. The faculty member brings his/her knowledge of the course, the course requirements and the essential skills taught in the course.

Essential skills are the skills that a course is intended to teach. For example in Biology, it might be considered essential for a student to acquire a basic understanding of cell biology, classification of organisms, and simple genetics. However, being able to identify a specific species of fish or fruit fly based on characteristics might serve to demonstrate knowledge but may not be considered essential in and of itself at the introductory level.

Using their expertise, professors determine what is essential in a given course or program. However, please note that the professors’ judgments about essential skills should be defensible in light of the standards and programmatic considerations of their disciplines.

Every program of study has a set of essential skills. All students, regardless of the presence of a disability, should master the required competencies. It would not be appropriate to waive or dismiss activities that teach these skills. In fact, doing so would compromise the integrity of the curriculum and undermine the concept of equal access and the intent of the law.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states that essential skills should not be waived or “watered down.” Otherwise, upon graduation, students with disabilities would find themselves at a disadvantage when compared to their peers.

How to determine essential skills:
- Course exists to teach these skills
- Fundamental in preparation for the program for which the course exists
- Essential based on the experience of those working in similar fields to the program
- Based on the amount of time professionals in this field will perform this task
- Required for certification or existing standards in the program field
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A faculty member can incorporate many elements into his or her teaching practices from the onset that make the course more accessible to a wide array of students. This process called Universal Design for Learning emphasizes adjusting teaching practices and presentations to meet varying educational needs and learning styles.

Rather than taking the “one-size-fits-all” approach, UDL stresses flexible and customizable delivery of content assignments and activities. To the extent possible, UDL is a preferred line of attack to accommodate diverse learners. It allows the learning process to be more accessible without labeling or serving students differently. Please note, however, that while UDL may eliminate the need for some accommodations, no product or instructional method will ever be 100% universal. Individualized accommodations may be necessary to meet some students’ needs.

Fundamental Practices of UDL:

- **Create a climate of openness and respect:** Some students may be intimidated by faculty. Therefore, it is essential to create a climate of openness and respect. This lets students know you are approachable and interested in their success.

- **Consider the physical environment:** The instructor does not always have control over the physical environment of his/her classroom. However, it is good to be aware of conditions that may interfere with learning and improve them if possible.

- **Clearly define expectations and offer feedback:** When an instructor clearly defines course expectations, it gives students a clear sense of direction. Frequent and timely feedback to students allows them to assess their progress and make adjustments to their study strategies.
• **Promote information access:** Students access information in a variety of formats, including audio, visual and kinesthetic.
  o *Multiple Formats.* Multiple formats increase the effectiveness of instruction;
  o *Technology.* Computers and other technology increases information access for many students. Providing digital format also enables students to use assistive devices (such as software) to access the information;
  o *Textbook Selection.* Whenever possible, choose textbooks and other materials that are available in both print and digital format. If a digital version is available, students can transfer textbook information to an alternative format. With digital format, students can search for key phrases and use other advanced features;
  o *Organization and planning.* Providing course organizers, summaries, and study groups helps students prepare for upcoming events. Students rely on advance information to manage time, meet deadlines, or arrange for specific accommodations such as Braille, audio, or large print. Facilitating study groups can also help many students;
  o *Facilitating note-taking.* Note-taking is vital in academic coursework. However, note-taking can be problematic for many students: students who speak English as a second language, students with limited manual dexterity, the elderly, etc.

• **Use cooperative learning methods:** Cooperative learning offers students opportunities to master concepts through discussion, application, and exposure to different perspectives. By using small groups, faculty can build natural supports for learning.

• **Assess students’ knowledge through a variety of methods:** To the extent possible, it is helpful to use a variety of strategies to assess students’ knowledge, such as projects, oral presentations, multiple-choice exams, quizzes, research papers, etc. The possibilities of doing this depend on considerations of academic integrity, rigor, purpose, practicality, class size, etc.

For more information on Universal Design, visit [http://www.ahead.org/resources/ud_resource.php](http://www.ahead.org/resources/ud_resource.php)
Creating an accessible environment

Include a statement about disability accommodations in your syllabi. If possible, have syllabi and reading lists available before class begins. Early access to syllabi assists students who need different formats for class materials (e.g., Braille, audiotape, sign language interpreters, etc.).

In your first class meeting, invite students with disabilities to confidentially discuss accommodation needs with you. Remember students with disabilities who request accommodations must be registered with DSS. If a student requests accommodation but does not have accommodation letters from DSS, refer the student to DSS (1701 9th Ave S, 934-4205).

Use web pages and e-mail to make course information available. Text-based web pages are easier to navigate with assistive computer technology. Make sure that your web-based material is compatible with assistive technology. You can talk to DSS if you have questions. You can also talk to an IT department and let them know you need assistance to make sure your web material is Section 508 compliant.

If possible, arrange your room in a circular or semi-circular manner. If you cannot rearrange furniture, leave a few front row seats open for distractable students, deaf students who use interpreters/captionists, and students who use service animals. If your classroom or building is not accessible to students with mobility disorders, call DSS as soon as possible (934-4205). If field trips are required, verify that transportation and off-campus sites are physically accessible.

Respect the privacy of students with disabilities; avoid mentioning accommodations in front of others (i.e., "John, will you need an accommodation for this exam?" or "Students who need extended time for exams please leave the room now."). If you need to address a disability-related issue immediately, try conferring with the student in the least distracting manner possible.

Avoid fostering dependence in students with disabilities.

When in doubt about if and how to assist students with disabilities, ask them! If your offer of assistance is declined, do not insist on ‘helping’.

Above all, interact with students with disabilities in the same manner as other students.
**Teaching accessibly**

Face the class when speaking. Many students with hearing or attention disorders depend on seeing your face for information.

Repeat or re-word lengthy or complex oral directions.

Always try to preview and summarize content during each class session.

If you use a board to describe information, complete some examples in advance. Or examples can be presented by using overhead projectors, Power Point, or web sites.

Make copies of handouts available in large print. DSS can enlarge documents and convert documents to other formats (such as audiotape or Braille) with advanced notice. Enlargement can also be done on any copier simply by adjusting the percentage of the copy (e.g. 150%) or by adjusting the font size on your computer (18-20 point font).

Remember, it is important that students with disabilities receive information in a timely manner, comparable to non-disabled classmates. This is not always possible, but UAB has an obligation to make every effort to do so.

Read aloud information presented on the board or overhead. Also, try to have printed copies of board or overhead information available.

Repeat questions and comments from class members. Repetition affords students with sensory and cognitive disabilities an opportunity to clarify and/or gain information that may have been missed.

Provide study guides for quizzes and exams, or provide guidelines for studying effectively (i.e., “Concentrate on lecture notes, and chapters 1, 2, and 5, in your text.”). Provide timely feedback on assignments and tests. Students retain information better when the information is current.

Always try to present key terms and concepts visually as well as orally. Stress the importance of time management, study skills, and organization. Students with disabilities do not need sympathy; they need academic modifications to meet the expectations of an academic environment.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SUMMARY

DSS’s involvement in the accommodation process is intended to give students with disabilities appropriate and legally mandated supports to work toward a higher education. It is also there to provide legal protection for the faculty member or instructor. **Bypassing DSS can be a mistake that can have serious consequences for the students, faculty member, and institution.**

How do I respond to a student for whom the specified accommodations do not seem to be effective?
If the accommodations recommended through DSS are not working, you may wish to meet with the student again privately and discuss these concerns. It may be that you and the student can reach a more workable solution. If so, document your new agreement and send a copy to DSS, keeping a copy for your records. It may also be helpful to meet with the student and a DSS counselor to address your concerns and work out a better plan. It is important that you never argue with the student or do anything that might jeopardize the student’s confidentiality. It is also important to maintain the accommodations that were previously recommended until a new solution is agreed upon.

What if a student with a disability has problems with attendance in class?
There may be times when attendance accommodations may be requested if the student’s disability interferes with attending class. For example, a student with a medical condition such as epilepsy or diabetes; a psychological disability such as anxiety or panic disorder; or, a physical limitation such as cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis; may not be able to attend class on some occasions. The presence of a note taker or tape recorder will be of assistance to these students. On the other hand, it is not reasonable for a student not to go to class because he or she has a note taker or tape recordings of classes. Students with disabilities are required to meet the same academic requirements of the class as the other students, including attendance. If regular attendance is a problem related to a student’s disability, please contact DSS to discuss these concerns.
What are the goals of accommodation?
The goal of accommodation is to provide equal access to education and to the academic experience of the institution to qualified students with disabilities. In no way should academic standards be altered. However, at times faculty may need to change the way in which they measure a student’s competency in a subject. For example, a student with a vision impairment may need to have materials read to them or have examinations made available in large print, Braille, or digital format. A student without the use of his or her hands may need an aid in a laboratory or a scribe for a quiz or a computer with special assistive technology devices. Some students may need note takers or tape recorders in the classroom, wheelchair-equipped vans for field experiences or sign language interpreters.

Other students in the class express resentment that accommodations are being provided to another student who appears “normal” but who claims to have a disability. How should I respond?
This situation can be uncomfortable, but can be handled by simply explaining to them that all students have the right to confidentiality. You are not at liberty to discuss any student’s academic situation with others. However, express that you would be happy to meet with him or her individually to discuss his or her needs.

Are institutions expected to waive courses or write individualized education plans (IEP) for students with disabilities?
Postsecondary educational institutions are not required to write Individualized Education Plans for students with disabilities as public (K–12) schools do. In postsecondary education, academic programs are required to consider reasonable adjustments or accommodations that do not compromise the integrity of the program. Modifications should not substantially alter the essential skills of a course. It is unusual for courses to be waived for students with disabilities, especially in their chosen fields of study.

Are students with disabilities required to meet the same academic standards as other students?
Yes! Students with disabilities must meet the same admissions and retention standards as is required of other students. Students who have academic difficulty due to a disability or illness may appeal a denial of admission or a retention decision at which time disability information may be used by the appeal committee to make a final decision. The appeal committee may offer provisional admission or retention. There are no quotas related to students with disabilities.
How will these students cope in the workforce if accommodations are provided at the university?
The purpose of accommodations in postsecondary education is to level the playing field for students in an academic setting and allow the student to receive an education without discrimination. Accommodations in employment are often similar to those in postsecondary education. Employers also provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Individuals with disabilities must meet the same performance criteria as others.

What is a disability and who is eligible for services from the DSS?
The ADA defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Individuals who have a history of such impairment or have been regarded by others as having impairment are also protected from discrimination under the ADA. The DSS serves students who meet the eligibility guidelines of the institution. These guidelines are defined by each institution based on several factors, including the definition of disabilities set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

While it is not possible to list all of the possible conditions that qualify as disabilities under ADA, some common ones include:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epilepsy</td>
<td>Specific Learning Disability</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Deaf/Hard of Hearing</td>
<td>Attention Deficit Disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cerebral Palsy</td>
<td>Mobility Impairment</td>
<td>Muscular Dystrophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>Asperger’s Syndrome</td>
<td>Traumatic Brain Injury</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
<td>Speech/Language Impairment</td>
<td>Psychiatric Disability</td>
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What kind of disability documentation is required? Is a letter from a physician enough?
Students must provide full medical evaluations prepared by professionals with expertise in the specific disability. For example, documentation of a learning disability must include this diagnosis, information related to the history of the problem, specific reports of the standardized testing and other instruments used to make the diagnosis, a statement of the limitations presented by the disability in the educational arena, and recommendation for remediation and accommodation. The report must be submitted by an appropriate licensed professional. Further, the professional must include his or her professional credentials.

In the case of a medical condition or psychiatric disability, DSS seeks information related to the medical condition, the limitations the condition imposes, side effects of medications and treatments and other information needed to determine appropriate accommodations.
How is DSS funded? Who pays for accommodations - the student, the department, or the institution?
The university is not permitted to charge students for accommodations or services needed because of a disability. The university is not required to provide items of a personal nature such as wheelchairs, personal computers, readers or tutors for personal study, or personal care attendants. The institution is responsible for insuring that all “programs, services, and activities” are accessible and appropriate and that disability-related adjustments are available.

Who decides whether a student meets eligibility requirements for disability related adjustments and services and how is it done?
In order to receive services from DSS, a student must meet the criteria for eligibility as defined by the institution (i.e. the ADA definition of a disability) and have limitations related to the physical or academic environment. The services provided are determined on a case-by-case basis by DSS counselors after a careful review of the medical or psychological documentation and interviews with the student.

Should I grade students with disabilities differently than other students?
Students with disabilities need to be held to the same academic standards as other students. It would indeed be unfair to them to do otherwise. It would also violate the intent of the ADA and institutions could be held liable for “watering down the curriculum” for students with disabilities.

What about the student’s behavior? What do I do if a student with a disability needs so much assistance it is affecting the whole class? What if the student is disruptive in class?
First, understand that most accommodations are not time-consuming to the instructor. Most time-consuming services are provided through DSS. It is important to note that the law does not obligate instructors to tutor students. Individual tutoring is not considered to be a “reasonable” accommodation under the ADA.

Regarding classroom behavior, students with disabilities are bound just as all students are by the institution’s code of conduct and should be held to that code. If a student’s behavior becomes very disruptive or dangerous or threatening, the instructor has the option of calling campus security for assistance, just as he or she would with any other student. Faculty can also refer students for tutoring, counseling, and other services and programs offered by their institution.
**Glossary**

**Academic adjustment:** A modification to an academic requirement or procedure to ensure that a qualified student with disabilities receives equal access to education. Adjustments should not alter the academic integrity of the course, waive essential skills, or allow content to be “watered down”.

**Accessibility:** For purposes of this unit, accessibility is defined as making courses available to students. To do this it is important to consider the pedagogy, the equipment, and the physical environment. Providing information in digital format and the use of assistive technology may be required for some students.

**Accommodation letter or memo:** A letter or form prepared by DSS that explains the approved accommodations to faculty and identifies the role of the faculty member in the provision of these accommodations.

**Accommodation Process:** 1) Getting to DSS, 2) meeting the eligibility requirements, 3) deciding on specific accommodations, 4) implementing the accommodation plan, and 5) revising the accommodation plan.

**Alternative format materials:** The production of print materials in a format that enables a person with a visual impairment or other print disability to read the materials using adaptive skills or technologies. Alternative format materials may include large print, audio tapes, electronic text, and Braille.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** Civil rights legislation signed by President George Bush on July 26, 1990. Prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the areas of employment, state and local government, public accommodations and services, transportation, and telecommunications.
Architectural accessibility: The application of design principles and construction that allows persons with disabilities to use facilities such as buildings, sidewalks, entryways, elevators, restrooms and water fountains with maximum independence and in accordance with current building codes.

Asperger’s Syndrome or Asperger’s Disorder: A milder variant of Autistic Disorder. While often highly intelligent, there are usually impairments in two-sided social interaction and non-verbal communication. Though grammatical, their speech may be peculiar due to abnormalities of inflection and a repetitive pattern.

Assistive or Adaptive technology (AT): Equipment or software items designed or used to compensate for areas of disability or impairment. It allows persons with disabilities the same access to information and production as their peers.

According to the Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities ACT of 1988 (Tech Act; P.L. 100, 407), an AT device refers to “any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off-the-shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.” Raskind and Bryant (1996) note that in some instances the device may assist, augment, or supplement task performance in a given area of disability; while in others, it may be used to circumvent or bypass specific deficits entirely.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): A neurobiological disorder that interferes with a person’s ability to sustain attention or focus on a task and to control impulsive behavior.

Auxiliary aids: Services, equipment, and procedures that allow students with disabilities access to learning and activities in and out of the classroom. They include, but are not limited to, sign language interpreters, real-time captioning, adaptive technology, alternative media (Braille, tapes, scanned text, enlarged print), readers, and scribes.

Captioning: A process that allows individuals who have hearing impairments to have access to oral information in classroom lectures, video or film presentations. Captions are printed scripts of the oral information presented. Captioning is accomplished with various technologies, including stenography and specialized software.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV): An enlarging device, used by persons with vision impairments or learning disabilities, composed of a zoom lens and a television screen or computer monitor to enlarge print or visual materials.
Confidentiality: Refers to privacy of medical and academic information. Students in higher education have the right to confidentiality of disability related information. DSS offices may not release medical information to faculty or others without a signed release of information form. Faculty should use caution not to disclose information shared by students regarding their disability or accommodations with colleagues or other students.

Deafness: A hearing impairment that results in little or no residual hearing with or without a hearing aid. An individual who is deaf uses vision as the primary modality for learning and communication. Many people who are deaf use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language that has its own unique linguistic characteristics and is a distinct language from English.

Direct threat: A significant risk or substantial harm to the health and safety of the individual or others that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation.

Disability (person with): “Any individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such an individual; any individual who has a record of such an impairment; and any individual who is regarded as having such an impairment” (ADA, 1990). Major life activities may include, but are not limited to, walking, hearing, seeing, learning, caring for oneself, breathing, performing manual tasks, and working.

Disability related or functional limitations: Restrictions resulting from a disability that prevent an individual (without accommodations or auxiliary aids) from participating in major life activities including, but not limited to, walking, learning, seeing, hearing, and learning.

Documentation: Comprehensive written validation of a person’s disability and the functional limitations of the disability provided by an appropriate professional qualified to make a specific type of diagnosis. The documentation must be given to DSS before services, accommodations and auxiliary aids can be approved. Faculty do not have access to this medical information. (See Confidentiality.)

Dyslexia: One of several distinct learning disabilities. A specific language-based disorder characterized by difficulties in single-word decoding. Dyslexia is manifest by difficulty with different forms of language, including problems with reading and acquiring proficiency in writing and spelling. (Adapted from the International Dyslexia Association.)
Eligibility for disability related services: In order to be eligible for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, students must have a documented disability that severely limits the performance of a major life activity as compared to the average person. The documentation must be professionally credible, comprehensive, and support the necessity of the requested accommodations (see Documentation).

Essential functions or requirements: Refers to job duties of the employment position that the person with a disability holds or desires. Within the scope of the ADA, essential functions of the job are those “basic job duties that an employee must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodation” (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], 1991, p. 3). Evidence whether a particular function is essential is based on a number of sources including, but not limited to “an employer’s judgment, written job descriptions, amount of time performing the function, collective bargaining agreements, work experience of past and or present employees in similar jobs.” Essential functions in higher education are discipline specific.

Essential skills: The skills that the course is intended to teach so that an individual can gain the competencies of the program or course. Essential skills are critical to the purpose of the course, should not be “watered down”, and are the responsibility of the instructor to determine.

Guide Dog/Service Animal: Dogs who have been trained to assist individuals with visual, physical or hearing impairments. Guide dogs are legally permitted to accompany their owners into all places of public accommodation.

“Has a record of”: ADA provisions protecting those who may experience discrimination based on a history of disability. For example, an individual who has a history of cancer is protected from discrimination.

Hearing Impairment/Hearing Loss: A disability that affects the ability to hear. Hearing impairment, as generally used, denotes that there are different degrees of hearing loss that may be mild, moderate, or severe. Individuals with hearing impairments may or may not use hearing aids. Though these individuals have a hearing loss, they still use auditory means for learning and communication.
Interpreter: A trained professional who assists individuals who are deaf with a variety of communication services, including sign language and tactile or oral interpretation of verbally expressed communication. Interpreters used as accommodations should be arranged by DSS. Alabama law requires that interpreters have a permit or license in order to be paid to interpret.

Invisible or hidden disability: Disabilities that are not readily apparent or observable. Invisible disabilities include learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, psychological disabilities, medical or chronic health impairments, visual impairments, and hearing impairments.

“Is regarded as having”: ADA provisions protecting individuals who may not have a disability as defined by ADA, but is treated or subjected to discrimination as if they do. For example, a person who has a chronic medical condition but is not limited in any way is protected under ADA from discrimination and harassment.

Lab aide: A person who performs skills that are difficult or impossible for the student with disabilities to carry out. Much like scribes and readers, a lab aide would be trained to carry out specific operations as dictated by the student. He or she would need to receive training in ways to assist the student without compromising the academic integrity of the lab and or fieldwork, allowing the student to demonstrate mastery of the essential skills of the course or lab.

Learning disability: A permanent disorder that interferes with integrating, acquiring, and/or demonstrating verbal or nonverbal abilities and skills. Frequently, there are some processing or memory deficits. An individual may have difficulty with reading, spelling, written expression, mathematics, problem solving, listening, and oral expression. The disorder is often inconsistent and each individual has his or her unique set of characteristics.

Legally mandated services: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires that postsecondary institutions provide services and accommodations to qualified students including interpreters for the deaf, note taking assistance, readers, accommodated testing, extended time to complete program requirements, and other reasonable modifications as determined on a case by case basis.

Major life activity: Basic activities that the “average person” could perform with little or no difficulty, including caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.
Medical disability: A disability resulting from a medical condition. An individual with a medical disability may exhibit several functional limitations. Conditions that may fall under this category include, but are not limited to multiple sclerosis, diabetes, seizures disorder, chronic fatigue, multiple chemical sensitivity, and respiratory conditions.

Mobility impairment: A disability that limits an individual’s ability to move; walk independently without the aid of a wheelchair, walker, or other assistive devices; or walk long distances due to limited energy or chronic pain.

Psychiatric disability: Individuals with a diagnosed mental illness may have difficulty functioning well in their academic, personal, or social environments. These conditions may include depression, pervasive anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and stress-related conditions. Many of these conditions are successfully treated with medication and therapy.

“Qualified individual with a disability”:  
- In higher education: An individual who meets the academic and technical standards for admission to or participation in an education program or activity and can, with or without accommodation, perform the essential tasks involved in the course or program.
- In employment: An individual with a disability who satisfies the qualifications for employment and can perform the essential functions of such position with or without reasonable accommodation.

Real time captioning: An auxiliary aid for students with hearing and other impairments that allows them instant visual access to lectures. The lecture content is typed verbatim by a trained professional as the lecture occurs. Students view the typed captions on a monitor or other display device.

Reasonable accommodations: An adjustment made to assist a student and/or employee that allows equal participation in a public service, program, and or employment opportunity.

- In the educational setting, reasonable accommodations may involve modification or adjustments that provide equal access to programs, services and activities of the institution, including classroom access, internships and field experiences, housing facilities, and recreational programs. Access may be achieved through the provision of auxiliary aids, assistive technologies, and modification of instructional and examination practices.
- Reasonable accommodations do not include lowering of academic standards, alteration of the fundamental nature of programs, personal services, or accommodations that result in undue financial or administrative burden. Undue hardship is determined based on the total resources of the institution, not the individual resources of a program or department (see Undue Hardship).
Rehabilitation Act of 1973: This law prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in federally funded programs and activities and in programs and activities conducted by the federal government. Section 504 of the law states: “No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States... shall..., solely by reason of his or her handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

Scribe: A person provided as an accommodation to assist in transferring verbally expressed communication to a written form. This is generally used for persons who are unable to write due to their disability.

Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973: The first law to specifically address the needs of students with disabilities. It is a civil rights statute intended to prevent discrimination on the basis of disability. Section 504 requires that institutions of higher education provide students with disabilities the same opportunities as nondisabled students.

Section 508 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973: In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. Under Section 508, agencies must give disabled individuals and members of the public access to information that is comparable to the access available to others.

Syllabus statement: A statement included in the course syllabus regarding your policies on providing services and accommodations to students with disabilities. Examples:

If you are registered with Disability Support Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability but have not contacted Disability Support Services, please call 934-4205 or visit DSS at 516 Hill University Center.

Students who may need course accommodations are welcome to make an appointment to see me during office hours. Students with disabilities must be registered with Disability Support Services, HUC 516 or 934-4205, and provide an accommodation request letter before receiving academic adjustments.
**Substantial limitation:** Inability or significant restriction in the condition, duration, or manner in which a person is able to perform any basic or major life activity.

Factors that may be considered in determining whether there is a substantial limitation include (a) the nature and severity of the impairment, (b) the duration of the impairment, (c) the permanent or long-term impact of the impairment (29 C.F.R. § 1630.2[j]).

**Technical standards:** All nonacademic criteria that are found to be essential to participate in a course or program.

**Telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD), Text telephone, Telephone relay service:** Instruments or services that allow individuals with hearing or speech impairments to communicate over the telephone using a keyboard device or computer. Telephone relay services, required in each state under ADA, assist callers with hearing impairments via an operator-assisted program.

**Undue hardship:** Refers to an accommodation request requiring significant difficulty or expense in the nature and cost of the accommodation in relation to the size, financial resources, and type of situation. At UAB, the entire budget of the UA system would be analyzed to evaluate whether the cost in question was an undue hardship; not individual departmental budgets. This is in determining whether an accommodation is reasonable and whether it must be implemented (see Reasonable Accommodations). Denial of an accommodation based on “undue hardship” must be made by the institution’s legal counsel, not by faculty or departmental leadership.

**Universal design for learning (UDL):** As used in education, universal design for learning refers to the process of making the goals of learning attainable by all students regardless of learning style or physical, sensory, organizational, or linguistic abilities. It emphasizes meeting the unique needs of each student by providing a variety of ways for students to access and engage in the learning process.

**Video Description:** An audio narration of visual media, i.e. television and film, for viewers who are blind or visually impaired. This narration consists of verbal descriptions of key visual elements in a media presentation such as settings and actions not reflected in dialogue. The descriptive narration is inserted into the presentation during the natural pauses in the audio (and sometimes during dialogue if deemed necessary).
Video relay service (VRS): Uses a qualified interpreter as a relay operator to translate spoken word to American Sign Language (ASL). A Deaf person uses a webcam, signing to the interpreter, who then voices to the hearing person. Communication is returned via the interpreter.

Visual impairment: A disability that involves either total lack of sight or limited sight.

Web accessibility: Defines standards for promoting access to electronic and information technology, including computers, software, and electronic office equipment. It provides technical criteria specific to these technologies and states requirements for making these products accessible to people with disabilities.