



# DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

## Faculty and Staff Resource Guide

UAB Disability Support Services

409 Hill Student Center

205.934.4205

[dss@uab.edu](mailto:dss@uab.edu)

[uab.edu/dss](http://uab.edu/dss)

## **Faculty & Staff Guidelines**

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) is committed to providing equal opportunity to higher education for academically qualified students without regard to a disability. Students and Faculty at UAB are encouraged to become familiar with their rights and responsibilities. Providing reasonable accommodations is a cooperative effort between UAB Faculty and Disability Support Services (DSS).

These guidelines are designed to help UAB Faculty and staff understand how accommodations work and what parts of the accommodation process they are responsible for.

## **General Information**

The Disability Support Services office at UAB is charged with ensuring university faculty, staff and administrators are educated and aware of the institution's responsibilities under federal disability mandates, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Disability Support Services provides direct services to students with disabilities in order to ensure accessibility of all UAB programs, services, courses and activities. DSS is further responsible for facilitating university-wide efforts which support the prevention of disability discrimination on our campus. This requires UAB DSS staff members to provide continual consultation to faculty, staff and administrators. DSS staff work collaboratively with faculty and staff to determine when adjustments to academic requirements may be necessary.

## **Disability Support Services Mission**

DSS provides an accessible university experience through collaboration with UAB partners. These partnerships create opportunities to identify and remove barriers, provide individualized services and facilitate accommodations in order to ensure individuals with disabilities have equal access to all university programs, activities, and services.

## **UAB Equal Education Opportunity Statement**

As an institution of higher education and in the spirit of its policies of equal employment opportunity, UAB hereby reaffirms its policy of equal educational opportunity. UAB prohibits, and will not tolerate, discrimination in admission, educational programs, and other student matters on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, national origin, disability unrelated to program performance, veteran status, or genetic or family medical history. Complaints by any applicant or student who has reason to think he or she has been affected by discrimination will be considered through appropriate established procedures. See also the "Complaints" section below. This policy must be included in all student handbooks and catalogs. The following summary statement may be printed in other UAB publications:

*The University of Alabama at Birmingham prohibits discrimination in admission, educational programs, and other student matters on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, national origin, disability unrelated to program performance, veteran status or genetic or family medical history.*

## **Student Responsibilities**

Students with disabilities who need accommodations should contact the DSS office. Students are responsible for providing documentation, making timely requests for services and communicating with their professors regarding accommodations specific to the course.

## **Documentation of Disability**

Accommodations are available to students whose disabilities have been documented by the appropriate professional and in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Disability verification is solely the responsibility of the DSS office. The student is responsible for providing appropriate documentation. Faculty and staff should not be involved in the process of documenting a disability. However, they can assist students by directing them to DSS's resources, thereby easing the student's adjustment and assuring a more positive early university experience. If faculty receive an electronic notification letter from DSS, the student's disability has been documented.

## **Faculty and Staff Responsibilities**

### **Class Syllabus**

The following statement should be included on the class syllabus and referred to in the first class meeting.

UAB is committed to providing an accessible learning experience for all students. If you are a student with a disability that qualifies under Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and you require accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services for information on accommodations, registration and procedures. Requests for reasonable accommodations involve an interactive process and consist of a collaborative effort among the student, DSS, faculty and staff. If you are registered with Disability Support Services, please contact me to discuss accommodations that may be necessary in this course. If you have a disability but have not contacted Disability Support Services, please call 205-934-4205 or visit [uab.edu/dss](http://uab.edu/dss).

## Receiving a Request for Accommodations

Formal requests for accommodations will come to Faculty from DSS via email identifying appropriate accommodations for the student. Faculty will be responsible for reviewing the email, submitting any requested information, and considering the impact of the accommodations in the context of the course.

Recommended accommodations are not meant to give students with disabilities an unfair advantage, but rather to give the student an equal opportunity to demonstrate mastery of course content. Although a student may request an accommodation at any point in the semester, the student should request it as early as possible. Some accommodations may take more time to provide than others. The student should follow established procedures to ensure that the University has enough time to review the request and provide an appropriate accommodation. Any faculty member considering denying an accommodation because it modifies an essential course requirement should consult with DSS.

## Confidentiality

It is essential that disability information be kept confidential. At no time should the class be informed that a student has a disability. Information concerning a student's disability should be disclosed only to those with a legitimate "need to know." Sharing of information with other faculty and staff needs to be balanced with the student's interest while maintaining their privacy. Further disclosure should only be made with the express permission of the student or in consultation with appropriate DSS staff. DSS recommends that students discuss the coordination of their accommodations during office hours or by appointment. At that time, arrangement of accommodations can be discussed in private.

## Web Access

All course web pages must be constructed in an accessible format. Web pages need to be accessible across multiple platforms (text-to-speech software, screen readers, screen enlargers etc.). If media is embedded into pages, descriptive text or captioning should also be provided. Making Web pages accessible is easier than many might think and usually only takes up little time. UAB has accessibility guidelines for everyone to follow. They are available at <http://www.uab.edu/faculty/teaching/dss/creating-an-accessible-course>. For assistance regarding Web page accessibility, please contact [dss@uab.edu](mailto:dss@uab.edu).

## Classroom Accommodations

DSS may recommend the following academic accommodations, based on supporting disability documentation. The following list of accommodations is not a comprehensive listing of all accommodations. Please consult with DSS if there are any questions about providing specific accommodations.

### **Academic Classroom Aids**

Students may be approved for the use of calculators, dictionaries, word processors, and/or spell checkers for in-class and out-of-class work.

### **Accessible/Alternative Formats**

Handouts, assignments, and/or exams may need to be provided to the student in a format other than what is provided to the entire class (i.e. electronic version rather than a paper document).

### **Audio Recording of Lectures**

Students who are eligible to audio record class lectures are expected to provide their own recorder. All recordings are for private use only: the information is to be treated as confidential and may not be shared.

### **Alternative Testing**

Testing accommodations are the most common type of accommodation and are determined on a case-by-case basis. This may include, but are not limited to: extended time, reduced-distraction testing environment, accessible format, access to assistive technology, calculator, accessible furniture.

Faculty will receive an electronic faculty notification letter via email which will include a link to submit an Alternative Testing Agreement. The Alternative Testing Agreement identifies all of the information that students, faculty, and DSS need to know about administering testing accommodations- whether the faculty member or DSS will be proctoring the exam and providing the accommodations, where the exam will be taken, and what the exam instructions are. Faculty reserve the right to proctor and provide accommodations for their exams. Proctoring services in DSS are provided as a courtesy to faculty who are unable to provide the accommodations for their exams.

After the faculty member submits an Alternative Testing Agreement, students who use DSS as their proctor must schedule their exams two business days in advance through the DSS Student Portal.

#### **Important Notes for Faculty:**

- Instructors are responsible for providing extended time accommodations for exams and quizzes within Canvas
- If changes need to be made to a Testing Agreement contact DSS at [dss@uab.edu](mailto:dss@uab.edu) or 205-934-4205

- If an Alternative Testing Agreement is not submitted the professor is responsible for providing their students' testing accommodations
- If DSS has not received an exam or received a response from the instructor/department regarding assistance troubleshooting an exam within 30 minutes of the first attempted communication, the exam will be rescheduled for a later date.

#### **Important Notes for Students:**

- Students should follow up with instructors if a Testing Agreement is not in their DSS online services account after the beginning of the term and/or more than two business days after submitting the request
- After faculty submit an Alternative Testing Agreement for DSS to proctor exams, students are responsible for scheduling their exams with DSS at least two business days in advance of the requested exam date

#### **Test Proctoring Services Policies**

##### **Hours of Operation:**

DSS testing hours operate Monday through Friday between 8:15am-4:45pm. All exams must be completed during operating hours and end prior to 5:00pm. In the case of inclement weather, DSS will be closed in conjunction with the University.

##### **During Testing:**

During testing, only authorized testing materials are allowed in the testing rooms. All personal items are stored in designated areas. Testing rooms are monitored by staff and equipped with video cameras. Testing time is monitored by DSS during the exam. When the time is up, the student is notified and must stop testing immediately.

Prohibited items in the testing room include, but are not limited to:

- Cellular phones, pagers, Smart Watches or other electronic devices
- Backpacks and purses
- Tobacco/vaping products
- Unauthorized testing materials (scratch paper, calculator, etc.)
- Unauthorized resources (notes, books, personal computers, etc.)
- Food/drink can be approved upon request
- Students may be requested to leave a coat or jacket outside of the testing room

## **Academic Integrity:**

The UAB student code of conduct provisions regarding disruptive behavior and/or academic dishonesty applies to both classroom exams and exams administered by DSS. DSS has the right to stop an exam at any time there is a testing discrepancy. All violations will be reported to faculty.

## **Lateness**

Students must arrive on time for their scheduled test. If a student is late, the student forfeits the missed time. If the student is more than 30 minutes late to the exam, DSS must obtain permission from the instructor for the student to be administered the exam.

## **Pop Quizzes**

Pop quizzes can be scheduled with DSS. If faculty would like to partner with DSS to provide accommodations for pop quizzes, please contact DSS so arrangements can be made.

## **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Access Services**

Sign language interpreters and CART providers/captionists facilitate communication for classroom instruction (lecture, discussion, lab, etc.) and academic requirements (group meetings, internships, instructor-student meetings, etc.)

## **Working with Interpreters/CART Writers**

If you have a deaf or hard of hearing student enrolled in your course, Disability Support Services may schedule a Sign Language Interpreter or Communication Access Real-Time (CART) provider to facilitate communication in your class.

## **Guidelines for Working with Interpreters/CART Providers:**

- Before classes begin, DSS may inform you that a deaf or hard of hearing student is enrolled and an interpreter/CART provider will be in your class

## **Interpreters/CART Providers:**

- Will introduce themselves to you and provide any information on the process in general
- Follow the Code of Ethics where confidentiality is essential and strictly adhered to
- Will discuss appropriate seating arrangements with you and the student
- May not have background in the course content. Any information you can provide regarding technical vocabulary is helpful
- Have access to portable lights for occasions when videos, slides, etc. are used

- Should be informed when videos will be shown. DSS can assist in accessing closed-captioned versions of videos
- Will not provide service when the student does not attend class and will wait for a set length of time if a student is late for class

### **Working with an Interpreter:**

- Speak directly to the student and not the interpreter in your normal speaking voice and rate
- Do not have discussions directly with the interpreter. For example, do not say, “Tell him...” or “Ask her...” to address the deaf/hard of hearing student.
- When you ask a question or take class comments, allow additional time so the interpreter can interpret your message effectively
- Interpreters are there to facilitate communication; interaction should take place between you and the deaf/hard of hearing student
- You may have more than one interpreter present if your class is over one hour in length or is particularly challenging. This eliminates fatigue and ensures quality services

### **Working with a Communication Access Real-Time (CART) Provider:**

- CART providers are trained court writers who use a steno machine, laptop computer and software to transcribe everything you say verbatim and in real-time to provide access to an eligible DSS student
- At the conclusion of each class, the provider may provide a copy of the class transcript to the student. This copy is for the student only and is not shared with other class members
- Upon request by the student, CART providers will be present during exams/quizzes and must be permitted in the classroom during testing
- A CART provider’s equipment is their personal property; therefore it should not be touched by anyone other than the provider
- It is never appropriate to ask a provider to turn off equipment, shut their laptop, not to “type” something being said, etc. This accommodation is provided to a student to provide equal access to the information being presented in class

There are several teaching techniques that are helpful for students with a hearing loss in your class. These include:

- Ensuring that lighting is adequate for the student to be able to see interpreters.
- Avoid speaking while facing away from the class; avoid covering the mouth and face with papers, books, hands, etc.
- Providing DSS information about media you plan to use and ensuring it is closed captioned.

- Strive to minimize background/environmental noises.
- Use written notes to communicate with the student when interpreters or transcribers are unavailable.

### **Peer Notetaker**

A peer notetaker 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 the DSS student's own notes.

Arranging a peer notetaker is a cooperative effort between the instructor and the DSS office. DSS makes every effort to identify a notetaker for your class before the beginning of the term. In some cases, DSS may need faculty assistance in order to recruit a notetaker.

1. Please email [dss@uab.edu](mailto:dss@uab.edu) if you can provide the student(s) with complete lecture, or if the lecture notes are posted online via Canvas, so that we may inform the students. Please note: some students (due to their disability) may require a notetaker in addition to the notes you provide. When this is the case you may receive an email asking for your assistance in recruiting a notetaker.
2. If lecture notes are not available, you can assist the DSS office by identifying a student in your class who you believe would be a competent and dependable notetaker. Please refer all interested students to sign up online at: [uab.edu/dss](http://uab.edu/dss) and clicking on the "DSS Student Portal Login" button. Notetakers are assigned on a first-come, first serve basis. Your referral will be taken into strong consideration, but may not be assigned as the notetaker if another student requests the assignment first.  
If you cannot recommend a student to become a notetaker, please make the following announcement in class or through Canvas, not mentioning the name(s) of the student(s): "A student in this class requires a notetaker. If you are interested and will attend class on a REGULAR basis, please contact me after class."

### **Reasonable Number of Disability-Related Absences**

Students are expected and encouraged to attend class and meet deadlines for assignments and tests. Faculty have the right to establish attendance and late work policies. However, if a student has a disability with random or cyclical acute episodes that may occasionally impact his/her ability to attend class and complete tests or assignments at the scheduled time, a reasonable number of disability related absences may be considered an appropriate accommodations.

Students who miss class because of a disability-related absence are responsible for informing instructors that their absence is disability-related, obtaining notes or other materials from the class(es) they missed, and arranging to make-up any tests or assignments missed.

The number of allowable absences depends on the interactive or participatory nature of a course, or is based on department, college, or accrediting agency rules. There is no “magic formula” for the number of excused absences a student with disabilities is allowed in addition to absences allowed for all students in class.

When determining how many additional absences are reasonable in a particular course, below are a few questions to help identify the role “in-class participation” has toward students meeting course outcomes/objectives:

- What does the syllabus state regarding attendance/participation?
- What stated learning outcomes/objectives require participation?
- Is attendance factored in as part of the final course grade? If yes, what percentage of the grade?
- What is the level of interaction between the instructor and students, and/or among students?
- Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- Does the course rely on student participation as a method for learning?
- Is there content only offered in class?

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.

#### **Additional Important Notes:**

- This accommodation is not a blanket reason to miss class. It must be due to the documented disability.
- This accommodation does not cover excessive absences (even if the absences are disability-related).
- This accommodation is not retroactive, meaning absences incurred prior to an instructor receiving the accommodation notice may not be covered.
- It is the student’s responsibility to email both instructor(s) and DSS on day(s) a disability-related absence is being used.
- Faculty are not obligated to re-teach material missed due to not attending class.
- Students have the responsibility for completing all class work and should be held to the same standard as all other students.

### **Reasonable and Unreasonable Accommodations**

A reasonable accommodation includes actions to eliminate or reduce physical or instructional barriers to learning. Accommodations are individualized to a student’s needs, which can include physical accessibility and participation in course activities. The University is obligated to make a reasonable accommodation only to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified student with a disability. To verify reasonable accommodations, DSS may seek information from

appropriate University personnel regarding essential standards for courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities.

Accommodations are reasonable unless they:

- Alter or remove essential requirements
- Fundamentally alter the nature of a program
- Impose undue financial or administrative burden
- Pose a threat to others

### **Essential Functions/Technical Standards**

Instructors and other University staff will be expected to assist in the provision of accommodations when reasonable and necessary; however, they are not expected to compromise “essential elements” of a program, course or activity or the evaluation standards of a program, course or activity.

If it is believed that a particular approved accommodation will fundamentally alter the essential elements of a program, course or activity, the University staff member responsible for the program, course or activity (i.e. the instructor) should contact DSS to discuss the ways in which the accommodation causes a fundamental alteration. The accommodation in question should continue to be provided to the student while the issue is resolved. DSS may ask that the instructor complete the Accommodation Dispute Form for further review. If DSS finds that the accommodation in question does fundamentally alter the essential elements of the program, course or activity, the student will be notified that the accommodation is unreasonable in this specific situation and the accommodation will be discontinued. DSS will work with the student and instructor to try and identify an alternate accommodation that does not cause a fundamental alteration of the essential elements of the program, course or activity.

## **Grievance Procedures**

### **Faculty/Staff Complaints**

Disability Support Services is a part of UAB’s Student Development, Health and Wellness unit within the Division of Student Affairs. All complaints related to services and/or experiences with Disability Support Services should be reported to DSS Director, Allison Solomon. If the complaint is not resolved through this process, faculty or staff may file a complaint with:

Assistant Vice President of Student Development, Health & Wellness  
1714 9th Ave South  
Birmingham, AL 35294

## **Student Appeal/Grievance**

It is important that those with disabilities be aware of the right to appeal academic and/or disability-related decisions that are believed to have been made in error. UAB has procedures in place for the appeal of academic decisions (such as grade appeals), for the appeal of disability-related decisions and for complaints of discrimination.

To appeal an academic decision, a student will want to consult with their academic advisor to determine the appropriate next step for appealing. Some appeals may be directed to Academic Departments while some may be processed through the Office of the Registrar.

To appeal a disability-related decision, a student should contact DSS directly. If DSS staff members cannot provide information and suggestions that resolve an issue, students may request a meeting with the instructor (if appropriate), a DSS staff member, and the Director of Disability Support Services. If an agreement is not reached at this point, students may file a formal, written appeal. The appeal should clearly describe the complaint in detail, and should be transmitted as a confidential document to:

Assistant Vice President of Student Development, Health & Wellness  
1714 9th Ave South  
Birmingham, AL 35294

## **ADA Grievance Policy**

The University of Alabama at Birmingham is committed to ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students who believe the university or university representatives have violated or potentially violated the ADA should report this claim to the university ADA Compliance Officer. The ADA Compliance Officer at the University of Alabama at Birmingham is the Director of Disability Support Services, Allison Solomon. To report a compliance concern or to discuss a potential compliance concern, please contact:

Allison Solomon  
Director, Disability Support Services  
ADA Compliance Officer  
205-934-4205

Students should be prepared to submit a written account of the alleged violation(s) and will be asked to meet with Ms. Solomon to discuss the claim. During the grievance process, students

are entitled to receive all accommodations recommended by DSS. It is important that students' concerns are addressed promptly so that their participation in courses is not affected.

If a complaint is not resolved through the UAB Grievance Process, students may file a formal complaint with the regional Office for Civil Rights in Atlanta, Georgia. The Office of Civil Rights investigates complaints alleging violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.