

## Frequently Asked Questions about Accommodating Students with Disabilities in the Classroom

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### **1. What qualifies as a disability?**

As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended, and Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), an “individual with a disability” is any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (2) has a record of such impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. Wake Forest is required by Section 504 and the ADA to ensure that every student has meaningful access to all programs, services, and activities and to provide appropriate academic accommodations and services as needed. The Learning Assistance Center & Disability Services (LAC-DS, 336-758-5929, <http://lac.wfu.edu>) and Office of Academic Advising (336-758-3320, <http://advising.wfu.edu>) also work with students who have temporary impairments—such as broken limbs and concussions—that may affect them for limited periods of time to assess whether the students qualifies for reasonable accommodations.

### **2. What must a student do in order to qualify for disability-related academic accommodations for a course?**

Students must: (1) identify that they may need disability-related services and/or academic accommodations to the LAC-DS, an instructor, or an administrator (instructors and administrators should then refer the student to the LAC-DS), (2) provide LAC-DS with information that substantiates their disability-related needs, and (3) follow reasonable procedures for securing and using academic accommodations. LAC-DS professionals review relevant documentation and engage in an “interactive process” with each student as required under the ADA and Section 504 before making final, long-term determinations on an individualized basis. As needed, LAC-DS consults with others, sometimes including the professional(s) who provided the documentation. LAC-DS will occasionally consult instructors to ascertain the fundamental requirements of a class and options to address those requirements.

### **3. What kinds of academic accommodations and services are there?**

Examples of academic accommodations include extended time for in-class exams, use of word-processing for written portions of exams, alternative means of assessment, and small-group testing. Services include, but are not limited to, note taking support, document conversion, real-time captioning, sign language interpreters, and adaptive technology.

### **4. How do faculty members comply with the requirements of the ADA and Section 504?**

When a student requests an accommodation but does not have an accommodation letter from the LAC-DS, it is appropriate to refer the student to LAC-DS. When a student presents an accommodation letter on LAC-DS letterhead that documents authorized academic

accommodation(s), or a faculty member receives an electronic mail message from an LAC-DS professional staff member, the faculty member must provide or permit the specified accommodation(s) unless the faculty member has questions or concerns that providing the accommodation(s) would fundamentally alter the requirements of the class. In such circumstances, the faculty member must consult the LAC-DS representative who signed the letter. The LAC-DS may reconsider its accommodation letter as long as the student's needs and legitimate objectives of the course are protected. *Until the matter is resolved, however, the initial LAC-DS authorization necessarily prevails.* This practice prevents students from being underserved while discussions are underway.

### **5. What should faculty members do to address students' disability-related needs in their courses?**

- Include language in course syllabi such as:  
*Wake Forest University provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are in need of an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact me privately as early in the term as possible. Retroactive accommodations will not be provided. Students requiring accommodations must also consult the Learning Assistance Center and Disability Services Office (117 Reynolda Hall, [336-758-5929](tel:336-758-5929), [lac.wfu.edu](http://lac.wfu.edu)).*
- Faculty members may not set an absolute deadline by which students must discuss academic accommodations (e.g. "within the first two weeks of the semester"). Instructors may expect students to request services in a manner that is timely with respect to the action needed (e.g. five business days before an in-class examination for extended test time). LAC-DS encourages students to discuss their disability-related needs with their instructors as early as possible, and the goal is to have accommodation letters distributed to faculty within the first two to three weeks of each semester.
- The most commonly authorized academic adjustment is extended time on timed, in-class assignments, exams, quizzes, and the like. Often, exams are conducted in a separate room, perhaps with a few other students who are receiving extended time. Faculty members should select the room and *assure that the circumstances of the exam are comparable to those in the main exam venue.* For example, students in the separate room must receive announcements, corrections, clarifications, etc. comparable to students in the main testing venue, and should have the same opportunity to consult the instructor and ask questions.
- If a student in your class has a disability-related need for note-takers, LAC-DS may approach you for assistance in recruiting classmates as paid note-takers. This may involve posting an announcement on your Sakai site, making an announcement in class, and/or sending a message to the students in your class. Note-takers may also be LAC-DS student employees who are not students in your class.

- Some students use technological services in class that may require the participation of their instructors, teaching assistants, etc. These could include assistive listening devices, real-time captioning, and video captioning. Similarly, some students have disability-related permission to use laptops for word-processing or to utilize specialized software, and some students use “smart pens” loaned by LAC-DS.

**6. If faculty members have concerns about a student, where should they go?**

School of Business faculty, contact Integrative Student Services (336-758-5422)

School of Law faculty, contact Associate Dean Ann Gibbs (336-758-6119)

School of Divinity faculty, contact Associate Dean Michelle Voss Roberts (336-758-5373)

Undergraduate College and Graduate School faculty, contact the LAC-DS (336-758-5929)

**7. What should faculty members do if a student reports that he or she has experienced disability discrimination or has been denied accommodations?**

Students should be directed to the LAC-DS (336-758-5929) to learn more about the grievance procedure. Information about the grievance procedure can also be found on the LAC-DS website at <http://lac.wfu.edu/disability-services/grievance/>

**8. Where should faculty members go to learn more about disability issues at Wake Forest?**

· Michael Shuman, PhD, Interim Director of LAC-DS, [shumanmp@wfu.edu](mailto:shumanmp@wfu.edu), 336-758-5929

· Angela Culler, Assistant VP and ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, HR Services, [culleraa@wfu.edu](mailto:culleraa@wfu.edu), 336-758-4010

· Dina Marty, Counsel, [dmarty@wfu.edu](mailto:dmarty@wfu.edu) or 336-716-6364