



Special Resource Center

Most Frequently Asked Questions

Educational Access for Students with Disabilities
(310) 660-3295



Although the following questions address the most common faculty concerns, the issue of faculty responsibility is situation-specific and as such can be difficult to define. Please contact the Special Resource Center (SRC) when you are in doubt about how best to meet the needs of a student with a disability.

Q: What is the definition of a disabled student in higher education and how do students qualify for SRC services?

A: Persons with a disability means any person who has an impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Students must provide verification of disability from either a qualified professional or suitable agencies.

Q: What services are available to students who qualify for services?

A: SRC services include: priority registration, academic counseling, career counseling, test accommodations, orientation/workshops, campus and community referrals, note-taking services, Learning Disability assessment, alternate media services, and High Tech Center (computer lab). Specific services are dependent on the educational limitations of the student.

Q: A student has asked for accommodations. How do I know the student truly has a disability and needs accommodations?

A: Determination of disability and accommodations is the role and function of SRC faculty. If you request verification of a student's eligibility for any disability-related accommodations such verification will be in the form of a confidential letter written by an SRC counselor or specialist and delivered by the student or mailed directly to you. If the student is requesting testing accommodations, they will present you with a form that states the parameters of accommodations required. The SRC has a file for every student who is registered with the office and uses services.

Q: Are all students with disabilities registered with SRC?

A: No, it is likely that many students with disabilities have chosen not to be registered with the SRC or they may not have met the eligibility criteria for services. Students choosing not to be affiliated with the SRC may choose to speak directly with the Dean of Enrollment, Arvid Spor to establish eligibility for accommodations. In either case, the student will approach faculty to request accommodations.

Q: Why can't I get a list of the students with disabilities who have registered for my class?

A: Information about a student's disability is confidential. It is the individual's choice whether to ask for an accommodation or not, or how much to reveal about his/her disability. Faculty DO NOT have the right to ask students if they have a disability. For those students with documented disabilities, faculty DO NOT have the right to ask about the nature of the disability.

Q: Who is responsible for determining appropriate accommodations?

A: The SRC is the office on campus that determines appropriate accommodations as well as the Dean of Enrollment Services in specific situations. The office bases their decision upon documentation collected from a student with a disability, the student's functional limitations, the nature of the class or activity and what constitutes a reasonable accommodation.

Q: What would be the best way to inform students in the class that I would like to help in facilitating test accommodations or any classroom accommodations?

A: The best way is to put a statement in the syllabus and read the statement in the class. Examples of such a statement are as follows:

"If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible."

or

"Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Special Resource Center on campus as soon as possible to better ensure such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. As well please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. "

Q: I have a student who is having difficulty in my class. I think this student may have a disability. What should I do to help the student?

A: Talk privately with the student to discuss your observations. The student may reveal s/he has a disability. If this is the case and the student is registered with SRC, suggest that the student talk to his/her counselor there. The student may also be referred to SRC for diagnostic testing for a suspected learning disability. Suggest that the student call or visit the SRC for further information.

Q: Am I required to lower the standards of a required assignment because the student has a disability?

A: No, the standards should be the same for all students. However, some students with disabilities may exhibit their knowledge, production, and other course expectations differently than their peers. For example, a student with a learning disability in writing may produce an essay exam by using a computer or scribe rather than writing out an answer. The quality of the work should be the same.

Q: Do I have a right to fail a student with a disability?

A: The student with a disability has the same right to fail as anyone else. The laws mandate access to education, not guaranteed academic success. Their work should be equivalent to their peers. It may be a good idea to discuss your observations with this student just as you would with anyone else in your class who is experiencing difficulty.

Q: Am I required to provide test accommodations to students who request it?

A: Yes you are. Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act requires that qualified students with disabilities receive equal access to an education, and this includes test accommodations.

Q: What are some of the types of test accommodations available to students with disabilities?

A: First of all, the test accommodations are based upon the student's functional limitations and the documentation of disability that the student has provided SRC. Some of these accommodations include, but are not limited to, extra time for tests (usually 50% to 100% extra time), a reader or scribe (a person who writes answers verbatim), a computer, a Brailled test, an enlarged test, an test scanned onto a disk and the use of a computer (student uses voice, enlargement options, or spelling/grammar check), a reduced distraction environment, image enhancements (graphs, charts, and other types of images converted into raised-line format), and use of a closed circuit TV to enlarge print.

Q: A student with a disability has requested that s/he take the test at SRC. How do I know that my test will be safe and that the student does not have an unfair advantage?

A: The SRC has developed a very systematic and secure procedure for receiving tests from faculty and returning them once the student has taken the test. There is very rigid checking in and checking out procedures for tests, and students are not able to take a test with accommodations without authorization. While tests are at the SRC, they are kept in a locked file during the night. When students take the test in a specific room so designated, they are monitored. All faculty are welcome to visit the SRC and review these procedures first hand.

Q: What if I give the whole class extra time for a test? Do I still need to give the accommodation of additional extra time to the student with a disability?

A: Yes, the laws specify that you provide the approved extended time beyond what the class is provided, during each test.

Q: Is it appropriate to let a student take a test home?

A: Only if you let all other students take the test home and work unsupervised. Fair treatment of students with disabilities does not mean that you compromise academic integrity.

Q: May I require that a student start the test at the same time as the class?

A: Ideally proctored tests are scheduled close to the time when your class is being tested if not at the same time. Sometimes a student must take the test at a different time or date. The test will only be scheduled at a different time when there is insufficient space or proctoring staff or if the student has a schedule conflict interfering with the parameters of the testing accommodation.

Q: Can a faculty member forbid a student with a disability to use a tape recorder in class?

A: An instructor is typically required to allow a student to tape record the course if taping the class is determined to be an appropriate accommodation for a student's disability. Tape recorders are specifically mentioned in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act as a means of providing full participation in educational programs and activities. Occasionally, classroom discussion reveals items of a personal nature about students. If open discussions tend to reveal personal information, it would be appropriate to ask the student with a disability to turn off the tape recorder during these discussions.

Q: I have a student in class who told me that s/he has a disability, but since that time has never requested any accommodations. Am I still responsible for accommodations?

A: No, you are only responsible for reasonable accommodations if requested. In these types of situations, however, it would be appropriate to speak to the student privately to let the student know that you welcome the opportunity to discuss reasonable accommodations if the student is interested.

Q: Do I have any recourse if I disagree about requested accommodations?

A: To clarify any disagreement about a requested accommodation, you can first contact the SRC. Start with the specialist who signed the accommodation request, but you are certainly free to talk to the Director if you wish. If there continues to be conflict, you can contact the ECC ADA Coordinator.

Q: What is assistive computer technologies?

A: Assistive computer technologies provide students with disabilities an opportunity to compete on equal footing in the academic environment when utilizing specialized computer applications. In practical terms, this means the ability to use a word processor, e-mail system, Web browser, distance education resources, web-based college registration system and other computerized tools and resources used by all students.

Q: What is the High Tech Center?

A: The High-Tech Center is a computer lab designed to provide students with disabilities training and support in the use of assistive technologies that allow them to compete as equals with their non-disabled peers on a community college campus.

Q: What if a student with a disability causes discipline problems?

A: Students with disabilities are expected to conform to the same Student Code of Conduct rules as all students on campus.

Q: What should I do if a student needs help to use the restroom?

A: Students with disabilities are expected to provide their own assistance for personal care such as toileting, eating, and other activities, which are not strictly school-related activities.

Q: What if a student has an aide come to class with him/her? What should I expect?

A: In specific circumstances the SRC may provide in-class assistants to assist with the manipulation of objects or to provide real-time reader or scribe for classroom activities. In other situations, a student may have a personal assistant assist them in the classroom. Such assistants if not currently enrolled in the class will need to complete the volunteer form process. Please contact Human Resources or the SRC for more information on the volunteer form. A personal assistant or in-class assistant are expected to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct just as any other student in the class.

Sources: DO-IT, City College of San Francisco DSPS Faculty Handbook, and High Tech Center Training Unit

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