



OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

University Policy

Policy #4500

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Responsible Oversight Executive: Vice President for Student Engagement and Enrollment Services

Date of Current Revision or Creation: May 4, 2012

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define the procedures used to accommodate students with disabilities.

B. AUTHORITY

[Virginia Code Section 23-9.2:3, as amended](#), grants authority to the Board of Visitors to establish rules and regulations for the institution. Section 6.01(a)(6) of the [Board of Visitors Bylaws](#) grants authority to the President to implement the policies and procedures of the Board relating to University operations.

[Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)

[Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended \(ADA\)](#)

C. DEFINITIONS

Disability (as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 [ADA]) - A person has a disability within the meaning of Section 504 if the person has as a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment.

Physical and Mental Impairment (as defined by ADA) - Physical or mental impairments include any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory, including speech organs, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, and endocrine; or any mental or psychological disorder such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

Major Life Activity (as defined by ADA) – A major life activity includes the following: self-care, manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, breathing, standing, thinking, concentrating, reading, learning, sleeping, working, bending, communicating, reproducing, normal cell growth, immune system function, digestive function, bowel function, bladder function, neurological function, brain function, respiratory function, circulatory function, and endocrine function.

Reasonable Accommodation – Reasonable accommodations are meant to level the playing field for students with disabilities so that they can have equal access to the University and include reasonable modifications to rules, policies, or practices; the removal of architectural, communication or transportation barriers; or the provision of auxiliary aids and services. Reasonable accommodations shall not fundamentally alter the College programs or cause undue hardship to the University.

Technical Standards (as defined by ADA) : Technical standards are non-academic criteria for programs that should relate directly to the essential or core aspects of the program, academic or programmatic success, skills necessary to obtain licensure, and the safe performance of the skills the program seeks to develop.

D. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, students, prospective students, volunteers, employees of affiliated organizations, and visitors to the institution as needed to meet the legitimate needs of the students with disabilities. Employees include all staff, administrators, faculty, full- or part-time, and classified or non-classified persons who are paid by the University. Students include all persons attending classes whether enrolled or not enrolled. Affiliated organizations are separate entities that exist for the benefit of the University and include the Foundations, the Community Development Corporation, and the Alumni Association. Visitors include vendors and their employees, parents of students, volunteers, guests, and all other persons located on property, owned, leased, or otherwise controlled by the University.

E. POLICY STATEMENT

Old Dominion University is committed to providing students with documented disabilities the same opportunity to achieve academic success as it provides for all students. The provision of services to students with documented disabilities at Old Dominion University is based on the principle of non-discrimination and accommodation in academic programs set forth in the implementing regulations for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. These services will be provided within the basic guidelines to follow, with the understanding that students with disabilities may require unique accommodations and must have their needs assessed on a case-by-case basis. The provision of accommodations for students with documented disabilities need not guarantee students equal results or achievement; accommodations must only afford them an equal opportunity for achievement.

F. PROCEDURES

1. Recruitment: The Office of Admissions at Old Dominion University will make all reasonable efforts to assure that all recruitment activities are made accessible to persons with disabilities. All entities hosting Old Dominion University recruitment activities will be encouraged to provide facilities that are accessible so that interested persons with disabilities will not be excluded or denied participation. In keeping with this policy, Old Dominion University will provide, if given adequate advance notice, such services as interpreters, audio tapes or reader services at recruitment functions. The University may require documentation of a specific disability, as allowed by law, if such services are requested.

2. Admission to the University

- a. **General Admissions:** The requirements for general admission for prospective students with disabilities are no different from those for other applicants. The University will not ask for information concerning an applicant's physical or mental disability during the admissions process. A prospective student with a disability may choose, but is not required, to self-disclose during the admissions process. Those who self-disclose should be referred to the Office of Educational Accessibility.
- b. **Acceptance to Specific Programs:** If an academic program has established technical standards, they should be published and prospective students with disabilities should be aware of any that are applicable to their intended program of study. The University is not required, however, to make major academic adjustments, fundamental changes, or substantially modify standards for acceptance into or completion of any academic program.

If a question arises about the qualifications of a student with a disability who wishes to be accepted in a particular degree program, the Department Chair or Program Director shall have the responsibility of deciding whether or not the applicant will be accepted to the program. The Department Chair or Program Director will work with the student's academic advisor and a counselor from the Office of Educational Accessibility to determine if, with or without reasonable accommodations, the student is otherwise qualified for acceptance into the program. If, after careful consideration, the Department Chair or Program Director decides that the student is not otherwise qualified for acceptance to the program of study, the student will be advised of his or her academic options. The decision of the Department Chair or Program Director may be appealed to the Dean. The Dean shall consult with the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity prior to deciding the appeal. The decision of the Dean is final.

3. Determination of Need for Reasonable Accommodations/Academic Adjustments

The information sent to students upon acceptance to the University shall include a notice that it is the responsibility of students with disabilities to contact the Office of Educational Accessibility in order to arrange for accommodations. The information provided by students in doing so will be kept confidential and shared only with those involved in arranging for accommodations.

Students who request reasonable accommodations must be prepared to provide documentation of the disability by a qualified professional to the Office of Educational Accessibility before accommodations will be implemented. The documentation must be current (dated no more than three years prior to enrollment in the University) and must provide sufficient information to assist the institution in determining how the disability will impact the student's ability to function in a typical learning environment. Although formats will vary, the following critical data should be included in any documentation in support of a request for accommodations:

- The student's name, the dates of examination or testing, the examiner's name and credentials;
- Identification of the problems or reasons for referral;

- In cases of learning disability, a list of the tests administered, including the names of the tests, as well as the version used;
- An analysis or interpretation of the results;
- Diagnostic summary with a brief composite of the entire assessment process. The summary should address the concerns raised in the section on reasons for referral; and
- Recommendations of accommodations necessary to support the student in the learning environment.

Staff in the Office of Educational Accessibility will review the documentation provided by the student in order to determine if the documentation meets the guidelines set forth above. If the documentation does not meet the guidelines set forth above, the student will be asked to return to the initial evaluator and request additional documentation. If the documentation meets the standards, staff will determine what reasonable accommodations will be necessary in order to support the student. Staff will meet with the student in a timely manner to review the documentation and develop an accommodation plan. In most cases this initial meeting will be held within two weeks of receiving the paperwork. The student will receive written verification of the accommodation plan once it is developed.

Students must notify the Office of Educational Accessibility of accommodation needs within a reasonable time period prior to the date of anticipated need. Students needing sign language interpreters or special equipment should provide at least 45 days' notice.

Once the student receives written verification of the accommodation plan from the Office of Educational Accessibility, he/she must supply his/her instructors with Accommodation Letters from the Office of Educational Accessibility each semester in order for accommodations to be provided. These letters verify the existence of a disability and identify reasonable accommodations. This process is referred to as "self-disclosure" of a disability. The student and faculty member shall: (1) discuss the implementation of appropriate accommodations; (2) note their respective agreement to these accommodations; and (3) return the signed forms to the Office of Educational Accessibility noting their agreement in the space provided.

Students are encouraged to self-disclose by providing Accommodation Letters to their instructors early in the semester in order to start receiving accommodations. Accommodations will not be made until the Accommodations Letters are provided to instructors each semester. Students with disabilities who self-disclose are also encouraged to provide Accommodation Letters to their academic advisors so that the advisors can best guide them through courses and degree requirements.

Students who have a documented disability may elect not to disclose their disability. In this case, course accommodations will not be provided. However, if the student seeks accommodations later in the semester, the student should be aware that all previous grades will stand as earned. Once requested, the Office of Educational Accessibility will attempt to implement accommodations in a timely manner, usually within two weeks.

The types of accommodations provided to students with documented disabilities will vary depending on the nature of the disability and the course content. Often an initial trial-and-error period may be needed to determine the best way to accommodate a student's disability. If agreed-upon accommodations do not meet the needs of the student, the student should contact the Office of Educational Accessibility for further assistance.

If accommodations are not agreed upon by a faculty member or are not implemented, the student should contact the Office of Educational Accessibility. Staff from the Office of Educational Accessibility will work with the student and faculty member to reach agreement on the accommodations to be provided. If an agreement cannot be reached, the student may follow the procedures outlined in Section 5 of this policy.

4. Accommodations

The following accommodations are available for students who self-disclose, and in the case of course accommodations, complete the process outlined in Section 3:

- a. **Course Accommodations:** The University shall provide reasonable course accommodations to students with disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Course accommodations are intended to level the playing field for the student with disabilities and may include, but are not limited to: extended time (up to double time) to take tests, testing in a distraction-reduced setting, use of computers and spell-check for assignments and exams, use of tape recorders or other assistive technology devices in the classroom and on exams, accessible and priority seating in classes, providing scribes or volunteer note-sharing for classes or exams, and providing sign language interpreters for classes.
- b. **Student Services and Activities:** The University shall provide reasonable accommodations for participation in and use of student services and activities including housing, health insurance, counseling, financial aid, physical education, athletics, recreation, transportation, or other co-curricular programs or activities.

At athletic and co-curricular activities, such as concerts and stage entertainment, accessible seating will be provided for students using wheelchairs as audience participants. For Old Dominion University sponsored lectures, cultural activities, convocations and commencements, the participation of students with documented disabilities shall be provided, upon request, through the aid of sign interpreters, assistive technology or other reasonable accommodation. Arrangements shall be made by the Office of Educational Accessibility if sufficient notification is given.

- c. **Housing:** The University shall provide reasonable housing accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Reasonable housing accommodations include accessible residence hall rooms, single room status, and residence hall rooms in close proximity to academic buildings. Students must provide sufficient documentation stating why housing accommodations are required to the Office of Educational Accessibility. This documentation will be carefully reviewed by staff from the Office of Educational Accessibility in order to ensure that the documentation and requests are valid. Since accessible residence hall rooms on campus are limited, documentation must be provided in a timely manner.

The Office of Educational Accessibility will accept housing requests and will forward them to the Office of Housing and Residence Life. The Office of Housing and Residence Life will assign accessible residence hall rooms based on information provided by the Office of Educational Accessibility. Priority will be given based on the greatest physical need to live in University housing as a means of providing the student with a disability the opportunity to successfully fulfill his/her academic program at the University. Final selection for reserved spaces for students with disabilities will be completed at a specified date in mid-summer of each year. The student will be informed of their room

assignment by the Office of Housing and Residence Life. The remaining spaces reserved for students with disabilities will be turned over to the Office of Housing and Residence Life staff for assignment to students on the housing waiting list.

Any student with a documented disability has the alternative of entering the regular housing application process and is not required to take a reserved space.

Rental rates for students with documented disabilities requesting housing accommodations shall be set at the same rate as for any other student at Old Dominion University. The exception to this is the single room policy, which provides for a limited number of single room accommodations available for qualified students with documented disabilities at the rate that would normally be charged for double occupancy.

Returning students with documented disabilities may request that they be assigned to the same space as the previous year, and should proceed through the regular housing process to request the same space.

5. Complaint Resolution Process

If a student with a documented disability believes that he/she has not been provided with the services to which he/she is entitled, the student should direct his/her complaint to the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity.

The student shall provide, in writing, documentation of the disability, the nature of the discrimination, and any other information deemed relevant.

The Assistant Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity will then attempt to reach an agreement through an informal mediation process. If an agreement is reached, a copy of the agreement shall be provided to the student and the involved University employee. If an agreement cannot be reached, the Assistant Vice President will convene an ADA Evaluation Committee for the purpose of evaluating the case and making a recommendation to the appropriate Vice President. The decision of the Vice President is final.

The members of the ADA Evaluation Committee will be the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity (chair), University Counsel, Director of the Office of Educational Accessibility, the appropriate Dean and a designated representative from the Office of Academic Affairs.

G. RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS

The Assistant Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity is the Section 504 Coordinator who will monitor the implementation of these guidelines.

The Director of the Office of Educational Accessibility will implement the University's policies and procedures for students with disabilities and uphold the mission of the office. The Director will also oversee student requests for accommodation and assistance, assist University employees in providing equal access and reasonable accommodations, and ensure the appropriate delivery of equipment and services

H. RELATED INFORMATION

[University Policy 5406 - Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities](#)

