

General Instructional Guidance for Faculty and Staff Working with Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are individuals. Comparisons with other students needing the same accommodations or appearing to have the same disability should be avoided.

Assumptions based on previous or current experience can be wrong and detrimental. For example, students using wheelchairs may not require the same accommodations. The classroom location should be wheelchair accessible but that may be where commonality stops. Where a student sits in the class (utilizing a wheelchair or transferred into a regular desk), how a student manages the reading and writing requirements of a class and how a student interacts within the class can differ from one person to another.

If a student presenting no apparent disability requires extended time in testing, the student's disability should not be assumed or guessed. Extended time is required for a number of different types of medical conditions that are not visible.

Students are not obligated to reveal or discuss their disability with instructors. Some will choose to have a dialogue about their disability and accommodations; others will not. If a student chooses to openly discuss his or her disability, the content and discussion should be kept private and confidential. It is not uncommon for people to feel awkward when discussing disability. An open mind, avoiding stereotype images and experiences, and recognizing the student for his or her abilities are important in establishing a successful working relationship with each student.

Clearly written course syllabi provided in advance, at the beginning of the semester and posted on the web during the semester offer important information to determine the accommodations for each student. Standards for course content and the evaluation and testing content should not be changed for students with disabilities. The manner in which the student is evaluated or tested may be modified. If specific course activities are impossible for a student, alternative but equal assignments can be considered. The individual student can be invited to participate in the discussion of alternative assignments to determine what is feasible, however the standards of the instructor or course evaluation should not be reduced. The Accessibility Resources Office (ARO) can be helpful in suggesting other ways that a student can pursue a required activity.

Teaching Students with Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorders

Students with documented Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) will experience inattention more frequently and severely than other students. Inattentiveness may or may not be apparent by observation. Diagnosis occurs by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist and treatment may involve medication and on-going professional counseling support.

Attention may be affected by environmental stimuli that other persons may or may not be conscious of, e.g. consistent background noise from any source in and out of the classroom. "Street noise", concurrent conversations overheard in and out of the classroom, radiator pipes "banging", an air vent

fluctuating with subsequent noise and the sound emitted from fluorescent lights are examples of possible distractions to a student with ADD or ADHD.

ADHD indicates “hyperactivity” that, to many persons, is an outward or obvious appearance of behavior. This is a generalization and not exhibited by all persons experiencing ADHD. Hyperactivity within some students may be unapparent.

Common challenges for our students with ADD and ADHD involve the attention required in the classroom and the internal focus ability to learn, sequence and retain the instructional materials presented. Outside of the classroom and sometimes affecting attendance and/or course assignment deadlines, students are challenged with temporal (or time) awareness, the ability to organize a self-schedule, and adhering to schedules and places for reading, studying and writing that are conducive. The degree to which each student is distracted, inattentive and finds successful supports is variable.

Students with ADD and ADHD are expected to meet course requirements in the same manner as other students in the class. Regular, on-time attendance is not excused. Accountability is expected. Recurrent or chronic problems in class attendance or course assignment deadlines should be handled in the same process as expected with any students. Some instructors choose to speak with the student first. If a Dean is contacted for academic concerns as the routine course of action, the Dean should be contacted in situations even when an instructor knows of an ADD or ADHD diagnosis (by way of student disclosure or student permitted disclosure to the Accessibility Resources Office). The Dean may choose to involve and consult with the Accessibility Resources Office.

Instructors can provide necessary supports for their students with Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorders in the following ways:

- Present the course syllabus in writing with clear deadline dates for assignments. Review the syllabus aloud at the start of the course and shortly after the close of shopping period. Remind students of upcoming deadlines with a week’s notice.
- Invite the student to submit drafts of written assignments with a specific deadline. When reviewing, make notes but do not correct sentence structure, spelling and syntax. Discuss the draft in person with the student.
- Present course materials and instruction in a variety of modalities – verbal, visual and hands-on when possible. This is usually helpful to all students.
- Adhere to the schedule for course deadlines.
- If teaching a course that is over 1 hour and 15 minutes, offer breaks every 45 minutes.
- Plan for a separate testing room for examinations.

Teaching Students with Chronic Illnesses

Chronic illnesses that can affect academic life are too numerous to list in entirety. Many present no visible difference but can involve pain, severe and chronic fatigue, stress, discomfort and required time for medical treatment. Some examples are arthritis, Lupus, cancer, diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, chronic and severe asthma, seizure disorder, cardiac disease and narcolepsy.

Students with chronic illnesses have made a conscious choice to attend school and do so with medical support. Attendance can be affected by a flare-up or medical complication that cannot be predicted. A

change in medication can be disruptive to a student's energy level, concentration or general feeling of "wellness".

Students with chronic medical illnesses are frequently experts on their medical management. They are often honest with their self-imposed limits of activity. Because of a history of unpredictable medical episodes and subsequent time delays, these students often plan ahead, within reason, and manage time carefully.

- Instructors can provide necessary supports for their students with chronic medical illnesses in the following ways:
- If a student chooses to self-reveal his or her illness, limit questions related to academic concerns. The student may volunteer additional information.
- If a student is absent and or tardy frequently, approach the student in the same fashion as any other with the same pattern. Speak to the student in a private location. Plan for sufficient time to hold a comfortable conversation.
- Be respectful, not reproachful. Review course expectations regarding attendance and ask the student to respond. Make contact with the student's Dean if attendance problems continue and threaten a passing grade.
- Mid-term and final exam times offered separate from regular class time may need to be changed to accommodate a medication schedule or expected daytime cycle of fatigue.
- Short rest breaks may be required for some students in class times longer than one hour.

Teaching Students with Chronic Mobility Impairments

Students with mobility impairments may use wheelchairs (manual or powered), scooters, crutches or braces. A personal aide may accompany some students. Others may walk unassisted but sometimes slower and/or with a noticeable difference in gait. And there may be students who rely on a mobility aid (e.g. a wheelchair) only occasionally.

There are a number of medical conditions that affect mobility. Some also affect the individual's fine or gross upper limb ability. Some can affect the length of time an individual can sit or stand. Chronic medical conditions can include (but are not limited to) spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, amputation, multiple sclerosis, severe arthritis, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, severe back injury/pain, severe cardiac conditions, severe sickle cell anemia, and severe respiratory disorders.

The Accessibility Resources Office expects to have advance knowledge of students who have mobility impairments. If the planned course work of a particular student indicates very special arrangements (e.g. laboratory work, internships, fellowships) the Accessibility Resources Office will begin advance planning with the Student and faculty member before the semester begins.

Physical access is a primary consideration for students with mobility impairments. The University continues to make improvements in wheelchair access to and within its buildings. The Accessibility Resources Office maintains current information on building and specific classroom accessibility changes. Each semester, the Accessibility Resources Office will work with students known to require wheelchair access.

Instructors can provide necessary supports for their students using wheelchairs in the following ways:

- When speaking with a student who is using a wheelchair, try to sit or squat for equal level eye contact if the conversation lasts more than a minute or so. Do not hang onto or lean on the wheelchair. If working one-on-one with a student using a power chair in a directed activity, ask the student to shut the power off. This prevents the chair from moving accidentally and unexpectedly.
- Take note of the classroom layout. Chairs and desks moved by a previous class can present abrupt obstacles to wheelchair navigation. Ensure doorways and aisles are clear of obstructions.
- A student who uses a wheelchair should have a choice in the location of seating in classrooms where seating is not fixed. Some students may need assistance to move a chair around a table to fit the wheelchair. This can often be done casually. Offer assistance and if a “no, thank you” is the response, accept it and let the student assist him or herself. In classrooms with tables, a table may not be high enough for the fit of the wheelchair. If the student prefers to sit under the table, there are a few simple solutions that can be discussed with the student and the Accessibility Resources Office as needed.
- Where there is an unexpected change in classroom location, expect the student to arrive with delay. Access to and within our University buildings may not be as direct for persons using wheelchairs. The same expectation can be held for days during snow and ice.
- If your office is not accessible for a wheelchair, speak with the student early in the semester. Alternative meeting locations should be arranged. This will require a planned space and meeting times and, while not as spontaneous as a student stopping by during office hours, it is an acceptable alternative.
- Field trips required by the course must consider transportation and accessibility according to the individual student’s requirements.
- Casual or formal gatherings of students outside the structured classroom and related physical activity associated with the gathering must consider accessibility and alternative participation activities. A conversation with the student is advised.
- Laboratory courses may require a modification of tables and the placement of equipment. This is done on an individual basis. Some students may require no modification.

Teaching Students with Hearing Impairments

Students with hearing impairments can experience different levels of hearing ability and loss. They can present varying abilities in communications. Differences can be attributed to the degree of the hearing loss; when the hearing loss occurred; social, educational and home environments; and the modes of communications used. Students may rely on lip reading, amplification, any one of a number of interpreting services (e.g. American Sign Language (ASL), Cued Speech, and Oral Interpreters) and/or Computer Assisted Real-time Transcription (CART).

What a student needs in his or her academic life depends on degree of loss, the age at which the hearing loss occurs, and his or her experience with alternative communications and the environment. For example, a student with a hearing loss in a small seminar may be able to rely on lip reading. The same student may require amplification or interpreting support for large lecture environments. When a student relies on lip reading or interpreting services, he or she may also require notetaking support to

keep a visual focus on the interpreter or lecturer. Students with hearing loss can also vary widely in their written and verbal expressive ability.

The Accessibility Resources Office meets students with hearing loss or who are deaf prior to their entrance to the University. In planning with some students, it is possible to define the exact supports that will be required. This is possible for a student who is deaf and consistently relies on interpreting services. For others presenting varying degrees of hearing loss, the environments and the correct supports can only be anticipated and arranged when the student arrives.

The University relies on contracted resources for services that include American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and Computer Assisted Real-time Transcription (CART). These services are provided in the classroom through arrangements made by the Accessibility Resources Office. CART is a service provided by trained court stenographers using a steno machine and laptop computer supported with special software that translates steno into written English. Interpreters and CART providers attend class with the student.

Some students will rely on a wireless FM transmission system to amplify the speech of a speaker. A small clip on microphone is offered to the speaker in a class.

A student with a hearing loss will often be proactive to explain his or her requirements to instructors early in the semester.

Instructors can provide necessary supports for their students with hearing impairments in the following ways:

- When speaking privately to a student with a hearing loss accompanied by an interpreter, direct your eye contact to the student, not the interpreter. To get the student's attention not already in visual direction, a light tap on the shoulder or other visual sign is helpful. Face the student and avoid sitting in front of a window with bright light. Try to pause briefly to allow the interpreter time to catch up. If unique terminology is used in the conversation, expect the requirement to spell words requested by the interpreter. If the conversation held is an interview with standard questions involving unique terminology, be prepared to provide the questions in writing to the interpreter in advance. Do not hesitate to ask the interpreter questions about the logistics of the interpreting.
- When speaking with a student who has a hearing impairment, try to keep hands and other objects away from your mouth. If something is misunderstood, try rephrasing rather than repeating and avoid speaking louder.
- When presenting a class lecture, face front. Try not to speak with a turned back while, for example, writing on a board. Visual aids can be helpful to supplement verbal presentations.
- If a student is using an interpreter or CART service, try to pause the verbal presentation often. Seconds of silence to erase the blackboard, change overheads or move to the next slide can be helpful for everyone in the class.
- Be patient with student responses. Because of the delay in interpreting and CART supports, there will be a delay in response. Keep casual eye contact with the student as he or she answers.
- If there is a group discussion in the classroom, try to limit the communications to one person at a time. Repeat questions asked by other students before responding.

- When handing out papers that expect immediate visual review, give students time to give their visual attention to the paper before giving explanation or instructions.
- If an interpreter is used, invite a private conversation with the student and the interpreter to discuss how to best communicate in the classroom and the most appropriate location for the interpreter. If there is only one interpreter, she or he will require a break after 45 minutes. For three hour classes, two small breaks can be considered as an alternative to one mid-way break. The interpreter has only one role: to facilitate communication. If a response is unclear, either student or faculty member should indicate this and ask the respondent to rephrase the response. The student or faculty member should not consider interpreters in other roles.

Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities

A student with a learning disability should not be thought of as “a person who cannot read,” “a person who cannot write” or a “person who cannot learn at the same pace or knowledge level”. Each student who has been accepted at Longwood has shown competitive academic and community achievements. Those with learning disabilities have identified and managed compensatory strategies that minimize a difference in auditory, visual and/or performance (i.e. hands-on) learning. The student’s ability to learn can be challenged by the traditional education methodologies and the student’s ability to perform to his or her maximum capability may be dependent on the accommodations provided in each course.

A student with a learning disability may or may not enter Longwood with a reasonable knowledge of what supports he or she requires. The student will meet with the Director and/or Associate Director of the Accessibility Resources Office upon registration and each semester the student requests and requires services. Changes in accommodations may occur each semester and are customized to the course requirements and evaluation methods. Knowledge of the student's learning strengths and weaknesses is derived from testing information received from a licensed practitioner and from interviews with the student.

Instructors can generally expect that students with learning disabilities will need support in information processing. This may include reading comprehension, written and verbal expression, writing mechanics (i.e. cursive or print), sequencing and memory, and receptive auditory and visual processing. The skill levels and amount of support required by each student can vary drastically. It is impractical and unnecessary to change a course structure to accommodate one student’s needs in the classroom; however teaching with various modalities (verbal, visual and performance) may provide the support for a good cross section of students’ learning styles. A combination is effective if there is more than one student in the class with a learning disability and will not be detrimental to other students.

Instructors can provide necessary supports for their students with learning disabilities in the following ways:

- Present the course syllabus in writing with clear deadline dates for assignments. Review the syllabus aloud at the start of the course and shortly after the close of shopping period. Remind students of upcoming deadlines with a week’s notice.
- Sharing lecture notes with a student in advance can be extremely helpful to support his or her visual and auditory preparation for each class.

- During a lecture, pause occasionally allowing students to take the time to assimilate the information and catch up with notetaking. Pauses can be used to erase a board or change a visual slide. • When presenting abstract concepts, support the concepts with concrete examples or visual materials such as charts and graphs.
- Invite the student to submit drafts of written assignments with a specific deadline. When reviewing, make notes but do not correct sentence structure, spelling and syntax. Discuss the draft in person with the student.
- Unless considered as an essential requirement of the course, grading on spelling errors for in class writing assignments should be suspended. Permission to use portable and computer based spell checkers can be asked. It will be the instructor’s decision to determine if spelling is critical and essential to the course requirements.
- In the classroom, avoid “rapid fire” questions of students.
- In the testing process, do not make assumptions about the student who has submitted the exam completed before the extended time allowed. There are times when a student “gives-up “on an exam – just like any student – and, there are times when a student completes the exam because the format did not challenge his/her learning style. This can be especially true when the information about test format was not pre-published or spoken to in enough detail in advance to change what might have been expected when a Letter of Accommodation was written at the beginning of a semester.
- Advance planning for the reading requirements of a course from semester to semester is especially helpful to students who need recorded, audio presentations as an alternative format. The Accessibility Resources Office may contact faculty members several weeks before the beginning of a semester to ask about anticipated reading assignments. Lead-time is essential to provide the alternative medium in a timely fashion.

Teaching Students with Psychological Disabilities

There is a broad range of psychological diagnoses that can be experienced by a student at Longwood, both temporary and long term in treatment. By experience, these students are the least likely to seek exceptional support in the course work or to self-identify their current or previous history with instructors. A student’s individual choice to seek out individual supports – from the Accessibility Resources or from a faculty member is the student’s choice.

Symptoms and the interruption of academic requirements as a result of psychological disorders are mostly unpredictable.

A person with psychological diagnosis registered with the Accessibility Resources Office most commonly comes to present medical documentation pro-actively in the event that intervention in a semester becomes necessary but is not expected. The most common symptoms of psychological disorders exhibited by students at the University are behaviors displaying (but not limited to) inattentiveness, difficulty in concentration, apathy, fatigue, and/or irritability. Anxiety may interfere with concentration affecting classroom learning and the examination process. Medication prescribed can have side effects and can result in fatigue and irregular behavior and attentiveness.

Any student choosing to self disclose a psychological disorder to faculty should receive the same respect of confidentiality expected of other students. The student is often in fear of a judgment and stigma. If a student reveals a psychological diagnosis, consider and look at the factual information available from the student and self-directed research. Avoid making judgments and assumptions based on the casual information accumulated by way of past media presentations.

- Instructors can provide necessary supports for their students with psychological diagnoses in the following ways:
- If a student self-reveals a diagnosis, inform the student on campus about the supports on campus to include the Office of Disability Resources. Meet the student privately. Do not attempt to hold a conversation in a public area.
- Communicate deadlines and exam dates clearly in the class and in the syllabus. Avoid sudden changes in dates for exams. Give reasonable notice for quizzes and tests not announced at the beginning of the semester.
- Discuss inappropriate behavior or unacceptable academic performance as you would with any other student. Present the facts and expectations of the class. Maintain a calm delivery and eye contact. Allow the student the opportunity to respond. Keep the communication professional. Do not attempt to counsel the student.
- Avoid “rapid fire” questions in class. Allow time for a thoughtful response if the procedure within the class is to randomly call upon any and all students for answers.

Teaching Students with Visual Impairments

There is a wide spectrum of etiologies and functional abilities among persons known to have a visual impairment. Some students may be experiencing a progressive loss of vision. Some students might experience a medical condition affecting vision in an unpredictable manner. Others may have a visual impairment that has stabilized and is corrected but still substantially hinders their ability to see near and/or far.

Some students experience the inability to use peripheral vision; others, central vision. Some students will have no visual response to color but for others with limited sight, color may be an aid. Some students are blind either from birth or an early age or later in life.

Persons with visual impairments can present themselves with identifying symbols: a white cane used in mobility, a guide dog, electronic notebooks offering voice output or Braille support, and glasses. Others do not. The absence of physical supports should not indicate more or less capability. It simply indicates the individuality of each person with a visual impairment.

Students with visual impairments are often challenged by the regular methodologies and demands of academic life that are highly visual. Modern technology allows access to print and electronic material within certain limits. Copy machines have the capacity to enlarge print. A growing library of books on tape is offered through public and private services. Text files (originally generated or scanned materials) and Internet use is supported by specialized technology added to personal computers with the capacities to enlarge or present materials verbally. Closed circuit TV's (CCTV's) produce magnification of print information. These products enable access to vast amounts of information required in the academic setting. How individual students use this technology can vary.

Some students arrive at Longwood with years of experience using special technology and manage the use to maximum benefit. Other students arrive at Longwood with limited or no experience. The Office of Disability Resources can provide the technical and instructional support in these technologies and recognize that each student's ability to use and adapt is incomparable. It is often a transition time for the student moving from the use of human supports to read, write or otherwise assist to a growing independence achieved with the technology. Communications with the student, faculty members and the Office Disability Resources is imperative in this transition stage.

Not all students who are blind will rely on braille reading. The Accessibility Resources Office does offer a braille printer that can convert printed text from a computer file. This resource is available with prior notice.

While use of these technologies is enabling, it does not promise equal access to all sight dependent media. The use of any of these technologies can also require more time and unintentional delays. Technology does not support all visual requirements in and out of the classroom. Charts and graphic displays are not supported well. Video multimedia presentations lacking visual description may be useless to a student with a visual impairment.

Visual interpreters are employed by the Resource Office to present alternative verbal support. Visual interpreters present a verbal description of visual materials in print, either on paper or on a projection screen.

Use of this service in the classroom can be disruptive as the visual interpreter needs to speak in an audible level. The presence of a visual interpreter in the classroom also requires incremental delays in the lecturer's presentation. The student needs to hear the description of the visual presentation and the lecture information presented separately. The most practical alternative to this process is for the instructor to provide descriptions of the visual materials to the entire class.

Videos and movies without closed description captioning may need to be viewed separately with a visual interpreter if essential to the course content. Otherwise, use of such media should be avoided.

When needed, the Accessibility Resources will often seek the technical support of a Department or School to solicit persons with the correct experiential background to act as a visual interpreter. Common use of a visual interpreter occurs outside of the classroom for assigned reading containing charts, graphs and formulae.

Instructors can provide necessary supports for their students with visual impairments in the following ways:

- When approaching a student known to have a visual impairment in or out of the classroom, introduce yourself. It will help a person know who you are without guessing by the sound of your voice. If you are leaving a group conversation, let the student know.
- If a student with a visual impairment is alone and needs to walk or sit, you can offer assistance. Wait for a response. If the student declines the offer, do nothing. If the student accepts, extend your right or left arm bent at the elbow depending on how you are situated in reach of the student's extended hand. Place your upper arm in reach of the individual's hand and if walking through a maze of obstacles, talk about the need to move right, left or up/down stairs as required. Pause for only a second if going up/down stairs and inform the student of stairs and

the approximate number before reaching a flat surface. To assist and direct the student to a seat in an office or meeting room, extend your arm, elbow bent to reach the student's extended hand for direction. When approaching a chair, place the student's hand on the back or arm of the seat. In an office visit or classroom, pay attention to unexpected barriers in doorways and paths of access and changes in regular seating arrangements within the classroom used. If there is an unanticipated room change, arrange for someone to wait for the student and act as an escort to the new location.

- Invite the student privately to talk about their needs in the classroom. Ask about how he or she is handling the reading and writing assignments. This information can help understand what supports the student is using and how he or she is managing the supports. It can be informative to decide on processes and arrangements for the course requirements.
- Provide the reading list or syllabi in advance. Posting this information on line in an accessible format (text based) allows students with special technology to access it and reference it equal to other students. If enlarged print is needed, develop text files in 18 point. Use copy machines to enlarge 150%. In the classroom, read any information that is presented visually in overheads, LCD screen display or on the board. Avoid using "this and that, here and there" phrases, such as the "the sum of this equals that" or "the battle site was located here and the artillery was positioned there."
- Movies and videos shown in class should offer closed description captioning or not be shown at all. If essential to the course, a private viewing should be arranged with a visual interpreter.
- In a group discussion, acknowledging the name of the speaker will allow a student with a visual impairment to know who is participating.
- Do not apologize for or purposely avoid using common expressions that refer to sight, such as "I'll see you later."
- Class notes can be supported in a number of ways. Some students will bring their own portable equipment, such as a Braille notetaker or portable computer. Students may rely on a volunteer note taker. Sometimes instructor's notes are made available and reproduced in the media usable by the student. Students may request the instructor's permission to tape record class lectures. Tape recording is less common because of time factor and "white noise" interference.
- Test taking can be accomplished in several ways. Tests can be administered orally or with a scribe who reads questions and writes the student's responses. Essay exam questions can be pre-recorded on tape and student responses typed or in some circumstances, the student will be capable of and prefer handwriting the responses. The exam may be enlarged on a copier or sent electronically to a host computer equipped with speech output or magnification support. There can be test arrangements that only require extended time, i.e. breaks for a student to relax their visual attention for a period of time. Any one of these solutions is uniquely considered for the student's ability.
- Field trips and out-of-class locations should be discussed with the student. The student may require assistance from a "sighted guide," perhaps another willing student in the class. Discuss transportation requirements, if any.

We will continually find unique academic requirements that can present a penalty or unprecedented challenge to students and faculty members. The search for reasonable solutions is a shared partnership between the faculty member, student and the Accessibility Resources Office.