

Accessibility Resources Office (ARO)

Faculty Guide: Roles and Responsibilities when working with Students with Disabilities

The number of students with disabilities who attend postsecondary education continues to increase every year. Faculty and staff need to be informed regarding their role and responsibility as it pertains to supporting students with disabilities.

“The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (Title II), which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Every school district and nearly every institution of postsecondary education in the United States is subject to Section 504 or Title II. Entities covered by these civil rights laws have an obligation to comply with legal requirements and to carry out their programs and activities in a manner that does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

Institutions of postsecondary education must provide an appropriate academic adjustment based on students’ disabilities and individual needs when necessary to avoid discrimination. In providing an academic adjustment, a postsecondary institution does not have to eliminate or lower essential requirements, or make modifications that would result in a fundamental alteration of the programs or activities being offered or impose an undue burden on the institution.”

1. Encourage students to disclose their disability early by including a statement in your syllabus that invites them to meet with you to discuss their needs. Do not include a time frame (the student may disclose a disability at any time), but also be aware that you are not obligated to provide accommodations retroactively.

Syllabus Statement:

“If you have a disability and require accommodations, please meet with me early in the semester to discuss your learning needs. If you wish to request reasonable accommodations (note-taking support, extended time for tests, etc.), you will need to register with the [Accessibility Resources Office](#) (Brock Hall, 434-395-2391), prior to those accommodations being implemented. The office will require appropriate documentation of disability. All information is kept confidential.”

2. If you have not received an accommodation letter from ARO, we caution you against providing any accommodations. ARO is the campus office responsible for determining eligibility and reasonable accommodations under Section 504 and ADA laws based on specific disability documentation requirements.

3. As a faculty member, you provide the requested accommodations to students with documented disabilities. While it is the faculty member's responsibility to work with the student to provide the accommodation, if a student has, for example, extended time on tests and wishes to use ARO's Testing Center to receive this accommodation, please work with ARO's Testing Center to assist in scheduling, approving, and providing assessments. Please note that for ARO to facilitate any testing accommodations for your students, you must log into the AIM Faculty Portal and create an Exam Instruction Template for the class/section. The Testing Center is available to meet with you in person, via Zoom, via phone, or during open office hours to answer any questions and provide a tour of the space.
4. Information related to a student's disability is confidential and should not be shared without his or her consent in the classroom or with other students. The student should be afforded the opportunity to meet with you privately and must not be identified in front of others which includes in person, via email, Zoom, and all other platforms.
5. Accommodations are designed to mitigate the effects of a disability so the student has an equal opportunity to meet the course standards, not to change or circumvent them. If a student with a disability cannot meet the course standards with accommodations, it may mean the student will not pass. Accommodations give students a chance to compete on a level playing field; they do not guarantee success.

*Adapted from Texas A&M

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