

Faculty Accommodations Guidance

Overview

To initiate the accommodations review process, a student submits a request form to the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (OAA), and has medical documentation sent from an appropriate healthcare provider. OAA then engages in the interactive process individually with the student to determine reasonable accommodations as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The purpose of providing accommodations is to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to all aspects of the course/program.

Faculty are notified of a student's accommodation eligibility by an official accommodations email. This notification is initiated in the OAA portal by the student and is valid only for the academic term and course listed. The eligibility notification alerts faculty to the student's pre-approved accommodations. The notification does *not* indicate the student is planning to use all listed accommodations in your course. If you have not received an accommodations email, you can assume the student is either not eligible for accommodations at that time or has elected not to use accommodations in your course. Faculty are responsible for contacting OAA with all questions and concerns.

Instructor Portal

Faculty have access to the OAA Instructor Portal, where you can view student eligibility emails, upcoming test dates, and complete necessary accommodation forms.

Direct Portal Link: <https://york.accessiblelearning.com/Samford/instructor/>

The portal is also accessible through the Tools sidebar in MySamford.

Required Actions for Faculty Each Semester

Review Accommodation Eligibility Emails Carefully

Read through eligibility emails and accommodation descriptions carefully to determine whether you have questions or concerns related to your courses. In some cases, accommodation implementation may need to be adjusted by OAA to align with the essential requirements of a course. Please reach out to discuss. Accommodations should not alter fundamental learning objectives, academic standards, or essential course requirements.

Complete Testing Contracts

Complete Testing Contracts for the OAA Testing Center (or indicate that you will be providing testing accommodations). A link is provided in the student eligibility email, and the contract is

also available through the Instructor Portal. If utilizing the OAA Testing Center, please familiarize yourself with Testing Center policies and procedures and enter known testing dates and details in the portal at the beginning of the semester, if possible.

Submit course Flex Plans for the Disability-Related Attendance Modification accommodation

Submit Flex Plan forms through the OAA Instructor Portal to establish parameters in your courses for students eligible for the Disability-Related Attendance Modification accommodation. Modifications should be determined based on the level of flexibility that could reasonably be provided during *any* significant unexpected circumstances while maintaining the essential requirements and learning outcomes of the course (e.g., car accident, surgery, death in the family, chemotherapy).

Discuss Logistics with Students

Discuss any necessary logistics related to accommodations with students. We encourage students to check in with faculty to confirm receipt of their eligibility notification. Faculty are likewise encouraged to communicate their preferred method for discussing accommodation logistics.

Accommodation Guidance

Audio Recording Agreements

Action Items for Instructor: N/A

Students approved for audio recording accommodations are required to sign the Audio Recording Agreement *before* accommodation notifications are issued. Receipt of an eligibility email confirms that the student has completed the required agreement.

Audio recorders are a covered auxiliary aid under Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is approved to supplement or substitute note-taking for students with disabilities that impact their note-taking speed, quality, or handwriting/typing capacity. Recordings may not be used for any purpose other than as a supplement or substitute for class notes for the student approved for this accommodation. Recordings in any form may not be shared with any other individual.

Regarding class policies that prohibit audio recording:

This accommodation supersedes any in-class policy prohibiting audio recording. Instructors are permitted to prohibit audio recording **ONLY** during portions of the class when note taking in all forms is prohibited. If students are permitted to take handwritten or typed notes, audio recordings must be allowed.

Testing Accommodations

Action Items for Instructor:

- Determine whether you will provide testing accommodations or utilize the OAA Testing Center.
- Mark this decision on the Testing Contract via the Instructor Portal.
- If testing with OAA, complete the remainder of the Testing Contract and review Testing Center policies. Instruct students it is their responsibility to schedule with the OAA Testing Center at least one week prior to an assessment in order to utilize testing accommodations in your course. If providing accommodations yourself, please reach out to OAA with any questions about the testing environment or conditions that meet the required parameters.

Faculty are responsible for providing approved testing accommodations and should contact OAA with any questions or concerns. All approved testing accommodations will be sent to the professor by email. For students with testing accommodations, a link will be included with a Testing Contract. Faculty complete this contract to indicate whether they agree to provide the student's testing accommodations independently, or whether they would like to utilize the OAA Testing Center proctoring service. If utilizing the OAA Testing Center, professors will identify testing dates, permitted materials, and preferences on the contract.

The OAA Testing Center proctors exams Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:30am and 4:00pm. Students are expected to reserve a testing room at least one-week in advance of tests. An earlier deadline is applicable for students requesting final exam testing space. When a room reservation is approved, professors will receive an email confirming the details.

To use the proctoring service, professors must provide a copy of the test at least 24-hours in advance for regular tests and at least one-week in advance for final exams. Please Note: OAA provides computers, software, and/or technology ONLY to meet accommodation needs. All technology required for the test by the instructor must be provided by the instructor or student.

Faculty who choose to provide accommodations themselves are welcome to discuss the required parameters with OAA. Please note that “reduced distraction” is typically relative to the conditions in the classroom. It does not mandate private testing nor allow the student to choose their testing environment.

Disability-Related Attendance Modification

Action Items for Instructor:

- Complete Flex Plan in Instructor Portal for each course section. A copy feature is available.

This accommodation is designed for students who have a disability or chronic health condition that may occasionally impact class attendance. Typically, this is related to a condition that “flares” or behaves in an unpredictable way.

This accommodation is not intended to allow indefinite absences or an extended period of consecutive absences. For in-person courses, students should be expected to fulfill their responsibilities of attendance and coursework at the standard course pace and length.

Details regarding the modified attendance policy should be determined by the instructor based on the percentage of in-person attendance that is considered fundamental to the course regardless of any circumstance (e.g. car accident, surgery, death in the family) and should NOT be based on the student's specific disability or current health needs. Questions regarding the student's disability should not be asked to determine the attendance modification.

The modified policy should apply equally to each student with this accommodation regardless of academic status, current grade in the course, or the potential negative impact on their final grade due to missing class content.

To utilize the accommodation, the student should email the professor as soon as possible on the day of a disability-related absence and copy access@samford.edu. Medical notes and/or information related to the symptoms or diagnosis of the disability are NOT required to use a disability-related absence.

Once additional approved absences are exceeded, the student is subject to course policy and the same penalty would apply even if the subsequent absences are disability-related.

Access to Peer Notes

Action Items for Instructor:

- No immediate action required. A second email requesting you to make a notetaking announcement to the class *may* follow.

Student has permission to utilize notes from classmates in addition to their own notes. This accommodation is intended to remove any class-specific policy prohibiting the sharing of notes. It is the student's responsibility to obtain peer notes as needed by coordinating with fellow students and/or utilizing the class notetaker system. This accommodation should NOT replace a student's personal notetaking or class attendance.

To utilize the class notetaker system and gain access to the class notetaker's notes (if available), the student must first confirm this request under the "Notetaking Services" tab in the OAA portal. Please note that a volunteer class notetaker may not be available in every course and the timeline of uploads and quality of notes cannot be guaranteed.

If OAA or the student requests your assistance in identifying a class notetaker, all announcements should be handled anonymously. Faculty should never disclose the name of a student requesting peer notes to any other student in the course.

To ensure course instruction is fully captured, students with this accommodation are strongly encouraged to request and utilize additional notetaking accommodations such as permission to

audio record class or permission to utilize technology. Please contact OAA with any questions or concerns. Resources related to developing notetaking strategies are available in the Academic Success Center.

Accessible Exam Format

Action Items for Instructor:

- Discuss with the student the current format of your assessments (e.g., online, paper, etc.) and if the student has any accessibility concerns.
- Either make arrangements directly with the student or reach out to OAA to discuss further.

Instructor should provide assessments in an accessible format. Common examples include: electronic version, enlarged font, paper copy, braille or textile graphics, etc. OAA facilitates conversion to accessible formats by instructor request.

Student is responsible to discuss specific needs with instructor. There are often multiple routes to meet accessibility. For example, if a student requires enlarged font, the exam could be printed in larger font or provided electronically in a program that allows for magnification.

The student's preferred format is subject to course objectives and instructor discretion. Accessible formats should not alter essential elements of the course or assessment. Instructors and students are encouraged to discuss concerns with OAA.

Additional Flexibility with Oral Presentations

Action Items for Instructor:

- Meet with student to discuss their accessibility concerns regarding oral presentations and any specific requests.
- Either make arrangements directly with the student or reach out to OAA to discuss further.

Discuss with the student what types of flexibility may be available for oral presentation requirements in this course. Please keep the discussion centered on the course's learning objectives and the student's disability-related concerns regarding oral presentations, rather than symptoms, diagnoses, or disability-related advice. Depending on the student's individual concerns, possible options to consider include pre-recording the presentation to play during class, using a notecard, access to a chair or stool, standing behind a podium, presenting first or last, presenting to a smaller group or one-on-one with the instructor. Faculty who are concerned that any flexibility may alter a fundamental aspect of the course should contact OAA to discuss.

Do Not Call on Student in Class Without Advanced Notice

Action Items for Instructor:

- Discuss with the student how participation points are calculated in the course.

Student should volunteer to answer questions, participate in class discussion, or read aloud, rather than being individually called on OR the instructor should provide reasonable advanced notice regarding possible questions/content. This accommodation is NOT a participation waiver. If the course has specific participation requirements, please review these with the student to discuss options and expectations. Reasonable advanced notice is typically considered at least 24 hours prior to class and provided in an individual and private manner, not as a general class announcement.

Surgery, Illness and Hospitalization

Action Items for Instructor:

- Complete a Care Team referral. Review guidelines document.

There are times that OAA may need to be involved when students report surgery, extended illness or hospitalization. Other times, the situation may be managed through course or university policies. The document below was developed by OAA to give students guidance on the type of assistance we can provide, as well as the limitations on what may be available. Faculty are welcome to link to or distribute this as well. [Surgery, Injury or Other Temporary Impairment Guidelines](#).

Fundamental Alterations

Action Items for Instructor:

- Notify OAA of any perceived or potential fundamental alterations between an approved accommodation and your course.

Accommodations in higher education should not alter any fundamental requirement of the course. A fundamental alteration is changing something deemed essential about the course. This includes program standards or course learning objectives, as well as pedagogy, modality, or content of a course. It is important to identify and articulate fundamental requirements in the syllabus clearly.

If an instructor has concern that an approved accommodation may alter a fundamental requirement of the course, they should immediately contact OAA. OAA will oversee a review of the accommodation and fundamental course requirement. A decision in writing will be provided to the student by OAA should it be determined that an accommodation cannot be used in a course or for a particular assignment. An instructor should NEVER notify a student that an approved accommodation cannot be used in a course without direct consultation and guidance from OAA. Common fundamental requirement reviews relate to attendance modification, consideration for spelling and grammar, oral presentation adaptation, and access to a calculator.

Reminders

Accommodation Notifications Are Initiated by the Student

The accommodation notification email you receive is initiated by the student through the online portal and serves as the student's first outreach regarding accommodations. Eligibility is determined only after a thorough review process conducted by OAA staff in accordance with university policy, professional standards, and applicable laws. Notification emails establish eligibility for accommodations. Students may choose whether to utilize accommodations in a particular course.

Reach Out with Questions About Accommodation Implementation

If you have questions or concerns regarding equity, unintended advantage, or the impact of an accommodation on essential course objectives, please contact our office for consultation. Accommodations in higher education are based on access, not success. All students should be provided the same opportunity to succeed or fail in a course. Accommodations are intended to remove disability-related barriers that are not fundamental to course objectives while preserving academic standards and essential learning outcomes. Like workplace accommodations, course accommodations are designed to provide opportunity rather than guarantee outcomes or reduce essential standards and expectations.

Disability Information Is Confidential

Students should **not** be asked about their diagnosis or required to disclose details regarding their condition. Additionally, information regarding accommodation eligibility should be treated as confidential and shared only when there is a legitimate educational need to do so. If you have questions or concerns about a student's accommodations, please contact our office directly.

Classroom Culture Is Important

Please be especially mindful of the tone used when discussing accommodations and disabilities in your classroom. The question our office receives from students more than any other is: "What will my professors think about me using accommodations?" The vast majority of students utilize accommodations with apprehension and concern about being perceived negatively.

Refer Students as Needed

If a student requests accommodations that are not listed on their eligibility email, please refer the student to our office. If you believe a student may benefit from additional support beyond the accommodations listed, please refer the student to the appropriate campus resource, such as Counseling & Wellness or the Academic Success Center.

Links and Documents

- [OAA Instructor Portal](#)
- [Online Exams & Accommodations: A Two Step Process](#)
- [Surgery, Injury or Other Temporary Impairment Guidelines](#)
- [Service Animal Community Guidelines](#)
- [Community Guidelines on Disability](#)