

Disability Accommodations Guidelines

Northwest University is committed to ensure that educational programs are accessible to all qualified students in accordance with the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and expanded by the Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA). Reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids are determined on a case-by-case basis for qualified students who have demonstrated a need for these services.

Definitions Applicable to All Student Accommodations Requests

- A “disability” is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.
- “Major life activities” include learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, caring for one-self, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, sitting, reaching, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, and interacting with others, working and operation of major bodily functions.
- An individual is “substantially limited” when she/he is unable to perform a major life activity that the average person in the general population can perform or when he/she is significantly restricted or less able as to the condition, manner, or duration under which she/he can perform a particular major life activity as compared to the average person in the general population.
- A “qualified student with a disability” is a student with a disability who, with or without reasonable accommodations, meets the essential eligibility requirements for receiving services or participating in programs or activities.
- A “reasonable accommodation” is a reasonable modification or adjustment to a class or program, or the provision of auxiliary aids/services that allows a student with a disability equal opportunity to participate in Northwest University programs and activities.

Eligibility for Accommodations

Once confirmed for enrollment, students must initiate any request for accommodations due to a qualifying disability by contacting the Director of Academic Success and Advising for academic accommodations or the Assistant Dean of Students for other accommodations. Students must provide recent documentation (within the last three years) from a qualified clinician attesting to the presence of a disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and expanded by the Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and ADA Amendments Act of 2008. Please see definitions section above.

Required Documentation

The student is responsible for providing appropriate documentation for the claimed disability. These materials should be submitted to the Director of Academic Success and Advising or the Assistant Dean of Students for consideration. Documentation means those documents and reports that are required to be presented to the University by the person requesting an accommodation before any accommodation will be offered. Documentation consists of official written communication from a relevant qualified

treating medical or other professional (such as a physician, surgeon, psychiatrist, physical therapist, etc.) This communication must be current and must describe the diagnosis and nature of the disability, the major life function(s) affected, the functional limitations of the disability and the prognosis. The professional may also make suggestions regarding the accommodations being requested.

Specific required documentation criteria are available from the Academic Success and Advising office and through additional links on the Disability Accommodations web page. This documentation will be used as a guide to develop an appropriate and supportive plan for the student.

It is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation relevant to the student's learning environment that assesses the current impact of the student's disability on her/his academic performance. If the documentation is considered outdated or inadequate in scope or content, it will be necessary for the student to facilitate an update on the evaluation report before the request for accommodations will be considered.

Confidentiality

All documentation and information pertaining to a student's disability is confidential and will not be released without the consent from the student, unless required by law.

Disability and Accommodations Committee

The DA Committee at Northwest University meets as needed. This committee's function is to assess the needs of students with disabilities and provide accommodation to qualified students and to advocate for structural, equipment and programming changes to meet those needs. The Disability and Accommodations Committee includes members from the Academic Success and Advising, Community Life, Housing, Counseling Center, Maintenance, and Admission's offices.

Reasonable Accommodation

A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a course, program, service, activity or facility that enables a qualified student with a disability to have an equal opportunity to attain the same level of performance or to enjoy equal benefit and privilege as are available to similarly situated student without the disability. Northwest University is obligated to make reasonable accommodations only to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified student with a disability.

Accommodations are designed to meet the student's needs without fundamentally altering the nature of the University's instructional programs and are determined on an individual basis. Requests for exceptions to the accepted curriculum policies or other academic related issues are referred to the appropriate academic department chair and/or appropriate Dean. The University is not obligated to grant specific requested accommodations if other reasonable accommodations may suffice to give the requestor equal opportunity.

The student is responsible for cooperating with the University in attempting to reach an agreement on a reasonable accommodation.

Determination of reasonable and appropriate academic accommodations is made by the Director of Academic Success and Advising with, if needed, input from other Northwest University professionals or faculty with appropriate expertise in the area of academic challenge for the student. Accommodation decisions are based on the student's medical documentation, evaluation of that documentation by the Director of Academic Success and Advising as mentioned above, and the specific accommodations requested by the student on the Accommodations request form. Accommodations are always determined on an individual basis.

If an accommodation is granted, the accommodation will be reviewed annually or as needed by the University office granting the accommodation to determine whether updated documentation is needed and whether the accommodation is still appropriate and sufficient.

Common Academic Adjustments, Auxiliary Aids and Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations are individualized and flexible, based on the nature of the documented disability and the requirements of the specific courses the student is taking each semester. Some of the more commonly requested accommodations include extended time on tests or test taking in a distraction free setting.

Many departments provide TA assistance for all students at no charge. Academic Success staff is available for individual coaching and occasionally offer short seminars on time management, study helps, note taking tips and test preparation for all students. While the University may occasionally be able to provide services such as individual tutor, the University is not responsible to provide these individualized services.

Non-Academic Accommodations

Students with documented disabilities who require accommodations that affect residential life, food service, athletic and other co-curricular activities, parking and other non-academic aspects of campus living should follow the same procedures as all other students with an application to the Student Development Office. The Assistant Dean of Students makes the determination of what accommodations are reasonable and appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Since arrangements for some accommodations may require extensive preparation, students requiring such services should notify the Student Development Office as soon as possible after admission.

Temporary Impairments

Students who experience temporary physical injuries that affect mobility can apply to the Assistant Dean of Students for assistance in transport to and from classes and/or for a temporary housing assignment. The student should provide evidence from a health professional describing the nature of the injury and indicating how long the student's mobility will be impaired.

Students who experience temporary illnesses or other types of medical conditions that do not affect them for an extensive period of time should notify the Health Services Office or the Office of the Provost.

Application Procedure

A student who desires any type of accommodation based on a diagnosed disability should follow the procedure outlined below. Since the process of providing accommodation involves assessing the student's needs for specific courses, it may be necessary to review the accommodations provided after the initial determination. Students should anticipate that some requests may take specific lead time and, therefore, should initiate the accommodation planning process immediately after that complete academic registration.

1. Schedule an appointment to meet the Director of Academic Success and Advising (for academic accommodation) or the Assistant Dean of Students (for other accommodations). This meeting will be the time to discuss the appropriate ways to address the student's specific physical or academic challenge.
2. Provide current documentation of the disability by a qualified medical or other licensed professional in a statement of requested accommodations. If documentation is not yet available, the student should schedule a meeting to discuss the physical or academic challenge with the appropriate University official.
3. After an accommodation plan has been approved by the Director of Academic Success and Advising or the Assistant Dean of Students, the student will be given confirmation of the accommodation provisions in writing. For academic accommodations, the Director of Academic Success and Advising will provide a checklist of accommodation approval that can be shown to the student's professors, or will (with the student's permission) send an introductory memo with approved accommodation(s) listed to each of his/her professors at the beginning of the semester.
4. Reconsideration of approved accommodations is accomplished by discussion with the Director of Academic Success and Advising or Assistant Dean of Students, with reference to any additional relevant information provided by the student or the clinician's diagnosis and recommendations. A student who wishes to change an accommodation request, add another accommodation to those approved, or appeal the denial of an accommodation should contact the Director of Academic Success and Advising or the Assistant Dean of Students (depending on jurisdiction). The appropriate University official will discuss the proposed alteration with the student and if approved, incorporate the change into the approved accommodations provided.
5. If, after the reconsideration process, the student still considers the accommodations inadequate, they can fill an appeal to the Disability Accommodations Committee.

Appeal for Reconsideration of Accommodations

If a requested accommodation is not approved, a letter of appeal stating the purpose for the appeal, the accommodation(s) requested, and the rationale for such an accommodation is provided to the Disability Accommodations Committee. The Disability Accommodations Committee will be convened and a decision made within 30 days. If the appeal is denied by the Disability Accommodations Committee and the student wishes further consideration, a letter stating such must be received by the Vice President for Student Development within ten (10) working days of the denial by the Disability Accommodations Committee. The decision of the Vice President for Student Development will be final.

Committee Members will include the Director of Academic Success and Advising, Assistant Dean of Students, Human Resources Director, Counseling Services Director, and a faculty member or appropriate Dean assigned by the Provost.

Student Grievance

Students may initiate a grievance procedure if they:

- believe that they have not been treated according to stated procedures and policies.
- believe a request for an accommodation has not been properly responded to, approved or implemented.
- perceive improper actions with regard to a disability or perception of a disability.

To address a grievance informally, the student should meet with the Vice President of Student Development who will attempt to resolve the matter. If the grievance is against a faculty member or if it is filed as a formal grievance, the Provost will also serve with the Vice President of Student Development as the *grievance response team*. A complete description of the Grievance Policy is available in the Student Community Handbook in the Campus Life section.