Overview for Faculty of Accommodations
Provided by the Center for Disability Services

Academic Accommodations are services that are put in place to give students with disabilities equal access to education. Accommodations are individualized to each student, and are based on the way their disability impacts them academically. Examples of types of accommodations include but are not limited to: notetaking services, text in alternative format, Sign Language interpreters, use of adjustable chairs or adaptive technology, large print materials, and exam accommodations including additional time or the use of a computer.

There are federal and state laws mandating that students with disabilities have equal access to an education, and the CDS office is here to assist you in making sure those students receive accommodations. It is not the sole responsibility of the CDS office to provide the accommodations; we are here to assist the faculty members and the institution in the provision of accommodations. Sometimes we are able to set up accommodations without working with the instructors. Other times we may need to gather information from faculty members prior to the beginning of the quarter in order to assure that accommodations are provided in a timely manner.

All students must provide documentation of their disability from a qualified professional (such as a physician or psychologist) and set up an intake appointment with the Director of the CDS office in order to determine what accommodations are appropriate.

In most instances, the implementation of accommodations goes smoothly and students receive the accommodations they need. However, there are times when complications arise, and in these cases you are strongly urged to contact the CDS office to discuss the difficulties and potential resolutions. On rare occasions an accommodation that has been approved by the CDS office may create a “fundamental alteration” to the course, and therefore may not be appropriate. In these cases the faculty member should contact the CDS office for consultation prior to denying the accommodation for the student. There are a fair number of legal considerations that one must make before denying an accommodation, and it is in your best interest to do so with consultation from the CDS office. Since the provision of accommodations is legally mandated, students do have legal options to pursue if they feel they have not been accommodated, or been
discriminated against unfairly. Remember, the CDS office is here for you just as much as the student.

**Faculty Letters**

During the intake appointment, the Director will write a “Faculty Letter” directed towards a student’s faculty members that describes the types of academic accommodations that have been deemed appropriate for that student. At first glance, it may appear that the faculty letters are all exactly the same; however they are individualized for each student. The paragraphs explaining the accommodations may be the same, but each student is eligible for different accommodations depending on how their disability impacts them in an academic setting.

It is important that you read over the entire letter to see if there are unique circumstances for the student who is presenting the letter to you. **Specific information regarding the student that is essential for you to be aware of will be bolded, so please at least scan through the letter to see if there is information on how the student may interact or respond to you in the class setting.**

The students should give you the copy of their faculty letter during your office hour, so that they can meet with you during a private time. Many students with disabilities are uncomfortable discussing their disability or need for accommodations and would not feel comfortable approaching you in front of their classmates. Others may just hand you the letter in class. In these instances, please request that the student come to your office hour so you can discuss it with them privately. The CDS office has space available for you to meet with the student if you do not have a private office - just give us a call to schedule a time. Please file the faculty letter in a confidential area, and shred at the end of the quarter.

**Furniture**

The CDS office places adjustable tables and chairs in classrooms for students who have health impairments such as back, shoulder or neck injuries. Each quarter, the student comes to the CDS office to fill out a “Request for Services” form indicating where they will need the adjustable furniture placed. The furniture will have a yellow label on it indicating that it has been placed there for a student with a disability, and requesting that it not be moved from that room. CDS also places labels on the back of the chair each quarter that lists out the last four digits of their student ID# as well as the name, date, time and location of the class.

Please be aware that we may have more than one student needing adjustable chairs in one particular class, so students must pay attention to the label to be sure it is the chair that was placed for them. Because tables and chairs tend to migrate to other areas on campus each quarter, the CDS office would appreciate your help in ensuring that the chairs stay in the room in which they are placed. Knowing that a table or chair is actually in the classroom we placed it in at the end of the quarter helps us tremendously with our inventory. This furniture can be quite
expensive, so it is important that we keep close tabs on it so that it can be used for another student the following quarter.

**Text in Alternative Format**

The CDS office provides text books in alternative formats for students with print access disabilities (visual impairments or learning disabilities specifically in reading). The format in which the texts are provided varies depending on the type of a disability the student has, as well as the type of material included in the text.

In years past, the CDS office has provided “books on tape” for students by obtaining the tapes from a national organization if they were available, or hiring readers to read the text onto tape if the texts were not available. This was a very time consuming and cumbersome process. While having the ability to listen to the text being read aloud is extremely beneficial to students, the tape format is not perfect, as finding specific information on the tapes is difficult. We still provide students with some books on tape, however we are moving towards providing text in electronic format.

In 2004 Washington State passed a law ([Senate Bill 6501](https://leg.wa.gov/bills/resolutions/billpage.aspx?BillNumber=6501&Year=2004)) requiring any publishers working with institutions of higher education to provide copies of their text in electronic format (e-text) if it was requested for a student with a print access disability. Some publishers are very easy to work with and provide the e-text quickly and in formats that are accessible to us. Other publishers are more difficult to work with, taking a long time to send the e-text, or sending it in an incompatible format. Since we are legally obligated to provide the accommodation even if the publisher doesn’t provide us with the e-text, we have often had to manually scan entire textbooks into the computer and then edit them.

On rare occasions, we translate text books into Braille. We do this infrequently because it is quite costly, and students generally prefer to receive the information through e-text. However, textbooks for certain classes such as math will generally be translated to Braille. It would be very difficult for a student to complete a math course only hearing the information; generally math requires a more hands on approach.

Students may be contacting you early, prior to the quarter beginning to request specific information about the textbooks, specifically the order in which the reading will be assigned throughout the quarter. In situations where we are scanning the text into electronic format this information is essential in order to ensure that the student will be prepared once the quarter begins.

**Exam Accommodations**

The CDS office administers exams for students receiving services through our office if you are unable to administer them yourself. If you would like to send a student to our office to take their exam, it is essential that you complete the orange “Exam Accommodation Form” that is attached
to the faculty letters of students who are eligible to receive that accommodation. Please note that not all students receiving services through our office are eligible for exam accommodations. Each accommodation approved, including exam accommodations, is based on how the student’s disability impacts them academically. Please complete and submit the Exam Accommodation Form to the CDS office as early in the quarter as possible, as there are many things we have to take into consideration when scheduling exams. We administer 250-350 exams each quarter, and scheduling them all can be tricky when we have students needing computers, adaptive technology, scribes or private testing rooms.

The CDS office strives to maintain the integrity of each exam we administer; therefore it is important for you to let us know if there are any changes in the administration of the exam. If you change the date, or decide to allow a page of notes for the exam, and did not include this information on the Exam Accommodation Form, please stop by, send us an email, or give us a call letting us know about the changes. We would prefer to receive the information directly from you rather than the student.

**Notetaking**

Notetaking services are one of the most common accommodations offered through the CDS office. In most cases, the CDS office attempts to secure a notetaker before the quarter begins so that everything is ready to go as early as possible. We contact students with high grade point averages who are registered in the same class and offer to pay them $50.00 for taking notes for us for the quarter. We are simply asking for a copy of the notes that they take for themselves, and don’t require that they change the way that they take notes. Most students weed themselves out if they have sloppy handwriting or do not feel that another person would benefit from their notes. If we are unable to find a notetaker by sending letters, or if the student requests a notetaker late in the quarter, we send out a memo to the instructors asking that they make an announcement about the need for a notetaker in the class. Please do not disclose the name of the student during your announcement if you know who is requesting notes. The identity of the student should remain confidential.

If a student approaches you to request that you help them find a notetaker, please ask them to work directly with the CDS office to find a notetaker. We will work with the student to be sure they are eligible for notetaking services, and have completed their Request for Services form for the quarter. Then we will either send you a memo or have the student bring you a copy asking that you make an announcement for the need for a notetaker in your class. On a few occasions we have had faculty members find notetakers for students who have not officially requested notes through our office. When these notetakers came to our office we had no record of a student requesting notes in that class, and were unable to connect them with the right person. On occasion faculty members who were trying to assist the CDS office had the notetaker give notes to a student with a physical disability, when in fact that was not the student who requested notes, thus leaving the student with the hidden disability who actually requested notes without notes. Additional problems can arise when it comes time for payment. In order for a notetaker to receive payment for taking notes for the quarter they must be signed up with the CDS office. Please help us avoid frustration on all parts by sending the student to the CDS office if they do
not present you with a memo from us asking you to make an announcement regarding the need for a notetaker.

In the rare instances where we are unable to find notetakers through our letters or your announcements we may ask if a staff member from CDS can come in and make a request for a notetaker directly to the class.

**Tape Recording Lectures**

One of the common accommodations for students with disabilities is permission to tape record their lectures. There is specific information in the laws mandating our services stating that students with disabilities have the right to tape record their lectures. There are many reasons why a student might need to record their lectures. Some of the reasons include but are not limited to: difficulty concentrating, short term memory problems, taking medications that impact a person’s ability to concentrate, auditory processing problems, difficulties writing down information quickly or physical difficulties including pain and/or problems sitting for a length of time.

If permission to tape record lectures is deemed as an appropriate accommodation for a student, information stating such will be included in the student’s faculty letter. In the letter, it states that the instructor does have permission to ask the student to sign a contract stating that the student will not copy the tapes, sell them to anyone, or tamper with them in any way. This contract was created in collaboration with faculty union representatives, and has been in place for the past several years. If you are interested in receiving a copy of this contract please feel free to contact our office. We have copies we would be happy to send you. The contract is in triplicate so that you, the student and the CDS office can all have a copy.

Most students do not tape record every class session; they might just tape on heavy lecture days, or review sessions prior to the exams. Other students may need to tape every lecture; it depends on the individual student, their needs, and the classes they are taking.

As always, if you have any questions regarding accommodations for students in your classes, please contact the CDS office and we would be happy to assist you.

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