



**Accessibility Resource Center
FACULTY GUIDE**

**University of the District of Columbia
Division of Student Development
& Success**

Revised February 2019

Accessibility Resource Center: Our Role

In compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) works to ensure that students with disabilities are afforded the opportunity to yield maximum benefit from their educational experiences at the University of the District of Columbia. ARC staff assists students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. The staff approves accommodation requests on an individualized basis, and coordinates or oversees the provision of the approved accommodations. Services are designed to eliminate competitive disadvantages in an academic environment while preserving academic integrity.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the laws that protect university students with disabilities?

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provides that:

No otherwise qualified individual with disabilities in the United States...shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 upholds and extends the compliance mandates set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to include the whole of the institution's activities, including facilities, programs, and employment.

2. Who is an "individual with a disability"?

A person who: 1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity; 2) has a record or history of such an impairment; or 3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

3. What are the responsibilities of the student with a disability?

In order to be recognized as a student with a disability, a student must self-identify that she/he has a disability and needs accommodation. To be eligible for reasonable and appropriate services, a student must present current and comprehensive documentation of disability to Accessibility Resource Center. The records kept in our office are strictly confidential and are not part of the student's academic record.

4. What are the obligations of the university?

The institution must provide reasonable accommodations to the student's known disability in order to afford him/her an equal opportunity to participate in the institution's programs, activities and services (including extracurricular activities). A college or university may not discriminate against an individual solely on the basis of disability.

5. What am I to do when I receive a letter from ARC with regard to a student in my class?

At a student's request, ARC prepares individualized letters to professors which verify the nature of the student's disability and documents the need for auxiliary aids and services and/or academic adjustments.

Students are encouraged to meet with each professor early in the semester to discuss the academic implications of the disability as they relate to the specific course, and to request accommodation.

6. *What should I do if a student speaks with me directly to negotiate accommodations without an accommodation letter from ARC?*

No professor should provide a student with accommodation without verification from ARC that the student has a documented disability.

7. *What are some examples of reasonable accommodations that an institution may be expected to provide its students who have disabilities?*

Reasonable accommodations are provided to ensure that a student with a disability receives an equal opportunity to participate in the institution's programs and activities. Higher education institutions are not required to lower academic standards or compromise the integrity of the school or program. Examples of accommodations may include:

1. additional time to complete tests, coursework, or graduation;
2. substitution of nonessential courses for degree requirements;
3. adaptation of course instruction;
4. tape recording of classes; and
5. modification of test taking/performance evaluations so as not to discriminate against students with sensory, manual or speaking impairments (unless such skills are the factors the test purports to measure).

8. *Does ARC proctor exams for students who need test accommodations when the instructor is unable to provide the accommodation?*

ARC asks that, when possible, instructors administer exams for students with disabilities within their own department so that students have the opportunity to clarify any questions they may have about the exam. If you are unable to proctor the exam for a student who needs extended time, ARC staff can proctor the exam with sufficient notice. Additionally, there are some students, such as those who are easily distracted or need to have their tests read aloud to them, who need to take their exams with no other students present. If instructors are unable to locate a private room, ARC can administer the exam.

In order for ARC to administer an exam, the student must complete the Test Accommodation Request Form at least seven (7) days before the scheduled test date. ARC sends the professor a copy of the completed Test Accommodation Form to notify the professor of the upcoming need for a test accommodation. There is a section on the Form for you, the instructor, to request ARC to proctor the exam. Please check the appropriate box, and return the Test Accommodation Form to ARC, and ARC will make the necessary arrangements to proctor the exam for the student on the specified date.

Given staff and space constraints, ARC may not be able to accommodate last minute requests by the student or faculty member. With the exception of a class conflict, students with disabilities should take their exams within the same time frame as their fellow students.

9. *How much additional time on exams is reasonable?*

Extended time on exams is a customary accommodation for students who work more slowly for reasons of disability. For most students, time-and-one-half is adequate. Students with more severe or multiple disabilities may require additional time. The Accessibility Resource Center does not view untimed exams as reasonable. The Test Accommodation Request Form that professors receive from ARC indicates the specific amount of additional time the individual student is required to have on a test.

10. *What should I do if I have questions about, or disagree with, the recommended accommodations?*

The instructor should immediately contact the Accessibility Resource Center. If the instructor and the disability specialist cannot agree, the instructor should request a formal review of the request. The instructor should provide the requested accommodation until otherwise determined.

11. *How can I learn about specific disabilities or disability issues?*

Please see our ARC Student Handbook or meet with a staff member of the Accessibility Resource Center for more specific information. Disability Awareness Month (October) also provides opportunities to learn about disability issues, as does the Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities web site <http://rsa.dhs.dc.gov>.

12. *What can you do to begin the dialogue with students?*

To encourage self-identification, and to uphold the institution's commitment to nondiscrimination, ARC asks that your course syllabus state that it is necessary to receive accommodation on the basis of disability.

Sample Syllabus Statement:

“The University of the District of Columbia complies with the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any student who has a disability that qualifies and may require an accommodation under such provisions should contact the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) for information on appropriate guidelines and procedures. ARC is located in Building 44, A39. Their telephone number is (202) 274-6417. Feel free to visit their website at www.udc.edu/arc”.

Helpful Suggestions for the Classroom and Instructing Students with Disabilities

1. Understand that many disabilities are “invisible” (i.e., learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, psychological disorders). Many students with these disabilities have been treated with skepticism and disbelief, and may be understandably hesitant to talk about their disability, fearing similar reactions from professors and students.
2. Faculty can encourage early disclosure of disabilities by including friendly language in syllabi. Students should introduce themselves to faculty during the first two weeks of the term.
3. Faculty is the students' most valuable resource and should project an approachable demeanor. Students should visit their professors regularly for help with coursework and advice.
4. Include a statement in your syllabus encouraging students with disabilities to talk with you privately about accommodations. See “Sample Syllabus Statement.” Make a similar verbal announcement during the first few days of class (this could be positive for reluctant students).

5. Faculty should never reveal a student's disability to anyone, at any time. Students are entitled to confidentiality at every turn, in front of peers and faculty.
6. Faculty should direct any students (who are not currently registered with ARC) to the ARC. Students may be eligible for a range of academic accommodations.
7. Faculty, by law, must accommodate those students who are approved by ARC. If a professor thinks that an approved accommodation might violate or compromise an **essential** element of his/her course or program of study, please contact the Accessibility Resource Center immediately. Even in these situations, it is imperative to continue to provide the Accessibility Resource Center approved accommodation(s) until the issue is resolved.
8. Faculty should be aware that students are **not** entitled to unlimited time on exams. Students, depending upon the nature of their disabilities, are often entitled to extended time on in-class exams. Approved time-frame is listed on student's accommodation form. Students may also have been granted by the Accessibility Resource Center to take exams in a reduced-distraction testing environment. An appropriate room in the professor's department is an ideal option, if distractions are minimal (i.e. no talking, ringing telephones, copy machines, people walking in and out, etc.). When necessary, the Accessibility Resource Center may be able to provide a reduced-distraction environment.
9. Faculty should aid in the process by soliciting able notetakers (if necessary) early in the term, without disclosing the student who requires the notes. Students, depending upon the nature of their disabilities, are often entitled to peer notetaking, as well as recording class. These accommodations will be listed on student's accommodation form.
10. It is beneficial if faculty begin class with a review of material covered last time, and an overview of topics to be covered that day. The more structure you can provide, the better. Providing an outline of each lecture is a very helpful learning aid to all students. Posting a set of class notes on the Internet (i.e., Blackboard) is another helpful practice.
11. Give assignments both orally and in writing to help students with auditory/visual processing difficulties or attention deficit disorders understand and record the assignments accurately.
12. Faculty should contact ARC if mediation assistance is needed or desired. Students should first try to solve conflicts with their professors, before all else.
13. ARC staff encourages UDC faculty to contact them with questions and concerns. ARC staff encourages UDC students to ask them questions about disability support.

Suggestions for Online Learning

Technology plays a major role in the classroom. It is important that students are able to access technology and be successful in their classes. Students with disabilities are able to utilize technology, and may require additional support, including accommodations. Online study creates the need for accommodations that are different from those for traditional, in-class study. Below is a listing of recommendations for accommodation implementation.

- Extended Time is the most common accommodation for students with disabilities. If using Blackboard for exams, there are two options that may be used:
 - 1. Untimed Exam: If the student is not shut off the system at the time limit, simply allow the student to continue without taking off points for doing so.
 - 2. Timed Exam: A separate section or exam (i.e., Exam A, Exam B) may have to be created for the student receiving extended time.
 - Students with disabilities may need more access to instructor for clarification—via email or phone contact.

- It may take longer for students with disabilities to input information in chat rooms, especially if they are using assistive technology and/or software.
 - Course materials have to be accessible (i.e. PowerPoint, video, multi-media, etc.)
- Students can contact the ARC for assistance regarding accessible textbook formats. If necessary, the student should contact the ARC as soon as possible.
- Accommodation letters for students with disabilities can be emailed to faculty upon the request of the faculty member and/or student.
- Faculty can always reach out to the DRC if assistance is needed.

Universal Design for Learning

Instructors at the University of the District of Columbia are committed to providing quality education for typical learners, as well as students with disabilities. As such, the Accessibility Resource Center encourages instructors to utilize the Universal Design for Learning methodology in order to maximize the learning potential for all students.

What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?

UDL can be thought of as a methodology for designing a curriculum that includes a variety of different alternatives for both accessibility and appropriateness of content due to the varied nature of people and learning contexts. Issues to consider include learners' different backgrounds, learning styles, abilities, and disabilities.

The term "universal" "reflects an awareness of the unique nature of each learner and the need to accommodate differences, creating learning experiences that suit the learner and maximize his or her ability to progress." (CAST, accessed February 18, 2004)

What are the UDL principles?

Following are the main UDL principles listed on the [Ohio State University Partnership Grant website](http://telr.osu.edu/dpg/fastfact/undesign.html) (<http://telr.osu.edu/dpg/fastfact/undesign.html>) for you to consider while planning out your course(s):

- Identify the essential course content.
- Clearly express the essential content and any feedback given to the student.
 - *CIDD Tip*: your syllabus is a critical part of this process, as it is among your first, if not the very first, communication with your students. For more information, see the [CIDD Syllabus Creation Guide](http://www.cidd.gwu.edu/excellence/syllabus/index.html) (<http://www.cidd.gwu.edu/excellence/syllabus/index.html>).
 - *ARC Recommended Syllabus Statement*
- Integrate supports for learning
 - *CIDD Tip*: establish a sense of community among your students so that they can rely on and learn from each other. Include appropriate study guides, advance organizers, etc., to support your students' learning process.
- Use a variety of instructional methods when presenting material.

- CIDD Tip: Review the [Teaching Tips section](http://www.cidd.gwu.edu/excellence/tips.html) (<http://www.cidd.gwu.edu/excellence/tips.html>) of the CIDD website to learn what strategies GWU faculty are utilizing in their teaching.
- Allow for multiple methods of demonstrating understanding of essential course content.
 - CIDD Tip: Consider developing a rubric to guide you in your grading of the different methods of evaluation. You may want to review the CIDD [Establishing Rubrics to Guide your Grading guide](http://www.cidd.gwu.edu/excellence/rubric/index.html) (<http://www.cidd.gwu.edu/excellence/rubric/index.html>).
- Use technology to increase accessibility.
 - CIDD Tip: Consider reviewing the CIDD [Designing Instruction Guide](http://www.cidd.gwu.edu/ISD_guides/index_isd.html) (http://www.cidd.gwu.edu/ISD_guides/index_isd.html).
 - Step 6 of the guide addresses what technology or teaching tools you might use.

Additional Resources

- CASTS' Teaching Every Student [Tools and Activities](http://www.teachingzone.info/teachingjobs/casts) (www.teachingzone.info/teachingjobs/casts)
- OSU Partnership Grant Fast Facts for Faculty (www.telr.osu.edu/dpg/fastfact)

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to:

Ball State University Office of Disability Services

Iowa State University, Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

The George Washington University Disability Support Services

Xavier University of Louisiana Office of Disability Services

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