

# Faculty Frequently Asked Questions

The Accessibility Resource Center staff are available for consultation to faculty, staff and students by email [arc@bellarmine.edu](mailto:arc@bellarmine.edu), phone 502.272.8490, or in person CNMH 072 and CNMH 074 to problem-solve ways to address barriers and discuss the questions below.

## 1. What should I include in the syllabus to inform students of the Accessibility Resource Center?

- It is required that all instructors include in their syllabus a statement encouraging students to inform the University of any special needs that may require accommodation(s), along with the contact information about the Accessibility Resource Center. A further recommendation is that the statement be read aloud by the instructor during the first week of the course, or at least noted specifically by the instructor in discussing the course syllabus and its requirements.

### **Accessibility Resource Center Statement:**

*The university is committed to providing access to programs and services for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for this course should contact the Accessibility Resource Center at 502.272.8490 or by email at [arc@bellarmine.edu](mailto:arc@bellarmine.edu). Please refer to ARC's website for more information:*

<https://www.bellarmino.edu/studentaffairs/accessibility-resource-center/>.

*Students are encouraged to complete the process as early as possible to allow discussion and plan for your approved accommodations.*

### **(NOTE: THIS STATEMENT REFLECTS FEDERAL LAW; PLEASE DO NOT AMEND IT.)**

Additionally, it is requested that each instructor include a clear policy on attendance and its role in grading process, if any. This is helpful for all students to understand, and it can communicate the essential role of attendance in the course objectives particularly for students with disabilities that may affect class attendance.

## 2. How do students become eligible for accommodations?

- Students can apply for accommodations through [Accommodate](#), which can be found at the Accessibility Resource Center's website. For documentation requirements see: <https://www.bellarmino.edu/studentaffairs/accessibility-resource-center/doc/>. After documentation is submitted, the materials are evaluated to determine if accommodations are appropriate. The ARC staff meets with all students during an initial appointment to determine reasonable accommodations based on history, documentation, and current classes. As instructors, you should refer a student to the Accessibility Resource Center if the student discloses to you that s/he believes s/he may qualify for services.

3. **How will I be notified if a student is approved for accommodations?**

- Per student request, the Accessibility Resource Center will email the student and appropriate faculty a formal accommodation letter that outlines the approved accommodations. *The student is encouraged to discuss the letter in person with their instructors.* If a student asks you for accommodations and does not have a formal letter from the Accessibility Resource Center, please request that they contact the Accessibility Resource Center via phone, 502.272.8490 or email [arc@bellarmine.edu](mailto:arc@bellarmine.edu).

4. **What should I discuss with the student when I am presented with a letter of accommodation(s)? Do I need to know the nature of the student's disability?**

- It is appropriate for you to talk **in private** with the student about the letter of accommodations, reading through it together. You should discuss how you are able to integrate his/her need for accommodation(s) within the context of your course and its successful completion. For example, if the student's accommodation involves flexibility with attendance, the instructor may talk with the student about assignments that can be completed outside of class that will substitute for content mastery and points for attendance. With regard to course assessments, faculty may want to talk with the student about how "pop" quizzes will be handled, whether they send their students to the Student Success Center's Testing Center for distraction-reduced testing or choose to accommodate the student within their own department, and how to handle any other possible questions the student may have during a test, while testing in the Testing Center.
- The instructor does not need to know the nature of the student's disability and cannot ask the student for this information. The student may elect to disclose the nature of the disability, or other information about their disability, but conversation should still stay within the realm of what is instructionally and/or learning related. It is appropriate to ask the student whether particular instructional techniques or strategies may be helpful.

5. **I have a student whom I suspect has a disability or disclosed that they have a disability but is not registered with Accessibility Resource Center. What should I do?**

- It is a violation of federal law to ask a student if they have a disability in general, or a specific disability, however, open conversation about a student's needs and specific learning challenges is encouraged. In the course of that conversation, if a student self-discloses, you should suggest that the student contact the Accessibility Resource Center and reiterate that eligibility for accommodations for any disability must be determined initially by that office.

6. **Can I provide accommodations for a student without utilizing Accessibility Resource Center?**

- In order to ensure that accommodations are appropriately and effectively administered to students with disabilities, instructors are strongly discouraged from providing accommodations outside of the procedures outlined by the Accessibility Resource Center. By using the Accessibility Resource Center, the instructor can be confident that the student qualifies for appropriate accommodations. If an instructor grants an accommodation without the Accessibility Resource Center involvement, the student could be perceived as being disabled under ADAAA (Americans with Disabilities Act

Amendments Act) criteria and that could put the professor and the University at risk if a problem or complaint related to the accommodation arises. For example, one professor will accommodate a student without an accommodation letter and another professor will not. Such behaviors can be viewed as confusing and inconsistent to the student such that the student may end up challenging the discrepancy of why one professor will give a disability-supported accommodation and another professor will not unless that professor has received an accommodation letter from the Accessibility Resource Center.

**7. What is my responsibility if a student requests accommodations?**

- The provision of academic accommodations is ultimately a team effort between the student, the professor, and the Accessibility Resource Center. The Accessibility Resource Center helps the faculty to ensure that the accommodations are appropriate and obtainable for a particular class. All accommodations must be approved by the Accessibility Resource Center before a faculty member can accommodate a student. Each student's need for accommodations is renewed each semester, with the issuance of a new letter from the Accessibility Resource Center.

**8. Do I have the right to deny a student an accommodation if I feel that it is not necessary in my course, or it is not within my teaching style or philosophy?**

- Federal law requires students who present the appropriate documentation and who are registered with the Accessibility Resource Center be entitled to the accommodations given to instructors for implementation. It would be more appropriate to discuss (with the student and the Accessibility Resource Center) how the requested accommodation could be adjusted to the format/goals of your course. When a letter from the Accessibility Resource Center is presented to a professor, the accommodations that are being requested are based on a thorough review of the student's documentation of disability and are necessary for the student's equal participation in the course. Instructors are encouraged to contact the Accessibility Resource Center for support. The Accessibility Resource Center staff will communicate with faculty about any unusual accommodation requests or if there is any concern that the accommodation will compromise the integrity of the course objectives.

**9. What if a student notifies the instructor of needed accommodations after the beginning or late in the semester?**

- There could be numerous reasons why a student makes a late request. Sometimes students are not able to acquire documentation of a disability until later in the semester. In other instances, a student may try to take a class without accommodations but find that they are not doing well and need to use them. In some cases, a student may have just been diagnosed with a disability. In any of these situations, an instructor must remember that accommodations are not retroactive. The Accessibility Resource Center encourages instructors to make a good faith effort at fulfilling the accommodation, however, in some instances a late request may make the accommodation impossible to provide or render it less effective. Regardless of the time in the semester, the student is still entitled to accommodations at the point of documentation in the form of a letter from the Accessibility Resource Center.

**10. What should I do if a student approaches me about an accommodation that was not included in the letter emailed to me from the Accessibility Resource Center?**

- Faculty should refer students to the Accessibility Resource Center for the appropriateness of the student's new request to be evaluated. The Accessibility Resource Center will review their request along with their disability documentation and consult with the faculty member to determine if the student's requested accommodation is appropriate for that course.

**11. Why are instructors required to provide *exam* accommodations to students with disabilities?**

- Federal law (Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) mandates that university instructors must provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. This includes allowing students extended time on exams and a distraction-reduced testing environment. In these cases, it has been determined by a professional that the student's disability hinders his or her functional abilities during a testing situation and must have appropriate accommodations in order to have the same opportunity for success as students without disabilities.

**12. What do I tell other students regarding the exam (or any) accommodations for students with disabilities?**

- Since confidentiality is paramount it is best not to discuss exam or any other accommodations with other students or in a class setting. Discussing any information regarding a student's disability in the presence of other students can create an uncomfortable situation for the student (e.g. discussing specific accommodations for a student during lecture). Additionally, confidentiality is a legal concern and a student's right to privacy concerning their disability is protected by federal law.
- It is an opportune time, when first covering the course syllabus and the required Accessibility Resource Center/Disability Statement, for the instructor to mention that there may be circumstances where students receive specific accommodations and that such a practice is reasonable in terms of individualizing instruction so that each student can have an equitable chance for success.

**13. What are my grading and evaluation responsibilities if a student with a disability cannot pass the course requirements while using accommodations?**

- All students, including students with disabilities, must meet the requirements of a course - with or without accommodations. Accommodations are not designed to lessen the requirements or the expectations for successful performance in a course. They are designed to offer students with disabilities equal access to opportunity. An instructor should employ the same grading and evaluation procedures for all students, holding each student similarly accountable for course mastery.

**14. Do exams have to be taken in the Student Success Center (SSC) Testing Center?**

- Faculty may choose to accommodate the student within their own facility. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with the instructor at least **3 business days**

prior to **each** test, to allow both the student and professor time to reach an agreeable solution. As long as the student's required accommodations are met (e.g., distraction-reduced environment, etc.), it is not necessary for the student to take the exam at the alternate testing site. The testing location within the Student Success Center provides a safe, quiet, and distraction-reduced environment for the student. If the instructor prefers having students test in the SSC, the student is responsible for reserving a testing spot **at least 3 business days** prior to **each** test by logging into Accommodate and reserving space in the Testing Center.

15. **What is the instructor's responsibility in providing accommodations to a student who approaches them immediately before an exam?**

- The Accessibility Resource Center clearly sets out the expectation that students will approach instructors at least **3 business days prior to each exam date**. If a student chooses to wait until the day of the exam, instructors are encouraged to make a good faith effort in accommodating his or her needs. However, it is the student's responsibility to follow all procedures and policies, therefore instructors in this situation are not obligated to provide an alternate testing site.

16. **A student brings an animal to class. How do I know if it is an “approved” animal?**

- A service animal (dog) is the only approved animal in a classroom or campus area. The Department of Justice defines service animals as “**dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.**” Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you are uncertain if this is a service animal, there are two questions you can ask of the person with the animal: a) Is the animal required because of a disability? and b) What work or task(s) is the animal trained to perform? For additional information and University policy regarding service animals or assistance animals, please contact Accessibility Resource Staff at 502.272.8490 or [arc@bellarmine.edu](mailto:arc@bellarmine.edu) . Or see section II, R.

17. **What are technical standards? Does every program and/or major have them?**

- Technical standards should delineate observable performance elements that can be reliably assessed for all students. These standards should encompass important elements of performance for all students, regardless of disability status. Generally, technical standards relate to skills and techniques taught within the program, not prerequisite knowledge, skills, or abilities that incoming students are thought to possess. They focus on **what** must be done to successfully achieve a course or program outcome, not **how** it is done. Academic programs that require licensure and/or certification, and majors that require an internship, may have technical standards that delineate what students should know and be able to do to achieve mastery at the end of that program (or major).

**18. What is my responsibility as an instructor in assisting students with acquiring a note taker in class? Can a student ask for copies of my notes?**

- The student will determine those classes in which this assistance is needed. The Accessibility Resource Center will assist in identifying possible note takers for classes; however, the professor's assistance may be needed in *discreetly* identifying a note taker in the class. This may be done through Accommodate or by making a general announcement (without using the student's name) in class. The student is informed that access to an in-class note taker is not a substitute for class attendance. The student may choose to use assistive technology for note taking instead of an in-class note taker. If technology is used, the lecture will also be recorded. The student agrees that they will not share or transfer these recordings by any method currently available or any method which may become available in the future.
- It is ultimately the University's responsibility to acquire a note-taker once requested, however, we encourage students to advocate for themselves in this regard and for instructors to assist in any way possible.

**19. A student has disclosed to me that they have a hearing impairment and needs any videos shown in class to include captioning. Is this my responsibility?**

- Ultimately it is the University's responsibility to ensure that all videos, movie clips, DVDs, and films are made accessible by including closed-captioning or subtitles. Faculty and staff are encouraged to utilize only media products with closed-captioning or subtitles. If closed captioning or subtitles are not available the instructor can work with the Accessibility Resource Center or reference resources on the Faculty Development Center's resource Hub to explore options including adding captioning, allowing the student to have access to the movie or video clips in advance or using a service to add captioning and/or create a written transcript of the video.

**20. What are ways that I can ensure that students with disabilities are supported during the semester?**

- A) Provide students with a clear and detailed course syllabus, and provide opportunity for them to ask clarifying questions;
- B) Clearly set out expectations before the course begins (e.g., attendance policy, materials to be covered, and due dates);
- C) Start each class session with an outline of material to be covered that period;
- D) Present new or technical vocabulary in written and, if possible, visual form;
- E) Give assignments both orally and in written form to avoid confusion;
- F) Provide study questions for exams that demonstrate format as well as content (explain what constitutes a good answer and why);

- G) If possible, select a textbook which offers hard copy and electronic formats with accompanying study guides or software programs for optional student use;
- H) Provide adequate opportunities for questions and answers, including review sessions. Allow students to write questions on index cards and submit them at the beginning and end of class – to serve as a review both before and after delivering content;
- I) Give students some choices in assignment format and/or determining how to show mastery.
- J) Discuss with students specifically how to study for quizzes and tests, helping them determine effective study habits and skills; and
- K) Encourage completing large assignments (projects, papers) in blocks, so that feedback on quality and content can be provided by the instructor as the student crafts the assignment.