

Policy Statement for Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Introduction: The Disability Services Program (DSP) is responsible for the administration of the University of Denver's commitment to equal access and participation in academic areas and other programs sponsored by the University for all students who have documented disabilities. DSP works closely with administrators and faculty members to ensure that students who are eligible for accommodations are appropriately served.

This policy statement serves as guidance for faculty members to ensure equitable access, fairness and consistency in accommodating students who qualify for academic accommodations through the Disability Services Program (DSP) and supports faculty in understanding legal requirements and the importance of providing accommodations to students whose accommodations have been approved through DSP.

In addition, the guidelines and procedures listed below will clarify the difference between an accommodation, which is a legal requirement defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), and an informal arrangement for a student who may have missed a class or two or may need a make-up exam due to a minor illness or injury (e.g. flu, broken leg).

Additional information for faculty on working through the student disability accommodation process can be found in the "Blue Folder" located on the DSP website: www.du.edu/dsp.

Policy Statement:

1. The University of Denver is committed to providing students with disabilities equal access and participation in academic areas and other programs sponsored by the University as mandated by federal law. The process for granting qualified students with documented disabilities accommodations to obtain equal access is managed by DSP. Students requesting disability accommodations engage in a collaborative process with DSP staff that includes disclosing the disability(ies) and providing appropriate documentation.
2. Faculty should only implement accommodations approved by the DSP staff. The DSP staff will provide students with a Faculty Letter that describes approved classroom accommodations. Students are responsible for providing this letter to faculty prior to needing the accommodation.
3. Disability and accommodation information should be kept private, and only shared with other University personnel who have a legitimate educational need to know to be in compliance with relevant laws.

Definitions:

What does it mean to be a "qualified student with a disability?" A qualified student with a disability is a student, or prospective student, who meets the academic and technical standards required for admission or participation in an educational program or activity. Under this policy and consistent with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a disability is any physical, learning, medical, emotional, mental health condition that limits a "major life activity," such as walking, hearing, seeing, speaking, breathing, or learning. Disabilities can be visible or non-visible.

What are academic accommodations? Academic accommodations are reasonable modifications or services, as determined by DSP, that give a student with a disability an equal opportunity to benefit from the educational process. Accommodations can be in the form of academic adjustment or modifications such as extended time for test taking or completing course work; substitution of specific courses to meet degree requirements; modification of test taking or performance evaluations so as not to discriminate against a person's sensory, speaking or motor impairments, unless

that is what is being tested. Accommodations can also take the shape of auxiliary aids and services such as qualified sign language interpreters, note takers, readers, braille, large print, electronic formats of print materials, and adaptive equipment. The University does not provide accommodations that would “fundamentally alter” the educational program or academic requirements that are essential to a program of study or to fulfill licensing requirements. A "fundamental alteration" is a modification that is so significant that it alters the essential nature of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations offered.

Faculty Guidance for Accommodating Students with Disabilities:

- Each academic departmental website and all applicable student handbooks and bulletins should include a statement about how students request accommodations through the DSP. In addition, faculty should include a statement in each syllabus (see Appendix A) to inform students about the accommodation process through DSP.
- Faculty shall refer students who self-identify as having a disability to DSP. Students who want to request a disability accommodation must first register with DSP. DSP will make the determination of eligibility for accommodation and will also make the determination as to the appropriate reasonable accommodation.
- Upon request from DSP, faculty and or administrators will identify essential course and degree components and requirements.
- Faculty are responsible for implementing accommodations for students from the time they are notified by receipt of the Faculty Letter. Accommodations are not typically implemented retroactively for past assignments, exams, or class activities. Faculty members may grant only those accommodations approved by the DSP, shown in a DSP *Faculty Letter*. ***DSP welcomes dialogue with faculty to better assist our students.***
- Accommodations are typically implemented for the term during which they are requested and future terms. Students expressing disability-related concerns for past terms may be directed to other university appeal and/or grievance processes.
- Law students are granted appropriate accommodations by the DSP but the law school has standing policies and procedures that provide anonymity to all law students. These students should disclose DSP approved accommodations to the Student Services Office and the Registrar, who will administer the accommodations.
- DSP recommends that faculty complete DSP accommodations training. Trainings are available to academic departments throughout the year, and faculty may request individual consultation.
- Many accommodations students use in the classroom will not require the faculty to have primary responsibility – such as providing sign language interpreters, alternate format text, adaptive furniture – but there are occasions when it will be advantageous for the student, faculty, and DSP if needed, to collaborate on how the accommodation(s) can be administered in the classroom or department. This is especially relevant for Extended Time Testing, where it may be helpful for the student to be physically near the faculty in order to ask questions.

Informal Arrangements - Not DSP Accommodations: Faculty may ask for verification (e.g. doctors' note; receipt from medical center) from students requesting a minor arrangement such as a make-up exam or assignment extension for a temporary, minor illness or injury (e.g., colds/flu, broken hand/arm). Note: An arrangement is not considered an accommodation. Only the DSP can grant accommodations. If it appears that a more formal accommodation may be necessary, the faculty should refer the student to the DSP.

Recording Informal Agreements - Not DSP Accommodations: Faculty should use the Advising Toolkit-Comment Section- in PioneerWeb – to document arrangement of informal agreements made with the student and include any appropriate forms (e.g., Incomplete Grade Application). The Comment Section is part of a student's permanent record and can be referenced by other University officials to give consistent messages to students. In addition, this type of documentation assures consistency and fair practice to students and protects faculty members and the University.

Referral to DSP: Whenever students disclose a disability, or the need for a disability-related accommodation, they should be referred to DSP. If an injury, illness or temporary impairment creates increased challenges for the student then the faculty should refer the student to DSP for possible short-term accommodations.

ADA Syllabus Statement (Appendix A):

*Students who have disabilities (i.e., physical, medical, mental, emotional and learning) and who want to request accommodations should contact the **Disability Services Program (DSP)**; 303.871.2372; 1999 E. Evans Ave.; 4th floor of Ruffatto Hall. Information is also available online at www.du.edu/dsp; see **Handbook for Students with Disabilities**.*