

C. Frequently Asked Questions

Question: My class is held in one of the historic buildings on campus. I've been told it has been designated as such by the university and does not have to be accessible under ADA standards. It doesn't have any wheelchair ramps. But what if a student in a wheelchair signs up for one of my classes?

Answer: If a state or federal agency designates a building as historic, it can be exempted from renovations that threaten or destroy the importance of the structure. However, the ADA does require that alternative requirements for historic buildings or facilities provide a minimal level of access. For example, an accessible route may only be required from one site access point. But making a building accessible is not your job. What if the building is not accessible and you have a student who can't get to your classroom? Then you will need to move the classroom.

Question: Is it an appropriate accommodation to allow a student to take a course from home?

Answer: It depends on the course. For some classes, it's absolutely required that a student be in attendance. However, if that's not absolutely necessary, you can consider having a student who is hospitalized, or for some other legitimate reason cannot attend class, do some course work from home.

Question: A student has requested extra time for her exams. She claims she has a hand injury, but I don't really see anything. What do I do?

Answer: Contact your disability services office and make sure the student has given them the appropriate documentation. If she hasn't, tell the student that she needs to provide documentation to the DS office.

Question: A mobility-impaired student obviously struggles taking notes, yet she hasn't asked for a note-taker. In grading her tests, should I take into account the troubles she faces taking notes?

Answer: No. You should NOT lower the academic standards as an accommodation. However, you might suggest the student talk with the DS office about her accommodations. You also should consider encouraging the student to request the services of a note-taker.

Question: I have a student with a disability who has difficulty using her hands. What accommodations can I offer her for exams, besides extended time?

Answer: Consider providing the student with the test in an electronic format and allowing her to take the test on a computer with adaptive technology.

Question: Each year, I take my science class on the same field trip, which is outdoors. A student in a wheelchair told me she cannot go because it'll be too difficult for her. What do I do?

Answer: Work with your DS office to verify whether the trip is inaccessible. If so, develop alternative assignments that can replace the field trip.

Faculty Training Tips

Question: Aren't people with cerebral palsy mentally retarded?

Answer: Not always. Around 40 percent of those with CP have average or above-average intelligence, and are able to attend college. You cannot judge a person's IQ from the extent of his physical impairment.

Question: A student brings a monkey to class to pick up objects he drops. Doesn't a service animal have to be a trained dog?

Answer: No. An animal is considered a service animal regardless of whether it has been licensed or certified by a state or local government or a training program. However, the animal must perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. The tasks include, but are not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals who are hearing impaired to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.

Question: I am conducting a business class for a week at a bank to give my students some experience. If I hold this class in an off-campus facility, is my institution responsible for ensuring that it is accessible?

Answer: Yes. Public entities are required to make their facilities accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. That includes the use and lease of a facility or building owned by a third party. While it's someone else's building, it is still your program. And you are responsible for ensuring access.

Question: I have a student who uses a wheelchair. I am all for making my class accessible, but the disability service office also approved an accommodation of extra time for test-taking. It's apparent that his disability is physical, so why should he get extra time?

Answer: While outwardly his disability may seem to be only physical, a number of motor, learning and other skills also may be affected. Talk to your DS provider if you need more information about appropriate accommodations for this student.