



Office of Disability and Access

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ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Note: This is an overview of important disability policies that apply to all types of accommodations. The request procedures differ depending on the type of accommodation. To find the request procedure for accommodations go to www.eastern.edu/student-life/student-support/office-disability-access

Eastern University will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in compliance with the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The purpose of accommodations is to provide equal access to educational opportunities to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. It is not intended that academic standards be lowered or essential elements of programs or courses be changed, and accommodations are not intended to ensure a satisfactory or desired grade or evaluation. In determining reasonable accommodations, consideration will be given to the student's documented needs, essential elements of the involved courses or university activities, and institutional resources. Academic accommodations may include modifications in the classroom, in assignments, and in the way tests are administered. Non-academic accommodations may include modifications and assistance relating to physical accommodations in the residence halls and mobility and access to campus buildings.

Evaluation of requests for accommodations is a two-step process: 1) determination of the presence of a disability, 2) determination of reasonable accommodations for the disability. In the event that disagreements arise between students and professors or other university personnel over issues of accommodation, a due process procedure has been developed to settle such disagreements.

I. **General Procedure for Requesting Accommodations:**

- A. Submit documentation from healthcare provider & Request for Accommodations form to the ODA by email (oda@eastern.edu) fax: 610-341-1705 or mail: ODA, 1300 Eagle Rd. St. David's, PA 19087
 1. Documentation from healthcare provider
 - a) To be eligible for disability accommodations a student must provide documentation from a qualified healthcare provider that demonstrates that the condition meets the definition of a disability (See *III. General Documentation Requirements for more details*)
 - b) **Definition of disability:** According to the ADAAA of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a disability is defined

as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities

2. Complete Request form -Contact ODA (oda@eastern.edu) for the appropriate accommodation request form(s)/policy. Accommodation requests fit into the following categories and have corresponding policies/procedures:
 - a) Academic/Other Accommodations
 - b) Mobility/Parking Accommodations
 - c) Housing Accommodations
 - d) Meal Plan Accommodations
 - e) Emotional Support Animal/Service Animal Accommodation (Note: Students must request a meeting with ODA for ESA requests prior to receiving policy/procedure. All ESA documentation is required 30 days prior to the first day of the semester. Requests received after that date will be considered for subsequent semesters.)
- B. Meet with ODA for an accommodation intake meeting (once documentation/request form are submitted)
 1. Meetings can be held in person, via Zoom, or by phone
 2. The student must be present at this meeting.
 3. Appointments are scheduled by calling or emailing the ODA (oda@eastern.edu or 610-341-5990)

II. **General Documentation Requirements.** *This is not a comprehensive statement of requirements. Details are found within the policies for specific accommodation categories.*

- A. Documentation must be provided by a professional qualified to evaluate disabilities in the areas related to the student's request.
- B. Vague and/or short statements of diagnosis are not sufficient
 1. Documentation presented on a prescription pad is not accepted
 2. Information provided by the student, parent, or others does not constitute documentation of disability.
- C. Documentation must be on
 1. the professional's official letterhead with date and signature
 2. **OR** on the Healthcare Provider Documentation Form included in the specific policy for which accommodations are being requested.
- D. Documentation must be current - recent enough to establish that the condition is still present and to reflect current impairment and needs. This would typically be no older than 3 years for learning disabilities and AD/HD, more recent for changeable psychiatric or medical conditions (e.g., migraine headaches), longer for permanent disabilities (e.g., visual impairments).

E. Documentation should generally include:

1. Current diagnosis
2. How diagnosis was determined (e.g., a psycho-educational testing battery for learning disabilities and ADHD, neuropsychological evaluation for head injury, medical or psychiatric evaluation for other medical or psychiatric conditions)
3. History of illness/condition
4. Current symptoms (that require the need for accommodations)
5. Extent of functional impairment caused by symptoms/condition (specifically related to realms for which patient is requesting accommodations, if possible to determine)
6. List of accommodations that are needed at the present time
7. Projected time period for which accommodations should remain in place.

III. Accommodated Student Responsibilities

- A. Students are urged to request accommodations early, even if they are not certain that they will use them.
 1. Students should allow as much time as possible to ensure that their documentation of disability is adequate and can be reviewed by ODA.
 2. Accommodations are not retroactive.
- B. Accommodations go into effect after
 1. the student submits appropriate request form and documentation to the ODA
 2. the request is evaluated and approved by ODA staff
 3. the student attends the accommodation intake meeting with ODA staff
- C. If the student is approved for accommodations, **ODA will record the accommodation(s) in MyEastern**. The student will be able to access their accommodation memo through MyEastern, by logging into my.eastern.edu and under the Self Service Menu, selecting the *My Accommodations* link. The student may be prompted to login again. The memo will download and can be saved and shared with professors or whomever the student chooses.
 1. ODA will notify professors and staff every semester to access their report of current accommodated students.
 2. The report will include the student name, ID #, approved accommodation and whether the accommodation has an end date. The report does not include the student's diagnosis.
- D. It is the student's responsibility to arrange a time to meet with their professor or staff member who supervises the area of an accommodation (ie. Housing Manager for Housing Accommodations) to discuss how accommodations will be implemented. Students should not wait for the professor (or specific staff members) to contact them.
- E. Fully Approved Accommodations that are approved with no end date will be automatically renewed every semester
- F. Approved accommodations with end dates will prevent a notification to faculty or staff once the end date has passed. If the need for accommodations continues, the student must contact ODA. The student will need to submit updated documentation.

- G. If the student has any questions or problems with the approved accommodations, the student should report this to ODA promptly. If the student delays in reporting a problem, it may be too late to rectify the situation.

IV. Disclosure of Disability

Disclosure of a disability is voluntary. Students are not required to disclose a disability or request accommodations for a disability. Post-secondary institutions are not required to identify students who might be disabled. Students are not entitled to protection under the law if they choose to not disclose a disability or fail to follow the accommodations request process.

V. Confidentiality

Disability-related material at Eastern University is considered covered by the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act. Disability information will not be disclosed or released except as needed to University agents with a legitimate educational interest, and/or as otherwise required or permitted by law, and/or as otherwise requested by the student. Students with questions about how records are maintained or how information is shared should contact ODA.

VI. Procedures for Settling Disagreements Regarding Accommodations

In the event of a disagreement between student and faculty or other agent of the University over an issue of disability accommodation, the following plan for settling disagreements will be used, affording the student due process:

- A. The student shall report the problem promptly to ODA staff. The student may try to resolve the disagreement with the faculty member or other involved party. ODA staff will assist in this process.
- B. If the problem is not resolved, the student should continue to seek resolution through the lines of authority at the University (the ODA can assist):
 1. Professor or directly-involved staff member or administrator
 2. Department Chair or relevant supervisor of party involved in Step 1
 3. Academic Dean or relevant supervisor of party involved in Step 2
 4. Assistant Provost or relevant supervisor of party involved in Step 3
 5. Accommodations Committee, whose decision will be final
- C. Attempts should be made to settle the dispute at the lowest level of authority possible. If agreement is not reached after a reasonable period of discussion and negotiation, an appeal to the next highest level of authority can be made. The student should keep ODA informed at all levels of the dispute. *(NOTE: If the student believes this chain of appeal is not appropriate given the nature of the disagreement, they should contact the ODA Director about this.)*
- D. A Disability Accommodations Committee will assist in creating, reviewing, and revising policy regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. The committee will be convened when needed to review policy and to assist in resolving disagreements regarding accommodations for students with disabilities and is the final appeal for academic accommodations disputes.

1. The Disability Accommodations Committee will meet within ten (10) business days after receiving a written request from the student to consider the issue of accommodations that needs to be resolved when all other steps have been exhausted.
2. The Committee will provide a written decision within 10 business days after its meeting. If, after its initial meeting, the committee decides that more information is needed (e.g., an additional evaluation of the student, additional information on standards of practice in the field, etc.), the time the committee has to provide a written decision can be extended another 10 business days. The decision rendered by the Disability Accommodations Committee will be the University's final decision on appeals for disability accommodations.