

Office of the Dean of the College
406 West College

To: Members of the Faculty
From: Claire Fowler, senior associate dean of the college
Date: October 2015
Subject: Academic accommodations at Princeton for students with disabilities

Since a number of your students may qualify for academic accommodations because of a disability, I thought you might find it helpful to know more about how we handle requests for these accommodations.

Policy and practice

Princeton University is committed to ensuring equal access to its educational programs for students with disabilities, while also maintaining the essential nature of the undergraduate academic program. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) utilizes an interactive process to understand a student's disability and explore reasonable accommodations. After the Office of Disability Services reviews documentation that satisfies the Office's requirements and identifies an individual student's limitations and abilities, reasonable accommodations may be made to the time, place, or manner in which requirements may be completed in order to ensure accessibility of the curriculum. However, accommodations that would fundamentally alter essential elements of a Princeton degree are not reasonable. The University will not waive academic requirements such as attending class, taking in-class examinations if required, being engaged in a full-time course load, completing departmental requirements, or making adequate progress toward the degree. We might, for example, allow a student to take extra time on an examination, to take it in a separate room, to use a laptop instead of pen and paper, but we would never waive the examination itself.

The most common accommodations for students with learning disabilities are as follows:

Extra time, ordinarily up to 50%, on all timed in-class tests, quizzes and examinations, as well as on timed take-home examinations.

A reduced-distraction environment for in-class examinations.

Use of a laptop during writing-intensive in-class examinations. (Laptops are not usually permitted for math-based examinations, unless the student has a physical disability that precludes writing by hand.) A limited number of clean laptops are available to borrow at the Office of Disability Services; arrangements to borrow laptops should be made by the department.

Rest Break, 10 minutes after every hour of testing (this is not to be used for working on an exam or timed assignment; for exams less than one hour, no break is taken). ODS encourages the use of a stop-the-clock timer to monitor total test time and breaks; timers can be picked up by the student at ODS prior to the exam.

Recording of lectures.

Who qualifies for accommodations?

A student must self-identify that she or he has a disability and seeks accommodations. The University requires documentation to establish the specific disability and the functional limitations it creates. Institutions of higher education are required to accommodate students who are disabled in comparison to most people. The University provides accommodations to ensure equal access to a Princeton education, not to ensure that individual students can achieve a particular outcome, such as receiving A's. For learning disabilities and/or ADHD, we require both a narrative evaluation of the student's educational history and a demonstration by means of standardized tests that the student has a material, functional deficit (for more information please see www.princeton.edu/ods/). Time management and skills coaching may be some of the most effective supports for students with ADHD. Students may find it helpful to consult with staff at the McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning.

To ensure equity of access and consistency of standards, all student requests for academic accommodations for a disability will be reviewed by the Office of Disability Services. Faculty will be emailed written notification, by the Office of Disability Services, of any students in their courses who are eligible for accommodations and the appropriate accommodations will be specified. Students are instructed to contact their professors or instructors when these notification letters are sent or at least two weeks prior to the need for accommodations in order to make the arrangements for their accommodations. If a student does not contact the instructor two weeks prior to the need for accommodation, the instructor is not required to provide the accommodation. This does not mean that the accommodation *cannot* be provided, but only that the student *might* not receive accommodations if it is too late to make the appropriate arrangements. Students have been instructed by ODS to have a conversation with their professors to share information on their need for accommodations, as students have information about the academic effect of their disability and professors are the experts on the academic demands of the course curriculum. If a student approaches a faculty member with a request for accommodations for a learning, psychological or physical disability and there are any questions, please contact Eve Woodman, the University's director for disability services (woodmane@princeton.edu; 258-8840). Faculty members should not provide academic accommodations that have not been identified and approved by ODS.

Clarifying expectations

In an effort to clarify expectations of students with disabilities in your course, it may be helpful to add a statement to the course syllabus that outlines the responsibilities of the student and your expectations for interaction. A sample statement is presented below:

Students must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) (ods@princeton.edu; 258-8840) for disability verification and determination of eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. Requests for academic accommodations for this course need to be made at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible for newly approved students, and again at least two weeks in advance of any needed accommodations in order to make arrangements to implement the accommodations. Please make an appointment to meet with me in order to maintain confidentiality in addressing your needs. No accommodations may be given without authorization from ODS, or without advance notice.