



September 27, 2024

TO: Members of the Faculty

FROM: Michael Gordin, Dean of the College
Anne Caswell, Senior Associate Dean of the College
Asha Nambiar, Director, Office of Disability Services

RE: Academic accommodations for students with disabilities

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 of study. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) uses an interactive process to understand a student's disability and explore reasonable accommodations. This memo outlines how these requests are handled, and what they can mean for your teaching.

Policy and practice

After ODS reviews documentation that satisfies their requirements and identifies an individual student's limitations and abilities, reasonable accommodations to ensure the accessibility of the curriculum may be made to the time, place, or way requirements may be completed.

Accommodations that would fundamentally alter essential elements of a Princeton degree, however, are *not* considered reasonable. The University will not waive academic requirements that are considered essential to a program of study, 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, authorize a student to take extra time on an examination, to take it in a separate room, or to use a laptop instead of pen and paper, but we would never waive the examination itself.

The most common accommodations for students with disabilities are:

- 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. A limited number of clean laptops are available to borrow at ODS; arrangements to borrow laptops should be made by the department.
- Rest break, 10 minutes after every hour of testing (the rest break is not to be used by the student to work on an exam or timed assignment; for exams less than one hour, no



- break is taken). ODS encourages the use of a countdown 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.

We ask that instructors proactively consider the accessibility of course materials for students who have sensory and other impairments. To accommodate such students, instructors may be required to make course materials accessible. ODS can provide guidance and consultation, including resources for video captioning and making PDF documents and PowerPoints accessible.

Who qualifies for accommodations?

Students must self-identify that they have a disability and seek accommodations. The University requires documentation to establish the specific disability and the functional limitations it creates.

To ensure equity of access and consistency of standards, all student requests for academic accommodations for a disability will be reviewed by ODS. ODS will email faculty written notification of any students in their courses who are eligible for accommodations and will specify the appropriate accommodations.

ODS uses a disability management system called “Accommodate” to facilitate the accommodations process and to store accommodation letters and other pertinent information. You can access accommodation notification letters for students at any time by logging in to <https://princeton-accommodate.symplicity.com/> . For more information on using Accommodate, please visit the ODS website.

For learning disabilities, when certain accommodations are requested, 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/).

Institutions of higher education are required to accommodate students who have disabilities—those who have a physical or mental impairment, where the impairment prevents the normal exercise of any bodily or mental functions (or can be shown to exist through accepted clinical or laboratory diagnostic tests), as compared to most people in the general population.

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 grades in their coursework.

ODS should be contacted immediately if you believe that any approved accommodation compromises a legitimate academic standard or an essential element of your course. We ask you to work with your teaching assistants and your department staff to implement approved testing accommodations, but you should not provide academic accommodations that have not been identified and approved by ODS.

ODS encourages students to contact instructors to introduce themselves at the beginning of the semester and to communicate with their instructor or preceptor at least two weeks prior to the need for testing accommodations to discuss their implementation. Students know that if they do

not communicate with instructors within this time frame, they risk not receiving some or all the accommodations that ODS has authorized. We hope, however, that instructors will be as flexible as possible if a reasonable request is made outside of this two-week time frame. The two-week window is a guideline to encourage students to respect faculty time when they make their arrangements.

When multiple students in a course require testing accommodations, we recognize implementing them might be complicated. ODS can clarify required accommodations and work through their implementation with you. **If you have a departmental administrator who manages the arrangement of accommodations for your course and would benefit from direct access to the “Accommodate” program to view approved accommodations for students, please contact ODS to approve access.**

If a student approaches you with a request for accommodations for a learning, psychological, physical, or sensory disability that has not been approved by ODS, please refer them to Asha Nambiar, the University’s director for disability services (ods@princeton.edu or 609-258- 8840).

Clarifying expectations

To clarify expectations for students with disabilities in your course and to align with best practices, ODS encourages you to add a statement to your course syllabus or Canvas site that outlines the student’s responsibilities and your expectations. Here is a sample statement:

Students requesting academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) (ods@princeton.edu or 258-8840) for disability verification and determination of eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. If you are approved for accommodations and would like to discuss their implementation with me, please make an appointment to meet with me so that I can maintain confidentiality when addressing your needs. Requests to implement testing accommodations for this course should be made at least two weeks in advance, or as soon as possible for newly approved students, to make appropriate arrangements. No accommodations may be given without authorization from ODS or without reasonable notice.

In addition, time management and skills coaching may be some of the most effective supports for students with ADHD. Students may find it helpful to consult staff at the McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning or at the Writing Center.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.