

**To:** Members of the Faculty  
**From:** Claire Fowler, senior associate dean of the college  
**Date:** February 15, 2018

**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 that are considered essential to the academic program 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 disabilities are as follows:

- Extra time, ordinarily up to 50%, on all timed tests, quizzes and 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 (break time 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 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 making their course materials accessible to students who have sensory impairments. As an accommodation for such students, instructors may be required to make course materials accessible. ODS is available to provide guidance and consultation, including resources for captioning of videos and making pdf documents 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. Institutions of higher education are required to accommodate students who have disabilities – those who have a physical or mental impairment, and 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's. For learning disabilities, 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/](http://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. Faculty are asked to work with their graduate assistants and departments to implement approved testing accommodations, but they should not provide academic accommodations that have not been identified and approved by ODS.

Students are encouraged by ODS to contact instructors to introduce themselves at the beginning of the semester and are instructed to communicate with the professor or preceptor at least two weeks prior to the need for testing accommodations to discuss the implementation. Students are informed that if they do not communicate with instructors within this timeframe, they risk not receiving some or all of the accommodations that have been authorized by ODS. However, we hope that instructors will be as flexible as possible if a reasonable request is made outside of this two-week time frame. Our intent is always for the accommodation to be provided for the student when reasonably possible; the two week timeframe is a guideline encouraging students to be respectful of faculty time in making arrangements. When multiple students in a course require testing accommodations, we recognize that implementation may be complicated. ODS is available to clarify accommodations and work through their implementation with you.

If a student approaches a faculty member with a request for accommodations for a learning, psychological or physical disability that has not been approved by ODS, please refer the student to Liz Erickson, the University's director for disability services ([eerickso@princeton.edu](mailto:eerickso@princeton.edu); 258-8840).

### **Clarifying expectations**

In an effort to clarify expectations of students with disabilities in your course and to align with best practices, ODS encourages you 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 requesting academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) ([ods@princeton.edu](mailto:ods@princeton.edu); 258-8840) for disability verification and determination of eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. If you are approved for accommodations and would like to discuss implementation with me, please make an appointment to meet in order to maintain confidentiality in addressing your needs. Requests for testing accommodations for this course should be made at least two weeks in advance, or as soon as possible for newly approved students, in order to make arrangements to implement the accommodations. No accommodations may be given without authorization from ODS, or without reasonable advance notice.