

Alverno College

Handbook for Students with Disabilities

This handbook is available in alternative formats upon request

The goal of Student Accessibility is to assist the student to meet her academic potential through:

- self understanding of her learning needs
- development of strategies and accommodations to maximize her academic strengths
- development of self advocacy with faculty

This handbook was designed to assist students with disabilities in gaining an understanding of support services and accommodations available at Alverno College.

LEGISLATION

There are three laws that ensure the civil rights of people with disabilities: the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

This law states that: *"No otherwise qualified person with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participation in, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."* By definition, a qualified person is one *"who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the education program or activity."* II Section 504 protects the civil rights of qualified individuals who have disabilities such as (but not limited to):

Blindness/Visual Impairment	Chronic Illness such as:
Cerebral Palsy	AIDS
Deafness/Hearing Impairment	Arthritis
Epilepsy/Seizure	Disorder Asthma
Orthopedic/Mobility Impairment	Cancer
Specific Learning Disability	Cardiac Disease
Speech and Language	Disorder Diabetes
Spinal Cord Injury	Multiple Sclerosis
Tourette's Syndrome	Muscular Dystrophy
Traumatic Brain Injury	Psychiatric Disorders

Under the provisions of Section 504, colleges and universities may not discriminate in the recruitment, admission, educational process or treatment of students. Students with documented disabilities may request modifications, accommodations or auxiliary aids that will enable them to participate and benefit from postsecondary educational programs and activities. Postsecondary institutions make these adjustments, when appropriate, to ensure that the academic program is accessible to the greatest extent possible by all students with disabilities and to ensure that the student's ability in the course is assessed, rather than the student's disability. In cases where the college can demonstrate that certain academic requirements are essential to the program of instruction being pursued by the student, denial of an accommodation will not be considered discriminatory. The college also has the flexibility to select the specific aids or services it provides, as long as they are effective and done in collaboration with the student who will use them.

The Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended

The Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended in 2008 (ADAA) is a federal anti-discrimination and equal opportunity law. This law upholds and extends the standard for compliance set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to employment practices, public accommodations, telecommunication relay services, as well as services provided by local and state governments. In addition, it covers all policies, procedures and practices that impact on the treatment of students with disabilities.

The ADA sections pertaining to educational institutions focus on program accessibility, meaning that college programs, services and activities must be usable on a basis that is as equal as possible. Additionally, persons with disabilities are entitled to access in the most integrated setting appropriate. The college cannot require persons with disabilities to accept an accommodation, nor can it charge for these services. Private institutions are covered under Title III of this law.

Definition of Disabilities under ADAA

Under the ADA, a disability is defined in one of the following three ways:

- 1) *A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.* A physical impairment includes a physiological condition, cosmetic disfigurement or anatomical loss or damage. A mental impairment includes cognitive and psychological or psychiatric impairment.
- 2) *A record of such an impairment.* This section is designed to protect persons who had a recognized disability in the past, so employers may not act on unfounded fear of the disability. For example, an employee with a history of heart attacks may not be denied promotion simply because of a supervisor's fear of the stress in the new position.
- 3) *A perception by others as having an impairment.* This category covers individuals who have no substantial limitations, but are perceived by others to have limitations. For example, a supervisor may not prevent an employee with a facial deformity from accepting a receptionist position because of concern for appearance.

What is a "Reasonable Accommodation"?

"Accommodation" is a term coined from disability and employment legislation, and it refers to any modification that needs to be made for a person or within an environment to minimize the discriminatory effect of a person's physical, emotional or learning disability. A "reasonable accommodation" means the provision of the adjustment should not cause an undue burden on the setting or on the institution. In academia, reasonable accommodations are also called academic adjustments, and they may

include classroom adjustments, assessment modifications or administrative accommodations.

Specific, individual academic adjustments are not mandated by law. A basic rule of thumb is that the adjustment matches the individual needs of each student but does not change the essential requirement of the role of each student. To summarize, a request for accommodation is reasonable when it:

- is based on individual documentation in all cases of non-apparent disability
- allows the most integrated experience possible
- does not compromise the essential requirements of a course or a program
- does not pose a threat to personal or public safety
- does not impose undue financial or administrative burden on the college
- is not of a personal nature (i.e., hiring of personal care attendants)

Access versus Success

Some students who come directly to Alverno College from high school programs may have experienced program modifications designed to assure some form of success (under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that governs K-12 public schools). It is not uncommon for students or parents to assume that these kinds of program modifications will be available in college. They are not. IDEA does not apply to postsecondary education.

While we hope all of our students will achieve success, the laws do not require colleges to ensure success. Rather, disability accommodations in higher education are focused on access. Requests for accommodation may include modification of instructional or testing methodology, but will not include a waiver of any essential element or changes in the fundamental nature of a class or program. Students are not entitled to the accommodation they may prefer, or that might have been provided them in another educational setting. However, the College considers the requested and preferred accommodation, on a case-by-case basis, as supported by documentation.

ROLES, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Ensuring access to higher education involves a partnership between the student, the Student Accessibility Coordinator and appropriate faculty and staff. Understanding the various rights and responsibilities of those involved will help students advocate for themselves more effectively.

The student has the right to...

- equal opportunity to participate in employment, programs, services and activities offered through the college
- accessible campus facilities and curriculum
- appropriate confidentiality
- not disclose a disability. If the student does not disclose the disability, she is not eligible for accommodation. If she later discloses her disability, she is not entitled to retroactive accommodation

and the responsibility to...

- identify her disability in order to receive accommodations (she can do this during the admissions process or anytime thereafter in her educational experience)
- provide current and valid documentation to the Student Accessibility Coordinator
- follow published procedures for obtaining accommodations and services
- meet qualifications and standards set for all Alverno students
- communicate with faculty about her needs and make requests for accommodation in a timely manner
- observe the Alverno Student Code of Conduct irrespective of any disability issue (see the ***Alverno Student Handbook***, http://www.alverno.edu/current_students/stu_handbook_0304.doc.pdf - pgs. 18-19)

The Student Accessibility Coordinator has the right to...

- select among equally effective accommodations
- refuse an accommodation request when the documentation is inappropriate, does not identify a specific disability, is not provided in a timely manner or does not support the accommodation being requested. Accommodation requests can also be denied when the request is unreasonable or inappropriate, one that imposes undue hardship (financial or administrative), or one that constitutes a substantial alteration of an essential element of a course or a program

and the responsibility to...

- meet with the student to explain support services
- request valid and current disability documentation
- obtain a signed release of information form for the purposes of communicating with appropriate faculty and staff
- produce accommodation request memos each semester to share with the student who will deliver them to her instructors as she determines the need
- assist the student in communicating with faculty as needed
- refer the student to other ISC and Alverno services as needed
- maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication concerning students with disabilities
- provide information regarding policies and procedures to students with disabilities and assure its availability in alternative formats upon request
- inform students with disabilities of college policies and procedures for filing a formal grievance

Instructors have the right to...

- determine course content and general methods of teaching
- make informed decisions about how best to adapt teaching and assessment methods to accommodate all students while ensuring that course standards are not lowered or compromised
- question a specific accommodation request if it is either inappropriate for the course or if the nature of the request would alter the essential requirements of a course
- refuse accommodation requests based upon a disability unless notified through written memo by the Student Accessibility Coordinator. Students who make accommodation requests without the provision of this memo should be directed to the Student Accessibility Coordinator

and the responsibility to...

- provide reasonable accommodation in a timely manner as requested in the memo provided by the Student Accessibility Coordinator
- evaluate students on their abilities and not on their disabilities
- ensure that a student has demonstrated mastery of the essential requirements of the course in order to be successful
- find any student who does not demonstrate mastery of essential course requirements unsuccessful
- encourage discussion with an identified student with a disability about reasonable accommodations and learning strategies specific to the course by being available to meet during office hours or by appointment. Telephone and email communication are alternative methods of communication to consider only when face-to-face contact is not possible

- contact the Student Accessibility Coordinator regarding any questions or concerns about accommodation requests
- discuss inappropriate or disruptive behavior on the part of the student with her, directly and forthrightly, delineating if necessary the limits of acceptable behavior. If abusive or threatening behavior occurs, the instructor should call the Dean of Students

ACCOMMODATION REQUEST PROCESS

1. The student provides appropriate documentation for her disability.
2. The Student Accessibility Coordinator reviews the documentation and accepts it or requests further information.
3. The Coordinator identifies appropriate accommodations.
4. The student signs a release of information allowing the Coordinator to produce an accommodations request memo each semester that the student is enrolled.
5. The student picks up and delivers this memo to instructors and meets with the individual instructors to discuss the specifics of accommodations within each course.
6. Instructors are provided a list of the student's recommended accommodations. This memo, however, does not identify the specific disability or how the disability impacts the student's functioning. It is the student's right to determine whether she will reveal a specific disability or not.
7. The student introduces herself to the instructor at the beginning of the course, meets with the instructor to discuss her accommodations, and follows up throughout the semester as needed (Request copies of *Guidelines for Communicating with Instructors* and *Communicating with Instructors Worksheet* from the Student Accessibility Coordinator).
8. The student contacts the Coordinator, in a timely manner, if she feels at any point that she needs assistance in advocating for her needs with her instructors.

CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS – GENERAL

Assessments

Many students with disabilities have difficulty processing information under timed conditions. As a result, extra time may be requested to allow a student to show what she knows. Research studies show that, in the case of students with learning disabilities for example, receiving extra time can improve performance significantly, while the extra time does not positively impact the performance of their non-LD peers. "Extra" or "extended" time does not mean "endless" time, however. Students usually receive time and a half or double time for in-class assessments.

In addition, a separate or quiet space may also be provided to allow students with distractibility or anxiety issues to better focus on their assessment.

Finally, students with disabilities that affect the ability to produce written text may benefit from alternative forms of assessment, such as oral assessment, use of a computer, a reader or a scribe.

There are a number of ways to arrange these accommodations, but they all involve communicating with the course instructor in a timely way, at least one week in advance of the assessment date. The student should

1. Initiate a discussion about assessments with her instructor early in the semester
2. Express interest in receiving a specific accommodation for in-class assessments as her accommodations request memo states
3. Negotiate with her instructor for the best time and place to take the assessment. This will depend upon her schedule, her instructor's schedule, and available resources (e.g., Assessment Center hours). As a result, it is all the more important to work well in advance to make arrangements. Some possibilities are:
 - working in the classroom but having more time
 - using Alverno's Assessment Center or individual Computer Center rooms
 - taking the assessment on an alternative day and/or time
 - scheduling a room nearby so the instructor is available to answer questions
4. Remind her instructor a week before the assessment of the arrangements that have been agreed to.
5. Contact the Student Accessibility Coordinator if for some reason she feels she need assistance in making her requests understood by her instructor.

Note Takers

Students with a variety of issues may have need for a note taker in class. For students with physical disabilities, note taking may be a slow and painful process. Students with learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder may struggle to focus on and keep up with taking notes during class. The student should:

1. Initiate a conversation with her instructors about the role of note taking in the course. She can then determine if a note taker is needed (her familiarity with course content, her learning strengths and the nature of the course will all play a role in this decision).

2. If the student is not aware of a peer who can take notes for her, she can ask the instructor to announce to the class that one of their peers has need of a note taker. The instructor will not reveal the student's name upon her request.
3. The note taker can submit notes to the instructor for verification of content or hand them directly to the student. Carbonless form notepaper is available for this purpose from the Student Accessibility Coordinator.
4. If no volunteer is available, the instructor will check with the Student Accessibility Coordinator to see if a paid note taker can be scheduled to attend class.
5. If no paid note taker is available, the instructor may be able to provide copies of lecture notes, outlines and/or overheads to the student requiring accommodation.

Tape Recording Lectures

Many students with learning disabilities, ADHD or psychiatric disabilities have difficulty taking notes during lecture classes and are encouraged to tape record lectures. These students should discuss with their instructors the best place to sit in order to tape. The student may need to ask the instructor to be aware of the location of the tape recorder while he/she lectures to ensure that the information discussed is recorded audibly. Taping the lecture allows the student to more fully concentrate on the topics being discussed without the distraction of having to recall spelling of words, etc.

Extended Deadlines or "Incomplete" Progress Codes

In most cases, students with disabilities are held to the same deadlines as other students for course assignments. Students are expected to manage their schedules in a manner that will allow them to complete their coursework within the normal semester period; however, certain circumstances may justify a request for an extension on an assignment or the need to negotiate an Incomplete. The decision to grant the assignment extensions or an Incomplete rests with the course instructor.

Attendance

Since Alverno courses involve active participation through discussions, presentations, small group work or laboratory work, attendance is expected. Instructors also expect students to be responsible for coming to class on time. Students with disabilities are held to the same attendance requirement as other students. There are certain instances, however, where the nature of a disability may affect a student's ability to attend class. In these instances, students are encouraged to communicate with their instructors in a timely way on an as needed basis. Individual instructors may provide some latitude where attendance is concerned, but that will depend on the particular requirements for that course and the instructor's judgment.

Course Waiver or Substitution

All Alverno students are required to meet Level 1 quantitative literacy criteria, through the Communications Placement Assessment (CPA), and Level 2 quantitative literacy criteria through CM 156Q/176Q. It is possible that a student's performance on the CPA will require they take MT 050 and/or ALG 051 prior to CM 156Q. Alverno does not waive these requirements because they are considered essential elements of our curriculum. Every effort is made to offer students appropriate accommodations and tutoring in order to successfully meet the criteria for these courses.

If you have questions about the requirements of your academic program, contact the Student Accessibility Coordinator to discuss them.

Other Classroom Accommodations

In addition to the accommodations listed above, other accommodations or classroom arrangements can be requested on an individual case-by-case basis. Consult with the Student Accessibility Coordinator to determine what and how other arrangements can be made.

Special Circumstances

In addition to classroom experience, there are other required and voluntary experiences for which students with disabilities may want to request accommodations. Students are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility Coordinator, in a timely manner, to discuss the nature of the experience and to determine what if any accommodations need to be arranged. Examples of these situations are listed below.

- External assessments
- Internships
- Study Abroad programs
- Professional certification examinations
- Campus co-curricular activities

GRIEVANCE PROCESS

A grievance involving a disability-related issue may involve the following:

- disagreement regarding a requested service, accommodation or modification of a college practice or requirement
- inaccessibility of a program or activity
- harassment or discrimination on the basis of disability
- violation of privacy in the context of disability

Alverno College has established procedures for students to follow when they believe that a member of the college community (students, faculty or staff) has violated their rights. The following information is adapted from the Conflict Resolution Process identified in the on-line *Alverno Student Handbook* (http://www.alverno.edu/current_students/stu_handbook_0304.doc.pdf - pgs. 18-19) and is designed to assist students with disabilities to use self advocacy skills in the process of resolving conflict.

Generally, complaints are handled within each functional area of the college. The student should ordinarily attempt to resolve an issue by addressing the issue with the person involved and if dissatisfied with the outcome, appeal the issue through the department coordinator, chair or director. If the student has a justifiable basis for not going directly to the person involved, a student may make a formal complaint without having made an informal complaint.

Grievances Related to Course Work

Step 1 -The Student Should Identify the Issue/Concern

- ✓ Review appropriate materials: accommodations request memo, course syllabi, assignments and other resources to clarify the issue
- ✓ List the facts
- ✓ Decide what is and is not known and what does and does not support her thoughts
- ✓ Consult the Student Accessibility Coordinator to assist with clarifying the issue

Step 2- The Student Should Talk with the Person Involved

- ✓ Either on her own, or with the assistance of the Student Accessibility Coordinator, describe the issue
- ✓ Discuss, advocate and challenge ideas or actions, not the person
- ✓ Restate ideas even if she doesn't agree

- ✓ Look at the issue from both perspectives
- ✓ Brainstorm possible responses to the issue/problem
- ✓ Take notes or draw a picture of the information presented
- ✓ Synthesize the best advice and reason to create a resolution

If the student is not satisfied with the results of this process, she may make a formal complaint within 4 weeks of the incident.

Step 3 -Formal Complaint Process

- ✓ The student should write a letter to the Department Coordinator and copy the Student Accessibility Coordinator describing the conflict/concern and include documentation. The Department Coordinator determines the next step/outcome and informs her.
- ✓ If this step does not resolve the situation, the student should write a letter to the Division Chairperson and provide a copy to the Student Accessibility Coordinator describing the conflict/concern and include documentation. The Division Chairperson determines the next step/outcome and informs her.
- ✓ If this step does not resolve the situation, the student should write a letter to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and provide a copy to the Student Accessibility Coordinator describing the conflict/concern and include documentation. The decision of the VP for Academic Affairs will be final.

Grievance Related to Campus Life

Students who have a disability-related complaint with another student or staff member, should follow the same procedure as listed above under Step 1 for Grievances Related to Course Work. However, formal complaints should be referred to the Dean of Students.

- ✓ The Dean will provide a copy of the formal complaint to the individual charged, the immediate supervisor and the student making the complaint. The immediate supervisor will inquire into the facts of the complaint and discuss the matter individually with the student and the person involved in the complaint.
- ✓ If appropriate, the immediate supervisor, the student and the person charged with the complaint will be asked to meet together in an effort to resolve the complaint.
- ✓ The Dean of Students will follow up with the student and the supervisor to see if the issue has been resolved.
- ✓ If appropriate, the Dean of Students may refer the issue to the College Community Relations Board (see pg. 23 of the Alverno Student Handbook).
- ✓ If not resolved, the Dean of Students or the VP for Academic Affairs will make a decision about the issue. The decision is final.

Grievances Related to Student Accessibility

Students who have a disability-related complaint with the Student Accessibility Coordinator should follow the same procedure as listed above under Step 1 for Grievance Related to Course Work. However, formal complaints should be made to the Director of Instructional Services.

Inquiries about discrimination may also be referred to the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education, or other appropriate federal agencies.