



Faculty Guide to Accessibility Resources

at Spartanburg Methodist College

2024-2025

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Section One

Policies and Office Procedures

I. Students with Disabilities Policy

Spartanburg Methodist College desires to make its programs and facilities accessible to all students, employees, spectators, participants, and visitors. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2009 (ADAAA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Spartanburg Methodist College will not discriminate against any person based on a disability. Furthermore, Spartanburg Methodist College is committed to providing equal access to college programs and facilities to all qualified students regardless of disability.

In providing equal access for students, the college will not discriminate in admissions based on a disability. The college will provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations to enrolled students with disabilities to ensure equal access to the academic programs and to college-administered activities.

The legal definition of a person with a disability is *a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.* Physical or mental impairments may include, but are not limited to, mobility/orthopedic impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech impairments, specific learning disabilities, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, psychological disabilities, neurological impairments, traumatic brain injury, or chronic medical conditions such as cancer, diabetes, or AIDS.

Major life activities include, but are not limited to caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

II. How Academic Accommodations Are Requested

The process for the consideration of academic accommodations begins with (1) the student submitting the *Intake Form* found at <https://hipaa.jotform.com/221935355939164>, and (2) documentation of the disability to the Accessibility Resources (AR) office. The Director of Accessibility Resources will consult with the student through email, in person, via email or video conference, or by phone to determine what accommodations will be needed. Guidelines for the types of documentation that is needed for various disabilities are available online at <https://www.smccsc.edu/the-experience/experience-wellness/> or from Accessibility Resources on the first floor of the Walker Building, room 109.

III. Determination of Eligible Accommodations

Once documentation is received in the Accessibility Resources office, the staff will review the information to arrive at a preliminary idea for accommodations for the student. An intake interview will be conducted by staff with the student, and needed accommodations will be agreed upon by the Accessibility Resources staff and the student. Depending on the time of year and the volume of documentation received from students, this review process may take up to two weeks.

During the intake interview, the student's accommodations and the procedure for obtaining the accommodations are reviewed. The *Academic Accommodation Notice* will be emailed from Accessibility Resources to the professor, the student, and the student's academic advisor. The student is advised of the following:

- accommodations are not retroactive
- the student should request a meeting with professors to discuss the accommodations

NOTE: If the professor has a concern that a particular accommodation might result in a fundamental alteration of a course, he or she should contact Gina Parris, Director of Accessibility Resources.

IV. Testing in Accessibility Resources

A low-distraction testing room is available to students who are registered with the Accessibility Resources office and receive low-distraction testing or extended time as an accommodation. It is the student's responsibility to reserve space at least **two business days** prior to the test.

A. Procedure for reserving space in the low-distraction testing room

- Students may schedule a test by completing the online *Test Request Form* at <http://smcforms1.smcsc.edu/machform/embed.php?id=93324>
- Upon receipt of test request, AR will e-mail a confirmation to the student and professor.
- Students taking tests in the Testing Center should make every effort to schedule tests at the same time or as close as possible to the same time as the class is taking the test.
- Reservations for **midterm exams** should be made one week in advance. Reservations for **final exams** should be made a month in advance due to the need for additional testing space and proctors.

A. Delivery of Tests to Accessibility Resources

Tests may be delivered or e-mailed to AR. If a test is e-mailed, please be sure to e-mail it to [Disability Services](#). Once the test is printed, confirmation that the test has been received will be e-mailed to the professor, and the test will be deleted.

B. Obtaining Completed Tests from Accessibility Resources

According to the professor's preference, completed tests may either be:

- picked up by the professor or a person designated by the professor
- Returned in a sealed envelope by the student to the professor

C. Other Information:

Please notify the Accessibility Resources staff if students are permitted to use a computer, textbooks, note cards, calculators, or any other materials on the test. *Please specify if a scientific or graphing calculator is prohibited.*

Because of space limitations...

- *Accessibility Resources must be notified **one week** in advance if a computer is required to administer a test/exam.*
- *Accessibility Resources must be notified **one week** in advance of any computer program required to administer a test/exam.*
- *Accessibility Resources must be notified **one week** in advance if there will be a listening portion of the test.*

FINAL EXAMS

Administration of final exams through the Accessibility Resources office requires careful planning because of space and staffing limitations. Special test administration needs for students who need to use computers as an accommodation to complete exams, students whose classes require computer and/or internet access to complete exams, students who are enrolled in art classes in which slides must be viewed to complete the exam,

or students who are enrolled in music classes for which selections must be played must be considered early to reserve the appropriate locations and secure additional proctors. Faculty who know that their final exams will require access to a computer, viewing of art slides, or listening to excerpts of music should notify Accessibility Resources at least one month prior to the exam date to ensure that there is adequate space, equipment, and staff to cover the request in Accessibility Resources during final exams.

VI. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. *What should I do if I suspect that a student may have a learning disability?*

A. It is illegal to ask a student if he/she has a learning disability or to state that you think he/she has a learning disability. However, it is perfectly acceptable to share with the student your concerns about his or her academic performance. This can lead to a discussion of services available on campus, such as the Write Place, Tutoring Services, or Accessibility Resources.

Q. *Are there occasions in which academic accommodation letters may be provided to the professor late in the semester?*

A. Yes. Accommodation letters may be sent later in the semester because the student may not be diagnosed with a disability until after the semester begins or because they want to try to complete the class without academic accommodations. Students with disabilities are NOT required to use their accommodations, but by law, professors are required to provide the accommodations to students who request them following the professor's receipt of academic accommodation letters from Accessibility Services.

Q. *How does a professor know if a student has a documented disability and is registered with Accessibility Resources?*

A copy of the Academic Accommodation Notice will be emailed to the professor, student, and academic advisor from Accessibility Resources.

- Q.** *When should the professor begin providing accommodations to a student who has a documented disability?*
- A.** Accommodations become effective after the professor has received the notice of accommodation letter.
- Q.** *Are accommodations retroactive?*
- A.** No. Accommodations are not retroactive. If tests and assignments are completed prior to the professor's receipt of the academic accommodation notice, the professor is not required to allow the student to retake or re-do those particular tests and assignments with accommodations.
- Q.** *May a professor choose not to provide an accommodation?*
- A.** The law mandates that we must provide accommodations to students with a documented disability who are registered with Accessibility Resources and have followed the proper procedure for obtaining accommodations for a semester. If providing certain accommodations to a student will fundamentally alter the course objectives, the professor should contact the Director of Accessibility Resources.
- Q.** *Does Accessibility Resources provide tutoring for students?*
- A.** Accessibility Resources does not provide tutoring, but Tutoring Services in the Walker Building does provide peer tutoring and online tutoring for SMC students. To book appointments with a SMC Peer Tutor or with an online tutor from ThinkingStorm, students may access the link for booking in Brightspace.
- Q.** *I have a student who needs to take a make-up exam. Could Accessibility Resources proctor this exam?*
- A.** No. Accessibility Resources does not proctor tests for students who do not have a documented disability and are not registered with the Accessibility Resources office.

Section Two

Tips for Teaching Students with Disabilities

I. Teaching with Students Who Are Hard-of-Hearing or Deaf

1. Ensure that the student gets preferential seating. The student should be seated near the front of the class so that he/she can get as much from hearing as possible and/or is in a position to get lip-reading cues.
2. Face the class when speaking. When talking while your back is facing the class (i.e., when writing on the whiteboard), the student is unable to get facial or lip-reading cues.
3. If showing slides or movies, provide an outline or summary of the material to be covered. Use closed-captioned movies when available.
4. When questions are asked from the class, repeat the question before answering. Be sure the student can see you when repeating the question.
5. During class discussions, indicate who is speaking so the student can follow the discussion.
6. When handing out papers or assignments, make sure procedural information is understood by the student.
7. A class note taker may be of benefit to the student. It is difficult to take good notes when "listening" with your eyes.

Quick Tips for Working with Students Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and the Interpreter

The Role of the Interpreter

The interpreter is there to facilitate the communication between the teacher, class, and deaf student(s). They are trained and qualified as Sign Language Interpreters.

Interpreters adhere to a strict code of ethics. They are to be professional and shall render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker using language most readily understood by the person(s) whom they serve (they are there for the hearing person as much as they are there for the deaf person).

Interpreters shall keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential.

For more information about the interpreters role and the field of interpreting please go to:

<http://www.rid.org/>

Classroom Teacher Responsibilities

(Following these *Quick Tips* will help to ensure that the interpretation process goes as smoothly as possible)

1. Interpreter should be in the student's line of vision:
 - All communication comes through the eyes of deaf people. It is essential that they can clearly see the interpreter.
 - It is OK to walk between and interpreter and a deaf person, but please do not consistently stand in the line of vision.
 - Keep lighting in mind while showing PowerPoint's or videos; the deaf person must be able to see the interpreter.
 - In order for deaf people to follow the action of the event, it is necessary for the interpreter to sit or stand near the focus of attention. Speakers, media, and the interpreter should be positioned along in the same line-of-sight.

2. Talk directly to the deaf or hard-of-hearing person:

- Maintain a one-on-one situation and look at the deaf person, not the interpreter.
- Avoid directing comments to the interpreter. Use of third party phrases, such as "ask her" or "tell him" can be confusing. Respond directly to the deaf person.
- Speak naturally at your normal volume and pace.
- If the deaf student communicates through sign language, the interpreter will voice what the student has said. Some deaf students prefer to voice for themselves, while others will sign and allow the interpreter to voice for them. This is often related to the deaf person's degree of hearing loss and is a personal choice.

3. Process Time:

- The interpreter finishes communicating in sign language a few seconds after the speaker. Deaf people therefore, will not respond immediately after the speaker has finished addressing them. In a discussion situation, it is important to allow for this "lag time" so that the deaf person can participate fully.

4. Confidentiality:

- Avoid private conversations; everything will be interpreted.

5. One person should speak at a time:

- During class if you are speaking too fast, if someone speaks inaudibly, or if several people are speaking at once, the interpreter will not be able to provide a clear interpretation to the student.

6. Avoid asking the interpreter for opinions or comments regarding the content of the class.

In addition, refrain from asking the interpreter to monitor your class while you leave the room or to function as a participant in classroom activities.

7. Provide the interpreter with all texts and materials used in the class. This includes handouts.

8. Deaf students learn visually. Deaf students cannot receive information through two channels like hearing students can. For example, hearing students can listen to your lecture while looking down and taking notes or typing on a computer. Deaf students must maintain eye contact with the interpreter to "hear" your lecture. Try to avoid talking while students are focused on written class work. In addition, any visual aids are helpful for deaf students.

9. Captioned films and videotapes or DVD's are strongly recommended to allow the student direct visual access to the information.
10. If you need to speak to the student after class and would need the services of the interpreter, please ask if the interpreter can stay for a few minutes. Do not assume that the interpreter is available because he or she may have another assignment or appointment.
11. When the interpreter "voices," he/she is interpreting what the student is signing/saying and is not speaking for himself/herself.
12. Hand materials and assignments directly to the student, not to the interpreter; this fosters the perception of the interpreter's role as communication facilitator rather than classroom aide.
13. For interactive situations, semicircles or circles work best for deaf and hard of hearing students.
14. When a message is being produced through sign language it is not generally a verbatim translation of what the speaker is saying. Please be aware that most of what deaf students and interpreters sign is not English, but is American Sign Language or in some cases, Signed English.

II. Teaching Students Who Have Low-Vision or Blindness

(Adapted from the University of California at Berkeley)

Like students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, students with visual disabilities can be at a great disadvantage academically. Though they can hear lectures and discussions, students with visual disabilities are often frustrated by class syllabi, textbooks, chalkboard diagrams, overhead projections, films, maps, videos, printed exams, Scantron answer sheets, laboratory demonstrations, and internet websites designed to be navigated by clicking on images.

Students with visual disabilities vary considerably. Some have no vision, others are able to see large shapes, and still others can read standard print if magnified. Depending on their disabilities, they use a variety of accommodations, equipment, and compensatory strategies. For example, many students with visual disabilities need extra time for exams and projects, and many use readers, scribes, or computer reading software for reading assignment and exams.

Most students with visual disabilities take advantage of assistive technology. Computers can enlarge print, convert printed material to Braille, read the text on a computer screen aloud, or scan books, articles, and other printed materials and then read their text. Some students also use audiotape recorders, portable note-taking devices, or talking calculators.

Listed below are some suggestions for instructing students with visual disabilities.

- Students with visual disabilities may need preferential seating. Allowing the student to be seated near the front of the class will allow him or her to hear clearly what is being presented and to see as much as possible, if applicable.
- When using an overhead projector with transparencies, use a large print-size (at least 18 points). Provide additional time for students with visual disabilities to copy the material on the transparencies, or provide them with printed copies.
- Whenever possible, modify the presentation of material to make it accessible.
- Allow the student to audiotape lectures or use a note taker.
- Pace the presentation of material; if referring to a textbook or handout, allow time for students with visual disabilities to find the information.

- When lecturing, avoid making statements that cannot be understood by people without sight, such as, "This diagram sums up what I am saying about statistics." (Don't worry about using words and phrases that refer to sight: for example, "See you later!"-- such expressions are commonly used, and most people with visual disabilities don't find them offensive.)
- Read aloud everything that you write on the whiteboard. Verbally describe objects and processes whenever possible.
- In making comparisons and analogies, use familiar objects that don't depend on prior visual knowledge. Foods and objects found around the house are good choices. You might say, for example, that a particular dance movement requires a lot of weaving and turning, "like getting from one side of the living room to the other on moving day."

Resources for Teaching Students with Low-Vision/Blindness in Science and Math-based Courses

1. <http://www.blindscience.org/ncbys/default.asp?SnID=1828018621>
This is a starter great website. One of its founders is a chemistry Ph.D student who is blind and is doing his research in science education for students with visual impairments. "STEM" refers to Science, Tech, Engineering and Math courses. The resources page is broken up by subject. An example: there is a link to a page that has a Brailled version of the Periodic table and descriptive explanations.
2. http://www.as.wvu.edu/~scidis/text/vision_impair.html
This site contains strategies for teaching students who are blind or have visual disabilities.
3. <http://www.tsbvi.edu/math/teaching.htm>
Specifically offers math teaching strategies, but can apply to other types of subjects as well.
4. <http://people.rit.edu/easi/easisem/nemeth1.htm>
Written by Abraham Nemeth himself. author of Nemeth Braille Code – the Braille math code.
5. <http://people.rit.edu/easi/itd/itdv03n4/article1.htm>
Teaching science to the visually disabled, Purdue Visions Lab.
6. http://books.google.ca/books?id=0CmK1k4mHj0C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=&f=false
Look at table of contents or use "find" option to search for relevant topics, such as Chapter 9 & 10.
7. <http://dots.physics.orst.edu/tactile/tactile.html>
Info on tactile graphics
Includes "low tech" options such as pipe cleaners, waxed sticks, peg boards such as the "Battleship" board game or "Lite Brite," play-dough, straws, etc.

III. Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities

(Adapted from the University of California- Berkeley)

Students with learning disabilities have normal or above-average intelligence, but they also have severe information-processing deficits that make them perform significantly worse in one or more academic areas (reading, writing, math) than might be expected, given their intelligence and performance in other academic areas. Though all learning disabilities are different, students with learning disabilities report some common problems, including slow and inefficient reading; slow essay-writing; problems in organization and the mechanics of writing; and frequent errors in math calculation.

The following suggestions may be helpful in working with students who have learning disabilities, and also those who have head injuries (Traumatic Brain Injury or TBI).

- Students with learning disabilities may take longer to complete exams and may need extended time.
- Students with learning disabilities may also take longer to complete assignments, so it is particularly important to provide a detailed syllabus at the beginning of the class. The syllabus should list all assignments and due-dates.
- If possible, provide frequent opportunities for feedback; for example, weekly quizzes on assigned reading, instructor-review of early drafts of essays, error-analysis of tests. If a student's written exams seem far inferior to the student's in-class performance, you might meet with the student during your office hours for a discussion of the exam questions. This discussion will give you a better idea of what the student really knows and how you can help the student produce better exams or other written work.
- Encourage students to contact you in order to clarify assignments. One thought is that you might suggest that students re-phrase the assignment and send the re-phrased version to you via e-mail. You can then reply via e-mail, confirming that the student has understood the assignment or correcting misunderstandings.

- Be sensitive to students who, for disability-related reasons, may be unable to read aloud or answer questions when called on. If students make you aware of these difficulties, you and the students can discuss other ways they can meaningfully participate in class sessions, such as volunteering comments or making short presentations.
- Compose exams in a way that makes them accessible for students with learning disabilities. Some ideas for this include:
 - ✓ Making sure that exams are clearly written or typed in large black letters or numbers, with spaces between lines and with double or triple spaces between items. To avoid visual confusion, avoid cramming too many questions or math problems onto one page. Printing questions on only one side of the paper also helps avoid visual confusion in the event that the information from the front of the page bleeds through to the back of the page and is picked up by the copier.
 - ✓ Grouping similar types of questions together; for example, all true/false, all multiple-choice, all short-answers. Leave several spaces between multiple-choice items.
 - ✓ Permitting students to circle answers in the test booklet rather than darkening circles on a Scantron sheet.
 - ✓ Allowing students to use extra paper in preparing answers to essay questions. (Encourage the students to turn in preliminary outlines or scrawled notes with the completed exam bluebooks.)
 - ✓ Suggesting that math students use graph paper (or lined paper turned sideways) to ensure neatness and avoid confusion when performing math calculations.

IV. Teaching Students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

(Adapted from the University of California at Berkeley)

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is characterized by a persistent pattern of frequent and severe inattention, hyperactivity, and/or impulsiveness. People with ADHD have many problems in academic settings. Some of these problems are similar to the problems of people with learning disabilities: slow and inefficient reading, slow essay-writing, and frequent errors in math calculation and the mechanics of writing. Other problems that involve executive function skills and are especially characteristic of ADHD include serious problems with time-management, task-completion, organization, and working memory.

The following suggestions for working with students with ADHD may prove helpful.

- Students with ADHD generally perform better if given a syllabus with clear explanations of tasks and specific due-dates. As the semester progresses, keep reminding students of impending deadlines.
- Whenever possible, start each lecture with a summary of material to be covered, or provide a written outline. If you use broad margins and triple-space, students will be able to take notes directly onto the outline, which is an aid to organization. At the conclusion of each lecture, review major points.
- Students with ADHD may tend to "drift" mentally during class more than other students, especially during long lectures. They are better able to stay tuned-in when the class material is stimulating and the format varied (for example, lecture alternating with presentations and class discussion). If the class goes on for several hours, be sure to permit several breaks.
- Students with ADHD are often highly distractible, so it might be best to suggest that they sit near the front of the class away from possible sources of distraction (i.e., open doors, windows, and noisy heaters).
- Avoid making assignments orally, since ADHD students may miss them. Always write assignments on the whiteboard, or even better, pass them out in written form.

- If the student will be testing with you and not in Disability Services, provide test-taking sites that are relatively distraction-free, and when students are taking tests with extended test-time, do not ask them to move from one test-site to another.
- For large projects or long papers, help the student break down the task into its component parts. Set deadlines for each part; for example, there might be deadlines for the proposal of an essay topic, for a research plan, for the completion of research, for pre-writing to find the essay's thesis, for a writing-plan or outline, for a first draft, and for a final edited manuscript.

V. Teaching Students with Mental Health Disorders

(Adapted from the University of California at Berkeley)

Some students have mental health disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, or anxiety disorder (not to include test anxiety). Mental health disorders complicate many areas of life, including education.

Every case is different, but there are some commonalities in the academic experiences of students with mental health disorders. These students report difficulties with focusing, concentrating, and completing work in a timely fashion. Reading, writing, and math may require extra effort and more time. The ability to function effectively may vary from day to day. In response to stress, students may experience an increase in symptoms. Medications help with some symptoms of some mental health disorders, but medication side-effects (for example, drowsiness or headaches) can contribute to a student's academic problems.

The suggestions about learning disabilities and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder may be useful to use in working with students with mental health disorders. Listed below are some suggestions specifically addressed to the needs of students who have mental health disorders.

- Mental health disorders are not always well understood and accepted in our society, and many students with mental health disorders have good reason to fear the reactions of others. Please make every effort to make students feel comfortable if they disclose their mental health disorders to you. Don't press students to explain their disabilities if they do not wish to do so. If the student has given consent to do so, you may receive further information from Disability Services.
- Understand that for disability-related reasons, these students may sometimes have to miss class, or even leave the room in the middle of a class. The students will be responsible for the content of any lectures missed, but they will appreciate having you to help them fill in the gaps.

VI. Teaching Students with Mobility Limitations

(Adapted from the University of California at Berkeley)

Mobility limitations can have many causes, including cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, and spinal cord injury. Students with mobility limitations have varying physical issues and deal with their limitations in different ways. They may use crutches, braces, a walker, or a wheelchair. Below are some suggestions for working with students who have mobility limitations.

- Students who have upper body limitations may need note takers, extended time on tests and exams, and audiotape recorders or scribes to record exam answers. Disability Services provides note takers and scribes. Students with upper body weakness may not be able to raise their hands to participate in class discussion. Establish eye contact with the students and call on them when they indicate that they wish to contribute.
- A wheelchair is part of a student's "personal space." No one should lean on a chair, touch it, or push it unless asked. Whenever you are talking one-on-one with a student in a wheelchair, you should be seated so the student does not have to peer upward at you.
- For reasons beyond their control, students with severe mobility limitations may at times be late for class.
- Special seating arrangements may be necessary to meet student needs. Students may require special chairs, lowered tables on which to write, or spaces for wheelchairs. In laboratory courses, students who use wheelchairs may need lower lab tables to accommodate their chairs and allow for the manipulation of tools or other equipment.
- Instructors in courses requiring field trips or internships need to work with students and the Disability Services to be sure the students' needs are met. An example of this would be that students may need assistance with transportation, special seating, or frequent rest-breaks.

- Not all mobility limitations are constant and unchanging. Some students experience exacerbations or relapses which require bed rest or hospitalization. In most cases, students are able to make up the incomplete work, but they may need extra time.

VII. Teaching Students with Chronic Illness or Pain

(Adapted from the University of California at Berkeley)

Some students have medical conditions that are "hidden" (not easy to see) but cause serious problems in an educational setting. Students can be disabled by chronic illnesses such as asthma, arthritis, diabetes, cardiopulmonary disease, cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, and seizure disorders. They can also be disabled by medical conditions that cause intense and continual pain, such as repetitive stress injury, post-surgical issues, and back problems.

Symptoms of all these conditions can be unpredictable and fluctuating. Students with chronic illness or pain may have limited energy and difficulty walking, standing, or sitting for a long time. For some students, certain times of the day are more difficult for them to navigate (i.e., early morning classes for students with chronic fatigue syndrome). Their pain or the side-effects of medications, may cause them to become dizzy or confused, making it hard for them to pay attention in classes, complete out-of-class assignments, do library research, and stay focused during exams. The following suggestions may help you to work more effectively with students who have disabling medical conditions.

- Medical conditions, including medication side-effects, can cause problems with fatigue and stamina which may adversely affect attention and concentration. For these reasons, students with medical conditions may need extended time on exams.
- Students with some medical conditions may become dizzy and disoriented or may lack physical stamina. This may result in the student being unable to quickly get from one location on campus to another. For these reasons, a student may be late getting to class. Please be patient when this happens.
- Preferential seating may be necessary to meet student needs. In a few situations, students may be unable to use the type of chair provided in a particular classroom. They might also need to be seated close to the classroom exit (i.e., for a diabetic to monitor blood glucose levels or a student with Crohn's Disease to get to the restroom quickly.)

- Some students experience the recurrence of a chronic condition, which may require bed rest and/or hospitalization. In most situations, students can make up the incomplete work, but they may need extra time.

VIII. Spartanburg Methodist College Faculty Guidelines Flexible Attendance/ Assignment Extensions for Students with Chronic Medical Conditions

From time to time, there are students enrolled at Spartanburg Methodist College who might have chronic medical conditions that bring with them unique circumstances and challenges not only for the student, but also for the faculty in whose classes the student is enrolled. This sheet is designed to provide some guidelines and suggestions to assist the faculty member in navigating the gray areas that sometimes arise with these students and their class attendance and assignments.

Chronic medical conditions include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Autoimmune disorders, such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis
- Respiratory conditions such as asthma and cystic fibrosis
- Blood disorders such as sickle cell anemia
- Lyme's disease
- Crohn's disease
- Complex pain syndromes
- Cardiac disorders
- AIDS
- Seizure disorders and epilepsy
- Multiple sclerosis and muscular dystrophy

Attendance Requirements

In some cases, attendance is fundamental to course requirements. Examples of this might include classes in which students are required to interact with others in the class, the need for students to demonstrate the ability to think and argue critically, or that students might be required to participate in group projects. In other instances, faculty might determine that students would be able to master course content despite some or many absences. In situations where class participation is fundamental, the following questions may be helpful in determining if the absences(s) will fundamentally alter the course requirements:

- Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon student participation as an essential method for learning?

- To what degree does the student's failure to attend class constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
- What is the method by which the final course grade is calculated?

Note: If the faculty member believes that absences are becoming excessive and are threatening the student's mastery of the academic material, please contact the Director of Disability & Academic Success Services.

Assignment Extensions

In normal circumstances, Accessibility Resources does not recommend across-the-board extensions of assignments or due dates. However, in the case of a student with a chronic medical condition, symptom flares might occur to a degree that could interfere with the timely completion of assignments. Students are advised by Accessibility Resources to work ahead to meet any assignment deadlines. For this reason, it would be helpful for the student to have advance notice of assignments that might have a short turn-around time. The extension of the assignment(s) should have reasonable parameters as to how long the extension is and should be clearly communicated by the faculty member to the student.

Quizzes, Tests, and Exams

Students should make every effort to take a quiz, test, or exam at the time it is scheduled. However, symptom flares might prevent the student from being able to take the test or might cause the student to need to stop testing during the exam. Students are instructed by Accessibility Resources to contact the professor prior to the exam if at all possible to share that they are experiencing a symptom flare and will be unable to take the exam at the scheduled time. If the student is unable to contact the professor because of the symptom flare, the student is instructed to contact the professor as soon as possible. Professors are encouraged to grant some leniency with testing times and allow students to make up tests where possible. Accessibility Resources is available (with advance notice) to proctor a student's make-up test for the professor. In some cases, students might experience symptom flares during an exam (i.e., a student with diabetes experiences a high or low blood sugar and is unable to think or concentrate well enough to complete an exam). Where possible, professors should permit the student to submit what has been completed and allow the student to complete the rest of the test (or its equivalent) later. Accessibility Resources is again (with advance notice) available to proctor the student's exam.

As a faculty member, what are my responsibilities?

- Clearly communicate the attendance requirements for the course to ALL students and include these in the syllabus
- Determine ahead of time what are reasonable extensions of allowable absences and reasonable time allowances to make up assignments or tests
- Determine the method by which the student should notify you in the event that the need for flexibility in attendance, extensions for assignment due dates, or the postponement or rescheduling of tests should arise

What are the student's responsibilities?

- Register with the Accessibility Resources office (provide documentation of the chronic medical condition from the treating professional)
- Contact Accessibility Resources at the beginning of each semester to initiate the sharing of information with faculty for courses in which the student is enrolled
- Meet with the professor to discuss issues and concerns related to the chronic medical condition and to determine the professor's guidelines for attendance
- Contact the professor as soon as possible if a flare of the medical condition will require the student to be absent from class, to miss a test, or to make a request to have an assignment extension because of the flare *USING THE AGREED UPON METHOD(S)/ TIMEFRAME FOR CONTACT*
- As much as possible, seek to complete assignments ahead of time in case there is a flare of the condition that prevents the assignment from being completed or submitted by the due date

IX. Teaching Students with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

[From *Faculty Guide for Working with Students with Asperger Syndrome*, an appendix in [*Students with Asperger Syndrome: A Guide for College Personnel*](#), by Lorraine E. Wolf, Jane Thierfeld Brown, and G. Ruth Kukiela Bork]

High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental disorder that is characterized by deficits in social skills, communication, and unusual repetitive behaviors. The core feature appears to be the individual's inability to understand the thoughts, feelings and motivations of other people and to use this understanding to regulate his or her own behaviors.

The following characteristics are typical in an individual with high-functioning ASD. Due to the diversity and complexity of this disability, you may not see all of these characteristics in a given student. It is important to understand these characteristics, because they can result in behaviors that are easy to misinterpret. Often behaviors that seem odd or unusual or even rude are in fact unintentional symptoms of ASD.

General Characteristics

- Frequent errors in interpreting others' body language, intentions or facial expressions
- Difficulty understanding the motives and perceptions of others
- Problems asking for help
- Motor clumsiness, unusual body movements and/or repetitive behavior
- Difficulty with the big picture, perseveration on the details ("can't see the forest for the trees")
- Difficulties with transitions and changes in schedule
- Wants things "just so"

- Problems with organization (including initiating, planning, carrying out, and finishing tasks)
- Deficits in abstract thinking (concrete, focuses on irrelevant details, difficulty generalizing)
- Unusual sensitivity to touch, sounds, and visual details; may experience sensory overload

Functional Impact

Communication and Social Skills

- Difficulty in initiating and sustaining connected relationships
- Poor or unusual eye contact
- Problems understanding social rules (such as personal space)
- Impairment of two-way interaction (may seem to talk "at you" rather than "with you")
- Conversation and questions may be tangential or repetitive
- Restricted interests that may be unusual and sometimes become a rigid topic for social conversation
- Unusual speech intonation, volume, rhythm, and/or rate
- Literal understanding of language (difficulty interpreting words with double meaning, confused by metaphors and sarcasm)

Some Tips

- Don't use absolute words such as "always" or "never" unless that is exactly what you mean
- Supplement oral with written instructions when revising assignments, dates, etc.
- Use clear directives and establish rules if...
 - a student invades your space or imposes on your time

- the student's classroom comments or conversational volume become inappropriate

Writing

- Information in papers may be redundant, returning to the same topic focus repeatedly
- Student may be able to state facts and details, but be greatly challenged by papers requiring taking another's point of view, synthesizing information to arrive at a larger concept, comparing and contrasting to arrive at the "big picture", or using analogies, similes, or metaphors

Some Tips

- Use clear and detailed directives when referring to revisions that need to be made
- Listing or numbering changes on the paper will provide guidelines for student when working
- If modeling writing rules, write them on a separate sheet for future reference
- Keep directions simple and declarative
- Ask students to repeat directions in their own words to check comprehension

Example: (Student arrives at your office at 1:40). "We have 20 minutes to work together. At 2:00, I'm going to ask you to take my suggestions home and start making changes to your paper. Come to my office tomorrow afternoon at 3:00 and show me what you've done."

Some Considerations

Students may have sophisticated and impressive vocabulary and excellent rote memory but may have difficulty with high-level thinking and comprehension skills. They can give the impression that they understand when in reality, they may be repeating what they have heard or read. Many individuals with high-functioning ASD are visual learners. Pictures and graphs may be helpful to them.

Instructional Tips

- Clearly define course requirements, the dates of exams, and when assignments are due. Provide advance notice of any changes.
- Teach to generalize and to consolidate information.
- Go for gist, meaning, and patterns. Don't get bogged down in details.
- Use scripts and teach strategies selectively.
- Make sure all expectations are direct and explicit. Don't require students to "read between the lines" to glean your intentions. Don't expect the student to automatically generalize instructions. Provide direct feedback to the student when you observe areas of academic difficulty.
- Encourage use of resources designed to help students with study skills, particularly organizational skills.
- Avoid idioms, double meaning, and sarcasm, unless you plan to explain your usage.
- If the student has poor handwriting, allow use of a computer if easier for the student.
- Use the student's preoccupying interest to help focus/motivate the student. Suggest ways to integrate this interest into the course, such as related paper topics.
- Make sure the setting for tests takes into consideration any sensitivity to sound, light, touch, etc.

**Accessibility Resources
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