



Policy

UNIVERSITY POLICY SA-09.04-09/19

TO: The University of West Florida Community

FROM: Dr. Martha D. Saunders, President

SUBJECT: Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Responsible Office: Division of Academic Engagement

- I. Reason for Policy/Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to define the procedures used to accommodate students with disabilities.
- II. Who Does this Policy Govern and Who Needs to Know this Policy?**

This policy pertains to students qualifying for academic accommodations, staff responsible for determining reasonable accommodations, faculty providing academic accommodations, and all University staff who have processes or content that a student would access in the course of their academic experience.
- III. Definition of Terms:**
 - A. Reasonable Accommodation** – For the purpose of this policy, a reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a course, program, service, activity, or facility that enables a qualified student with a disability to have an equal opportunity. An equal opportunity means an opportunity to attain the same level of performance or to enjoy equal benefits and privileges as are available to a similarly-situated student without a disability. The university has an obligation to make reasonable accommodations in policies, practices or procedures when accommodations are needed to prevent discrimination on the basis of disability unless making the accommodations would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program or activity, or would result in undue financial and/or administrative burdens.
 - B. Disability** – (as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended) For the purpose of this policy, disability, with respect to an individual, is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of that individual, a history or record of such an impairment, or regarded as having such an impairment.
 - C. Qualified individual with a disability** is defined as an individual who, with or without reasonable modifications and accommodations, meets the essential requirements for the programs, services, and activities offered by the University.

- D. Technical Standards (as defined by ADA): Technical standards are non-academic criteria for programs that should relate directly to the essential or core aspects of the program, academic or programmatic success, skills necessary to obtain licensure, and the safe performance of the skills the program seeks to develop.

IV. Policy Statement:

- A. The University of West Florida (UWF) is committed to providing students with documented disabilities the same opportunity to achieve academic success as it provides for all students. The provision of services to students with documented disabilities at UWF is based on the principle of non-discrimination and accommodation in academic programs set forth in the implementing regulations for Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended by the 2008 Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA), and other pertaining laws and guidelines. These services will be provided within the basic guidelines to follow, with the understanding that students with disabilities may require unique accommodations and must have their needs assessed on a case-by-case basis. The provision of accommodations for students with documented disabilities need not guarantee students equal results or achievement; accommodations must only afford them an equal opportunity for achievement. The University of West Florida (UWF) is committed to a policy of ensuring that no otherwise qualified student with a disability is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination in university programs or activities due to his or her disability.
- B. Student Accessibility Resources Center (SAR) is the designated office that receives and files disability-related documents, verifies eligibility for services, assesses reasonable accommodations, and develops plans for the provision of such accommodations. Reasonable accommodations are provided to ensure access to all University courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities.
- C. It is the policy of the University to make services available for any student who, through a current assessment, can document a disability. Student Accessibility Resources will provide appropriate services including, but not limited to 1) support, referrals, and information, and 2) academic assistance services. Reasonable accommodations are to be made for students with disabilities on a case-by-case basis through a collaborative process.
- D. The University is obligated to make a reasonable accommodation only to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified student with a disability. To verify reasonable accommodations, Student Accessibility Resources may seek information from appropriate University personnel regarding essential standards for courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities. Final determination of reasonable accommodations is made by Student Accessibility Resources.

- E. Requests for accommodations and documentation should be submitted in a timely manner to allow processing and to insure the best service for the student. Retroactive requests will not be accommodated.
- F. Students may appeal an accommodation decision, register a complaint about the implementation of an accommodation, or allege discrimination based on disability. Accommodation decision appeals and implementation complaints shall be filed with Student Accessibility Resources for review per the process outlined on the Student Accessibility Resources website. Discrimination concerns shall be directed to the Equal Opportunity Programs Office pursuant to University Policy P-13.08-03/17, *Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation*.

V. Procedures and Roles:

- A. **Responsibilities of Students with Disabilities:** It is the responsibility of students with disabilities to seek available assistance at the University through the Student Accessibility Resources office to make their needs known. Students who believe they may benefit from academic accommodations because of a disabling condition must:
 - 1. Self-identify that he or she is a student with a disability or disabilities by submitting the Student Accessibility Resources Enrollment Application and completing the registration process with Student Accessibility Resources.
 - 2. Provide appropriate documentation of the disability or disabilities in accordance with the Student Accessibility Resources guidelines. The cost of obtaining documentation is borne by the student. If the initial documentation is incomplete or inadequate to determine the extent of the disability and reasonable accommodations, Student Accessibility Resources has the discretion to require additional documentation. Any cost of obtaining additional documentation is also borne by the student.
 - 3. Complete the registration appointment with a Student Accessibility Resources staff member to discuss documentation and eligibility for reasonable accommodations.
 - i. Individual accommodations will vary based on the nature of the student's documented disability and will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Academic accommodations may include extended time for exams and assignments, low distraction testing space, supplemental notes, enlarged printed text, readers, screen reader software, real-time captioning or sign language interpreters, among others.
 - 4. Complete a *Semester Accommodation Request* each semester in order to utilize approved accommodations.
 - i. Once the student has submitted the *Semester Accommodation Request*, Student Accessibility Resources will notify instructors of the student's eligibility for

accommodations and the type of accommodations the student is eligible to receive. Only those instructors identified by the student on the *Semester Accommodation Request* will be notified.

- ii. Where a student has requested and has been determined eligible for testing accommodations, the student is required to discuss the accommodations with the course instructor prior to the exam date. If the instructor is unable to provide the testing accommodations, the student can request to take the exam at the University testing office. The student must submit his/her request to Student Accessibility Resources by the testing request deadline for each exam.
- iii. Where a student has requested and been determined eligible for note taking services, Student Accessibility Resources will notify faculty of this accommodation. Student Accessibility Resources staff will work with the student, and faculty member to determine the best option for note taking support.
- iv. Where the student has requested a course substitution or graduation modification based upon his/her disability, the student must submit the appropriate request form per University procedures. Student Accessibility Resources will evaluate the documentation and provide a letter either supporting or not supporting the requested accommodation to the appropriate committee for review.

VI. Responsibilities of Faculty and Staff

- A. All faculty and staff within the University have the responsibility for ensuring programs and services are accessible to all students. Responsibilities of faculty and staff include:
 1. Informing students of University procedures for accommodating students with disabilities through a formal syllabus statement.
 2. Referring all students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability to Student Accessibility Resources.
 3. Providing Student Accessibility Resources approved accommodations in a fair and timely manner.
 4. Contacting Student Accessibility Resources immediately if the approved accommodation undermines the essential requirements of the course or alter the fundamental nature of the course.
 5. Completing *Faculty Instruction Form*, if student will be testing at the University testing office and providing the exam within the time requested.

6. Assisting student and Student Accessibility Resources staff with recruiting readers, scribes, or note takers and other assistance, if needed.
7. Maintaining appropriate confidentiality of records and communications concerning students with disabilities.
8. Providing accessible electronic and information technology including web sites, electronic forms, instructional materials and other technologies used within the University.

VI. Change Justification

This policy is being revised to better specify and clarify policy issues that are considered best practice and to update departmental names and changes due to reorganization.

Authority and Related Documents:

Florida Board of Governors Regulation 2.003 Equity and Access; Florida Board of Governors Regulation 6.018 Substitution or Modification of Requirements for Program Admission, Undergraduate Transfer, and for Graduation by Students with Disabilities; UWF/REG-3.011 Student Appeals, Complaints, and Grievances; UWF Policy P-13.08-03/17- Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation.

Approved by: 
Dr. Martha D. Saunders, President

Date: 9.13.19

History:

SA-09.00-06/01 Student Disability Resource Center Testing Policy for Students with Disabilities, adopted July 2001; SA-09.02-11/12 Student Disability Resource Center – Procedures for Requesting Accommodations, adopted November 2012; SA-09.03-10/15 Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities, adopted October 2015; revised hereby.