

SUNY Upstate Medical University

Accommodating Students with Disabilities in the Classroom: The Faculty Role

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

- According to federal regulations, otherwise qualified students with documented disabilities are entitled to equal treatment at institutions of higher education, and to reasonable accommodation if needed.
- Disability is defined as any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, or working.
- A major life activity also includes the operation of a Major Bodily Function, including but not limited to functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.

Reasonable Accommodations:

- **An accommodation is a legally mandated modification or service that gives a student with a disability an equal opportunity to benefit from the educational process.**
- Accommodations do not lower academic standards or compromise the integrity of an academic program. Academic, conduct, and technical standards will always be maintained.
- All students and applicants must be capable of meeting the technical standards for their program of study with or without reasonable accommodation.
- Accommodations are not provided retroactively.
- Depending on the accommodation requested, disability services staff may reach out to faculty, program chairs or clerkship coordinators to ask about program policies and practices; the disability services staff member has to balance what is a reasonable accommodation, while making sure that the accommodation does not give the disabled student an advantage and while making sure the accommodation does not fundamentally alter the nature of the program.

Process for Registering with Disability Services at Upstate Medical University:

- Students must identify themselves to the Disability Support Services Office as a student with a disability and request specific accommodations. Please visit their website to find information on this process: <https://www.upstate.edu/currentstudents/support/disabilities/index.php>
- It is also the student's responsibility to obtain a thorough written evaluation from an appropriate professional, documenting the presence, extent, and ramifications of the disability. In addition, the documentation should explain what specific types of accommodation the

evaluator believes might be most helpful in offsetting the effects of the disability to an acceptable extent in a medical or health sciences school environment.

- Accommodations are determined on a case by case basis, determined by disability documentation and the interactive process with the individual student.
- Once accommodations are approved, our office provides a letter to the student that the student then has to distribute to faculty. This letter does not describe the disability, it only states that this student is registered with our office and is entitled to the accommodations outlined in the letter.

Guidelines for Faculty:

- Include a statement about disability accommodations in your course syllabus (see sample below).
- Implement the accommodations approved by the Disability Support Services staff that are outlined in the DSS letter of accommodations. If you have questions or concerns about any approved accommodation, reach out to DSS staff for further clarification.
- All disability information is to be kept confidential. Please do not discuss a students' disability and/or diagnosis with them or to others. Any discussions of accommodation letters or logistics of implementing accommodations should be done in private.
- If a student tries to provide you with primary disability information, please refer them to the DSS Office.

Suggested Syllabus Statement:

ADA and Access Statement

Upstate Medical University is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. Students who anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, such as health events (ex. illness or injury), or significant life events (ex. a loss, a caregiving emergency) should notify the professor as soon as possible (username@upstate.edu or by phone 315-464-xxxx).

If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please schedule a meeting with someone from our Disability Support Services Office to begin this conversation or to request an official accommodation. You can find more information about Disability Support Services here:

<https://www.upstate.edu/currentstudents/support/disabilities/index.php>.

You may also visit their office in room 130 of the Health Sciences Library (M-F, 8:30am – 4:30pm), call their office at 315-464-8855 or send an email to StuServe@upstate.edu. If you have already been approved for accommodations through Disability Support Services, please meet with your professor to review your accommodations letter and develop an implementation plan together.