Faculty Resource: Tips for Accessibility

From the Office of Accessible Education and Student Support (AESS)

While not required, a student may choose to disclose a disability to you. When this occurs, conversation around strengths, anticipated challenges, and implementation of approved accommodations can be helpful to both the student and faculty member. This resource is designed to provide general tips for facilitating access and broad information relevant to specific disabilities.

General Guidelines and Recommendations

- **Open the door for communication.** Include a statement in your syllabus and make an announcement on the first day of class encouraging students to meet with you to discuss accommodation needs. A sample syllabus statement can be found under Information for Faculty on the AESS website.

- **Maintain confidentiality.** It’s a student’s right not to disclose their disability or related information and, legally, you may not ask. However, all students are strongly encouraged by AESS to discuss, with their professors, how approved accommodations will be implemented. Whatever level of information a student may share, ensure it is kept confidential.

- **Recognize the student as the best expert.** Students will be most effective in describing accommodation needs and providing assistance in figuring out how to best implement them.

- **Evaluate potential barriers to access.** When designing a course and syllabi, consider how you can make it most accessible to students with all types of learning styles and abilities. This will benefit all students, not just those with disabilities.

- **Use Accessible Education and Student Support as a resource.** Abigail is available for consultation, problem-solving, and questions. If a student gives permission, more specific information related to a disability and resulting limitations may be shared. Email anelson2@bates.edu or call 207-786-6222.

Tips for Specific Disabilities

**Important Note:** Information provided in the table below is designed to be a broad “snapshot.” Strengths, limitations, and accommodation needs will vary by individual, regardless of disability. Examples of more typical accommodations are included, but this is not exhaustive, as accommodations are not “one size fits all.” Students with the same type of disability may receive different accommodations and students approved for the same accommodation may have differing disabilities and resulting limitations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>More Information</th>
<th>Tips for Teaching &amp; Course Design</th>
<th>Examples of Accommodations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Learning Disabilities (LD)      | ✚ A LD affects the way a person’s brain processes information.  
✚ Students may experience challenges in understanding what is read, listening effectively, comprehending math concepts, with spelling and grammar, expressing thoughts orally or through writing, for example.  
✚ Having a LD does not mean being unable to learn. It does mean the person will have to use adaptive methods to process information so that learning can be accomplished. Students must receive and transmit information in forms that work for them.  
✚ Many people prefer the term “learning difference,” which is a more accurate reflection.  
✚ Common LDs include [Dyslexia](https://www.ldonline.org/disabilities-overview/dyslexia), [Dyscalculia](https://www.ldonline.org/disabilities-overview/dyscalculia), [Dysgraphia](https://www.ldonline.org/disabilities-overview/dysgraphia), and [Visual and/or Auditory Processing Disorder](https://www.ldonline.org/disabilities-overview/postive-taking). | ✚ Provide multiple means of engagement (lecture, video, group work, hands-on)  
✚ Give all assignments and course expectations in both written and oral form.  
✚ When designing syllabi, selecting course materials, and creating exams, make sure they are accessible to students with print-related disabilities (AESS can help with this).  
✚ Give a review of material covered and emphasize key points.  
✚ Be mindful that some students may not be comfortable reading aloud, answering questions when called on, or sharing in-class work.  
✚ Build in time for Q & A. | ✚ Extended Time on Exams  
✚ Assistive Technology (example: text-to-speech or speech-to-text software)  
✚ Text in Alternate Format  
✚ Peer Note Taking  
✚ Permission to Audio Record Lectures  
✚ Computer Use for Exams, In-Class Assignments, Note-Taking  
✚ Calculator Use  
✚ Memory Aid for Exams |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>More Information</th>
<th>Tips for Teaching &amp; Course Design</th>
<th>Examples of Accommodations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD) | ADD/ADHD is characterized by a pattern of frequent inattention, hyperactivity, and/or impulsiveness.  
- People with ADD/ADHD are often highly-intelligent, creative and “out-of-the-box” thinkers.  
- Many students with ADD/ADHD may have similar challenges to students with LDs (described previously).  
- Students with ADD/ADHD often have difficulty with executive functions, including focusing, time-management, prioritizing, work activation and completion, organization, and memory. | “Phase” or break assignments into parts and set deadlines for each part. Offer feedback on each component.  
- Provide a clear syllabus with exams, assignments, and due dates listed.  
- Remind students of deadlines frequently.  
- Begin class with an overview of material to be covered. Review major points at the end of each class and allow for questions.  
- Provide multiple means of engagement and build in breaks. | Extended Time on Exams  
Separate Location for Testing  
Peer Note Taking  
Permission to Audio Record Lectures  
Preferential Seating  
Advance Notice of Assignments (when not included on syllabus) |
| Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)         | Many people with ASD have high intellectual and verbal abilities and can understand ideas in novel ways.  
- People with ASD have difficulty with social cues and connections. Flexibility and adapting to change may also be particularly difficult. | Provide a clear syllabus with exams, assignments, and due dates listed.  
- Remind students of deadlines frequently.  
- Be prepared to assist with group dynamics during group work and establish guidelines so expectations are clear. | Extended Time on Exams  
Separate Location for Testing  
Computer Use for Exams, In-Class Assignments, Note Taking  
Preferential Classroom Seating  
Permission to Audio Record Lectures |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People with ASD</th>
<th>Students with ASD may have similar executive function challenges to those with ADD/ADHD.</th>
<th>If students get stuck on a topic, are overreaching or speaking out of turn, it is OK to be clear about your boundaries and move on.</th>
<th>Don’t assume lack of eye contact or fidgeting, for example, is a sign of disinterest or inability to focus.</th>
<th>Advance Notice of Assignments (when not included on syllabus)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Mental Health Conditions**

- Common psychological disabilities include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and bipolar disorder.
- Medication side effects (for example: drowsiness, headaches, hand tremors) may impact academic performance.
- Ability to function effectively may vary from day to day.
- Students with mental health disabilities may be more protective of their confidentiality. Many students may have had stigmatizing or negative experiences with disclosure in the past.
- Make every effort to help students feel comfortable if they disclose to you and also understand they may not wish to do so and this is their right. With a student’s permission, AESS may be able to provide more information.
- Provide a clear syllabus with exams, assignments, and due dates listed.
- Consider alternative assignments if they don’t compromise the essential elements of the course.
- Many tips for students with LD and ADD/ADHD may also apply to students with mental health disabilities.
- Extended Time on Exams
- Separate Location for Testing
- Prearranged or Frequent Breaks In-Class
- Preferential Seating
- Flexibility in Attendance Requirements when Appropriate and within limits
- Service Animal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>More Information</th>
<th>Tips for Teaching &amp; Course Design</th>
<th>Examples of Accommodations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Deaf or Hard of Hearing        | ➢ Hearing impairment is a broad term that applies to hearing losses of varying degrees from hard-of-hearing to total deafness.  
➢ Students with hearing impairments may use a variety of communication methods including speech (oral communication), speech reading (lip reading), hearing aids or other technologies, and sign language. | ➢ Ensure that only one person speaks at a time in-class. When a class member asks a question or makes a comment, repeat it for the class before answering.  
➢ Plan ahead on captioning for videos and films (*AESS can help with this*).  
➢ If a student uses an interpreter, speak directly to the student, not the interpreter. When using the board or slides, pause so the student may look there first and then to the interpreter to see what is being said. | ➢ Assistive Technology  
➢ Captioning for Video and Films  
➢ Preferential Classroom Seating  
➢ Peer Note Taking  
➢ Real-Time Captioning (CART)  
➢ American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter  
➢ Extended Time on Exams |
| Visual Impairments and Blindness | ➢ A visual impairment may refer to people with various gradations of vision. The term “blindness” is usually reserved for people with complete loss of sight.  
➢ Students with visual impairments may have difficulty seeing syllabi, exams, handouts, PowerPoint presentations, videos, and inaccessible websites, for example. | ➢ Choose textbooks, articles, and other course materials that are available (or can be converted) in a format that is accessible to students who use assistive technology (*AESS can help with this*).  
➢ When using the board or slides, use a large font. Make electronic copies of materials presented in class available to students.  
➢ Speak with the student about their accommodation needs— they are the best expert. | ➢ Extended Time on Exams  
➢ Assistive Technology  
➢ Text in Alternate Format  
➢ Written or Verbal Descriptions to Accompany Visual Aids, Films, Diagrams  
➢ Computer Use for Exams, In-Class Assignments, Note Taking  
➢ Permission to Audio Record Lectures  
➢ Preferential Classroom Seating  
➢ Service Animal |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>More Information</th>
<th>Tips for Teaching &amp; Course Design</th>
<th>Examples of Accommodations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Speech Impairments          | ➢ Speech impairments can include but aren’t limited to problems with pronunciation, voice quality, rate of speech, and inability to speak.  
➢ Speech impairments may be found alone or in combination with other disabilities.  
➢ Many students with speech impairments may be reluctant to participate in activities that require speaking. Even when a student has adjusted to a speech impairment, new situations may raise old anxieties. | ➢ Meet with students who have speech challenges to discuss their communication styles and accommodation needs.  
➢ When appropriate, consider offering alternative options for oral presentations to all students.  
➢ Encourage students with speech challenges to express themselves and allow time for formulation of response.  
➢ Be mindful that some students may not be comfortable reading aloud, answering questions when called on, or sharing in-class work. | ➢ Assistive Technology  
➢ Electronic Communication Aides  
➢ Modification to Oral Presentation/Participation Requirements (when not fundamental to the course) |
| Mobility and Dexterity Limitations | ➢ Mobility limitations may result from a broad range of neuromuscular and orthopedic disabilities that produce wide variations in nature and extent of functional limitations.  
➢ Physical access can be a major concern for people with mobility limitations, whether or not they use a wheelchair. Barriers can include stairs, curbs, narrow walkways, non- | ➢ If a classroom, lab, or faculty office is inaccessible, a new accessible location will be necessary.  
➢ Allow for travel time. If the student is frequently late, meet with the student to seek solutions.  
➢ Restructure lab experiences to include the use of a partner for students with hand and arm dexterity limitations. A partner | ➢ Accessible Classrooms and Meeting Spaces  
➢ Modifications in Lab Settings  
➢ Priority Registration  
➢ Assistive Technology  
➢ Peer Note Taking  
➢ Permission to Audio Record Lectures  
➢ Extended Time on Exams  
➢ Computer Use for Exams, In-Class Assignments, Note Taking |
| **Chronic Health Conditions** | **Chronic health conditions can include heart problems, diabetes, seizure disorders, chronic fatigue syndrome, arthritis, or fibromyalgia, for example. These conditions rise to the level of disability when they substantially limit one or more major life activities**<br>**Symptoms may be unpredictable and fluctuating. This along with medication side effects have the potential to impact a student academically** | **On occasion, a health condition, medication, or medical appointments may impact a student’s attendance**<br>**In some instances, flexibility in attendance requirements is an appropriate accommodation, however it is not unlimited and the student is responsible for notification and make-up work**<br>**Provide a clear syllabus with exams, assignments, and due dates listed** | **Breaks Not Counted in Testing Time** | **Prearranged or Frequent Breaks In-Class**<br>**Flexibility in Attendance Requirements when Appropriate and within limits**<br>**Priority Registration** |