



Student Accessibility Services — Faculty Frequently Asked Questions

Please feel free to contact the Director of Student Accessibility Services, Laura Galt, at galtl@union.edu or 518-388-8785 with any questions or concerns.

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1: What is Student Accessibility Services?

Student Accessibility Services coordinates assistance for students with documented disabilities in order to promote equal access to College programs and services. Union College's policies comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and applicable local, state, and federal statutes regarding nondiscrimination against persons with disabilities.

Students seeking accommodations must register with Student Accessibility Services by providing supporting documentation and participating in an interactive dialogue (intake meeting). Reasonable accommodations will be approved based upon a student's documented diagnosis(es), functional limitations, and the assessment of specific needs.

Student Accessibility Services is located in Schaffer Library, Room 222. The Director of Student Accessibility Services, Laura Galt, is available for consultation and may be contacted by email at Galtl@union.edu, or by telephone: (518) 388-8785, or fax: (518) 388-6444.

Q2: What are the rights and responsibilities of a student with a disability?

Students with disabilities have the right to equal access to courses, programs, activities, services, and facilities offered at Union College. Students are also entitled to reasonable accommodations designed to facilitate such access. All information about the student's disability is to be kept confidential. Students have the responsibility to provide acceptable documentation of disabilities and to register with Student Accessibility Services if they would like to receive accommodations. If students want to receive accommodations, they are responsible for requesting accommodations from Student Accessibility Services each term and discussing with their instructors how the approved accommodations can be implemented. (Student Accessibility Services will email an Accommodation Letter to faculty once a student has requested accommodations for the term.)

Q3: What are the rights and responsibilities of an instructor when working with students with disabilities?

An instructor has the right to confirm a student's request for accommodations and to ask for clarification about a specific accommodation approved by Student Accessibility Services. Instructors do not have the right to refuse to provide an approved accommodation or to review a student's documentation, including diagnostic data. Instructors have a responsibility to work with Student Accessibility Services to provide reasonable accommodations, keep all records and communications with students confidential, and refer a student to Student Accessibility Services who requests accommodations but is not currently registered. Instructors do not have to provide accommodations for students not registered with Student Accessibility Services.

Q4: Why does an instructor have the responsibility to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities?

An instructor has a legal responsibility to provide approved reasonable accommodations to registered students with disabilities. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) protect students with disabilities. These laws require that qualified students with disabilities must have equal access to an education. If you are concerned that the approved accommodations fundamentally alter an essential component of your course, please contact Laura Galt, Director of Student Accessibility Services. For more information, go to the Americans With Disabilities Act website www.ada.gov.

Q5: What is an Accommodation Letter?

An Accommodation Letter is a letter from Student Accessibility Services that lists specific approved academic accommodations for an individual student. A student who has an Accommodation Letter, dated in the term in which the class is taking place, is currently registered with Student Accessibility Services and has provided necessary documentation supporting the provision of such accommodations.

Q6: Are all students with disabilities registered with Student Accessibility Services?

No. Some students with disabilities choose not to register with Student Accessibility Services or may not meet the eligibility criteria for services. In either instance, faculty are not required to provide accommodations for such students.

Q7: Who is responsible for determining reasonable accommodations?

Student Accessibility Services determines who is eligible for approved accommodations. Decisions regarding accommodations are based on documentation provided by the student with a disability, as well as the student's functional limitations.

Q8: When is a student required to notify me of a need for an accommodation?

Student Accessibility Services strongly encourages registered students to meet with their professors at the beginning of each term to discuss the approved accommodations listed in their Accommodation Letters. However, students can register with Student Accessibility Services or meet with you to discuss their approved accommodations at any time during the term.

Q9: Besides the Accommodation Letter provided by Student Accessibility Services, am I allowed to request additional documentation from a student?

No. Documentation stating and describing a student's disability is confidential information. All documentation for registered students is kept with Student Accessibility Services.

Q10: Do I have any recourse if I disagree with the approved accommodations and feel they fundamentally alter the program?

If you are concerned that the approved accommodations fundamentally alter an essential component of your course, or if you have other questions or concerns, please contact Laura Galt, Director of Student Accessibility Services, at ext. 8785.

Q11: If a student discloses a disability midway through the term, am I required to accommodate previously submitted work in the course?

No. Accommodations are not retroactive. Students are encouraged to disclose their disability early in the term so that the approved accommodations can be implemented. It is their responsibility to meet with you to discuss how approved accommodations will be implemented. You are not required to retroactively accommodate coursework that has already been submitted for evaluation.

Q12: I received an Accommodation Letter for a student in my class who has never discussed it with me or used the approved accommodations. What is my responsibility in this situation?

If the student has not communicated directly with you about his or her approved accommodations, it is good practice to email the student inviting them to speak with you about their accommodations. Faculty should work in collaboration with the student to implement the approved accommodation(s).

Q13: Am I required to lower standards for a required assignment because the student has a disability?

No. The standards should be the same for all students. Some students with disabilities may exhibit their knowledge, production, or other course expectations differently than their peers. Accommodations are designed to address those differences, but the end result should be the same as what is expected from all students.

Q14: I have a student with a disability who is getting behind in his coursework. The student has missed several classes and has failed to hand in several assignments. Although he has taken a midterm and used accommodations, at this point he is not passing the class. Do I have the right to fail a student with a disability?

It is important for instructors to remember that providing reasonable accommodations to a student with a disability does not guarantee success in the course. Students with disabilities may not master the course material, just like any other student. Students with disabilities have the same right as other students to fail as part of their educational experience. If you are concerned that a student is falling behind in your class, please submit an Early Alert so that the student's class dean and/or Student Accessibility Services can assist the student. [Click Here to Submit an Early Alert](#)

Q15: What do I do about a student with a disability who is misbehaving, threatening, or rude?

All students are expected to abide by the policies and rules set forth in Union College's [Student Handbook](#). An instructor should treat a disruptive student with a disability the same as any other disruptive student. If an instructor feels that there is a disability-related reason for the student's behavior, the instructor should contact Laura Galt, Director of Student Accessibility Services, to determine if there is a solution to the problem or strategies for addressing the behavior.

Q16: I have a student who is having difficulty in my class and might have a disability. What should I do to help the student?

Talk privately with the student to discuss your observations. Do not assume that the student's difficulties are a result of a disability. After speaking with the student, suggest/refer the student to helpful campus resources. If the student discloses that he or she does have a disability, refer the student to Student Accessibility Services for more information and possible assistance.

Q17: What types of academic accommodations are provided to students with disabilities?

There are several accommodations available to students with disabilities that exist to provide equal access to College programs and services. Students' approved accommodations are specifically and individually designed to address the functional impact of their disabilities. Depending on the nature and impact of a student's disability, the following types of accommodations are generally available:

- Testing Accommodations — extended time (1.5x, 2.0x), distraction limited environment, laptop for essay exams, calculator, speech-to-text, noise-canceling headphones, no scantron, enlarged font
- Classroom Access Accommodations — Notetaking Services (assistive technology to record audio lectures, laptop for notes), noise-canceling headphones, faculty medical notification, flexibility accommodation, class participation accommodation
- Alternative texts and audiobooks

Q18: How should I communicate my policy on providing reasonable accommodations in my class?

Student Accessibility Services recommends, at a minimum, that all faculty members include a statement in their syllabi regarding reasonable accommodations. Such a statement makes it clear to students that you are aware that some students require accommodations. It also will help them be more comfortable and forthcoming in discussing their approved accommodations with you. Below are two examples of syllabus statements. You may adapt them or develop your own. (See Qs 20 and 21 for additional syllabus guidance.)

Accessible/Compliant Statement:

- If you are a student with a disability or think you may have a disability and need accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services, located in Schaffer Library, Room 222. You may refer to the SAS webpage for more

information: union.edu/accommodative-services. If you are already registered with SAS, please schedule a time to speak with me as early as possible in the term (during the first week of classes, or within one week of having your accommodations approved by SAS) so we can discuss your approved accommodations. Untimely notice could result in a delay in the receipt of reasonable accommodations.

Accessible, Inclusive, and Compliant Statement:

- Union College is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with college policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability or think you may have a disability and need accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services in Schaffer Library, Room 222. Please refer to SAS's webpage for contact and more information: union.edu/accommodative-services. If you are already registered with SAS, please schedule a time to speak with me as early as possible in the term (during the first week of classes or within one week of having your accommodations approved by SAS) so we can discuss your approved accommodations. Untimely notice could result in a delay in the receipt of reasonable accommodations.

Q19: Do I have to allow students to use technology in my courses?

There are instances when a student registered with Student Accessibility Services will need to use various technologies during your class. These will be outlined in the Accommodation Letter. These accommodations may include, but are not limited to, a laptop to take notes, assistive technology to audio record class lectures, and other types of technology as needed.

Q20: What if I have a policy specifically banning the use of laptops?

If a laptop is an approved accommodation, a policy modification for the student with a disability is reasonable. In order not to publicly identify the student with a disability, faculty are encouraged to state on the **syllabus** something like the following: "Exceptions for the use of a laptop may be granted for accommodations or for other compelling reasons at the discretion of the instructor."

Q21: Do I have to alter my attendance policy?

No. As a general matter, you are under no obligation to alter or waive your attendance policy for students with disabilities. However, you are strongly encouraged to identify and determine how much attendance is considered an essential part of your course. It is always good

practice to clearly state on your course syllabus your attendance requirements. In some cases, a student may be approved for a **Flexibility Accommodation for attendance and/or deadlines**. The Flexibility Accommodation will be specifically listed in the student's Accommodation Letter, along with suggested guidance for faculty and students on how to collaborate to create a flexibility plan for the course.

Q22: I have a student who is approved for testing accommodations, including extended time and a distraction limited environment. How should I handle these exams?

You should discuss with your student the options for implementing such testing accommodations. Faculty are encouraged to provide approved testing accommodations within their departments when possible because doing so often allows for easier access to faculty during exams should a student have questions; however, Student Accessibility Services' [Testing Center](#) is available as an alternative resource for registered students with approved testing accommodations.

Q23: If I design an exam to take a certain amount of time and then allow all students in the class extra time to complete it, does that meet the accommodation need for students with extended time accommodations?

From a compliance standpoint, extended time for students with exam accommodations (usually 1.5x or 2.0x additional time) is based on what the class receives. As an example, if you design an exam so that it should take students 40 minutes to complete it but offer the entire class up to 80 minutes to complete it, you would need to ensure that a student with 1.5x extended time has 120 minutes to complete it.

Q24: What steps can I take to support a student with a visual impairment?

- <http://www.allaboutvision.com/resources/guide-for-visually-impaired-college-students/>
- <http://www.perkins.org/resource/common-classroom-accommodations-low>

Visually impaired students face some common difficulties when they reach college, including orientation and mobility and self-advocacy with faculty and staff. Navigating a busy college campus - dorms, classrooms, dining halls, bathrooms, pathways, and hallways - can be challenging for visually impaired students.

Colleges and universities can best accommodate visually impaired students by utilizing Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is a teaching and learning system that combines various teaching methods. It removes any learning barriers students may have and provides them an equal opportunity to learn. Some examples of how colleges and universities use UDL to accommodate visually impaired students are:

- Assigning volunteers to help students read, take notes, or perform other important tasks

- Using large fonts in lecture presentations, making auditory software available, and providing braille materials
- Allowing students extra time to get to class, complete assignments, and finish tests
- Ensuring all campus facilities, including classrooms, dining halls, and student housing, are fully accessible (e.g., adequate lighting, preferential seating)
- Allowing students to use alternative learning methods when giving presentations, completing assignments, etc.
- Using clear verbal communication and explanations for anything written on the board or presented on slides
- Working with students to make sure they have what they need to access and participate in the course, such as assistive technology and adaptive software

Examples of assistive technology tools:

- **Screen magnifiers** allow the user to zoom in and out on their device in a variety of ways. Some screen magnifiers will also allow the user to change color contrast or font for ease of access.
- **Screen readers** use a computerized voice to read the text on a screen. Screen readers employ keyboard shortcuts that allow the user to jump throughout the text on the window.
- **Note-taking software and/or recording lectures.**
- Students can use a **video magnifier** and zoom in to better read the font or study the graphics. Some video magnifiers allow the user to change color contrasts, such as white font on a black background. Other video magnifiers come with a distance-viewing option that allows the user to turn the camera at something farther away and zoom in, such as a white board or lecture slide.

Additional information about how to support a student with low vision in a lab environment is also [available](#).

Q25: How should I handle a student with a service dog in my class?

<https://www.guidedogsofamerica.org/best-practices-when-around-a-service-dog/>

- You may ask if someone's dog is a service animal; however, do NOT ask for documentation regarding the dog's registration or certification. Service dogs are not required to wear a special harness or vest.

- You may ask what work or task the dog has been trained to perform; however, do NOT ask that the dog demonstrate any tasks it has been trained to perform.
- Do NOT ask about the nature of the person's disability.
- A service dog must be housebroken and under control by its owner.
- Approach the handler, not the dog. Give the dog space so it can stay focused on its job.
- Never touch a service dog without asking permission first. Doing so ensures that you are not interfering with the dog's ability to assist its owner.
- Don't offer food to a service dog.
- A sleeping dog is still on the job. If the handler is sitting for an extended period, it's perfectly normal for a working dog to have a quick sleep. The dog is still on the job, so all the previous advice remains true.
- Service dogs are trained to perform their respective tasks without distractions. If a service dog approaches you with its owner and sniffs or paws at you, then let the owner know. This may be unwanted behavior that needs correcting. Even though the dog is demanding your attention, ignore it and talk directly to the owner instead.

Q26: How can I support a student who is hard of hearing?

Various technologies may be utilized to support a student who is hard of hearing, including an assistive listening device such as an FM (frequency modulation) system. As part of his or her approved accommodations, a student who is hard of hearing will likely be provided with Genio Notes software for live captioning and note-taking during class. Captions take around 300-500ms to generate, so there is a tiny delay before the text appears. As more audio is recorded, captioning is able to correct for any errors.

In addition, the following information may be helpful to communicate effectively with a student who is hard of hearing.

Before Class – Several things would be helpful for the student to see ahead of time, if practical:

- The course outline or syllabus early in the term;
- A list of new vocabulary or specialized terminology before it comes up in class;
- Lecture slides/notes, if available, and/or
- A list of visual and auditory media that will be shown in class before it is presented.

During Class –

- Maintaining a clear line of sight between you and the student will be very helpful. Allow the student to be seated in a spot where he/she can maintain eye contact. Speak clearly and naturally; do not over-enunciate, talk loudly, or use exaggerated mouth movements. Try to avoid long periods facing away from the students or toward the whiteboard while you speak. Avoid unnecessary pacing while talking. Please refrain from blocking your mouth with your hands or other objects.
- Try to avoid standing in front of windows or other light sources. The glare from behind you makes it difficult to see your face and expressions.
- Try to keep classroom doors and windows closed to limit noise from hallways and outdoors.
- Slow down the pace of communication slightly to facilitate understanding.
- When another student speaks, repeat the comment or question and point or motion to show who is speaking. This will help to improve Genio Notes' captioning and will make it easier for the student to follow the discussion.
- In question-and-answer periods, allow for additional auditory processing time. The student may need a bit of extra time to read the captioned language, raise his/her hand, be recognized, and respond.
- Provide closed captioning on media shown in class.
- Make important information (like an assignment or a change in schedule) especially clear by writing it on the board.
- Allow time for students to study handouts, charts, etc., before speaking about them. It is difficult to read captions and study newly presented, written material at the same time.
- Be sure to allow extra time in science or computer labs for the student to find things that you are pointing out.

Q27: How should I interact with a student who is nonverbal and uses technology to communicate?

Interaction Tips

- Gaining Attention: Ensure that the person has a way to gain your attention so you can interact.
- Proximity: You may need to get in closer to the person to view the written communication.
- Attitude: Adopt an open attitude to successful communication. Let the person know if you have not understood what they have written, and try again.

Timing Tips

- **Take the Time to Communicate:** Written communication will take longer than direct communication by speech. Allow for some extra time to communicate.
- **Wait for the Person to Respond** – People who are nonverbal indicate that the ‘timing’ of their communication attempts often fails, and they miss the opportunity to have a ‘turn.’ Waiting for a response gives them a chance to have a turn, which will help you understand their needs.
- **Equalize the Speaking Turns** – Attend to how often you have a turn, and try to ‘equalize,’ giving the person every opportunity to have a turn to talk. Natural speakers often ‘dominate’ conversations and give the person no opportunity except to say ‘yes’ and ‘no’. Try to ask some open-ended questions, as the person might have something else to add.
- **Be Aware of “Flow”** – Sometimes a conversation can become ‘disjointed’ as both parties try to clarify their messages and establish shared meaning. You might move to topic B while the person is still thinking about or talking about topic A. This can get confusing for both parties as each tries to clarify and re-establish meaning. Checking regularly if you are on the right track and giving the person a chance to respond helps keep both parties in a ‘flow’ together on establishing mutual understanding.
- **Fatigue** – Keep in mind that a nonverbal person may be making extra efforts to communicate without speech. You may need to give them a break or a rest between their turns. Watch for signs of fatigue and allow them a chance to relax for their next turn.