

Faculty FAQs

Q: How will I know if a student needs accommodations?

A: For any accommodated student in your class, you and the student will receive an email from SASS with the Letter of Accommodation (LOA) attached. By replying “all” to the email, you are acknowledging the receipt of the letter and compliance with the accommodations. SASS expects the student and the faculty to discuss the implementation of the accommodations.

Q: Can I provide accommodations to a student who does not have an LOA?

A: If a student asks for an accommodation but you have not received the LOA, advise the student to contact SASS. If a student asks you for an accommodation not listed in the LOA, refer the student to SASS for consideration of his/her request.

Q: Do I have to provide accommodations listed in a letter if they do not fit with my teaching philosophy or pedagogy?

A: Yes. Federal law requires that students who are registered with SASS are entitled to the accommodations listed in the LOAs. Provision of accommodations is a shared obligation of Rider University faculty and staff. Failure to comply puts you, the individual instructor, as well as the entire university in potential violation of federal laws that protect individuals with disabilities.

Q: What accommodations are appropriate?

A: SASS grants accommodations to students with documented disabilities based on the documentation provided by the appropriate professional and based on the functional limitations resulting from the disability. These accommodations should not compromise the essential elements or objectives of your course.

Q: If I receive a student's LOA in the middle of the semester, am I obligated to provide accommodations?

A: Yes. Legally, a student can request a Letter of Accommodation at any time during the semester. However, accommodations are not retroactive and only apply, upon receipt, through the end of the semester.

Q: If I receive a student's LOA dated from a previous semester, am I obligated to accept this?

A: Students are required to request new LOAs from SASS every semester. LOAs from a previous semester do not apply to the current semester. Please have the student contact our office to request LOAs for the current semester.

Q: Can I talk to students about their disabilities?

A: The decision to disclose disability information is made by the student. Some students may wish to keep specific disability information confidential, and others may choose to openly discuss their diagnoses and related information with you. You can ask students about their needs related to learning and fulfilling the requirements of your course, but you should avoid asking specific questions about their disability. Please be respectful of the student's disability. Understand that there are hidden disabilities that are not readily apparent, but be assured that our SASS staff carefully reviews each student's documentation prior to writing a LOA.

Q: Is it fair to other students to provide accommodations to a student with a disability?

A: It would be unfair and actually illegal to not provide the accommodations that Rider University has agreed to. Accommodations are designed to give a student equal access to the course material, not to guarantee success in the course. For example, a student with a deficit in long-term memory retrieval may require extended time on a test. Note that no amount of extended time will help a student if she/he does not know the material.

Q: What if a student fails a test and then decides to inform me of her/his disability? What is my responsibility at this point?

A: If a student with a disability did not inform you of the need for accommodations prior to the exam, then the law does not require you to alter or make any changes to what has occurred. Accommodations are not retroactive. If, however, you should receive a LOA for this student, the LOA would apply to all future exams.

Q: What is my role in providing extended time exam accommodations in the classroom?

A: If a student only needs extended time as an accommodation, the expectation is that the student will take the exam with the rest of the class. A student with a disability should have equal access to you, the professor, within the same testing environment afforded others. The student has the opportunity to ask questions, and you maintain control over the exam proctoring environment. For extended time, students can either come before or stay after the rest of the class. If that is not possible, you can proctor the exam in your office or a separate room. Please be mindful of the confidentiality of students when making arrangements, and remember that the AFSCME Union regulations do not allow administrative support staff to proctor exams.

Q: What does it mean when a student has an exam accommodation for a scribe or reader?

A: A scribe only writes what the student says, and a reader only reads the exam questions aloud upon request. They do not assist the student with exam content in any way.

Q: How do I accommodate a student who has flexibility with attendance/deadlines?

A: Federal law and the Office of Civil Rights (Department of Justice) mandate that disability services offices must directly communicate with faculty regarding accommodations for flexibility with attendance/deadlines.

In collaboration with the Associate Deans, we have developed a *Course Flexibility Form* as a communication tool. You will receive the *Course Flexibility Form* when a student with this accommodation is registered for one of your courses. The completed form should be returned to SASS before the next class. For detailed information regarding course flexibility with attendance/deadlines, [click here](#).

Q: Sometimes a student hands me a form labelled: Notice of Documented Disability. How is this different from a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) and what is my responsibility once I receive it?

A. Students may choose to use this form when they do not need accommodation in your class but would like to alert you to the fact that they are registered with SASS. This notice serves as a way to open communication between you and the student regarding the impact of the student's disability

on her/his academic performance. If during the semester the student recognizes a need for accommodations, refer them back to SASS for their Letter of Accommodation. Without a Letter of Accommodation, you have no particular obligation or responsibility to the student regarding her/his disability. *Note that this student must meet the expectations you have established for your class.*

Q: My class is taking a field trip. Do I need to do anything different for a student with a disability?

A: It depends. If the student has a mobility issue and uses a wheelchair or scooter, you will need to make certain that the site is accessible. In addition, if the University is providing transportation to the field trip, then an accessible means of transportation must be offered to the student with a disability.

Q: What language should I use when referring to a student with a disability?

A: You are encouraged to use people-first language – that is, you speak of the student first, then the disability (i.e., a student who is blind rather than the blind student). If you are unsure of what language to use, ask the student.

Q: Am I responsible for providing my course materials in an accessible format?

A: Yes. Legally, you must provide accessible course materials with the support of Rider University. Accessible format refers to the delivery of information in ways that individuals with disabilities are able to understand and use.

Q: How do I determine if my course materials are accessible?

A: It is essential that you, the professor, the student and SASS communicate with each other at least one month prior to the start of the semester. Generally, the student and/or SASS will send an email to alert you of the need for accessible course materials. You are expected to respond to those emails **within 72 hours** so that the accessibility determination process may begin. Through this collaborative process, you, the student and SASS, in consultation with the Teaching and Learning Center, will determine which materials require conversion. When appropriate, the materials will be converted.

Please note the following for a student with a **visual impairment**:

- Hard copy handouts should be avoided; they do not work for most students
- Materials in electronic format are highly preferred
- Word documents are almost always accessible

Please note the following for a student with a **hearing impairment**:

- In most cases, auditory material must be captioned

Q: How does new technology impact accommodation needs?

A: It is essential that you research the accessibility of technology before you adopt it for your course.

The US Department of Justice, the Office of Civil Rights and the US Department of Education, have issued a joint letter regarding the use of electronic book readers. The letter outlines the issues related to emerging technologies and ensuring equal access to individuals with disabilities.

The letter specifically states:

“Requiring use of an emerging technology in a classroom when the technology is inaccessible to an entire population of individuals with disabilities – individuals with visual disabilities – is discrimination prohibited by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) unless those individuals are provided accommodations or modifications that permit them to receive all the educational benefits provided by the technology in an equally effective and equally integrated manner.”

Therefore, all information – regardless of the method of distribution – must be made accessible to all students, either through document conversion or other procedures.

Q: I am teaching a class online. Are there any things I need to be aware of concerning the needs of students with disabilities?

A: Yes. The University has the same responsibility for ensuring access in online courses and in-person classes. You need to be certain that any documents used in your class are accessible to students who use screen readers or other types of assistive technology. Also, if a student who is deaf is in an online or in-person class and videos are used, you need to be certain that all materials are captioned, or a transcript is provided.

Q: I am in the process of selecting course materials for next year. Are there any issues I need to consider regarding students with disabilities?

A: You are encouraged to be mindful of the needs of all learners when selecting materials. As you interact with publishers, it is important to inquire about the availability of the materials in alternate format. The Department of Justice/Office of Civil Rights sent a letter to all college presidents across the country to alert them to the need to be inclusive in any technology required

for students' use. Institutions are not permitted to select technology that is inaccessible by a single class of students.

Q: I am interested in learning more about disabilities in the post secondary education setting. Are there places where I can go for further information?

A: Yes, there are many places to find additional information.

Information and Technical Assistance on the Americans With Disabilities Act
https://www.ada.gov/2010_regs.htm

A Guide to Disability Rights Laws
<https://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm#anchor62335>

Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/auxaids.html>

Do-It Faculty Room from the University of Washington
<https://www.washington.edu/doiit/programs/accesscollege/faculty-room/resources-faculty/do-it-publications>

Students with Autism in the College Classroom
[TipsforProfessorsofCollegeStudentswithAutismSpectrumDisorder](https://www.washington.edu/doiit/programs/accesscollege/faculty-room/resources-faculty/do-it-publications)