



Accommodating Students with Disabilities Guidelines for Instructors

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Vermont Technical College is required by law to provide equal access to qualified individuals with disabilities. “Accommodations” refers to strategies and adjustments used to ease the impact of a disability on a task demand. **Vermont Technical College can be held legally liable if the institution does not provide equal access.**

Many disabling conditions are obvious. It is easy to understand blindness, or other conditions that affect the ease with which people move through their environment, for example. Sometimes a little creativity is all that is needed to ensure access, and sometimes special equipment is required, but no one has a hard time understanding the purpose of the accommodation. Conditions like Attention Deficit Disorder, head injuries, emotional disabilities or learning disabilities are harder to process, in part because you cannot see them. The impact of these “Hidden Disabilities” on an individual can be profound, but in many cases are relatively easy to accommodate without altering the essential demands of a given class.

The following procedure is designed to ensure accurate and consistent allocation of accommodations. Instructors should be familiar with the process.

PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING AND IMPLEMENTING ACCOMMODATIONS

1. The student self identifies to the Learning Specialist. This can occur prior to placement testing or at any point during the semester.
2. The student provides documentation of the disability. Documentation must be current, and completed by a professional with the appropriate credentials to make the determination. Documentation should also provide guidelines for appropriate accommodations.
3. The student meets with the Learning Specialist to review the documentation, discuss areas of difficulty that may be related to the disability and to develop their access plan. This plan may include a description of the disability, recommendations for supports that the student should consider taking advantage of and a list of the accommodations the student is entitled to under the law.
4. The Learning Specialist generates copies of this memo, and signs them with the student. **The student must request this notification memo each semester.**
5. **The student takes the memo to the instructors in whose classes he/she would like to utilize their accommodations. The instructor and the student will discuss the accommodations and together determine the best application in a specific course.** The instructor and the student will coordinate as needed with the Learning Specialist.

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Announce to your classes the school's intention to provide assistance to students with disabilities.** This can be done with a statement included on your syllabus as well as through a verbal announcement. Frequently students are reluctant to access services because they have been shy about coming into my office, because they are not clear about what is available to them, or because they are concerned that they will somehow appear to be different. Done well, an announcement of this nature can help to normalize this process into another necessary piece of administrative detail, on a par with assignment dates and absence policies.
2. **Refer students to the Learning Specialist if they disclose a disability or request accommodations to you without providing a memo from the Learning Specialist's office.** While instructors are certainly free to provide students with whatever academic adjustments, such as extended time, that they wish, it is important to be clear that these adjustments are part of classroom policy and not related to the disability process. Accommodating a disability without documentation can be just as dicey legally as refusing to accommodate at all.
3. **Implement pre-determined, in-class accommodations as outlined in the student's memo, when it has been presented to you.** It is not necessary, for example, for a student to leave your class to receive extended time or a quiet space for a test. If this is difficult for you to provide, then of course you and/or the student may contact the Learning Specialist for assistance.
4. **Contact the Learning Specialist if there are questions about directions or implementation of accommodations.**

COMMONLY USED ACCOMMODATIONS

Many accommodations meet the needs of a wide range of students, and thus frequently appear in Accommodation Memos. The following chart lists some of these commonly accessed supports, along with a brief description of the accommodation and the sorts of issues it may be intended to address.

| ACCOMMODATION | DESCRIPTION |
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| Extended Time for Testing | Extended time for testing is designed to reduce the impact of a disability by allowing additional time for symbol recognition and decoding by students with disabilities that impact their reading, cognitive processing for slower processors or to reduce the situational stress of a testing event. Extended testing time can be provided in class or in an alternate location. If an alternate location is desired then arrangements may be made with the Learning Specialist. |
| Distraction Reduced Testing Environment | Distraction reduced testing is designed to reduce the impact of a disability by reducing extraneous stimuli that might compete with a student's ability to focus on the the test or trigger a stress related reaction. Testing is offered in an environment with reduced noise, light and activity. Depending on what individuals find distracting earplugs may be an appropriate intermediate step. |
| Readers/Scribes/Assistive Technology for Tests | These accommodations are helpful in reducing the impact of a disability by providing alternative forms of information assimilation and expression. Readers, whether human or computer generated augment the symbol recognition and decoding skills of students with visual impairments or cognitive processing disabilities. When used during a test, readers and scribes are not allowed to interpret, add to or subtract from the material being tested. They read or write verbatim what is presented to them. |

COMMONLY USED ACCOMMODATIONS Continued.

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| Spelling or Word Processing devices for in class written work | Spelling support reduces the impact of a disability by allowing a student to produce correctly spelled responses when they might not otherwise be able to do so. For longer responses, word processing is helpful. Alphasmarts (portable word processors) and Franklin Language Masters (portable electronic dictionaries which will also read aloud) are available for loan to students from the Judd Support Center. |
| Notetaking Support | Many disabilities make notetaking a challenging task at best and nearly impossible at times. Note takers, copies of notes and the option of photographing notes from the board reduce the impact of the disabilities by reducing or eliminating latency in short term memory, decreasing the physical fatigue of extended writing, or as augmentation of student's notes when issues of distractibility are interfering. Note takers are volunteers, and instructors are asked to assist students in identifying classmates to help them in this area. The copier in the Judd Support Center is available for making copies of notes, and NCR paper is also available for student use. |
| Tape Recording of Lectures | Taping of lectures supports students by providing a mechanism to review verbally presented material when short term memory, cognitive processing or visual impairments exist. Recorded lectures also provide a way for students to review the accuracy of their notes and to supplement any material they might have missed. |
| Materials in Alternative Format | Copied materials or materials in alternate text format (enlarged, Brailled or electronic) supports students by providing access to written material for students with visual physical or cognitive processing issues. Overheads, Powerpoint slides, and limited access classroom materials are especially challenging for many students. The Learning Specialist and the Writing Center can assist with copying, enlarging, scanning and brailleing. |

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE CLASSROOM

People with hidden disabilities (Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder, Emotional Disabilities etc.) generally have problems processing information. There are three major components to the processing loop: input, integration and output. You will notice from the chart that there will be a certain amount of overlap in the sorts of limitations on classroom performance. This is an absolutely normal characteristic.

- ❖ Difficulty with INPUT means that information is not taken in correctly (visually, auditorily or kinesthetically). With input difficulties information is received improperly in the brain.
- ❖ An INTEGRATION difficulty means the information is taken into the brain properly but once in, it is scrambled in some way and not decoded properly.
- ❖ Difficulty with OUTPUT means that a person understands and integrates information properly but has difficulty expressing it in an understandable way.

| <u>PROCESSING POINT</u> | <u>POSSIBLE FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS/CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS</u> |
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| <p><u>INPUT DISORDERS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Term Memory • Attention Issues • Processing Speed • Auditory Processing • Long Term Memory Disorder • Spatial Organizational Deficits • Visual Processing Deficits • Visual Memory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Difficulty maintaining focus in lectures- distracted by sounds ○ Difficulty recalling isolated information such as names or phones numbers ○ Difficulty with multi step directions ○ Slow reading rate ○ Difficulty interpreting charts and graphs and visual aids ○ Weak reading comprehension ○ What is heard is not necessarily what was said ○ Difficulty recalling rote facts ○ Inconsistent recall of newly learned information ○ Difficulty with taking tests ○ Inability to “see” things in the right order ○ Difficulty/inability to attend to small differences between some letters and numbers or some colors shapes and patterns |

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| <p><u>INTEGRATION DISORDERS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstract Reasoning • Constructional Dyspraxia • Language Comprehension • Long Term Retrieval Deficit • Reasoning Deficit • Visual Processing • Dyscalculia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Difficulty making inferences and transferring knowledge into novel situations ○ Difficulty understanding relationships ○ Difficulty with Algebra ○ Difficulty telling a joke or a story in the proper sequence ○ Difficulty working math problems in the proper order ○ Difficulty constructing papers in the proper order ○ Difficulty with mathematical reasoning and math concepts ○ Inability to read and comprehend math word problems ○ Difficulty with time and money ○ Difficulty with vocabulary ○ Difficulty/inability to answer factual questions (as opposed to rote questions) ○ Difficulty comprehending lectures and using previous learning ○ Difficulty recalling information through association (related ideas, concepts, events and names) ○ Difficulty recalling information for tests |
| <p><u>OUT PUT DISORDERS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dysgraphia • Long Term Retrieval Deficit • Processing Speed • Motor Impairments • Short Term Retrieval Deficit • Spatial Organization Deficits • Visual Motor Processing Delays | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Difficulty sequencing letters, numbers, words, sentences, paragraphs, steps, etc. ○ Poor spelling ○ Difficulty sequencing steps in a problem ○ Difficulty telling a joke of a story in the proper order ○ Difficulty constructing papers/lab reports in the proper sequence ○ Difficulty breaking a task down into the proper steps. ○ Poor handwriting ○ Awkward pencil grip ○ Will almost always print ○ Tires easily when writing ○ Difficulty answering factual questions |

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| OUTPUT DISORDERS cont. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Difficulty completing assignments within imposed time limits○ Difficulty with timed tests○ Difficulty making rapid comparisons between and among bits of information○ Difficulty taking notes○ Problems perceiving the dimensions of space○ Difficulty “seeing” thing in the right order○ Trouble distinguishing up/down, left/right, north/south○ Trouble aligning mathematical work○ Difficulty noticing small differences between letters or numbers, shapes and patterns○ Difficulty finding a specific bit of information on a page or computer screen if too visually dense○ Difficulty staying in the boundaries of a line or page when writing○ Frequently bumps into things |
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