

Center for Educational Access

Faculty Guide to Supporting Students With Disabilities

UB Faculty members are integral partners of the team that works to support University of Baltimore students with disabilities – a team that includes the student, you, and the Center for Educational Access (CEA).

The CEA works with students with disabilities to help them succeed on the same level as other students at the University of Baltimore. We also lead the University in fulfilling the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Our office provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students in order to make their education accessible.

Not everyone with disabilities qualifies for accommodations, however. Only students with disabilities who provide qualified documentation with a diagnosis and recommendations for accommodations are supported by the CEA.

Disabilities Law

Before Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, only visible disabilities were considered for accommodations. Currently, however, 75% of the students with disabilities registered with CEA offices are diagnosed with invisible disabilities.

Accommodations

An accommodation levels the “playing field” for the student with disabilities in order for him or her to participate in class on an equal ground as other students. The laws require that the accommodations be reasonable and appropriate, meaning that the student is expected to fulfill the academic requirements of the course and that you are not required to alter these requirements.

As the instructor, you are responsible for providing classroom based accommodations. At the beginning of each semester, the student is required to sign and bring to you an Accommodation Letter from the CEA. This letter includes a list of the accommodations that the student is eligible to receive. The student, a CEA staff member, and the faculty member must sign the form. A copy is provided to the student and faculty and one is retained in the student’s folder in the CEA.

Working with Students with Disabilities

The primary focus when we work with students with disabilities is to help them reach their educational goals. We also work to educate the faculty and staff at the University about disabilities and accommodations so that you can work confidently with students with disabilities.

Students are encouraged to be proactive, work with their advisors and instructors, and give the CEA staff their schedules so that we can arrange accommodations with each faculty members in a timely manner.

You cannot question students regarding their disability and must respect their right for confidentiality. However, you can ask how it impacts them in the classroom and during the learning process. They do

NOT have to disclose their disability to anyone at the University, including the CEA office. However, accommodations cannot be provided unless the student discloses his or her disability to our office.

The student may appreciate a private meeting with you to discuss how best to work together, and someone from the CEA may be included if necessary. At any time you have questions or need clarification, please contact the CEA and speak with Karyn Schulz, Director.

You, as an instructor, can make the classroom more accepting for all students by considering implementation of the following recommendations:

- Make students feel comfortable about approaching you by stating in the syllabus: “Any student who requires an accommodation for a disability should contact the Center for Educational Access Center.” This statement can be found on our webpage at: [Information for Faculty](#)
- Do not discuss the disability in front of others; all student information is confidential.
- Encourage students to use campus support services such as the CEA and other academic services.
- Provide a course syllabus before registration, if possible.
- If possible, select a textbook with an accompanying study guide for optional student use.
- Recite complete bibliographic information on reading assignments for students who tape record lectures, or provide this information to the CEA in advance to be recorded for the student.
- Clearly explain grading procedures.
- Begin each lecture with an outline of material to be covered.
- Present new or technical vocabulary on the whiteboard or use a handout.
- Give assignments orally and in written form to minimize confusion.
- Conclude each class by briefly summarizing key points.
- If necessary, allow students with learning disabilities to demonstrate mastery of course material by using alternative testing methods (e.g. oral exams).
- Permit use of simple calculators, scratch paper, spellers, and dictionaries during exams.

Testing Accommodations

CEA provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations for classroom exams. These can include extended time, a low distraction environment and the use of a laptop or other assistive technology, as stated in the documentation provided by the student.

If a student needs alternative testing accommodations, the student is required to contact their professor to begin the arrangements for the testing accommodations. The student is also required to contact the Center for Educational Access in advance to make the arrangements for the accommodations in the CEA. The instructor is required to complete the Supervised Testing Agreement for Proctored Testing Form, which is available [online through the CEA website](#) as well as by hardcopy in our office. This form acknowledges the accommodations and provides the CEA with important information about what is allowed and/or not allowed during the test for all students in the class. It is imperative that the form is completed and delivered with the test to the CEA. All tests received in advance are locked in a safe for security.

Notetaking as an Accommodation

Notetaking is a reasonable and appropriate accommodation for many students with disabilities. A student's eligibility for a notetaker is based on the documentation provided by the student when he or she registers with the CEA, a thorough review of the documentation and a detailed intake between a CEA staff member and the student.

The notetaker is recruited in different ways. The CEA will recruit notetakers who receive positive evaluations from previous and current students who receive their notes; an email is sent to the classes that the student using a notetaker is registered for asking for volunteers; and CEA contacts faculty members to help in the recruitment process if a volunteer is not determined when classes begin. The CEA student can also help recruit a notetaker if they observe a student in class who appears to be a motivated, attentive student. CEA also accepts referrals from faculty for potential notetakers. Notetakers receive a stipend for taking the notes for the semester.

Extensions for Assignments as an Accommodation

Students with disabilities may request, as an accommodation, an extension for an assignment. This is not a common accommodation and should be requested only when it can be documented that the disability has caused the student to not be able to complete the assignment on time. Medical disabilities can require sudden hospitalization, for example, and the student may not be able to access their work. We encourage the student to contact our office immediately as well as their instructor to discuss the possible need for an extension. Documentation must be provided by the student stating that they were hospitalized due to their disability or another illness that prevented him or her from attending classes.

Attendance as an Accommodation

Students with disabilities, particularly medically-related ones, may miss classes more often than their non-disabled peers. While the university does not have a standard attendance policy, many faculty members include their own policy on their syllabus. We encourage all of our students to discuss the attendance policy with their instructor early in the semester. We do not condone absences as a policy and will not support a student's request for an extension or an incomplete if their absences have not been disability related. We ask that the student inform their professors of an absence as soon as possible and include our office in that communication.

Working with Students with Disabilities

It is important to know that if a student with disabilities has difficulties with an instructor – such as refusal to grant accommodations, discrimination, or any behavior that degrades or makes a class more difficult for a student – the student is to report this to the Karyn Schulz, Director of the CEA (extension 4141 or kschulz@ubalt.edu). It is important to remember that the University is bound by federal law to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Disability Language Etiquette

Language reflects a person's beliefs. Often, what is said about a person with disabilities can be negative and reinforce stereotypes that are unfair and untrue.

Please do not say:	Instead, say:
• Handicapped	Person with a disability
• Dumb	Person unable to speak
• Afflicted	Person who has MS, polio, etc
• Spastic	Person with seizures, spasms
• Wheelchair bound	Person who uses a wheelchair
• Retarded	Developmentally delayed
• Crazy	Person with a psychological illness
• Crippled	Person with a physical illness, in a wheelchair, etc.

Hard of Hearing (HOH) and Deaf Students

You may have a Deaf or HOH student in your class at some point in your teaching career. We often are questioned as to how to talk to Deafs if one doesn't know sign language.

What to do:

- Talk normally and clearly.
- Look directly at the Deaf person, maintaining eye contact.
- Do not tell the interpreter to “tell Suzy that...” Instead, get used to the Deaf person looking at the interpreter instead of you while you look at the Deaf person.
- Gestures, facial expressions, and body language help clarification.
- Be patient. Lip-reading is difficult with only 50% to 80% comprehension at the most.
- Never hesitate to write to the person instead of trying to communicate in voice. Deafs appreciate it and are not offended.
- Always use courtesy, common sense, and respect.

What NOT to do:

- Do not shout. The person cannot hear you anyway, and you will distort a hearing aid.
- Do not exaggerate your mouth movements or mumble.
- Do not look down or away, talk too fast or too slow.
- Do not hide your mouth with your hands, hair, or other items. Moustaches can present a problem at times.
- Do not use slang, idioms, or puns. In Deaf culture, there are different signs for English words that sound the same—puns. The same for slang and idioms.
- Never assume that Deaf students are “dumb” because they cannot speak or because they make unclear sounds when they sign and/or speak. It is difficult to learn voice sounds when you cannot hear them.

Handouts, and other visual aids such as Power Point, white boards, films (preferably with closed captioning), and charts are of great help to all students. Pause for a moment when pointing at any visual materials. This allows the Deaf student to take his or her eyes off the interpreter, look at the material, then return to the interpreter without losing the explanation from you, the instructor. If ou

It is helpful in group discussions to have the other participants raise their hands when speaking to enable

the Deaf student to shift focus from one speaker to another. In addition, be sure that only one person speaks at a time.

Please let the student and interpreter know in advance, if possible, when you plan to use visual aids or films in darkened rooms. The interpreter may need to arrange special lighting.

Visually Impaired Students

At some point, you will have a blind student. This list of do's and don'ts will help faculty members feel more comfortable and find that there is no difference between you both, except for the lack of vision.

- Do not hesitate to ask if he/she would like assistance if in unfamiliar surroundings.
- If your offer is accepted, allow the blind person to take your arm. This will allow the blind student to sense your body movements and judge the proper direction to move.
- When showing a blind person to a chair, simply place his or her hand on the back of the chair. He will be able to sit down without your assistance.
- When you enter a room where a blind person is present, identify yourself so that the person knows you are there. Also, say when you are about to leave so that the blind person does not attempt to speak to you after you have left.
- Do not expect the blind person to guess who you are. Identify yourself and others who are speaking.
- Never hesitate to be of assistance to locate items on a table that she or he may need. Also, feel free to read from a handout, a visual aid, a white board, or other materials that others can see. This will put the blind person at ease and let him/her know that if he/she does require assistance, he or she can freely request it.
- Finally, Do not hesitate to use normal language, including words such as see, saw, look, watch, etc. These are everyday expressions and will not be interpreted literally by the blind person.

Students with Mobility-Based Disabilities

Several disabilities, from cerebral palsy to physical trauma from an accident, may require that a student use a wheelchair. Regardless of the reason, a person who has difficulty with mobility may need assistance.

At the University of Baltimore, classes with students with mobility disabilities will be made accessible either with the current furniture or the addition of accessible desks. Also, it is federally required that doorways, hallways, and other areas have access that allows the minimum width of 36 inches. With that in mind, consider the layout of the desks or other furniture in your classroom or office. Is it easily maneuvered by a wheelchair? If a classroom or office is inaccessible, it will be necessary to find a location that is more accessible place. Often, one accommodation for mobility students is a reserved desk or area nearest to the door so that the student can reach it more easily. The CEA office works with the Registrar's Office to insure that all classrooms are fully accessible.

Some students may have difficulty getting to or from class, performing in class, and managing out-of-class assignments and tests. In addition, students may fatigue easily and occasional lateness to class may be unavoidable, especially with the time constraints imposed by class schedules. Transportation problems, inclement weather, wheelchair or an elevator breakdown may also cause tardiness or absence. It will help the student for you to work out a plan with him/her to make up any classroom coursework.

When you are having a conversation with a person in a wheelchair, you should sit or otherwise get to an eye-level position to talk. It is uncomfortable to continually look upwards to someone talking down to the person in the chair, and suggests an attitude of condescension.

When walking with a person in a chair, walk more slowly. Also, for people in a wheelchair, do not lean on their chair for any reason. It is considered a part of the person and therefore, you are essentially leaning on them.

Students with Seizures

If you have never witnessed someone having an epileptic seizure, it can be very unnerving and uncomfortable. Epilepsy is an umbrella term covering more than 20 different types of seizure disorders. Some individuals experience less intense seizures, and many individuals experience seizures quite infrequently. Seizures are the result of imbalances in the electrical activity of the brain and can be caused by brain injuries, high fevers during childhood, and brain tumors occurring at any age. The appearance of a seizure can range from a brief stare or period of confusion to uncontrolled muscle spasms and movements to a sudden fall.

There are several types of seizures. These can range from something called Absence Seizures to General Tonic Clonic (formerly known as Grand Mal). For more information, please visit the [Epilepsy Foundation website](#). Students registered with the CEA who have a seizure disorder will provide a Seizure Action Plan that will outline the steps needed to be taken when the student experiences a seizure on campus. Depending on the type of seizure and the student's input, the Plan will include who to contact, if necessary.

General Contact Information

Faculty members and the staff of the Center for Educational Access Office are essential to the success of students with disabilities in their education. Any time that you have a question, comment, concern, or any feedback, never hesitate to contact us. We are not only here for the welfare of students, but also for your support and education as well.

The CEA office hours are Monday through Thursday, 9:00am-7:00pm, and from 9:00am-4:30pm on Friday. Our office is located at Academic Center, room 139.

Thank you for your appreciation, accessibility, and accommodation of our students!

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