Legal Issues

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and its 2008 Amendments prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities. According to federal law, no otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of a public entity.

"Qualified" with respect to postsecondary educational services, means "a person who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the education program or activity, with or without reasonable modifications to rules, policies or practices; the removal of architectural, communication or transportation barriers; or the provision of auxiliary aids and services."

"Person with a disability" means "any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities [including walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working], (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment."

Disabilities covered by this legislation include (but are not limited to) AIDS, cancer, cerebral palsy, diabetes, epilepsy, head injuries, deafness or other hearing-related disabilities, specific learning disabilities, loss of limbs, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, psychiatric disorders, speech-related disabilities, spinal cord injuries, blindness, and low vision.

Accommodations

The student with a disability is the best source of information regarding necessary accommodations. In postsecondary settings, it is the student's responsibility to request disability-related accommodations from a campus office that informs instructors of the approved accommodations for that student. Most campuses have a statement that a faculty member can include on their syllabus to inform students of the services of this office. Faculty can also include a statement that invites any student to discuss their academic needs with them. If a student requests some form of accommodation or alteration due to disability directly from a faculty member, the faculty member is best advised to refer the student to the campus disability office.

Universal Design

An instructor can proactively apply universal design (UD) principles to their course to make it more accessible to students with disabilities and thus minimize the need for accommodations. UD can be applied to the overall design of instruction as well as to specific instructional materials and strategies to improve access for everyone. UD is defined as "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design" (*projects.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_ud/udprinciplestext.htm*).

Examples of UD include captions on video presentations that benefit students who are deaf, hard of hearing, those whose first language is not English, people with some types of learning disabilities, and many others. Examples of how UD can be applied to improve class climate; physical access, usability, and safety; delivery methods; information resources; interaction; feedback; and assessment can be found in Equal Access: Universal Design of Instruction at *uw.edu/doit/equal-access-universal-design-instruction*. More information about how UD can be applied to instruction, technology, services, physical spaces, and other aspects of higher education can be found at *The Center for Universal Design in Education* at *uw.edu/doit/CUDE*.

Examples of Access Solutions

Some common examples of access solutions or accommodations are provided below; however, it's important to be aware that campus disability offices consider a student's individual situation. For that reason, the campus disability office may conclude that a less common approach may be necessary.

Disability	Solutions
Low Vision	• Seating near front of the class • Large print handouts, lab signs, and equipment labels • Monitor connected to microscope to enlarge images • Class assignments made available in an accessible electronic format • Screen magnification software
Blindness	• Course materials in braille or an accessible electronic format • Verbal descriptions of visual aids, charts, graphs, and other images • Raised-line drawings and tactile models of graphic materials • Braille equipment labels, auditory lab warning signals • Adaptive lab equipment (e.g., talking thermometers, calculators, light probes, and tactile timers) • Computer with optical character recognition, screen reader, braille embosser, and braille printer
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	• Sign language interpreter, real-time captioning, and/or FM system • Notetaker • Visual aids • Written assignments, lab instructions, summaries, notes • Use of email for class and private discussions • Visual warning system for lab emergencies
Learning Disability, Attention Deficits, and Autism	• Notetaker and/or recorded class sessions • Captioned films • Extra exam time, alternative testing arrangements • Visual, aural, and tactile instructional demonstrations • Computer with text-to-speech software and spell and grammar checkers
Mobility-Related Disability	• Notetaker, lab assistant, group lab assignments • Classrooms, labs, and field trips in accessible locations • Adjustable tables, lab equipment located within reach • Lengthened pull-chains on safety showers • Class assignments made available in electronic format • Computer equipped with special input device (e.g., voice input, alternative keyboard)
Health- and Mental Health-Related Disability	• Notetakers • Flexible attendance requirements • Extra exam time • Assignments made available in electronic format

Teaching Tips

Below you will find examples of teaching techniques in the classroom, laboratory, examinations, and fieldwork that benefit all students, but are especially useful for students who have disabilities.

Classroom

- Select course materials early so that students and the campus disabled student services office staff have enough time to translate them to an accessible format (see uw.edu/accessibility).
- Make syllabi, short assignment sheets, and reading lists available in electronic format.
- Design course web pages to be accessible to students with disabilities. For further information, refer to uw.edu/accessibility.
- Face the class when speaking. Repeat discussion questions.
- Write key phrases and lecture outlines on the blackboard or overhead projector.

Laboratory

- Take the student on a tour of the lab they will be working in. Discuss safety concerns.
- Assign group lab projects in which all students contribute according to their abilities.
- Arrange lab equipment so that it is accessible to and visible by everyone.
- Give oral and written lab instructions.

Examination and Fieldwork

- Ensure that exams test the essential skills or knowledge indicated by the objectives for the class.
- Some students will require extra time to transcribe or process test questions. Follow campus policies regarding extra time on examinations.
- Attempt to include students in fieldwork opportunities, rather than automatically suggesting non-fieldwork alternatives. Ask students how they might be able to engage in specific aspects of fieldwork.

Videos

The videos, *Working Together: Faculty and Students with Disabilities*, *Building the Team: Faculty, Staff, and Students Working Together*, and *Equal Access: Universal Design of Instruction* may be freely viewed online at *uw.edu/doit/videos/index.php*.

About DO-IT

DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) serves to increase the successful participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs. Primary funding for DO-IT is provided by the National Science Foundation, the State of Washington, and the U.S. Department of Education.

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Disability Resources

[Make your own modifications or contact DO-IT at doit@uw.edu to have this brochure personalized with your campus resources.]

Working Together:

Faculty and Students with Disabilities

Disabilities
Opportunities
Internetworking
Technology