

Policy for Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Office of the Dean of Students
The College of William and Mary

It is the policy of the College of William and Mary to provide students who have disabilities with reasonable educational accommodation based upon relevant law, the College's educational standards, and sound ethical practice in disability services.

Persons eligible for accommodation under this policy include undergraduate and graduate students seeking degrees at the College of William and Mary, whether enrolled full time or part time, and unclassified students during the period of their enrollment at the College. Only students who identify themselves as having a disability and seek accommodation using the procedures described in this policy are eligible.

The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a "person with a disability" as anyone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. In addition to those with visible disabilities such as persons who are blind, deaf, or use a wheelchair, the definition includes people with a wide range of hidden disabilities. These include psychological problems, specific learning disabilities, and chronic health impairments such as epilepsy, diabetes, arthritis, cancer, cardiac problems, HIV/AIDS. A person is considered disabled if s/he has a record of disability or is regarded as having a disability. For the purpose of this policy, "disability" or "disabling condition" is also defined as the relational result of not having a fair environment or "level playing field" because an impairment is not counterbalanced by appropriate resources (such as tools, supplies, attitudes, rules, opportunities).

Educational accommodations are defined as any reasonable adjustment required for a student to participate fully in the College community, inside or outside the classroom. Decisions about what constitutes reasonable accommodation for an individual student are made by the Assistant Dean of Students for Disability Services, using information provided by the student and occasional consultation with faculty and/or other College officials. Accommodations are considered on a case by case and a class by class basis and decisions made by the Assistant Dean may be appealed to the Dean of Students. Accommodations not provided by the College of William and Mary include personal aids/devices and specialized transportation.

Accommodations are made during academic sessions and semesters when an individual student is enrolled at the College of William and Mary or Virginia Institute of Marine Science campuses. Students engaged in academic work off site (such as internships for course credit and study away) are not generally eligible for accommodation by the College of William and Mary. (The ability to accommodate a student with a disability should be a precondition for any business, agency, or organization that wants to participate in an internship or externship agreement with the College.) In the case of academic course work taken at another institution of higher learning, the Assistant Dean

of Students for Disability Services will serve as consultant and information source for students arranging accommodations at these locations.

Documentation of Disability

Students who may wish to document a disability include

- those entering the College for the first time or returning after a period of non-enrollment, who have a known disability;
- those experiencing educational difficulty who are referred by a faculty member or College official for consultation regarding the possibility of disability;
- and those whose health and/or physical abilities are altered during their educational tenure resulting in disability (permanent or temporary).

The student assumes full responsibility for providing all diagnostic information to sufficiently support the existence of disability and/or the need for reasonable accommodation. Further, the student will be expected to sign a Release of Information agreement before accommodation requests are shared with faculty or other appropriate College officials by the Assistant Dean of Students for Disability Services. Disability Services can offer outside referrals for diagnostic services not provided by the College. All costs associated with diagnostic study incurred off campus, however, are borne by the student.

Information regarding a student's disability which is submitted by a professional outside the College of William and Mary must be in writing and should be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students, Disability Services. Reports must be provided by a qualified professional, most often a physician, educational diagnostician, learning disability specialist, or mental health professional who is not a blood relative. When tests or measurements have been instrumental in the diagnosis of disability, a written report thoroughly describing testing procedures followed, instruments used, and test results/interpretation is expected. (See www.wm.edu/deanofstudents/disable/document.php for specifications.) Except for documentation of permanent physical and sensory disabilities, the information provided should be based on diagnostic work no older than three calendar years from the date of the student's initial consultation with Disability Services staff. In most cases, previous evaluations meeting the conditions described in this paragraph are accepted by the College; however, the College reserves the right to require further diagnostic study and/or a second opinion when the Assistant Dean of Students for Disability Services deems it necessary.

The Assistant Dean of Students for Disability Services is responsible for deciding whether a disability has been adequately documented. The Assistant Dean will identify a list of potential accommodations in accordance with the manifestations of the disability, a copy of which will be shared with the student. Following review and approval at the start

of each semester of enrollment, the Assistant Dean will prepare individual letters for each professor summarizing the accommodation request(s) in his/her course. Whenever possible, these letters will be hand delivered by the student seeking assistance.

When possible, students entering the College for the first time should submit information related to disability at least six weeks prior to enrollment so that reasonable accommodation can be arranged and delivered in a timely fashion.

Confidential Handling of Disability Records

All information submitted to or developed by the College related to the diagnosis, documentation, or accommodation of a disability is considered confidential and will not become part of any other student record at William and Mary. Staff of the Dean of Students Office have access to all disability records and may arrange access for other authorized College officials in the event of an emergency or other unusual necessity. Disability information may be released in confidence to faculty members or other members of the community who have an educational need to know, but only with the express written consent of the student. The Affirmative Action Officer may collect accommodation data at the end of each semester for statistical purposes only.

All documents supporting a disability on file in the Disability Services Office will be retained for ten years following graduation or some other definitive departure date, and then destroyed. Diagnostic information obtained during a student's tenure at William and Mary that is inconclusive of disability will be retained for one year from last date of service or contact, and then destroyed.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Having provided sufficient evidence of a handicapping condition, a student may make official requests for accommodation through the Disability Services Office. Faculty and other College officials will then be expected to provide reasonable accommodation(s) in accordance with official written accommodation statements issued by the Disability Services Office. Faculty and/or other College officials who do not provide reasonable accommodation do so with the understanding that they are in direct violation of College policy. If a professor or other College official does not agree to an accommodation request, the student should seek intervention through Disability Services. Because the reasonableness of any individual accommodation request can vary substantially depending upon a student's current course load, schedule, or course content, accommodation requests must be reviewed by the Assistant Dean of Students for Disability Services each semester or summer session of enrollment.

In addition to academic accommodation, the Assistant Dean coordinates the efforts of College departments such as Facilities Management, Parking Services, Residence Life, Office of the Registrar, and Student Activities to address special access and service issues related to a student's educational experience. The Assistant Dean also serves as

consultant, working with individual faculty members and academic departments to identify and arrange needed accommodations for individual students.

Disability and the Foreign Language Requirement

Students with conditions which adversely affect the learning of foreign language may request reasonable accommodation within the structure of required foreign language courses. If accommodation proves unworkable, however, students may petition the Committee on Degrees for authorization to substitute select courses for foreign language courses. They should petition as soon as possible, but no later than the pre-registration period of the first semester of their senior year. The substitute courses are approved by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies in consultation with the Chair of the Modern Languages and Literatures Department or his/her designee. All students seeking modification of this degree requirement must successfully complete one pre-authorized substitute course for every semester of required foreign language not taken.

To ensure that modification is considered only when truly needed, students must provide documentation of disability meeting specific criteria. The form is available on the web site at www.wm.edu/deanofstudents/disable/document.php. Students experiencing exceptional difficulty with foreign language course should also consider approaching any current foreign language instructor to discuss concerns.

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