

Top-Ten Accommodation FAQs for Instructors

[The Center for Students with Disabilities](#) (CSD) oversees accommodations for students who qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Accommodations are academic adjustments, modifications and/or auxiliary aids and services applied to elements of a student's postsecondary program to help compensate for the student's impairment(s) and provide equal access for students with disabilities. If a student is granted an accommodation by the CSD, instructors are *legally obligated* to provide it. Instructors do have the right to respond to CSD to discuss the accommodation(s) if they believe they are not feasible or will fundamentally alter the class pedagogy or learning objectives.

If you have questions about meeting a student's accommodations, call the Disability service Professional (DSP) named on the accommodation letter at 860-486-2020
The CSD also offers daily [drop-in](#) opportunities, both in person and on WebEx.

- 1) *Why can't I receive all student accommodation letters prior to the start of the semester?*

CSD strongly *encourages* students to arrange accommodations before classes begin, especially if the accommodation(s) require additional preparation on the part of the instructor. However, UConn is legally required to consider *any* ADA accommodation request received, even after classes have started, even beyond mid-semester. This may be frustrating to instructors. However, students' health status can change across an academic semester with regards to diagnosis, medications, or other conditions. This may trigger altered or new accommodations. *Whenever* a student's learning barriers lead them to contact CSD, they engage in an interactive process with a counsellor to determine what accommodations are needed. After determination, instructors are formally notified. This occurs separately for each class, and accommodations may differ across classes for the same student. For all of these reasons, and despite CSD efforts to provide timely notification, **it is not possible to deliver a complete list to instructors before a semester begins, or even on the first day of class.**

- 2) *Why are students now being given accommodations for remote attendance when instructors were never required to provide it before? In fact, we were told during post-COVID in-person re-opening that we did not have to teach in more than one more modality. The provision of remote attendance accommodation seems to violate that.*

Decisions are made by CSD on the basis of current civil rights law and opinions coming from the Office of Civil Rights. The courts have been very clear that since Universities demonstrated the ability to teach remotely during COVID, we cannot now say it is an unviable accommodation for disabled students where needed.

However, the expectation is not that faculty teach fully in *both* in-person and online modalities. Faculty also are not expected to provide the same experience for remote students in classes with “In-Person” components. Instructors providing remote accommodation *just need to provide access*. This may mean recording the lecture and having the student listen at a later time; using the technology in the classroom to live stream, etc. There is no expectation that a student granted remote access as an accommodation will have the same experience as an in-person student. Note that if your classroom is not “Hi-Tech” to support live streaming, CETL can assist. They are also able to switch classroom assignments.

- 3) *I think the requested accommodation is not appropriate for my class, and that granting the accommodation will alter the fundamental objectives of my class. What should I do?*

For some classes -- such as those with labs/studios -- accommodations such as remote attendance or alternative assignments may not be appropriate. If an instructor feels the accommodations indicated by CSD will *fundamentally alter class pedagogy, assessment validity, or expectations/requirements*, they should contact CSD to discuss other options or modifications. For instance, a public speaking class which measures a student’s ability to speak in front of the class and respond in-the-moment would probably not be appropriate to an accommodation of “alternate assignments in lieu of class participation.”

A tip: Having specific competencies and objectives for a class clearly identified *in the Syllabus* is helpful. If faculty clearly state their course objectives and link them to class assessments, this can help navigate (and dispute, as necessary) specific accommodations that may or may not be appropriate.

Faculty concerned about whether specific academic accommodations constitute a “fundamental alteration” to their course should refer to the [“Procedure for Raising Concerns Regarding Academic Accommodations”](#) on the CSD website. It’s very important to raise any such concerns *immediately* after receipt of CSD correspondence, and not to delay getting in touch with staff to discuss.

- 4) *Will creating alternate assignments for students with accommodations, including remote learners, prevent them from having the same educational experience as other students?*

The nature of accommodations recognizes that students will not have the exact experience of their peers. To bridge this gap as best as possible, faculty should ensure that all students have access to all necessary materials and resources. Furthermore, faculty should only change what is required by the student’s accommodation (e.g., instructors do not need to prepare new/separate lecture materials when accommodating remote attendance, just record or stream the regular lecture). For additional support, instructors can reach out to staff in e-

campus, CETL, or CSD.

5) *How should I talk to students about their accommodations? Can I know the reasons for their requests?*

Instructors should create a welcoming and accessible classroom culture and express this when discussing student accommodations. Instructors should also communicate that they are willing individually and privately to discuss accommodations and needs with affected students. However, such discussions should be handled with discretion. Avoid referring to a student's disability or accommodations in front of others (stigma related to disability is prevalent in our society!).

With regards to specific student medical history or diagnoses, this privileged information is typically *not* provided to Instructors. Moreover, Instructors should *not* request it – *especially* not from the student, where such a request holds power-dynamic. Nonetheless, some students *choose* to share such information with Instructors. If shared, such personal data should be regarded as *highly confidential*. Questions regarding student accommodations can be facilitated and answered by the CSD.

6) *I'm an adjunct or graduate assistant. What are some considerations particular to me? If I am a TA on a large lecture course, how will I find out about accommodations? Accommodation requirements, including dual modalities, are placing an additional responsibility on me for which I am not being compensated. Can this be remedied?*

CSD sends accommodation letters to instructors listed in Peoplesoft, including TAs. To ensure that a TA is able to receive the letter, accurate information appear in Peoplesoft. If a student requests a letter prior to the start of the semester and a TA is added, the database will automatically populate it for the TA that is assigned to the class. Federal civil rights law requires that accommodations be provided regardless of the status of the instructor. Adjuncts and graduate students are informed of this requirement in the compliance training they are required to take. Wherever possible, CSD works with ITS and CETL to make delivery of accommodation as simple as possible. Departmental resources may also aid TAs and adjunct faculty in this regard.

7) *What can I do to minimize the number of accommodations requested? Are there specific examples of faculty strategies to provide a more inclusive environment?*

To create an inclusive classroom, instructors might critically examine who they are privileging and who they are taxing with their instructional practice and course design. For example, some

students may struggle with presentation or test anxiety, but excel on writing assignments. In general, inclusive classrooms provide options for how students can access course information, represent their understanding, and physically and cognitively engage within the course. Instructors can get ideas for an inclusive curriculum by referring to the provided sources on the [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#). In addition, CETL hosts workshops routinely about inclusive and accessible teaching.

Strategies that faculty have used to create inclusive classrooms and thus reduce the need for accommodation include:

- a) Building some flexibility into the requirements, such as allowing students to drop the lowest grade;
- b) Restructuring in-class assessments so that all students can have 'extra time' (for instance, administering part of the exam in-class and part as take-home);
- c) Allowing students some flexibility in the weighting of their grades;
- d) Where possible, converting some time-based in-class assignments to take-home.

8) *Can students use their CSD accommodations to make up missed work/classes due to everyday situations like work-schedule conflicts, routine illness, or car trouble?*

Students with accommodations should follow established class policies to deal with any routine situations that fall *outside* their disability. So for example, if a student has an accommodation of Extended Deadlines due to a chronic or unpredictable condition that can unexpectedly interfere with work completion (some examples might be epilepsy, migraines, or Crohn's disease), this does *not* mean they can request a deadline extension because of a change in their work schedule, car trouble, or an everyday cold. (Of course, faculty are encouraged to provide flexible policies for *all* students to deal with everyday issues, but CSD accommodations should not be used to circumvent those policies or to receive special treatment). Likewise, students with Extended Time accommodations (typically provided for attentional, learning, reading or anxiety issues and applicable to timed assignments such as tests and quizzes) should not automatically receive additional time to complete long-term or take-home assignments. Any questions on distinctions between accommodated and routine academic disruptions should be brought to the CSD counsellor as listed in the student's accommodation letter for resolution.

9) *What are the students' responsibilities around taking exams at the CSD? What are mine?*

Students taking exams at the CSD must submit their requests through MyAccess *at least one week (or 7 days) in advance of the assessment date*. MyAccess can be reached from CSD's website homepage, www.csd.uconn.edu or directly at <https://csd.uconn.edu/myaccess>. It is a

student's responsibility to confirm an alternate time with their instructor when requesting to take an assessment on a different day/time than the class. CSD will proceed with scheduling student requests and instructors can then confirm or deny requests by scrolling to the bottom of an exam scheduling request in the Instructor MyAccess portal. Assessments must be uploaded to your MyAccess for Instructors portal *at least 24 hours (preferably 48 hours) in advance* of the testing date to allow the Accommodations Team time to prepare materials. Alternatively, assessments can be emailed to csdexams@uconn.edu or dropped off at the CSD office. Visit the 'Resources' tab in your Instructors MyAccess portal for additional information.

10) As the instructor of a graduate course, how do accommodations for my students work?

Graduate students can use the CSD and its supports throughout their coursework, exams, and dissertation preparation. If you are teaching a graduate course and a student has accommodations, you will receive documentation from the CSD and should supply the necessary supports for their classwork.

**If you have questions about meeting a student's accommodations, call the Disability service Professional (DSP) named on the accommodation letter. 860-486-2020
CSD wants to partner with you to support our students.**

Additional information:

The ADA defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. It also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are perceived by others as having a disability. The ADA also makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person based on that person's association with a person with a disability. Students with disabilities are the fastest growing minority population on college campuses. While research has suggested about 10-12% of a typical incoming University class in the US receive accommodation, UConn's numbers are closer to 16%.

Accommodations are provided based on a variety of evidence. Initially, students are expected to take the initiative to self-report. Self-reports may be further supplemented by previous documentation (such as medical notes, high school IEPs/504s, etc.). In some cases, a Disability Service Professional may meet with a student to further investigate. Because the process of securing diagnoses and accommodations can be influenced by social factors (e.g., economic status, race, ethnicity, clinical biases) some students may experience barriers even in accessing the CSD. Faculty should be aware of this and encourage students to connect with the CSD for guidance. More information on providing evidence of disability can be found on the [CSD website](#).

If a student is granted an accommodation by the CSD, instructors are *legally obligated* to provide it. In this way, accommodations required by the CSD differ from requests made by the

Dean of Students (DOS) for students struggling or facing setbacks. However, Instructors do have the right to respond to CSD to discuss the accommodation(s) if they believe they are not feasible or will fundamentally alter the class pedagogy or learning objectives. Instructors do *not* have the right to unilaterally refuse to provide an accommodation until such time as the CSD has responded to the concern with a revised letter. More information on student and faculty rights and responsibilities is available at the [CSD website](#).

[Academic accommodations](#) may include alternate assignments, attendance flexibility, deadline extensions, assistive technology, and captioning, among others. Students granted accommodations work with their CSD advisors to determine what accommodations may be needed for each course.