

Section 5. Accommodating Qualified Students with Disabilities

Some substantial information on various disabilities can be found in Appendix C, “Accommodation Suggestions for Students with Disabilities.” This section will be helpful to educators who want to better understand their students with disabilities. Appendix C contains information on the major categories of disabilities, including specific learning disabilities, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, vision, head injury, hearing, orthopedic, systemic disorders, Asperger Syndrome, rehabilitated substance abuse, emotional and other disabilities.

5.1 Substitutions

An accommodation is a change in the learning environment that may include services, academic accessibility through adjustments, and physical accessibility. (“Accommodation” does not include compromising the standards and requirements of the university.) However, on occasion substitutions may be called for. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will depend on documented evidence of need.

A. Substitutions for Physical Disabilities

Some physical disabilities may require accommodation or substitution of courses or assignments. For example, if a blind student cannot be adequately accommodated to complete microscope assignments in a lab, s/he may require a substitute lab assignment with manipulatives or a substitute lab course.

B. Substitutions for Language

Elon’s General Studies foreign language requirement is a course in language instruction at the 122 level or its equivalent. (See *Elon University Catalog*, “Foreign Language Requirement.”) Substitution of a language course would be inappropriate where it fundamentally alters a course of study for a degree. Some students with disabilities may use accommodation in foreign language study. If it later appears that a student with disabilities may require substitution, s/he may appeal to the Coordinator of Disabilities Services. Using the student’s disability documentation revealing a disability that substantially affects language learning and considering the student’s history with language courses, the Coordinator will meet with a sub-committee of the Disability Advisory Committee to determine if a substitution is in order.

Disabilities Services will write a letter recommending substitution to the Assistant Vice-President for Academic Affairs, who makes the final determination with the student.

C. Mathematics

Elon’s General Studies requirements include at least one mathematics course (See *Elon University Catalog*, “General Studies.”) and some majors require additional mathematics. If students with a math disability attempt a general studies mathematics

course with accommodation and cannot successfully complete the course, they may appeal to the Disabilities Services Coordinator, who will consult with the Assistant Vice-President of Academic Affairs or his/her appointee to arrange appropriate accommodation/substitution. However, specific math courses required within a major cannot be substituted as the substitution would significantly alter the nature of the program.

5.2 Alternative Testing

The primary alternative testing accommodations are extended time (not unlimited time), testing in a distraction-reduced environment, and/or use of word processing for tests-- if need for one or more of these is indicated by a student's documentation. A student who has given his/her professors accommodation notes from Disabilities Services first attempts to make these arrangements with the professor. If scheduling conflicts arise, the student makes arrangements with Disabilities Services. Timely notification is required. (See Appendix O for research by Arline Halper, Ed.D. for a discussion of extended time.)

If documentation indicates a need for other testing accommodations, requests for other alternatives may be considered. Consultation among the student, the professor, and Disabilities Services will determine the appropriate course. This discussion should begin early in the semester so that decisions can be made in a timely manner. Generally, however, alternative test formats are not considered reasonable. (Milani, 1966.) A university is not required to compromise academic standards, and the decision as to whether an alternative test format is a reasonable accommodation rests with the University.

5.3 Assistive Technology

Generally, the university should provide educational auxiliary aids for students with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills. When need is indicated, students with disabilities are permitted to use such technology as calculators, spell checkers, word processors, and other mechanical tools that might enhance their opportunity for participation in the academic environment. If a professor has compelling pedagogical arguments why such a support should be eliminated (calculator, for example), exceptions to this general practice may be made. Calculators may not be used during a placement test since the purpose of the test is to determine an appropriate level mathematics course.

Students must give Disabilities Services timely notification of technology needs to assure the availability of such equipment. Students who abuse University equipment will be charged a fee. (Note: The University does not provide equipment for personal use.)

5.4 Closed-Captioned Videos

Professors are strongly encouraged to purchase closed-captioned videos when new purchases are made. When closed-captioning is unavailable in existing videos, special arrangements will be made for students who need this accommodation to provide a copy of the script of the production, or arrange for the student to view the video with an interpreter, or to provide an alternative comparable assignment, if necessary.

5.5 Audio-Taped Lectures

When determined to be a reasonable accommodation for students with a disability, students are permitted to tape lectures. However, if requested by the professor, the student may be required to sign a taping agreement. If the class is primarily a discussion class, peer students may also request that an agreement be signed to protect their confidentiality. (See Appendix L)

5.6 Faculty Liaison

Students are encouraged to be self-advocates and are provided guidance when requested. Most faculty-student issues can be resolved between the two parties. In the event there is a communication problem or no resolution, Disabilities Services will act as liaison. If a faculty member is not providing an authorized accommodation, the student has the obligation to promptly inform Disabilities Services so that remedial action can be taken. In the event the issue remains unresolved, the student is encouraged to follow the grievance policy set forth in Section 3.8.

5.7 Final Exams

It is Elon University policy that no student is required to take more than two final exams per day. Please refer to the final Exam Policy in the University Catalog. Any exception to this policy for students with disabilities will be considered on an individual basis.

5.8 Interpreting Services

For students with disabilities for whom an interpreter has been determined to be a reasonable accommodation, interpreters will be selected on the basis of experience, level of RID certification, and college-level interpreting experience. If a particular subject area is new to the interpreter, she/he may request a textbook from Disability Services to assist the interpreter in becoming familiar with the discipline's vocabulary and developing new signage. It is important that the interpreter request the text early enough to allow timely delivery.

See Appendix H, “Student Responsibilities When Working with an Interpreter.”
See Appendix I, “Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf”
See Appendix J, “Interpreter Responsibilities”

5.9 Note-Taking Assistance

As with other accommodation, it is the student’s responsibility to request a note taker by completing an Accommodation Request Form, available in the Disabilities Services office and on the Disabilities Services web site. When note-taking assistance is determined to be a reasonable accommodation for a student with a disability, peer volunteers generally provide note-taking services. Notes are copied by a staff member in Disabilities Services so no copying expense is incurred by the students. Folders for notes, labeled with the course number, section, and professor’s name—not the student’s name, are maintained in Disabilities Services, where the requesting student can pick up notes as needed. Any dissatisfaction with the notes provided should be reported to Disabilities Services.

5.10 Off-Campus Facilities, Internships, Programs

Reasonable academic adjustments should be provided in internships, student teaching, and other certified school-related programs to ensure that off-campus facilities and programs are accessible but only to the extent the adjustments do not alter the fundamental nature of the educational program. Students with Disabilities participating in such programs should follow the usual procedure outlined in this Guidebook to determine accommodations that should be provided while they are participating in the program. Disabilities Services will serve as liaison between the student and the program coordinator if needed.

5.11 Personal Needs

The University is not required to provide attendants, individually prescribed devices, readers for personal use or study, or other devices or services of a personal nature.

Personal needs that necessitate an attendant are the responsibility of the student. (This may range from assistance in toileting, to being repositioned in chairs, to placing medication in the person’s mouth—any personal service.) Students with such needs must retain a personal assistant. Failure to do so may result in an administrative stop being placed on future enrollment until such time as the student demonstrates a personal attendant will be with the student to attend to personal needs.

We strongly recommend that personal attendants are trained and certified. Requesting such services from an untrained, random individual can be a safety threat to both the student with the disability and the individual providing the service. Elon University cannot assume the liability of risk involved.

5.12 Readers

When determined to be an appropriate accommodation for a student with a disability, readers are provided for test-taking only. Otherwise, a reader is considered a personal service and the university is not expected to provide one. The test reader will not offer clarification of test questions. If clarification of the question is a problem for the student, s/he may write a brief explanation of how s/he understood the question so the instructor will understand the point of view of the answer. Or, prior to the test, the student may ask for permission to call the professor to ask for clarification. A reader will note on the test, "Read by"

5.13 Scribe/Typist for Papers or Exams

The typing of papers is a personal service, and therefore, generally not provided by the University. However, for testing situations, students with disabilities that limit their ability to write may be furnished with assistive technology or a scribe. Students should request this service at least one week in advance of the exam. Typists may also transcribe from dictated audiotapes.

Scribes are to note on the test, "Scribed by" Scribes are expected to write as neatly as possible or type what the student dictates. Scribes and typists are not to interpret, explain, or assist with answers at all.

5.14 Service Animals

Animals are generally not permitted in university facilities. However, it is possible that a reasonable accommodation for certain qualified students with disabilities will be the use of a service animal. (See Appendix N, “Policy on Service Animals.”)

5.15 Absences

Academic departments and in some cases individual professors within a department set their own attendance requirements. Students are expected to meet those requirements. However, certain circumstances may require one-on-one consideration.

An occasional student may have an illness/condition that requires the student to miss class fairly often (a student receiving chemo-therapy, for example). The student should be proactive by notifying Disabilities Services that excessive absences are a possibility. When a portion of the grade is based on classroom participation, the student’s professors are notified in advance so that they can discuss the situation, individually, with the student and decide whether other alternatives should be considered. Otherwise, professors may want to consider the following recommendations:

- a. It is imperative that a professor avoid the pitfall of “grading the disability” rather than the student’s knowledge. So reducing a grade simply because of absences directly related to the disability should be avoided.
- b. If the student can acquire the required skills, competencies, and knowledge of the course, it is reasonable that absences should not affect grades. Even if reasonable accommodation is required (altered delivery system or instructional methodology; altered system of demonstrating knowledge, etc.) the grade should reflect only the skill, knowledge, or competency.
- c. However, if with reasonable, altered approaches, the student is not able to acquire and demonstrate the required skill, knowledge, or competency, the student’s grade should reflect the actual knowledge acquired. Also, there may be courses or classes for which no “reasonable” accommodation exists (for example, First Aid, co-ops, internships or other highly participatory classes in which there can be no substitute for attendance).
- d. A professor must be informed when a student has such a disability and both professor and student need to be clear about the manner in which competency will be gained and demonstrated.