



Dear Faculty Member,

This FAQ handout is designed to help you understand and provide test accommodations to students with disabilities enrolled in your courses. Please feel free to contact us with your feedback, questions, or concerns.

FAQ's - Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

1. What are test accommodations?

Test accommodations are adjustments to the standard test process that permit students to take exams with their disability minimized to the greatest extent possible while not fundamentally altering the intent of the exam or lowering the program standards. Test accommodations may include additional test time, alternative test formats (e.g., large print, audio or Braille), use of a computer with spell checking, or the use of assistive technology (screen reading software, text enlarging software or machines, voice recognition software, etc.). Some students experience fluctuating impairments (e.g., epilepsy, depression, multiple sclerosis) which may need to be considered in determining exam scheduling, deadlines and other parameters.

2. Who provides test accommodations?

Like regular exams, faculty or other instructional or support staff provide most test accommodations. Providing test accommodations within the department offers students with disabilities access to instructors during tests, ensures greater test security, and facilitates last minute changes or additions to exam questions. It also eliminates grading delays and minimizes confusion in exam delivery and return. Please see www.mcburney.wisc.edu/services/alt_tst/faculty.php for resources and suggestions on providing accommodations within the department.

3. When and where are accommodations provided?

Generally, exams overlap the time of the regularly scheduled class exam. Occasionally, due to schedule conflicts or back-to-back classes, students and faculty arrange for the exam to be taken before or after the regularly scheduled class time.

Test sites in the department include adjacent classrooms, faculty offices, libraries or conference rooms. Please see www.mcburney.wisc.edu/services/alt_tst/faculty.php.

4. Who else might be involved in the test accommodation process?

Exams that require assistive technology that cannot be provided by the department or the student are administered at the Testing and Evaluation Office. The Testing and Evaluation Office proctors exams in the evening and on weekends when regularly scheduled exams occur at those hours. Faculty will need to coordinate exam delivery to and from T&E. For detailed information please see http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/services/alt_tst/who_provides_test_accommodations.php. **Requests for support submitted within the first three weeks of the semester are more likely to be filled.**

The McBurney Center can provide braille copies of exams. For detailed information please see http://mcburney.wisc.edu/services/alt_tst/faculty.php#contentanchor6.

Faculty teaching large classes with many complex accommodation requests may have unique challenges with departmental proctoring. Faculty in this situation can contact the McBurney Center to explore what resources and options might exist that would permit the student to stay in the department.

5. What happens if faculty feel the requested accommodation is inappropriate? Who has the final authority to determine appropriate test accommodations for students with disabilities?

Ultimately, the institution has the authority to decide the appropriateness of accommodations through a multi-level appeals process; however, most decisions are arrived at via communication between the student and faculty with additional input from the McBurney staff as needed.

Students communicate the test accommodations recommended by their McBurney Accommodation Specialist, which are based on the interaction between the student's disability and general test conditions. McBurney staff may consult with faculty when an accommodation request is unusual or there is concern that the accommodation could fundamentally alter the intent of the exam.

McBurney Disability Resource Center

702 W. Johnson St.
Text: 608/225-7956

Madison, Wisconsin 53715
E-mail: mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu

608/263-2741
Fax: 608/265-2998
www.mcburney.wisc.edu

Faculty may accept, modify or deny the recommendation. If accepted or modified to the satisfaction of the parties involved, the authority can be thought of as residing within the collaborative process.

If there is not a mutually agreed upon accommodation, or if a faculty member denies an accommodation, the student may appeal the decision. While an appeal is in process, faculty should provide the best possible accommodation unless doing so would create an undue burden for the faculty or department or a demonstrably unfair advantage to the student per Faculty Document 1071. For more detailed information about disability policies, see <http://www.wisc.edu/policies/disability.php>

6. What happens when a student makes a last minute request for a test accommodation?

Students are responsible for providing adequate notice in order to receive test accommodations. Students who are aware of a need for accommodation at the beginning of the semester should arrange test accommodations within the first three weeks of a semester. Students who incur or recognize a disability and the need for an accommodation during the semester should immediately consult with the instructor. One week prior to the exam is considered adequate notice although students are strongly encouraged to notify faculty as soon as a need for accommodation is known.

When a student makes a late request (i.e., less than a week's notice), faculty should first consider whether the accommodation can be arranged or worked into existing arrangements in place for other accommodated exams. In these cases, faculty can honor the late accommodation request. Faculty may also consider and then deny the accommodation if reasonable justification can be made for the denial. For both faculty and the Testing and Evaluation Office, insufficient time to do the following may justify denial: a) consult with the student or student's Accommodation Specialist, b) identify space and proctors or, c) adapt the exam (e.g., provide a Braille or audio exam). Faculty should then work with the student to identify arrangements for the remaining exams in the semester.

7. Why might it be fair for a student to take an exam under different test conditions?

Test accommodations are intended to ensure *equal access* to the testing process at the university. Disabilities that interfere with reading print, writing legibly, retrieving information, and managing anxiety may be appropriately accommodated by a test accommodation. For most students, the disability affects the pace at which they can complete work relative to other students. Disabilities may include learning disabilities, visual impairments, motor disabilities, attentional or psychological disabilities or head injuries. For some, the accommodation itself requires more time to use (e.g., text enlarging machines, adaptive keyboards, etc.). By providing a test accommodation that creates a level playing field, the exam grades most fairly represent the student's understanding of the course material with minimal interference from the disability.

8. How do students receive a recommendation for a test accommodation?

Students choosing to register with the McBurney Center provide disability documentation from a professional specialist (e.g., physician, clinical psychologist) that is reviewed by McBurney staff. If the documentation meets university guidelines establishing a disability, a McBurney Accommodation Specialist develops recommendations for reasonable accommodations and records them on a student's VISA (Verified Individualized Services and Accommodation) plan. Students should provide faculty with a copy of their VISA. Faculty can also request confirmation of the accommodations by contacting the McBurney Center.

Students can also choose to work directly with faculty and independently negotiate their accommodations. Faculty members have the right to work with students directly or refer students to McBurney. McBurney staff are also available to consult with faculty regarding the requested accommodations.

9. What guidelines should faculty be following to maintain a student's confidentiality?

Throughout the accommodation process, **the student's right to confidentiality shall be maintained.** See the McBurney website for more information about confidentiality with regard to disability information and the accommodation process.

10. Where can faculty direct questions about test accommodations?

STUDENT: Faculty members are encouraged to first talk to the student. Students receive training at the McBurney Center on the test accommodation service and self advocacy skills and can often answer questions or concerns.

MCBURNEY: Questions about the impact of the disability or the appropriateness of a requested accommodation can be directed to the McBurney Accommodation Specialist identified on the VISA. Staff can be reached by calling the main office at 263-2741.

CURRICULAR REPRESENTATIVE: Questions regarding locating space in the department for proctoring an exam can be directed to your curricular representative. Call Curricular Services at 262-6345 for department representative contact names.

ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATION RESOURCE COORDINATOR (AARC): The departmental AARC provides basic information to faculty and students about the requirements of the laws governing reasonable accommodation, institutional policies, and procedures applicable to accommodation requests. See <http://www.wisc.edu/adac/facstaff/coord.html> for the AARC list.

TESTING AND EVALUATION OFFICE (T&E): Questions regarding exam scheduling, exam pickup and delivery, or other mechanics of providing the accommodation through T&E can be found on Testing and Evaluation's web site at <http://testing.wisc.edu/accommodatedclassroomtesting.html> or by calling T&E at 262-5863.

MCBURNEY WEBSITE: The McBurney website provides information regarding disability issues, confidentiality, campus policies and procedures and relevant disability links. See <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu> .