Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 require that reasonable and appropriate academic accommodations be provided to students with disabilities to ensure equal access to educational opportunities. While providing accommodations, however, institutions of higher education are not required to lower academic standards or modify the fundamental academic elements of a program. The Assistant Dean for Student Life at Eastman School of Music serves as the Access Coordinator. This position has the responsibility for the Eastman School of Music to determine whether students seeking academic classroom accommodations are eligible to receive them, and assigns reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities.

Reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to:
- Extended time on examinations
- Time extensions on papers and projects
- Alternative testing procedures and locations
- Advance notice regarding reading assignments for visually impaired and some learning disabled students
- Use of note takers and sign language interpreters
- Recording lectures
- Providing copies of teacher’s lecture notes
- Early advisement and assistance with registration
- Accessibility for students who use wheelchairs and those with mobility impairments
- Adapted furniture or equipment in the classroom

As an instructor or teaching assistant, you may encounter students who are eligible to receive reasonable classroom accommodations. **If you are notified by the Assistant Dean of Student Life that a student is eligible to receive classroom accommodations, it is your legal obligation to provide them.** If you have any questions about the classroom accommodations that have been approved, please discuss the issue with the Assistant Dean of Student Life.

### FAQs FOR FACULTY AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS

**Who determines the appropriate reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities?**
The Assistant Dean for Student Life is the designated Access Coordinator for the Eastman School of Music and determines appropriate academic accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student discloses the existence of a disability and the need for classroom accommodations, refer the student to the Access Coordinator. You should not discuss students’ disabilities with them directly except as discussed below.

**When should I provide classroom accommodations?**
If a student asks for a classroom accommodation without presenting you with an official disability accommodation notification letter, you should direct the student to contact the Access Coordinator to discuss the need for reasonable academic accommodations. Instructors should not try to determine whether a student qualifies for accommodations or what they would be.

Each semester, students who have met with the Access Coordinator and who are approved for academic accommodations, will be given an official disability accommodation notification letter that enumerates the identified classroom accommodations. The instructor will also receive a copy of this letter from the Access Coordinator. After meeting with the Access Coordinator, it is the student’s responsibility to meet with the instructor privately to discuss how to implement the specific classroom accommodations in a timely fashion. It is the instructor’s responsibility to share the information only with those who need to know (such as a TA or administrative assistant) to facilitate implementation. Students are not required to discuss their diagnosis with you. You should grade the work of students with disabilities as you would grade the work of any others. There may be times when a student utilizes some, all, or none of the accommodations for which they are eligible.
How are test accommodations provided?
Students who are eligible for testing accommodations (e.g., extended test time, quiet separate room, reader, scribe, etc.) should contact instructors well in advance of an exam to discuss their anticipated needs and implementation. The instructor and/or department secretary or administrative assistant will then make necessary arrangements, including reserving rooms, obtaining proctors, etc...

What is my role in providing students with course materials?
Students with disabilities need access to course materials and information presented in the classroom at the same time as all other students. Converting print materials to alternate formats for visually impaired students can be an intensive process. The Access Coordinator will contact course instructors about the textbooks to be used use and all other print materials as soon as a student with a disability is identified as needing such an accommodation.

Is there an effective way to facilitate a conversation about accommodations?
After meeting with the Access Coordinator, students should discuss specific classroom needs with instructors in a timely fashion. Instructors can facilitate this process and create an inclusive environment by including a statement on the course syllabus that invites students with disabilities to meet with you to discuss their needs in confidence. Here is an example of a syllabus statement: “Any student with a disability who desires accommodations in this class should contact the Access Coordinator at 585.274.1106 as soon as possible to ensure that reasonable classroom accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.”

Can I disclose information about a student’s disability to others?
Students with disabilities have the right to meet with instructors privately regarding course related matters. Treat all disability related information that is disclosed to you as confidential medical information to be shared only with the Access Coordinator. Information can be shared judiciously with other faculty and staff who need to know, in the capacity of implementing an accommodation. At all times refrain from making direct reference to your knowledge of the student's disability during class. When in doubt, please contact the Access Coordinator and the student to work out any issues, and to collaborate on the most appropriate instructional strategies for the student.

Do accommodations vary from student to student?
Yes! Individual accommodation needs vary from student to student because a disability, even the same disability, may result in different functional limitations.

Must I lower academic standards and grading? No! When providing accommodations, institutions of higher education are not required to modify fundamental academic standards. Students with disabilities with or without accommodations should be expected to perform at a level commensurate with their peers.

What about inappropriate student behavior?
Students with disabilities are subject to the same Standards of Student Conduct required of any student at the University of Rochester and Eastman School of Music. The Assistant Dean for Student Life also serves as Eastman’s Student Conduct Officer. If there are incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behaviors that are concerning, contact the Assistant Dean for Student Life at 585.274.1106 or email mschmidt@esm.rochester.edu.

What are some teaching strategies I might employ?
Universal Instructional Design is an approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit students of all learning styles. For more information, see DO-IT (University of Washington) Universal Design (http://www.washington.edu/doit/Resources/udesign.html).
Some other strategies include:

- Creating and maintaining accessible websites
- Creating and maintaining accessible course notes, study guides, and presentations on the web
- Creating and maintaining comprehensive syllabi with clearly delineated statements about course expectations, timelines, and assignments
- Allowing students to record lectures with your permission

RESOURCES

Melissia Schmidt, Assistant Dean for Student Life and Access Coordinator
585.274.1106
mschmidt@esm.rochester.edu

Disability-Specific Websites

Visit [http://www.rochester.edu/eoc](http://www.rochester.edu/eoc) for information at the University of Rochester.

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 www.uw.edu/doit/Video/, or purchased in DVD format.

There are several other websites that contain information about, and strategies for, teaching individuals with specific disabilities:

- The University of Washington's DO-IT video *Working Together: Faculty and Students with Disabilities, Building the Team: Faculty, Staff, and Students Working Together* may be freely viewed online.
- For instructional strategies specific to students with ADHD, visit: www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty/Strategies/Disability/Other/ and the [Attention Deficit Disorder Association](http://www.adhd.org/)
- For teaching strategies for deaf or hard of hearing students, visit [Pepnet2](http://www.pepnet2.org/)
- Southern Methodist University's [Learning Differences web page](http://www.smu.edu/learningdifferences) for teaching strategies.
- [Disability.gov](http://www.disability.gov/) lists publications for instructional strategies for students with disabilities.
- [Learning Disabilities Association of America](http://www.ldanatl.org/) is a non-profit advocacy organization for persons with learning disabilities.
- [http://www.ldanatl.org/](http://www.ldanatl.org/)
- Characteristics and challenges faced by students with psychiatric disorders can be found through the [National Institute for Mental Health](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/)
- For more information on classroom management and students with psychiatric disabilities, visit: www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/psych.htm

Disability Resources and Awareness

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

Universal Design for Instruction

Universal Instructional Design is an approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit students of all learning styles without adaptation or retrofitting. Resources about the philosophy and support for instruction methods can be found at DO-IT's [Center for Universal Design in Education](http://www.doit.org/).
Some UD strategies include:

- Creating and maintaining accessible websites
- Creating and maintaining accessible course notes, study guides, and presentations on the web
- Creating and maintaining comprehensive syllabi with clearly delineated statements about course expectations, timelines, and assignments
- Allowing students to record lectures

The video, *Equal Access: Universal Design of Instruction*, may be freely viewed online at [www.uw.edu/doit/Video/](http://www.uw.edu/doit/Video/)

**Assistive Technology**

*AccessIT* at the University of Washington has a compilation of resources that promotes the use of assistive technology for students, as well as employees, with disabilities in educational institutions. The mission of AccessIT is to support the efforts of educators, policy makers, librarians, technical support staff, students and employees to make academic achievement possible through the implementation of assistive technology.