



Policy Name:	Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
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I. Introduction

This section contains information about the University’s commitment to accessibility, the legal requirements with respect to disability-related accommodations for University students, what constitutes a disability, and the rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities.

A. Accessibility & Accommodations

Northwest Missouri State University’s (the “University”) Office of Title IX & Equity: [Accessibility and Accommodations](#) (“A&A”) office is responsible for coordinating support and arranging reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations is the umbrella term for academic adjustments or auxiliary aids or modifications or policies, practices and procedures to provide equal access to the University’s programs and activities for students with disabilities. Examples of accommodations include, but are not limited to, additional time or alternative arrangements for examinations and coordination of accessible housing. Reasonable accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the specific and individualized needs of the student. Accommodations decisions are informed by treatment provider documentation and academic program requirements. A&A may consult with the University’s faculty and staff in determining reasonable accommodations. The University is committed to fostering a learning, living, and working environment that is accessible for students with disabilities. Upon admission to the University, all new students with disabilities are encouraged to contact A&A. Current students seeking access, accommodations or support services for a disability should contact A&A at ada@nwmissouri.edu. For more information on the accommodations process and associated forms, please visit <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/titleixequity/accessibility/>.

B. What is a Disability?

An individual with a disability is defined as someone with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities of that individual. Major life activities

include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. An impairment substantially limits a major life activity when the individual's major life activity is restricted as to the conditions, manner, or duration under which the activity can be performed in comparison to most people.

C. Student Rights

A&A believes it is important for all students with disabilities to be aware of the rights afforded to them by law. A&A operates consistent with its obligations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Rehabilitation Act"), 29 U.S.C. § 794, the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"), 42 U.S.C. § 12111 *et seq.*, and the Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. § 3601 *et seq.* Students have the following rights under these laws:

1. To receive reasonable accommodations that do not fundamentally alter a policy, requirement, or learning objective of a program or course;
2. To receive reasonable accommodations that do not place an undue financial, procedural, or administrative burden on the institution or its representatives;
3. To be engaged in the interactive accommodation process;
4. To request an appeal or reconsideration of accommodations if new documentation is available; and
5. To grieve a University determination about approved or denied disability-related accommodations, to report a concern about a failure to implement an approved accommodation, report disability-related access barriers or report disability-related harassment and/or discrimination.

D. Student Responsibilities

Equally important are a student's responsibilities in exercising these rights. The following are actions students are responsible for taking to exercise these rights under the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act:

1. Students must contact A&A to self-identify their disability status and request accommodations for their disability;
2. Students must provide supporting documentation of their disability from an appropriate and qualified medical professional with established and consistent contact in a manner that complies with the Guidelines for Disability Documentation outlined in Section II.B, below;
3. Students must provide Accommodation Letters to their professors and residential housing staff, as appropriate; and

4. Students must schedule exams at least three business days (3) days in advance with A&A.

II. Procedure for Accommodations Requests

This Section contains a general overview of process for reviewing accommodation requests. Each of the steps in the process are described in greater detail in subsequent subsections. The timing of A&A's response to requests may vary depending on complexity and the nature and extent of follow-up required. A&A generally endeavors to resolve accommodation requests within twenty-one (21) days. A&A's general review process is as follows:

1. The student submits an Accommodation Application, along with any documentation from treatment providers required to verify disability status and the need for reasonable accommodations. Please see Section II.B ("Guidelines for Disability Documentation") for further information. The review process does not begin until the student's completed Accommodation Application and treatment provider documentation are received.
2. The student is contacted by A&A.
3. The student may meet with A&A staff to discuss disability-related access barriers and potential accommodations. Students may bring an academic advisor, parent, or other individual as needed to their meeting with A&A. During this meeting, A&A staff will review these policies and procedures.
4. A&A reviews the student's Accommodation Application, treatment provider documentation, and information provided during the meeting, if applicable, to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations.
5. A&A notifies the student of their approved accommodation.
6. The student provides the Accommodation Letter to professors and completes any accommodation-related follow-up steps (e.g., scheduling exams, registering an ESA with Residential Life, etc.).
7. Once accommodations are approved, they apply on a prospective basis. For example, an approved accommodation does not apply to course work completed before the request and approval of an accommodation.

A. Request an Accommodation

Submitting an Accommodation Application with A&A is the first step for students seeking to request a disability-related accommodation or service. Students who are unsure about their eligibility for assistance should complete the Accommodations Request Form and meet with A&A staff to discuss their situation. Please contact us at ada@nwmissouri.edu with any questions or accommodation inquires.

B. Guidelines for Disability Documentation

In order to ensure that students' needs are directly linked to accommodations, the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA allow higher education institutions to require disability documentation from students to verify disability status and the need for reasonable accommodations. A&A has established the following disability documentation guidelines.

General guidelines:

1. The documentation required may depend on the type of disability.
2. Although treatment provider documentation may recommend certain accommodations, A&A retains discretion to assess reasonableness in light of its administrative operations and academic programs. Because every student is different, accommodations that may be appropriate for one student are not necessarily well-suited to others, depending on severity, medical history, and course of study.
3. The student must bear any cost incurred in obtaining documentation. For referrals to low-cost treatment providers for any disability type, please contact A&A.
4. If the original documentation is incomplete or inadequate to determine the extent of the disability or reasonable accommodation(s), A&A has the discretion to require additional documentation.
5. Students must complete the application process and submit disability documentation before they may receive accommodations and services. A&A reserves the right to deny services or reasonable accommodations while the receipt of appropriate documentation is pending.
6. Documentation written in a language other than English must be translated and notarized. All such documentation as well as documentation from outside the United States written in English must follow A&A guidelines.

Disability documentation must:

1. Be recent enough to permit assessment of the current impact the disability has on learning or other major life activities.
2. Establish clear evidence of a substantial impact on one or more major life activities.
3. Establish a direct link between the underlying impairment and the recommended accommodations.
4. Include the student's history of receiving reasonable accommodations and academic adjustments, if such history exists.

5. Include specific recommendations for accommodations, as well as an explanation as to why each is necessary.
6. Be issued by a medical or otherwise qualified, licensed professional, unrelated by birth or marriage to the student, printed on letterhead, dated, signed, and including the professional's licensing information. No information may be redacted. The University reserves the right to require that a certified copy of the report be transmitted directly from the evaluator to A&A.

Students should note that falsification of disability documentation is prohibited, and violations may result in disciplinary action.

III. Special Provisions Regarding Certain Accommodation Requests

This section contains special provisions regarding certain accommodation requests, including (1) temporary impairments; (2) pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, and related medical conditions; and (3) medical marijuana.

A. Temporary Impairments

In the case of temporary impairments, such as broken bones, short-term illnesses, and recovery from surgery or medical conditions, A&A can provide temporary services to assist students in their academic work. To ensure prompt and appropriate action, A&A should be notified immediately of the arrangements believed to be necessary to accommodate a given temporary impairment.

B. Pregnancy, Childbirth, Lactation, and Related Conditions

The benefits and services provided to students affected by pregnancy shall be no less than those provided to University students with temporary impairments. Pregnancy in and of itself is not considered a disability; however, some conditions arising from pregnancy (e.g., hypertensive preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, and others) may constitute disabilities that necessitate reasonable academic and/or extracurricular accommodations. Students with pregnancy-related disabilities, like all other students with disabilities, are entitled to academic adjustments or auxiliary aids and services in accordance with the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act. Students with pregnancy-related disabilities are encouraged to reach out to A&A as soon as pregnancy-related disabilities arise. While accommodations should be provided in as timely a manner as possible, the University recognizes that pregnancy and its potential health-related consequences, including pregnancy-related disabilities, are not fully predictable. Thus, the University will work diligently to accommodate pregnancy-related accommodations requests as they arise. Reasonable accommodations can include, but are not necessarily limited to:

1. Accommodations requested by the pregnant student to protect the health and safety of the student and/or the pregnancy (such as allowing the student to maintain a safe distance from hazardous substances);
2. Modifications to the physical environment (e.g., accessible seating);

3. Extending deadlines and/or allowing the student to make up tests or assignments missed for appropriately documented pregnancy-related absences;
4. Providing remote learning options, where such options do not fundamentally alter the course or academic program in question and can be provided without undue financial or administrative burden to the University; and/or
5. Modified academic responsibilities in light of pregnancy and related health concerns.

C. Medical Marijuana

Patients who reside in Missouri may qualify for medical cannabis if they have a terminal illness, chronic medical condition, debilitating psychiatric disorder, or suffer from one of eighteen specified medical conditions. However, medical marijuana is not a reasonable accommodation under the ADA for students with disabilities, as marijuana is an illegal drug under the federal Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. § 812(c). The University abides by the federal Drug-Free Workplace Act, 42 U.S.C. ch. 81, and the federal Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1011i. Both Acts require that “as a condition of receiving funds or any other form of financial assistance under any federal program, an institution of higher education, or state/local educational agency must certify that it has adopted and implemented a program to prevent the unlawful manufacture, possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol by students.” Because marijuana is a controlled substance under federal law, the University is prohibited from allowing it on campus and therefore A&A cannot honor a student’s request to use marijuana as an accommodation, even with the requisite legal authorization under state law.

IV. Disability Grievance Procedures

The University has adopted internal grievance procedures providing for prompt, equitable and impartial resolution of grievances alleging any action prohibited by the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and/or the Fair Housing Act. Students who believe they have been subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of disability may file a formal written grievance with the ADA/Section 504 Coordinator in the A&A office pursuant to the University’s Non-Discrimination and Non-Harassment Policy and Procedures.