

Disability Services Resources for Faculty and Staff

Our Mission

Disability Services strives to reduce accessibility barriers on campus and provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities.

Who Qualifies?

Students with registered disabilities and students with temporary injuries who are enrolled at Montana Tech and/or Highlands College and visitors with disabilities. Accommodations and services are only available to those categories. Faculty and staff with disabilities seeking accommodations must contact [Vanessa Van Dyk](#).

Service Limits

Medical conditions or emergencies unrelated to disability, such as a death in the family, a sick spouse or child, or absences related to COVID-19 (quarantine, self-isolating, positive COVID-19 test, etc.), do not fall under the scope of Disability Services. In these instances, it is up to the faculty and the student to decide the best way forward.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Students without a disability whose native language is not English are not eligible for accommodations from Disability Services. It is up to individual faculty whether or not they want to give the student extra time on assignments or exams. Disability Services strongly encourages faculty to give ESL students the extra time they need. For inquiries unrelated to disability for international students, contact the [Director of International Services](#).

Campus Location

Disability Services is located in the Student Success Center (SSC) 3.137 within the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE). The Disability Services and Accessibility Coordinator can be reached at 406-496-4428 or by [email](#).

Interactive Process

It is the responsibility of each student to inform both Disability Service and faculty of access needs. Disability Services works in conjunction with faculty and students to assist with the implementation of reasonable accommodations listed in the Accommodation Letter, and maintain on-going communication to ensure access.

Confidentiality

Student disclosure of a disability is voluntary. Montana Tech considers disability-related information as confidential material. The information will not be released except in response to a student's request or written authorization, as needed, to assist a student with an education-related issue, or as permitted under certain circumstances per legal guidelines.

Definition of Disability

Federal Law

In addition to the policies and procedures of Montana Tech, the following federal legislation applies to Disability Services:

- [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA)
 - [Amended](#) in 2008
- [Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), Sections 503 and 504
- [Fair Housing Act of 1968](#)
- [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA)
- [Montana Human Rights Act](#)

Legal Definition

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This includes anyone who has a record of such an impairment, even if she or he does not currently have a disability, and individuals who do not have a disability but are regarded as having a disability.

Testing Anxiety

Testing anxiety on its own does not count as a disability. If a student does not have a disability and is experiencing test anxiety, the [Academic Center for Excellence \(ACE\)](#) offers tutoring or coaching to help students manage it.

Faculty and Staff Rights

As an instructor at Montana Tech, you have the right to:

- [Dispute an unreasonable accommodation.](#)
- Dictate course policies and maintain the fundamental nature of their course or program content.
- Require students to demonstrate their knowledge of essential course content.
- Request verification of a student's eligibility for an accommodation. Faculty are not obligated to provide an accommodation unless an Accommodation Letter has been provided.

Faculty Responsibilities

Best Practices

Faculty are strongly encouraged to understand that students do not all learn the same and strive toward creating courses and curriculums that can be accessed by all.

Communication

Please refrain from asking about the specifics of the disability and its limitations, but if the student discloses that information, keep it confidential. Disability Services encourages all faculty to be available to discuss accommodations with students and be clear in her or his expectations.

Most students will share the information of their disabilities readily with faculty and staff. Some, however, decide not to share such information and may never seek accommodations. Student's accommodation letters will be sent via email to faculty, and Disability Services encourages all students to maintain regular communication with faculty regarding their access needs.

If faculty or staff are concerned that a student has a disability which has not been disclosed or diagnosed, they may discuss that matter with the student or direct their concerns to Disability Services. It is the student's right, however, to keep the nature of their disability private.

Service Animals

We offer a [Guide on Responding to Service Animals on Campus](#) and an outline of our [policies on animals on campus](#). A service animal is allowed anywhere on campus, so long that the area does not pose a threat to the animal (ex. a lab or workspace where the animal may be exposed to harmful equipment or chemicals), and is not required to be registered or licensed. By law, faculty may only ask students with service animals the following questions:

1. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

Faculty may not request any documentation for the dog, require that the dog demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the student's disability.

Accommodations

Accommodation requests must be reasonable. “Reasonable” is defined as an accommodation that does not constitute an undue burden or require a fundamental alteration of a course or program, and is provided on a case-by-case basis based on individual access needs. Reasonable accommodations exist to provide access. It is not special treatment, nor can it guarantee success, and students with disabilities must be held to the same academic and procedures standards as students without disabilities.

Accommodation Letters

Accommodations are not retroactive, nor do they carry over between semesters, and begin the day the instructor receives the Accommodation Letter. Letters are emailed to the student and instructors, and students are encouraged to approach instructors before or after class or during office hours to discuss individual access needs using the Letter as an ice-breaker.

Students must contact Disability Services every semester to receive an updated accommodation letter, as accommodations may change from semester to semester. Instructors should disregard accommodation letters from previous semesters. Letters may also be issued or revised at any point in a semester.

Flexible Attendance

Course attendance is essential to the success of the student. It is not enough to simply memorize the material for exams and assignments. Engagement with instructors and peers is beneficial for retention, learning, critical thinking, and communication. Students with disabilities are expected to follow attendance policies outlined in instructor syllabi. Students who miss class for reasons related to disability are

responsible for communicating with instructors to complete all missed assignments and exams.

However, some students may have disabilities that result in a need to exceed the number of allowed excused absences. Therefore, a flexible attendance, or "FLEX", accommodation may be considered on a case-by-case basis. The applicability and extent of the flexibility will be determined with each individual student and instructor, but this does not mean unlimited absences are permitted.

Students are required to meet with their faculty within two weeks of receiving a FLEX Agreement email from Disability Services to submit the agreement. The Disability Services coordinator is available to help mediate a discussion while filling out the form so that the best possible outcome can be agreed upon between student and instructor.

The reasonable amount of disability-related absences and make up procedures allotted before it fundamentally alters the course and compromises the integrity of the program will be determined by each individual instructor. Please do note that flexible attendance may not be applicable to some courses, including labs. Faculty are not required to lower or make substantial modifications of standards for accommodation purposes, but can decide how important attendance to the class is.

Fundamental Alterations and Undue Burdens

An accommodation may not fundamentally alter a course or program, nor cause an undue burden on the student or instructor. Students with disabilities must be held to the same academic standards as their peers.

If faculty believe an accommodation fundamentally alters courses or causes an undue burden, they are encouraged to contact Disability

Services as soon as possible. Faculty have as much right as students to appeal the accommodation process. If an accommodation is deemed a fundamental alteration or an undue burden, Disability Services will work with the appropriate resources to find an alternative solution.

Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Guidelines

The [United States Department of Education Offices of Civil Rights \(OCR\)](#) offers guidance on determining if class attendance is fundamental:

1. Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students, and among students?
2. Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
3. Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon student participation as an essential method for learning?
4. To what degree does a student's failure to attend constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
5. What does the course description and syllabus say?
6. What is the method by which the final course grade is calculated?
7. What are the classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?

Remote Instruction

Students who are unable to come to campus for reasons related to disability may be eligible for remote instruction via recorded or livestreamed lectures as an accommodation on a case-by-case basis. Faculty may choose between recording and uploading lectures or livestreaming them, but Disability Services understands that remote attendance may not be possible for all courses. In the event remote attendance is not an option, alternative solutions will be explored.

Though it may appear as an accommodation for students with disabilities on a case-by-case basis, Disability Services strongly

encourages all instructors to consider recording and uploading their lectures for the benefit of all students.

For remote learning information, resources and support, visit the [Center for Academic Innovation](#) or contact [Kat McCormick](#). For assistance with equipment and set up, contact the [IT Help Desk](#). Direct Zoom inquiries to [Kathy Stevens](#).

Testing Center

In Spring 2022, the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) opened a Testing Center. We provide services for:

- Testing accommodations
- Makeup/missed exams
- Placement tests
- HiSET/GED

To schedule an exam with ACE, faculty must submit the [Test Request Form](#) at least three (3) days before the exam. The Testing Center has a strict policy where no cell phones, smart watches, or other electronics are allowed inside the testing rooms unless authorized by the instructor or by Disability Services as an accommodation. Students are required to leave all of their belongings with the proctor and are only allowed to bring materials permitted by the instructor into the testing room. The proctor will report any instances of academic dishonesty to the instructor.

Campus Events

When planning a campus event, program, or activity, keep in mind accessibility and common accommodations. These may include:

- Relocation of the activity or event to an accessible space
- Alternative formats for printed materials, such as braille or enlarged print

- Preferential seating
- Sign language interpreters
- Captioned media and/or transcripts of spoken information for speeches, lectures, videos, theatrical performances, and other productions
- Assistive Listening Devices such as an FM system

If an instructor or staff member is hosting an activity, event, or workshop, consider these questions to help make it more accessible:

- Could someone who uses a wheelchair get inside and/or around? ADA standards say doorways must be at least 36 inches wide and free of obstructions to accommodate wheelchairs.
- Is there a button to automatically open the door(s)? A ramp at the entrance? Is there an elevator and is it working?
- Are there designated handicapped parking spaces nearby?
- Is there an accessible restroom?
- Could someone who has a vision, hearing, physical, or other sensory impairment still actively participate in the activities?
- Do you have a backup location in case the one you've chosen is not accessible?
- Are there quiet areas available nearby where noise and distractions are minimum?
- Can you use a sans serif font for printed material and ensure PDFs are not embedded?

When in doubt, always refer individuals in need of accommodations to Disability Services. Requests for accommodations must be made within 5-10 days of the event. If a requested accommodation cannot be provided, Disability Services will work with event staff to create an alternative accommodation.

Additional Resources

Creating Accessible Learning Environments

- [Delivering Accessible Presentations](#)
- [Accessible Virtual Meetings](#)
- [Accessibility in Video Conferences](#)
- [Accessible Word Documents](#)
- [Accessible PowerPoints](#)
- [Captioning Videos and Learning Management Systems](#)
- [Accessible Online Meetings](#)
- [Digital Accessibility Toolkit for Staff and Instructors](#)

Information Sessions

The Disability Services Coordinator may offer information sessions to faculty and staff on topics such as disability legislation, accommodations and services provided, small steps to implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the classroom, as well as address any questions, concerns, or topics faculty or staff may have. To arrange an information session for your department or program, please [email](#) the Coordinator.

Helpful Suggestions

The [National Center on Accessible Education Materials](#) provides information and guidance on supporting diverse learners by ensuring course materials are accessible. To accommodate students with disabilities, all course materials that are posted in Moodle or provided to the students in anyway should be accessible documents. This includes books, videos, PowerPoints, word documents, etc.

Moodle

Lafayette College offers [instructions](#) on how to extend time limits on Moodle.

Syllabus Statement Sample

Montana Tech provides reasonable accommodations to students who are registered with Disability Services. If you have been diagnosed with

or believe you may have a disability, contact Disability Services to discuss accommodations, access needs, and obtain an Accommodation Letter. You can reach the Disability Services Coordinator via email at sgoodell@mtech.edu, by phone at 406-496-4428, or in person in the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) within the Student Success Center (SSC). All services are confidential. Once you have received your letter, please meet with me to discuss your access needs.