

Academic Accommodations

The Interactive Process (1/4)

PROVIDING REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

The University of California (UC) is committed to providing students with disabilities access to its services and programs. The UC engages in an interactive process to determine reasonable academic accommodations for courses and programs to ensure they are accessible to students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations apply to all areas of the University's programs and activities, including those unrelated to academics or academic standards such as the University's online presence, particularly with respect to library programs, financial aid, registration, and counseling.

The following describes the academic accommodations interactive process and the rights and responsibilities of the faculty, Disabilities Services Offices ([DSO](#))¹, and the student.

STUDENT REQUESTS FOR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation Letters

Faculty learn a student has a disability when they receive an Accommodation Letter (AL)² issued by the campus DSO. An AL is issued after consultation with a DSO specialist to determine, on a case-by-case basis, appropriate reasonable accommodations that address access barriers and the student's specific disability-related needs. An AL signals the student (i) has a disability (ii) properly disclosed their disability to the DSO, (iii) provided documentation supporting their need for reasonable accommodation, and (iv) consulted with a disability specialist to determine appropriate academic accommodations. Some accommodations approved by DSO offices are straightforward (*e.g.*, notetaker, extra exam time), however others may require consultation with faculty before or during the DSO's [Interactive Process](#) with the student (*e.g.*, extended assignment deadlines or remote attendance). When a faculty member receives an AL, they must:

- (1) Implement the accommodations listed therein and work with the student, as necessary, to establish how to best implement the accommodation; *and/or*
- (2) Immediately contact the DSO/specialist listed in the AL if the faculty member needs clarification on, or objects to, an accommodation.

Faculty must not attempt to negotiate an accommodation directly with a student or ask for documentation of the student's disability.³

Student Requests for Accommodation Outside of the DSO Process

Students with disabilities seeking accommodations must work with their campus DSO. When a student requests a disability-related academic accommodation,⁴ faculty should ask the student for their current and applicable AL. If a student does not have an AL, the faculty should immediately refer the student to the DSO in writing. Faculty should not provide any disability-related accommodation without an AL. Providing accommodations outside the DSO's formal accommodations process is inappropriate and leads to confusion for both the faculty and student as to academic expectations and may expose the University to liability.

What is Not a Disclosure of Disability

Requests for accommodation due to something other than the student's own disability (*e.g.*, death in the family or common cold) are not requests for a reasonable accommodation under UC policy or the ADA.

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE OF A DISABILITY

Reassurance and Confidentiality

Disclosure of a disability is highly personal and sensitive for many students. When a student chooses to disclose a disability to a faculty member, the faculty member should take care to direct the student to the DSO for more information regarding the accommodations process.⁵

¹ The term "DSO" describes all offices in the UC System that provide academic accommodations services to students. See the link for contact information for all UC DSOs.

² The term "AL" or Accommodation Letter describes the documents issued by the DSO to indicate a student has an approved accommodation. These may be called "Notices of Accommodation," "Accommodation Letters," "Instructor Letters," etc. depending on the campus.

³ See, The Interactive Process section of this document and "Academic Accommodations—Fundamental Alteration and Undue Burden (2/4)" [insert link]

⁴ There are no "magic words" necessary to request accommodations. A request for help with class participation because of a physical or mental limitation is sufficient

⁵ Faculty may also wish to add their campus DSO's contact information to their syllabus with a note that students in need of accommodation must contact the DSO to request an LOA.

Do's

- If the student has disclosed their disability, acknowledge the disclosure and assure them it will remain private, except as necessary to provide an approved accommodation. Refer the student to the DSO if they have not already registered and document the referral with a follow-up email containing DSO contact information. Inform the student the DSO will work with them to determine appropriate accommodations.
- Once presented with an AL, discuss implementation of the accommodations indicated, as necessary, to ensure their provision in a timely and consistent manner. Direct any concerns or suggestions for implementing the reasonable accommodations to the DSO. Document any decisions made in an email.
- Provide only the accommodations listed in the AL. Refer the student to the DSO if they ask for different or additional accommodations.

Don'ts

- Never ask a student to reveal the nature of their disability or ask for medical documentation.
- Do not make assumptions about, or comment on, the accommodations or the student's disability. If you believe an accommodation is not compatible with your course, promptly contact the DSO.
- Do not discuss the student's disability or accommodations in a public classroom or space. Private meetings or emails are the appropriate means of communication to protect the student's privacy. Do not discuss the student's accommodations or disability status with other employees or students unless required to ensure the student timely receives their accommodations. Do not address any concern(s) directly with the student.

Referral and Timing

Faculty should immediately refer students to the DSO anytime they believe a student is requesting disability-related accommodation. While it is advisable for students to make a request at the beginning (or even before) an academic quarter or semester begins, that is not always feasible and *is not required*. Faculty need only implement accommodations after receipt of an AL; accommodations are not retroactive. If faculty believe they cannot implement an accommodation indicated on an AL, they must promptly consult with the DSO.

THE INTERACTIVE PROCESS

Student Responsibilities

- Register with the DSO and provide any requested documentation.
- Work with DSO to determine reasonable academic accommodations.
- Work with faculty to implement accommodations outlined in the AL, as necessary.
- Work with DSO if an academic accommodation is not effective or timely implemented.

DSO Responsibilities

- Review accommodation requests and work with student to determine need for academic accommodations.
- Work with faculty/departments to assess barriers to access, course requirements, technical standards, etc.
- When necessary, work with faculty to implement accommodations listed on the AL.
- Work with faculty when a proposed accommodation may fundamentally alter a course or program.

Faculty Responsibilities

- Work with the student and DSO to implement accommodations listed on the AL.
- Implement academic accommodations listed on the AL consistently and in a timely manner.
- Immediately consult with the DSO if an academic accommodation may fundamentally alter a course.
- Respond promptly to DSO requests for information.

REFUSING TO IMPLEMENT A PROPOSED ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

Faculty may not unilaterally refuse to implement an accommodation and merely stating that an accommodation fundamentally alters a course is not enough. Faculty and DSO must together follow the interactive process outlined in [PACAOS §143.34](#) and "[Academic Accommodations— Fundamental Alteration and Undue Burden](#)."