

# **A Faculty Guide to Accommodating Students with Disabilities**

**DRAFT**

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*The Medical University of South Carolina*  
*Disability Support Services*  
*A division of the Equal Employment/Affirmative Action Office*

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## **Introduction**

The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) is committed to providing an environment where all students can equally participate in the academic experience. The accommodation of students with disabilities who meet admissions requirements is mandated by both federal and state law. MUSC supports these laws by pledging to comply with their requirements. In effect, every individual and every administrative unit is pledged to make a good faith effort to provide equality of educational access/opportunity to qualified students with disabilities by making reasonable accommodations.

In many instances, responding to the needs of a student with a disability requires little adjustment to the environment or to teaching style. With some flexibility and a genuine willingness to help, instructors, faculty members and academic departments can find ways to accommodate special needs. The information in this Handbook is designed to facilitate that process.

The information contained in this Handbook has been set forth as a guide to help faculty members, administrators and staff understand their vital role in accommodating the needs of students with disabilities. It has been compiled in response to faculty feedback requesting more information on how to deal with students with disabilities in the classroom environment. Students with disabilities and faculty members working with these students have both rights and responsibilities in the accommodations process.

Faculty members should use this Handbook to address common questions about working with students with disabilities. The Handbook also sets forth a network of professional staff to which you can turn for advice and assistance in resolving student problems associated with reasonable accommodation. The 504 ADA Student Coordinator is available to inform students, faculty, and staff of their rights as individuals with a disability. The 504 ADA Student Coordinator is in charge of Disability Support Services, and chairs the Student Disability Committee. There is a designated ADA College Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in each of the six colleges at MUSC. These individuals have the responsibility to assist faculty and staff, as well as students, to understand and work within the federally mandated process of accommodating students with disabilities.

## **Purpose of Handbook**

This Handbook serves as a reference for faculty, academic affairs administrators and staff with regard to responding to the academic needs of **students** with disabilities. The Handbook will provide you with specific information on the following topics:

Section 1: The University's obligations under the law.

Section 2: Identification of staff who work with students with disabilities at MUSC and their roles.

Section 3: Explanation of the process entitling students to accommodations at MUSC.

Section 4: Working with students with disabilities. Answers to some common questions and an explanation of various types of accommodations.

Section 5: Explanation of the internal grievance procedure and the right of students to seek external review.

Note: This handbook does NOT address non-academic accommodations. This Handbook also does not address accommodations for you as staff persons, faculty and administrators, nor does it address accommodations for students as employees.

## **Section I: University Responsibilities under the Law**

### **A. The University's Responsibility to Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities have the right to an accessible education, as mandated by both state and federal law. In order to obtain an accessible education, students with disabilities may require certain accommodations. It is the responsibility of this University to abide by all applicable state and federal laws, as well as its own policy of nondiscrimination against all individuals, including individuals with disabilities.

### **B. The Laws and Regulations**

There are three primary laws which govern the MUSC's relationship with students with disabilities:

1. Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) (specifically Title II of the ADA)
2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (“Section 504”)
3. Laws enforced by the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission

The federal and state governments have also promulgated regulations which deal more specifically with the actions required to ensure compliance with the above-named statutes. Regulations are also legally binding. The University’s obligation to uphold these federal and state laws and regulations extends to you as employees and representatives of the University, and you may face legal liability by failing to work with disabled students in the manner prescribed by law and as set forth in this Handbook.

Pertinent excerpts of these laws can be found at Appendix C to this Handbook. Complete copies of the above described laws and regulations are on file with the Compliance Office, and can also be found at many local libraries. The text of the federal laws and regulations can be viewed at: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>.

## **Section II: Identification of Staff and Roles**

### **A. Primary Staff:**

MUSC operates under a decentralized system which encompasses six representatives from the six various colleges. A complete list of the names of the ADA College Coordinators, and the 504 ADA/Compliance Officer, together with contact information, is set forth at Appendix A.

1. **The College Coordinators for the Concerns of Students with Disabilities:** act as the primary contact person for students with disabilities in their college, and are responsible to coordinate the determination of eligibility, to identify appropriate accommodations and to assist students and faculty in ensuring that accommodations are implemented. College Coordinators continue to provide advice and assistance for as long as the student remains at MUSC, and must be contacted by the student prior to the start of **each** semester for updated Letters of Accommodation.

2. **The 504 ADA Student Coordinator:** provide oversight to all student disability services on campus, coordinates training for College Coordinators, updates policies and procedures, maintains the ADA webpage and may assist in the provision of auxiliary aids (e.g. interpreters, note-takers) and chairs the Student Disability Committee.

3. **EEO/Affirmative Action Director:** provides policy guidance to the College Coordinators and the 504 ADA Coordinator, conducts compliance reviews of university programs and services, and responds to and hears grievances concerning services to students with disabilities. Reports to the Associate Provost for Education and Student Life.

4. **Resource Personnel:** Most auxiliary units, such as the Library and Computer Services, have designated resource personnel with special expertise in assisting students with disabilities. Both faculty members and students with disabilities are encouraged to seek them out and make use of their expertise.

#### **B. Committee(s)**

A Student Disability Committee will meet periodically. The committee will consist of, but is not limited to all College Coordinators for the six colleges and be chaired by the 504 ADA Student Coordinator. The committee will meet to make necessary changes to policies and procedures and ensure that the ADA program is flexible and meets both the spirit and the intent of the applicable laws.

### **Section III: Procedures for Accessing Student Disability Services**

All students seeking accommodation for a disability must complete the process of obtaining a determination of eligibility and a Letter of Accommodation listing approved accommodations before they should actually receive accommodations from faculty members. This process assists the University to make consistent, principled decisions with regard to student accommodations and provides guidance to students and faculty alike on the proper course of action with respect to disability accommodation. A list and short explanation of some types of disabilities is located in Appendix B.

Students are advised of the following information pursuant to the Student Handbook.

#### **A. Student Responsibilities:**

1. **Eligibility:** In order to receive accommodations or services a student must identify him/herself to the College Coordinator and provide documentation from an appropriate professional source (e.g. M.D., psychologist, learning specialist, and neurologist) which establishes the existence of a disability and verifies the need for accommodations or auxiliary aids.

2. **Who to Contact:** New students who have indicated a disability at the time of acceptance will be contacted by the College Coordinator in their degree-granting unit. A student attempting to access disability services for the first time should begin by contacting the appropriate College Coordinator. It is the student's responsibility to schedule an "intake" meeting with the appropriate College Coordinator as soon as they arrive on campus.

**Academic Accommodations From Faculty.** Students should NOT seek academic accommodations from faculty until they have completed intake with their College Coordinator. **If the student contacts you regarding accommodations for his or her disability without providing a letter from the Coordinator, you should refer the student to the appropriate Coordinator listed in Appendix A.**

## **B. Responsibilities of the 504 ADA Student Coordinator**

Works with the College Coordinators to ensure the following steps (1-6) are conducted in a coordinated fashion. Ensures that communication between faculty, student and coordinator is always maintained; documents and ensures all records are stored promptly, and secured in a confidential fashion. Reports to the EEO Director as necessary and ensures all reports are made to the appropriate personnel.

## **C. Responsibilities of the College Coordinator.**

After a student has properly initiated a request for services, the College Coordinator is responsible to do all the following:

1. Review the documentation provided by the student to determine the eligibility of the student for services. If the College Coordinator is not able to clearly determine that the student's documentation is either sufficient or insufficient, the College Coordinator is expected to: ask for further documentation and/or consult with appropriate professional staff at MUSC (e.g. University Health Services physicians or nurses, learning specialists, psychologists or one of the standing review committees) as necessary.
2. If the student's disabilities include learning disabilities, ADD or ADHD, or a psychiatric disability, the complete documentation will be forwarded to the appropriate committee for a determination of eligibility and appropriate accommodations, based on a review of the student's needs, the documentation provided, student history and prior experience. If the student's disability does not fall into one of the categories handled by the committees, the College Coordinator will make the determination of eligibility and appropriate accommodations based on the factors set forth below in Section IV.A.2.
3. Communicate the determination of eligibility and approved accommodations to the student and provide a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) to faculty, service providers and the student. The LOA verifies that the student has documented a disability and lists accommodations that are appropriate for that student. The student is expected to show a copy of the LOA to faculty or staff when making requests for accommodations and services. The LOA will NOT identify the specific disability for reasons of confidentiality.
4. Discuss with faculty any concerns over the appropriateness of accommodations.

5. Ensure that the student receives appropriate accommodations. In support of this responsibility, the College Coordinator may need to assist the student by arranging for auxiliary aids through the ADA 504 Student Coordinator's Office (who may assist), negotiating the logistics of accommodations with faculty or staff and addressing circumstances where appropriate accommodations were not provided in a satisfactory manner.

6. Refer promptly any unresolved disputes concerning documentation, services or accommodations to the ADA 504 Student Coordinator in accordance with the Grievance Procedure.

#### **D. Faculty Responsibilities**

Once the student has obtained a Letter of Accommodation from the College Coordinator, instructors are legally obligated to provide the accommodations specified therein, unless the instructor is able to document that the accommodation constitutes a "direct threat" to the health and safety of others, would be an undue administrative burden, would be financially prohibitive, or would fundamentally alter the nature of the course. These exceptions are RARELY, if ever, granted.

1. When meeting with a student requesting accommodation, you should:

- Schedule an appointment with the student (making sure the location is fully accessible if the student is mobility impaired.)
- Confirm that you have received and reviewed the Letter of Accommodation from the College Coordinator. If not, the student should present a copy and you should review it together.
- Discuss specific details about how the accommodations will be handled. For example, if extended time on an examination or a distraction-free room is an appropriate accommodation, be sure to discuss when the student will take the exam, where the student will take the exam, how the student will receive the exam and who will proctor the exam.
- Be flexible – there is often more than one right way to provide an accommodation. If you cannot immediately identify a solution, participate in problem-solving with an open mind. You are encouraged to contact the College Coordinator or the 504 ADA Student Coordinator for technical assistance.
- You should provide only those accommodations listed in the LOA. If you decide to provide additional or different accommodations than those listed in the LOA, you must make it clear that this is your decision, not that of the University.

2. If you believe that any accommodation requested is unacceptable for any of the reasons listed above, either during your initial meeting with the student or at any time thereafter, immediately contact the College Coordinator who issued the LOA.

3. You must protect **confidentiality** regarding the student's disability. The faculty member should **not** discuss the disability or accommodations during class time, or do anything to single out the student that is not explicitly set forth as a recommended accommodation. (e.g. Do

not announce that you want to see any students with disabilities after class, do not say e.g. “Robert, I know you have a hearing problem so why don’t you sit up front.”) You may not mention the request for accommodations in any way to other students in the class, unless they have been actively recruited to participate in the provision of accommodations, such as taking notes for the student with a disability. Even in this event, the student should not be specifically identified if possible. (E.g. when recruiting note-takers, say “There is a student in the class who has a disability that makes it difficult for the student to take good notes. Would you be willing to have your notes copied for that student?”)

Please be advised that federal law **prohibits** retaliation in any form against the student for seeking disability accommodations, such as extra work requirements, extra assignments or extra lab work.

## **Section IV Working with Students with Disabilities**

### **A. Providing Accommodations: Policies and Procedures**

1. Are accommodations based simply on the type of disability or are they provided on a case-by case basis?

Accommodations for each student will be determined on an individualized basis. Students with similar disabilities may not necessarily receive the same accommodations. There is no list of approved accommodations for any specific disability.

2. How are Accommodations Determined?

Upon receipt of complete documentation, the College Coordinator in concert with the 504 ADA Student Coordinator will either refer the request for accommodations to the appropriate committee or, when there is no committee, the College Coordinator and the 504 ADA Student Coordinator will make a decision on whether to grant the request for accommodations. The determination to grant accommodations shall be based upon all of the following:

- documentation provided by the student;
- the in-take interview with the student;
- consultation with other MUSC staff with appropriate expertise and who have reviewed the documentation,
- academic policies of the student’s college or school,
- the policies and practices set forth in this Handbook,

- consultation with course faculty regarding the essential course elements and the manner in which student mastery of course material is to be evaluated.
3. Once the Letter of Accommodation is issued, can the list of approved accommodations be changed or adjusted?

The initial accommodation determination of the College Coordinator and the 504 ADA Student Coordinator may be modified for any number of reasons. Some common reasons for changing the initial accommodation determination are:

- The faculty member teaching the course determines that providing the accommodation would fundamentally alter an essential element of the course;
- The student tries the accommodation and it is not effective;
- The student requests a different accommodation, provided it is reasonable and appropriate;
- The student does not accept the initial accommodation determination of the College Coordinator and the 504 ADA Student Coordinator and successfully grieves the issue to the **EEO/Affirmative Action Director**;
- The College Coordinator and the 504 ADA Student Coordinator substitutes an equally effective accommodation for reasons of administrative efficiency.

**In addition**, the student may choose not to utilize all the accommodations allowed in the LOA. If this occurs, ask the student to state this intention in writing, so that she/he cannot later claim that the accommodation was refused.

4. If a student obtains the Letter of Accommodation after the beginning of classes, do I have to go back to the beginning and retest or reevaluate assignments completed before the Letter of Accommodation?

A student who completes the in-take process with their College Coordinator is entitled to services and accommodations only from that date forward. MUSC will generally not expunge or reexamine course work completed before documentation of a disability even if the student can establish that they had a disability at the time of the course work in question. (The faculty member does have the discretion to allow students to revise completed work or retake tests, but this is at the sole discretion of the faculty member.)

5. The LOA doesn't say what disability the student has. Can I ask the student about the specific nature of her/his disability?

Due to privacy laws and related concerns, faculty members may not ask students or disability personnel for details regarding the specific disability for which the student is being accommodated.

6. If the student is determined eligible to receive accommodations, does the University give them every accommodation they ask for?

Not all accommodation requests are granted. MUSC will only provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations based upon a review of the factors described in the response to Questions 1 and 2 of this Section IV.A. This means that students may not necessarily be provided with all the accommodations recommended in their documentation. Some common reasons that MUSC might not provide a requested accommodation include:

- providing the accommodation would fundamentally alter the program, course, or activity;
- the accommodation being requested is not supported by the documentation;
- it is against the policies and practices set forth in this Handbook to provide the requested accommodation (e.g. unlimited time on tests);
- providing the accommodation would pose a direct threat to the student or to others;
- providing the accommodation would constitute an undue administrative or financial burden pursuant to criteria established under the ADA and/or Section 504.

7. What about interim accommodations?

In rare circumstances, a student who has not provided all documentation required under the Documentation Guidelines may be granted accommodations on an interim basis. To be eligible for interim accommodations, a student must have at least provided reliable documentation that gives a clear diagnosis of a physical or mental impairment. Only accommodations which are typically appropriate for the student's impairment will be offered on an interim basis. Interim accommodations will normally be provided for eight (8) weeks. In no event will interim accommodations be continued for more than one (1) semester. The purpose is to allow students who do not have pre-existing documentation conforming to the Documentation Guidelines the opportunity to obtain supplemental documentation. If it is the informed judgment of the College Coordinator that the student will be unable to later substantiate the requested accommodation, the accommodation will not be provided.

## **B. Some Common Types of Accommodations**

In recent experience, the following accommodations are among the most common requested by students and recommended by professionals. This is not a complete list and each student must demonstrate through documentation a legitimate need for any accommodation before it is approved for that student.

1. Extra Time: Extended time for examinations is perhaps the most common accommodation for students with disabilities. Extra time may be warranted when a student's documented disability impacts the student's ability to process information, such as students who read particularly slowly due to visual impairments or a learning disability (such as dyslexia), or students who must have questions read to them due to a visual impairment. Extra time is also

warranted when a student has difficulty communicating his/her response. Students who write particularly laboriously due to a disability are examples of the latter.

Extra time will generally be limited to time and a half (150%), of the standard allotted time, or double time (200%). MUSC does not officially approve the accommodation of “unlimited time” since such an open-ended commitment can be impossible to administer. There may be circumstances when extended time on an exam would fundamentally alter the test instrument and thus would not be required under the law. Such circumstances will be relatively rare and will generally involve tests where time is a principal component being measured. Faculty who question whether extended time is an appropriate accommodation as applied to their course should consult with the student’s College Coordinator or the ADA 504 Student Coordinator.

As a practical matter the accommodation of extra time may involve administering the test at a different time and location, as well as the use of proctors. Contact the College Coordinator for assistance if necessary.

2. Reduced Distraction Testing Environments: These are commonly requested by students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD, or ADD), though students with anxiety disorders may also seek reduced distraction testing environments. Examples of reduced distraction environments are: empty or near-empty classrooms, an office, conference room, or study cubicle. The Learning Resource Centers cannot provide suitable reduced distraction testing environments. Faculty should attempt to identify a suitable testing location and obtain the student’s advance agreement to the specific location. This helps to avoid the possibility of students alleging that the environment was not satisfactory after taking an examination on which they perform poorly. Tests administered in a reduced distraction environment may require special proctoring arrangements. If you are unable to arrange for same, please contact the student’s Coordinator for assistance, preferably at least two (2) weeks in advance.

3. Readers: Students with visual impairments or with learning disabilities that affect reading comprehension (e.g. dyslexia) may use readers as an accommodation. Readers are often used in advance of a class to read texts onto tape. To provide this service, the disability services coordinators require advance copies of all reading materials and textbooks. These materials must be read onto audio cassettes sufficiently in advance of the due date to allow the student ample time to listen to and review the cassettes. Accordingly, your cooperation in providing copies of these materials, as well as a syllabus with intended due dates, well in advance of actual due dates, is of paramount importance. Coordinators may be able to obtain textbooks directly from the University Bookstore, but course packs and handouts require your cooperation. Readers can also be used on exams to both read the questions to the students and to transcribe responses. This type of accommodation will generally also require alternate location testing, as there will be a necessary ongoing vocal exchange between the reader and the student with the disability.

4. Note-takers: Note-takers are used by students who cannot write at a speed necessary to take notes during class, students with attention deficit disorders and students with LD. An effective solution is to advise the other students in the class of a need for note-takers and request two volunteers (they will possess the necessary context and have incentive to take good notes.) You, as the faculty member, have the most credibility to make this request. Remember, this

request must be made in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the student with the disability, unless the student agrees otherwise. (Don't say, e.g. "John needs notes, who want to share theirs with him?") Ask for volunteers to meet with you after class. Another approach is to hire someone not already taking the class, this can lead to inconsistent quality of notes; the individual may not have the necessary background to adequately comprehend the lecture or discussion that takes place in class. Hiring students who have previously completed the class may be more appropriate when a current student is not available. Copies of lecture notes provided by the professor either in person or posted on the web are another option. Commercial note taking services will be used only as a last resort.

5. Tape Recorders: Tape-recorders are most often used by students with visual or manual impairments. Students with learning disabilities may also request this accommodation. If a student requests the use of a tape-recorder as an auxiliary aid and it is related to a documented disability we cannot refuse the request. Faculty concerned about copyright and inappropriate use of the tapes may enter into a written agreement with the student requiring the student to use the tapes only in connection with his/her personal understanding and completion of the course and requiring the student to turn over all tapes at the end of the term. See Exhibit D for a sample agreement.

6. Interpreters: Interpreters are often requested by those with hearing and/or visual loss. Try to meet with the interpreter prior to the start of classes in order to describe your teaching style, and to ascertain where you will be and where the interpreter will be in the classroom. The provision of a vocabulary list containing any technical words which you commonly use is also helpful.

7. Class relocation: Students with mobility concerns may need the class relocated to an accessible classroom and building. The class scheduler should take care of this matter.

8. Absence Waivers: Students suffering depression, chronic illness, psychiatric disorders or other problems may have health issues that preclude them being in class at certain times. Faculty should work with the College Coordinator to ensure that attendance is sufficient so that course requirements can be met within a reasonable time or to make alternate arrangements.

9. Test Format Changes: Some students may need a reader to read the questions aloud to the student and a transcriber to write down their answers (often the same person.) They may also need changes in the nature of the test questions. This accommodation is rarely granted and the faculty member should work with the College Coordinator for specific information with regard to the needs of each student.

10. Extra Time on Assignments: Students suffering depression, chronic illness, psychiatric disorders or other problems may have health issues that preclude them being finishing course assignments on a timely basis. Faculty should work with the College Coordinator to ensure that course requirements can be met within a reasonable time or to make alternate arrangements.

## Section V Grievance Procedure

### Process for Appealing Recommended Accommodations

In the event that a faculty member believes an accommodation recommended by the College Coordinator and the 504 ADA Student Coordinator is not appropriate for the course, please use the following appeals process.

1. All concerns regarding the appropriateness of recommended accommodations should first be brought to the Coordinator for the Concerns of Students with Disabilities (“College Coordinator”) in the student’s college or program of enrollment.
2. If the faculty member is dissatisfied with the College Coordinator’s response, the faculty member may request review of the response in writing to the **EEO/Affirmative Action Director** within 10 calendar days of the College Coordinator’s final response. The request shall specify: a) The accommodation in question; b) The nature of the faculty member’s dissatisfaction with the accommodation; c) The College Coordinator’s response to the faculty member’s concerns.
3. The **EEO/Affirmative Action Director** shall investigate the matter, affording all interested parties an opportunity to submit relevant evidence, statements and documentation.
4. The **EEO/Affirmative Action Director** shall issue to the faculty member a written determination specifying the resolution of the matter. Such written determination shall ordinarily be issued within thirty (30) days of the date of the request for review. Circumstances which may prolong the response of the **EEO/Affirmative Action Director** include the intervention of a semester break and such other circumstances which may render unavailable persons necessary to an appropriate resolution of the request.
5. The **EEO/Affirmative Action Director** shall maintain files and records relating to all such requests for review.
6. Until resolution can be reached, the accommodation suggested should be provided in as complete form as is feasible so that the student does not suffer during this process.
7. If a student believes that she/he has been discriminated against due to a disability, she/he can file a grievance with the **EEO/Affirmative Action Director**. If dissatisfied with the response of the **EEO/Affirmative Action Director**, students have a statutory right to file a complaint with an external, governmental agency, such as the Office of Civil Rights, or a complaint may be filed in state or federal court.

## Appendix A: List of Coordinators and 504/ADA Officer

**Jennifer Bailey,**  
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## **Appendix B**

### **Types of Disabilities<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Attention Deficit Disorder / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD)<sup>2</sup>**

A. Understanding ADD and ADHD. Attention deficit disorder (ADD) and Attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are neurobehavioral disorders. They interfere with a person's ability to stay on a task and to exercise appropriate inhibition (cognitive alone or both cognitive and behavioral.) Some of the warning signs of ADD and ADHD include failure to listen to instructions, inability to organize oneself and school work, fidgeting with hands and feet, talking too much, leaving projects, chores and homework unfinished, and having trouble paying attention to and responding to details. There are several types of ADHD: a predominantly inattentive subtype, a predominantly hyperactive-impulsive subtype, and a combined subtype.

B. Possible accommodations. The College Coordinator works with students with ADD and ADHD to identify accommodations that will help them minimize the effects of their disability on their academic work. Possible accommodations for students with ADD or ADHD include but are not limited to extended time on tests, reduced distraction testing environments, note takers in class, reading texts onto tape, permission to use word processors for in class assignments, transcribers, and tutors. Professors are not, however, expected to alter the fundamental requirements of the course or modify grading standards.

#### **Blind/Visual Impairment**

A. Understanding vision impairment. Many students who are legally blind have some percentage of measurable vision. Students with no vision may use many of the same assistive devices as vision impaired students but rely solely on audio or tactile devices to receive information.

B. Early preparation of the syllabus and books on tape. Many students with vision impairments use books on tape. Students with vision impairments are asked to choose their courses early in the registration process to provide time to read texts onto tape or obtain them in alternate formats when necessary. This accommodation is greatly facilitated by obtaining the texts weeks, or preferably months before the course begins. Reading books onto tape is a time consuming process. You may be asked to identify which chapters are due on specific dates so if the material can be provided to the student on a timely basis. A second copy of the textbook is often requested so that the student

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<sup>1</sup> The information contained in this Appendix B is general in nature and MUSC makes no claim as to exact medical accuracy. Physicians and other medical experts should be consulted for precise medical explanations.

<sup>2</sup> The information in the following paragraph has been taken from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder Information Page: [http://www.ninds.nih.gov/health\\_and\\_medical/disorders/adhd.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/health_and_medical/disorders/adhd.htm).

can follow the class in their copy of the book while chapters due later in the course are read onto tape for that student.

C. Additional suggestions: Large print books, text magnifiers, audio taped texts, note takers and taped lecturers are some of the aids that visually impaired students may use for assistance. Printing papers in larger fonts is another way to accommodate for the limited vision. Talking calculators and computers, reading machines, and Braille machines are also used by blind students.

MUSC has a limited number of readers available in-house and readers may also be obtained through outside sources. Please contact the College Coordinator in your unit for more information.

### **Deafness or Hearing Impairment**

A. Understanding hearing loss. Hearing loss manifests itself in varying degrees in individuals with hearing impairments. The degree of hearing loss will determine the accommodation needed in the classroom. Even students who can lip-read well often find it difficult keep up with the discussion in a classroom or a complicated lecture. Because the student wears a hearing aid it is not necessarily true that he or she can discern the spoken word. Many people who are deaf and do not speak have chosen not to speak because they feel their speech will not be understood.

B. Working with interpreters. Some students will use an ASL interpreter in the classroom. There is a lag time between what is being said in class and the hearing impaired student's receipt of the information. The student's comments in the class may be delayed due to the time taken to interpret the information. You can assist the interpreter by encouraging one person to speak at a time. When talking through an interpreter, address your comments to the student. Meetings with the deaf student and the interpreter are encouraged to establish the most effective way for the deaf person to receive and communicate information. In classes with specialized vocabulary, it is useful to provide these to the student and the interpreter ahead of time so the information is accurately conveyed.

C. Additional suggestions for accommodating deaf students or students with hearing impairments:

- Use visual aids, such as overheads and handouts when possible. Posting your lectures on the web can also be very useful.
- Avoid oral testing.
- As with other disabilities, a note taker will often be requested. It is nearly impossible for the person to take notes and lip-read or watch an interpreter simultaneously.

### **Mobility Impairment**

A. Understanding mobility impairment. Access to classroom, office and laboratory facilities are among the major problems faced by students with mobility impairments. When a class is scheduled for an inaccessible room or building and a student who uses a wheelchair or who has limited mobility is scheduled to take that class, by law the class must be moved to an accessible location. If a student notifies you of a building access problem, please contact either the student's Coordinator or the ADA Compliance Officer immediately.

B. Other Mobility Concerns. Students with mobility impairments periodically face difficulties in arriving at class on time. Many of these students depend upon our transit service to move from class to class. Traffic delays, equipment failure, or scheduling conflicts will occasionally impact the reliability of the transit service. In addition, some students who require attendant care must rely on the promptness of their attendants in getting them to class. Coordinators will attempt to minimize such problems by helping the student to schedule appropriate gaps between classes. Should attendance problems nevertheless arise, it is appropriate and helpful to talk to the student about the situation and seek solutions together.

If your office is in an inaccessible location and a student with mobility impairment would like an appointment, it will be necessary to find an alternate, private location that is accessible to the student.

C. Additional suggestions for accommodating students with mobility impairments:

- Provide space among the desks for a wheelchair, if necessary.
- Provide advance notice if class activity will be held elsewhere. If the assigned area has restricted accessibility, this generally requires the relocation of the class activity to an accessible site.
- If the student has limited use of his/her hands, providing a written list of terms is helpful.
- A student with limited hand function may also need assistance in test taking and/or extended time limits. Prior to examinations, contact the College Coordinator to make appropriate arrangements for students with limited motor control.
- A note taker may be requested by students with limited motor control.

### **Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs)**

A. Understanding learning disabilities. These are collectively among the most common disabilities faced by students at the University. "Learning Disabilities" is a generic term that includes: Dyslexia, developmental aphasia, dysgraphia, expressive dysphasia, aural receptive dysphasia, and sequential memory disorder. These disabilities can manifest through significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, writing, reading, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. Although the processes

by which a student learns may be disrupted by their disability, their capacity to learn remains intact. A person with a specific learning disability is often of above average intelligence but has difficulty processing information due to neurologically based sensory and motor dysperceptions. For example, some students may be extremely good at written assignments but experience failure in oral examinations due to difficulties processing oral information.

If you notice a student who performs exceptionally well in class yet consistently underperforms on exams or quizzes, or if the handwriting seems child-like or papers contain an abundance of spelling errors, you may want to refer the student to the College Coordinator for testing. Many students are first diagnosed with learning disabilities in college when time pressures and other factors create new work environments. Other students may have been diagnosed with an SLD at a young age and may have dedicated extensive time to learning how to cope with their disability. Some skills such as research or essay writing may not have been developed before coming to college. Referring the student to the Learning Resource Center is another option.

The College Coordinator works with learning disabled students to identify accommodations that will help them minimize the effects of their disability on their academic work. Common accommodations for students with learning disabilities include but are not limited to extended time on tests, note takers in class, reading texts onto tape, permission to use word processors for in class assignments, transcribers, and tutors. Professors are not, however, expected to alter the fundamental requirements of the course or modify grading standards.

## **Chronic Health Impairments**

A. Understanding some chronic health impairments. Chronic health impairments include cystic fibrosis, cerebral palsy, diabetes, sickle cell anemia, cancers, AIDS, hemophilia, seizure disorders, muscular dystrophy, rheumatoid arthritis and many others, including drug or alcohol addiction.<sup>3</sup> At times these diseases can have acute phases requiring bed rest or hospitalization.

Absenteeism, associated with the disability, needs to be accepted and schedules for completion of requirements may need adjustment. Many students with chronic illnesses tire easily, suffer from the side effects of the medication they take, and have difficulty maintaining a consistent schedule. If you observe sporadic attendance or performance, meeting with the student may be necessary to isolate the problem and possible solutions. It is important to establish a procedure for the student to communicate with you when they must miss class due to their illness.

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<sup>3</sup> Students who are recovering from drug or alcohol abuse or who are in treatment programs to assist their recovery are covered by federal anti-discrimination legislation and **are eligible** for services for students with disabilities.

B. The most common issues faculty members will encounter with regard to students with chronic health impairments are:

- 1) Absenteeism;
- 2) Late completion of course work.

C. All of the following should be considered when responding to the concerns of students with chronic health impairments:

- ✓ Rigid attendance requirements may not generally be applied to students who miss a number of class sessions due to a chronic illness.
- ✓ There is a point at which chronic absenteeism will prevent a student from completing a given course. Determining when this will occur for a student with chronic health impairment must be a decision analyzed on a case by case basis and in consultation with the student, the Coordinator and an academic advisor.
- ✓ Chronic illness is not a free license for students to turn in late coursework with impunity. A specific and documented period of absence related to a chronic illness may be justification for an extension of an assignment deadline.

C. Additional Points to Remember when teaching students with chronic illnesses:

- Late completion of selected assignments or courses may be necessitated.
- Scribes, class notes, or taped lectures may be necessary.
- Occasional use of wheelchairs may be necessary.
- Medications may change and create changes in behavior.

## **Psychiatric Disability<sup>2</sup>**

A. Understanding mental illness. Psychiatric and psychological disabilities are diagnosed mental illnesses or disorders that substantially limit one or more major life activities. Common forms of mental illness include depressive disorders and schizophrenia. They do not include mental retardation or brain injury. Mental illnesses may vary in intensity and duration, and may recur from time to time. It is important to note that a mental disorder in or of itself does not necessarily constitute a “disability.” Many mental illnesses can be controlled using a combination of medication and psychotherapy so that they do not “substantially limit” a student’s productivity and success in the academic environment.

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<sup>2</sup> Information contained in this section was derived from the Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation website, [www.bu.edu/cpr/reasacom/index.html](http://www.bu.edu/cpr/reasacom/index.html), and the University of Michigan Services for Students with Disabilities Student Handbook.

B. The symptoms of the illnesses and the medications may cause problems with memory, concentration, relating to others, managing or experiencing emotions, organizing and managing time and increased absences. Accommodations may include changes in schedules, instructions and ways of interacting with the student. Each situation must be treated on an individual basis and many people with psychiatric or psychological disabilities may not need accommodations of any kind.

## Appendix C

### Some Common Questions about Students with Disabilities and the Statutory Response

**Question:** MUSC accommodated students with disabilities long before the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Why is this so?

**Answer:** *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, [29 USCA 794]*

“No otherwise qualified individual with a disability...shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance...”

*Section 504 Implementing Regulations [34 CFR Part 104]*

“A recipient to whom this subpart applies shall make such modifications to its academic requirements as are necessary to ensure that such requirements do not discriminate or have the effect of discriminating, on the basis of handicap, against a qualified handicapped applicant or student. Academic requirements that the recipient can demonstrate are essential to the program of instruction being pursued by such student...will not be regarded as discriminatory within the meaning of this section.”

**Question:** I received a Letter of Accommodation telling me that I have to modify my testing procedures to allow a student extra time on his exams. Why am I required to grant this modification?

**Answer:** *Section 504 Implementing Regulations [34 CFR Part 104]*

“Course examinations. In its course examinations or other procedures for evaluating students’ academic achievement in its program, a recipient to which this subpart applies shall provide such methods for evaluating the achievement of students who have a handicap that impairs sensory, manual, or speaking skills as will best ensure that the results of the evaluation represents the student’s achievement in the course, rather than reflecting the student’s impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (except where such skills are the factors the test purports to measure.)”

**Question:** To accommodate a student with hearing loss, I am supposed allow a interpreter to sign all my lectures. I believe this will be a distraction to other students. Why must I allow this accommodation?

**Answer:** *Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Regulations [28 CFR 35.130(b)(7)]*

“A public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless the public entity can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity.”



## Letter of Accommodation

### Insert Date

Reference Student: **Insert Name**

Dear :

The above-named student is a student in the XXX academic program and has requested academic accommodations. The Medical University of South Carolina has an obligation to provide academic accommodations in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The accommodations listed below ensure equal educational opportunities for this student's documented disabilities. However, they should not contradict stated objectives and essential requirements of your course. It is the student's responsibility to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss specific needs and the provision of these accommodations in a manner appropriate to your classroom setting.

If you would like further assistance or have any questions or concerns, please free to contact me. Thank you for your time and efforts.

Classroom Accommodations (Sample)

When applicable and at the request of the student, please provide power point presentations, class notes, and/or outline for classes. Also, at the request of the student provide appointment time to discuss the completeness of class notes student has taken and/or to discuss important parts of a lecture after the class.

Regards,

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Some of the information contained herein was compiled directly from the following:

*Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504

*Teaching Students with Disabilities, The Ohio State University*

University of Virginia Faculty Guide to Accommodating Students with Disabilities.

# AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE MEDICAL RECORDS

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENT/RESIDENT:** Complete health care provider information and sign authorization release below. Make additional copies of this form for each of your health care providers, if you have more than one provider.

Sign and date all forms and return to:

**Michael L. Vanderhurst**  
504 ADA Student Coordinator  
Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office  
20 Ehrhardt Street, Unit # 2  
Charleston, SC 29425  
Phone Number: (843) 792-1282/fax 792-9581

## HEALTH CARE PROVIDER INFORMATION

Attending Health Care Provider's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Attending Health Care Provider's Specialty: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax Number: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

## AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE MEDICAL RECORDS

I have requested an accommodation from The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) under The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

**I hereby authorize the 504 ADA Student Coordinator for MUSC to communicate directly with the health care provider, in order to obtain clarification of issues relating to the functional limitations for which I am seeking an accommodation.**

**This authorization will automatically end within one year from the date I sign this form.**

Student/Resident's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:** Medical-related information shall be kept confidential and maintained separate from other personnel records. However, supervisors and managers may be advised of information necessary to the determinations they are required to make in connection with a request for an accommodation. First aid and safety personnel may be informed, when appropriate, if the disability might require emergency treatment or if any specific procedures are needed in the case of fire or other evacuations. Government officials investigating compliance with the ADA may also be provided relevant information as requested.