MEMORANDUM

**DATE: January 27, 2025**

**TO: Faculty/Instructors**

**FROM: Tawny L. McManus, Assistant Vice President for Accessibility & Disability Services**

 **Division of Institutional Equity (DoIE)**

**RE: WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES & ADA ACCOMMODATION FAQs**

Happy New Semester!

This memo is sent out bi-annually to provide information to assist you in ensuring that students with disabilities feel welcomed and have an equal opportunity for access and participation in your courses. Please join us in providing an inclusive educational environment for all of our UMBC students!

**Faculty Resources**

1. We provide faculty resource information on our Student Disability Services (SDS) website under the **“*Information for Faculty*” menu** heading at <https://sds.umbc.edu/resources/information-for-faculty/>.

The SDS website answers many FAQs and contains “Disability Accomm[odation Guidelines”](https://sds.umbc.edu/recommended-disability-statement-for-course-syllabi/) to assist you in supporting students. For example, we are often asked for a recommended syllabi statement, and there is a sample ready for you to use right on the resource page!

1. Please also **self-enrol**l in our Faculty SDS guide in *Blackboard* under the “*Organizations*” tab for resources.
* Weblink to *Blackboard “****SDS Accommodations Support for Faculty***[*”*: https://tinyurl.com/SDSfacultysupport](https://tinyurl.com/SDSfacultysupport)
* Faculty can also access our **online data portal** using the ***Accommodate* Faculty Module** via our website**.** The Blackboard organization link noted above has instructions for accessing this module.

►When you log into *Accommodate*, you can view the students with approved accommodations in your courses, and also see whether students have scheduled tests for your courses in SDS.

1. Join us for a *drop-in brown bag lunch and learn session*! Next one: 1/29/25 “*You Got An Accommodation Letter…*”
2. We host monthly Q & A’s that focus on varied topics with our Assistive Technology & Digital Access Specialist.

1. Invite us to attend department/staff meetings for individualized *ADA training* and discussion needs.

\*We also highly recommend attending the training sessions offered by our campus partners throughout the year on inclusive teaching practices, universal design for learning, and creating accessible course content. →*Follow our MyUMBC pages for event announcements (SDS, ADS, Instructional Technology Do-IT, FDC...)*

**FAQ SDS TOPICS & PROCEDURES: “***I got a letter, now what?”*

1. **ACCOMMODATIONS:** Instructors will receive an emailed letter directly from SDS listing the required ADA accommodation(s) if a student with a disability is in your class, is registered with SDS, and requested letters. Any letters you receive will be applicable to the current semester only.
2. If you have a TA or Co-instructor (who is not listed in the course schedule), please share the accommodation letter with them.
3. If you have a student who reports needing a disability accommodation but you have NOT received a letter from SDS, please refer the student to contact the SDS office. They may not be registered yet or may need to submit their accommodation request for the current semester.
4. Accommodation letters arrive throughout a semester/year. All students are informed about SDS on admission and orientation, but they have a right to request disability accommodations at any time on their academic journey; there is no deadline due date.
5. Instructors are NOT required to accommodate students retroactively who did not request SDS accommodations or did not have a letter sent. However, consideration of a student's reported challenges is encouraged. Reasonable flexibility and understanding may be advised.
6. Faculty ***cannot deny***or alter a student’s ADA accommodations. Reach out to SDS staff if there are concerns, and we will work collaboratively with you to find access solutions.
7. Students who have *COVID* or other brief, temporary illnesses (e.g., flu) are not typically considered students with disabilities. They will need to arrange make-up work directly with their faculty.
8. Advising: If a student informs you they require a [course substitution due to a disability](https://sds.umbc.edu/course-substitution-requests/), refer them to SDS. SDS-approved substitutions for Math or L201 GEP requirements will be noted in Peoplesoft Advising.
9. **SDS TEST PROCTORING:** SDS students must have a testing accommodation on their letter to receive accommodated testing in SDS. Only registered students with disabilities test in the SDS offices.
	1. SDS proctoring for in-person exams requires students to schedule appointments online at least **4-5 days** in advance. SDS does NOT proctor exams for online courses unless a specialized need exists. We encourage students to schedule all of their tests at the beginning of the semester, if possible.

[**Accommodated testing**](https://sds.umbc.edu/accommodated-testing/) **hours:**

**Mon/Thurs/Fri, 9 AM- 4 PM, & Tues/Wed 9 AM- 6 PM.**

* 1. Proctored testing is scheduled in the **SDS office MP 212** and in the **University Testing Center, UC 114**. The UC location is a pilot program as a result of a collaborative partnership with CNMS.
	2. NOTE: Extended-time test accommodations can be set up online through *Blackboard* tools when tests are online. Do-IT tools, such as the *Respondus Lockdown browser,* are also useful for proctoring online testing and are highly recommended. [Do-IT help resources link.](https://doit.umbc.edu/itnm/academic-continuity/available-tools-resources/)
	3. Instructors/TAs CAN provide testing accommodations themselves in their classrooms/offices (or through online proctor tools) if the ADA accommodation can be met (e.g., ensuring the correct amount of extended time is provided, a reduced distraction test environment, breaks, etc...).
	4. Testing accommodations are supported by medical documentation on file in SDS. They do not provide an unfair advantage to students with disabilities. *Accommodations allow students to demonstrate their knowledge alternatively, given environmental barriers.*
		+ Example: Consider if a student takes a test they have not studied for, then sitting with it for 1 hour versus 3 hours does not make them more likely to pass if they do not know the content. More time will, however, allow them to attempt every question if they may read or process information slower than their neurotypical peers.

**NOTE-TAKING ASSISTANCE:** Students with disabilities with this accommodation primarily use note-taking technologies and audio recording software to take notes.

1. **SDS provides** note-taking technology to students who *require* this support. Taking notes in this manner increases active learning with course content (versus passive receiving of copied notes).
2. SDS uses *Otter.ai*  recording software. “*Recording of lectures*” is listed on the accommodation letter to facilitate this. An audio recording agreement approved by UMBC's Office of General Counsel is linked to the accommodation letter for faculty to use with students if desired. It documents the following:

\*\*“*Recordings are only to be used for academic study and cannot be distributed elsewhere without instructor permission. Students may be subject to conduct sanctions if in violation.”*

\*Students can be asked *not to record sensitive discussions* where personal disclosure is likely.

1. If a student cannot use technology and *peer notetaker support* becomes necessary, **SDS will seek volunteers in the class and coordinate note delivery through SDS’s online student portal**. Faculty do not make SDS notetaker assignments unless SDS requests their assistance.
2. Instructors CAN provide their personal course notes as an access solution for student support.
3. Faculty concerns about audio recording as a required accommodation should be directed to SDS.
4. **ACCESSIBLE COURSE MATERIALS:** Accessibility is a shared campus responsibility. It benefits all students when courses are planned with universal design and inclusion in mind; be proactive!
	1. ALL course materials and videos must be provided in accessible formats (e.g., captioned videos regardless of whether a Deaf or hard of hearing student is in a class; readable PDFs- not images).
	2. Faculty are advised to attend training offered through DO-IT, FDC, & SDS on best practices in hybrid teaching, universal design, and accessibility. [PIVOT](https://pivot.umbc.edu/) self-service training is strongly recommended.
	3. USE *Blackboard*’s [Ally](https://wiki.umbc.edu/display/faq/Ally) tool, which scans and scores your course content for accessibility feedback.
	4. Run *Microsoft Word’s* “*Accessibility Checker*” on your self-created documents and self-correct errors.
	5. **Choose** accessible PDFs and digital textbooks, meaning texts that can be read by screen readers, not image/picture files or old copies of photocopied articles.

-*Check the library for digital articles and choose Open Educational Resources when possible. UMBC reference librarians can assist you in identifying these.*

* 1. Record lectures and use [Panopto](https://doit.umbc.edu/itnm/academic-continuity/available-tools-resources/) tools for auto-captioning. Host discussions/meetings in *Google* *Meets* or *WebEx* that have auto-captioning and transcripts available.
	2. *Why record?* Captions/transcripts can support all students in their learning, not just those with hearing disabilities. They support learning in students with note-taking challenges, auditory processing or attentional difficulties, English as a second language (ESL) learners, returning adult students, those who struggle in noisy or poor acoustic environments, and many others.
1. **ATTENDANCE AND ASSIGNMENT EXTENSION REQUESTS (DUE TO DISABILITY COMPLICATIONS)**
	1. When disability-related absences occur, students are responsible for contacting the faculty member and/or SDS as soon as possible, ideally in advance, to arrange for make-up.
	2. An accommodation for a make-up test or an assignment extension is NOT an automatic extension on all coursework for the entire semester. It is to be applied when an extenuating circumstance arises from a student's disability. Communication between students, faculty members, and SDS is essential.
	3. Any offered or agreed upon new due dates, extensions, or alternative assignments should be documented in writing (email to the student and disability@umbc.edu). Typical extensions are 24-48 hours, but it could be 7-14 days, depending on the specific health circumstances and type of assignment or project due. Referrals may be made to the Academic Success Center for a success planning meeting if the student is far behind and needs further assistance.
	4. Faculty should contact SDS staff if there are concerns about excessive absences or multiple extension requests reported (due to disability/health condition) to discuss possible solutions and impact.
	5. Faculty should NOT request any detailed disability information or health documentation be sent to them; this is confidential and maintained securely in SDS.
	6. Recognize that health challenges are not black and white, and one solution does not fit all cases. Empathic listening and flexibility are recommended, but you are not being asked to lower performance standards or alter fundamental course objectives.

Thank you for assisting UMBC in providing an accessible education to our increasingly diverse and talented SDS student population. Do not hesitate to contact our staff when questions arise. We look forward to working with you!

*\*Note: If you are an employee with questions about work-related accommodations due to a health condition, information can be found on the* [*Accessibility & Disability Services webpage*](https://accessibility.umbc.edu/employee-accommodations/requesting-work-related-accommodations-at-umbc-procedures/) *under the “Employees” menu heading.*

***New for Spring 2025, join ADS’s Sunflower Program Initiative and show your support for hidden disabilities!***

[***https://my3.my.umbc.edu/groups/sunflower***](https://my3.my.umbc.edu/groups/sunflower)



***ACCESSIBILITY & DISABILITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT***

***Office of Student Disability Services (SDS)***

***MP 212 - (410) 455-2459 -*** ***disABILITY@umbc.edu***

[**SDS.UMBC.EDU**](https://sds.umbc.edu/)