



Policy and Procedures For Disability Accommodations

These are Oklahoma Panhandle State University's Policies and Procedures in regard to Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Purpose

1.1 It is the policy of Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU) to offer educational opportunities and experiences to all students enrolled at the University on the basis of individual merit without interference from illegal, arbitrary, or capricious acts or omissions. OPSU will not tolerate discrimination against any student because of gender, race, age, status as a veteran, national origin, religion, or disability. OPSU embraces and commits itself and its faculty and staff employees to follow provisions of state and federal law prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities, including, but not limited to, the American with Disabilities Act ("ADA") and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

1.2 In order to assist applicants and students of OPSU regarding needed academic accommodations, OPSU has empowered its Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach and Director of Student Affairs with the authority to review complaints of potential disability discrimination and also has granted the Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee with the specific charge of working with students, staff and faculty to ensure appropriate steps are engaged in by the University in each case. The names of the current administrative officials overseeing those offices are identified in the OPSU General Catalog, the OPSU website (www.opsu.edu), the Office of the Director of Student Affairs, the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs

and Outreach, the Office of the President, and several other locations on campus.

1.3 This policy statement is intended to formalize procedures already established for the provision of academic accommodations for students with disabilities and to outline mechanisms for resolving complaints concerning the provision of such academic accommodations. This policy statement is intended to supersede and exercise control over any other policy of OPSU concerning whether the University is appropriately providing classroom, curricular, or access accommodations to a student with a disability.

1.4 OPSU shall make such modifications to its academic requirements as necessary to ensure requirements relating to its academic programs do not discriminate or have the effect of discriminating on the basis of disability against an applicant or student. Modifications, in appropriately documented instances, may include changes in the length of time permitted for the completion of degree requirements, substitutions of specific courses required for the completion of degree requirements, and adaptation of the manner in which specific courses are conducted. Determinations regarding the appropriateness of accommodations for students with disabilities must be made on an individualized, case-by-case basis.

1.5 OPSU will not impose upon students with disabilities other rules that have the effect of limiting the participation of students with disabilities in an educational program or activity.

1.6 In course examinations or other procedures for evaluating students' academic achievement in its programs, OPSU will provide such methods for evaluating the achievement of students with disabilities that impair sensory, manual, or speaking skills as will best ensure that results of evaluations represent the student's achievement, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (except where such skills are the factors that the test purports to measure).

1.7 OPSU will take steps as are necessary to ensure that no student with a disability is denied the benefits of, excluded from participation in, or otherwise subjected to, discrimination under the education programs or activities operated

by OPSU because of the absence of educational auxiliary aids for students with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills. Auxiliary aids may include taped texts, interpreters, or other effective methods of making orally delivered materials available to students with hearing impairments, readers in libraries for students with visual impairments, classroom equipment adapted for use by students with manual impairments, and other similar services and action.

1.8 Academic requirements that are essential to the program of instruction being pursued by a student with a disability or to any directly related licensing requirement will not be regarded as discriminatory.

Definitions

2.1 "student with a disability" is any student who:

- a. has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities,
- b. has a record of such impairment, or
- c. is regarded as having such impairment.

2.2 "physical or mental impairment" includes, but is not limited to:

- a. any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genitourinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or
- b. any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

2.3 The term "substantially limits" means:

- a. Unable to perform a major life activity that the average person in the general population can perform; or

- b. Significantly restricted as to the condition, manner or duration under which an individual can perform a major life activity as compared to the condition, manner, or duration under which the average person in the general population can perform that same major life activity.

2.4 Objective criteria for diagnosis of a "specific learning disability" have yet to be succinctly defined by educational psychologists. OPSU embraces the general guidelines suggested by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in 1991, which acknowledge that while multiple approaches are used in this area, specific criteria for diagnosis of a learning disability include: average to above average intellectual ability; severe processing deficits; severe aptitude achievement discrepancies, despite adequate learning opportunities; and a condition of presumed neurological origin.

2.5 A "classroom accommodation" is one where an alteration in the manner in which a specific class is conducted is requested by a student. Such alterations may include, but are not necessarily limited to, alterations in testing time limits, providing textual materials in alternative formats (such as on audiotape) and note taking.

2.6 A "curricular accommodation" is an alteration in degree program requirements. Such alterations may involve, but are not necessarily limited to, substitutions or waivers of classes normally required to successfully complete a degree program offered by the University, or alterations of time limits required for completion of degree programs.

2.7 An "access accommodation" is one where an alteration is made to allow physical access to equipment, a classroom, or facility. Such alterations may involve, but are not necessarily limited to, moving a scheduled class to a first floor classroom, removing snow and ice from handicap accessible parking spaces and walkways, and making physical alterations in buildings or equipment to provide access to facilities or classrooms.

Determination of Eligibility

3.1 Any student desiring to receive classroom, curricular, or access accommodations, as a mandatory prerequisite to receiving any such accommodations, must register with the Director of Counseling, provide competent medical documentation as requested evidencing the existence of a specific disability, and cooperate with the Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee in determining the type(s) of accommodations that may be warranted in the case. It is the affirmative obligation of the student not only to provide competent medical documentation as requested by the Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee, but also to renew any additional requests for accommodations each new academic semester.

3.2

- a. Competent medical documentation is required for two purposes: (1) to document the existence, nature, and extent of the physical or mental disability; and (2) to identify reasonable accommodations. Because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based on assessments of the current impact of the student's disabilities on his/her academic performance in a specific academic program, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation. In most cases, this means that the medical or psychological evaluation and report will have been conducted within the past five years. Learning assessments must be based upon adult-level learning. Assessments made at a pre-college level will qualify as acceptable documentation only if they reflect adult capabilities and the academic demands of higher education. Competent medical documentation, in order to be acceptable, must be rendered by a practitioner with credentials appropriate to the area in question.
- b. If a diagnostic report is incomplete or inadequate to determine the present extent of the disability or appropriate accommodations, OPSU may require

supplemental assessment at the student's cost. If the diagnostic report is complete but the University requires a second opinion (which may include getting a second opinion regarding the diagnostic report or a reevaluation of the disability), then OPSU may select the practitioner and shall bear the cost of the second assessment.

- c. The Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee may require a student to provide additional competent medical documentation evidencing the need for continued academic accommodations at any time that it appears that the student's physical or mental disability has substantially changed in character or if a student who has been granted special academic accommodations requests additional accommodations.

3.3 Verification of the existence of a disability will be retained in the Office of Counseling, Career Services, and Testing and will be shared with other OPSU personnel only as necessary and in conformity with applicable state and federal laws.

3.4 The Director of Counseling will assist students with disabilities who are seeking classroom, curricular, or access accommodations and will make recommendations to appropriate University personnel regarding accommodations, if any, that are believed to be needed by students. If recommended accommodations are not agreed upon between a student, the Director of Counseling, the Reasonable Accommodations Committee, faculty, or academic administrators, a request for further review may be filed by the student or the affected faculty member/academic administrator. Classroom accommodations as recommended by the Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee will be implemented during such time as the matter is under review. Curricular or access accommodations will not be implemented during the pendency of the review process.

3.5 A student who believes that appropriate academic accommodations are not being afforded by OPSU, may seek further review through informal or formal

means. Such a student may either file for formal review of such determination by following the processes set forth below in this policy statement or, prior to doing so, may seek informal resolution of the dispute by discussing the matter with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach or the Director of Student Affairs. The Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach will handle classroom and curricular accommodations. The Director of Student Affairs will handle access accommodations. During the time that the dispute is in informal review by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach or the Director of Student Affairs, the time frames for filing a formal appeal are set forth below.

Request for Review of Classroom Accommodation or Access Accommodation

4.1

- a. A request for special classroom accommodations or access accommodations, in order to assist a student with a disability, is initiated by the student filing a request with the Director of Counseling. The Director of Counseling initially reviews the request to assess whether the student has provided recent competent medical documentation evidencing the need for the accommodations being requested and then takes the request to the Reasonable Accommodations Committee to make a recommendation regarding accommodation(s) to be provided to the student. The Director will notify the student of the Reasonable Accommodations Committee's determination and, if an accommodation is recommended, will also notify the appropriate faculty member(s) of that recommendation.
- b. A student or faculty member disagreeing with a recommended classroom accommodation, or a recommendation from the Reasonable Accommodations Committee that no accommodation is warranted, may request further review by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach for accommodations related to classroom accommodations or the Director of Student Affairs for access accommodations. Forms for

such requests may be obtained from either the Office of Academic Affairs and Outreach, the Office of Student Affairs, or the Office of Counseling, Career Services, and Testing. The completed form and any desired attachments must be filed with the Office of Academic Affairs and Outreach or the Office of Student Affairs, and a copy filed with the Office of Counseling, Career Services, and Testing, within five (5) working days of the date that the person requesting has received notice of the accommodations, if any, recommended by the Reasonable Accommodations Committee. The Office of Academic Affairs and Outreach or the Office of Student Affairs will forward copies of the filed documents to the affected student or faculty member(s), and to the appropriate Unit administrator and Dean. The faculty member(s), unit administrator and Dean must maintain confidentiality regarding the request.

4.2 The student or faculty member(s) affected by the request for further review will be given the opportunity to present a written response to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach for classroom accommodations or the Director of Student Affairs for access accommodations. If no response is filed within 3 days, the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach or the Director of Student Affairs has the authority to make a determination without further delay.

4.3 The Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach or the Director of Student Affairs may seek technical and legal advice from the Director of Counseling, the Reasonable Accommodations Committee, and/or the Office of Legal Counsel to the Board of Regents regarding the matter.

4.4 The Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach or the Director of Student Affairs, after consulting with the Unit administrator and Dean, will make a final decision regarding the appeal. The appropriate Office will normally make such final decision within five (5) working days. A copy will be forwarded to the Office of Counseling, Career Services, and Testing for permanent retention with the student's file. There is no further appeal of such decision.

4.5 The student and faculty member/administrative official may mutually agree to some other form of accommodation at any time in the review process. If such an agreement is reached, such agreement should be memorialized in writing, signed by the student, and the review process automatically will be terminated.

Request for Review of Curricular Accommodation

5.1

- a. A request for a change in curricular or degree requirements in order to accommodate a student with a disability is initiated by filing a request with the Office of Counseling, Career Services, and Testing. The Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee initially review the request to assess whether the student has the ability to complete curricular or degree requirements as ordinarily required by the Department and College. The Director of Counseling will notify the Dean of the appropriate College of that assessment and of the accommodation(s) requested by the student. Such notification shall be made within ten (10) working days after the requested accommodation is received by the Director of Counseling.
- b. The Dean of the College is responsible for coordinating with appropriate academic unit faculty and college academic officials for the purpose of making a preliminary decision regarding the appropriateness of the requested accommodation. These officials will consider the recommendation of the Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee and the academic requirements of the curricular degree program at issue.
- c. The preliminary decision of the faculty/college academic officials is required to be in written form, explaining the reasons that such an accommodation should or should not be granted. While each case inherently must be judged on its own merits, consideration should be

- given to the actions taken in similar cases in the past to ensure fairness and comparable treatment.
- d. In making the preliminary decision, the academic unit faculty and college academic officials shall thoroughly consider the requested accommodation, its feasibility, cost, and effect on the academic program, and discuss other known alternatives that might be available. If the faculty/ University academic officials preliminarily conclude that the requested accommodation should be denied, that recommendation must be supported by a rationally justifiable conclusion that available alternatives to the usual academic requirements would result either in lowering academic standards or requiring substantial program alteration and must set forth in detail the factors considered by the faculty/academic officials in arriving at that conclusion.
 - e. A copy of the preliminary decision shall be transmitted to the student and to the Dean of the College at the same time. Such recommendation must be transmitted within ten (10) working days following the receipt of the documents from the Director of Counseling.
 - f. If the student disagrees with the preliminary decision, the student may file a request for review by the Dean.

5.2 Forms to initiate such further review may be obtained from the Office of Academic Affairs And Outreach or the Office of Counseling, Career Services, and Testing. The completed form and any attachments must be filed with the Office of the Dean of the respective College within ten (10) working days of the student's receipt of the preliminary decision that an accommodation not be granted, with a copy filed with the Office of Counseling, Career Services, and Testing and the Office of Academic Affairs and Outreach.

5.3 Copies of the request for further review will be forwarded by the Dean to the affected unit administrator for the purpose of receiving any additional written response desired to be given by the faculty. Such response must be filed with the

Dean within five (5) working days, with a copy transmitted to the student and to the Office of Counseling, Career Services, and Testing.

5.4 The Dean, or his/her designated representative, should ordinarily render a decision regarding the matter within ten (10) working days after receipt of the unit administrator's response. The Dean may seek academic, legal, or technical advice from College-level faculty committees or from University officials. If more than ten (10) days is required in a particular case, the Dean should give notice to the student and unit administrator of such fact, along with an anticipated date of response. The Dean's decision must include written reasons in support thereof.

5.5 If the student disagrees with the decision of the Dean, the student may request further review by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach by filing such a request within five (5) working days after receipt of the decision of the Dean. The Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach normally will make a final decision within fifteen (15) working days and will communicate such decision to the student, the Director of Counseling, the unit administrator, and Dean. There is no further appeal of such determination.

5.6 The student and faculty member/administrative officials may mutually agree to some other form of accommodation at any time in the review process. If such an agreement is reached, such agreement should be memorialized in writing, signed by the student, and the review process will automatically be terminated.

GUIDELINES FOR REQUESTING REDUCED SEMESTER COURSE LOAD/FULL-TIME STUDENT STATUS AS A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Purpose

6.1 The Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandate that institutions of higher education must make “reasonable accommodations” to the usual academic requirements for students with disabilities where such alterations are not essential to the academic program of the student and where they would not result in undue financial or administrative

burdens. The Department of Education states that modifications to academic requirements, or curricular accommodations may include “changes in the length of time permitted for completion of degree requirements.”

34 C.F.R.'104.44(a)(1996). Thus, students with qualified disabilities may be entitled to take less than the regularly expected “full-time” academic load and still be entitled to whatever privileges or benefits that are reserved for “full-time” students as determined by the institution of higher education.

Definitions

7.1 Under current Oklahoma Panhandle State University policy, full-time status is defined as follows:

Regular semesters: undergraduate students who are enrolled in 12 or more semester credit hours are classified as “full-time” students. Summer session: undergraduate students who are enrolled in six or more semester credit hours are classified as “full-time.” Credit hours enrolled in through correspondence study are not counted towards full-time status.

Procedure for Initiating Request

8.1 OPSU recognizes that students with qualified and documented disabilities, in appropriate cases, may request that specific accommodations be afforded them due to their disability. Under this policy, a request for accommodations is presented by the student to the Director of Counseling.

8.2 In order to ensure timely evaluation of a student’s request for reduced semester course load/full-time student status and his/her appropriate enrollment, a request must be made in writing by the student in advance of the start of classes for each semester that the accommodation is sought.

8.3 Any student desiring to receive reduced semester course load/full-time status, as a mandatory prerequisite to receiving any accommodations, must register with the Director of Counseling as a student with a qualified disability, provide competent medical documentation as required evidencing the existence of a specific disability and need for accommodations, and cooperate with the Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee in determining accommodations that may be warranted. The Director of

Counseling may require a student to provide additional competent medical documentation if it appears that the student's disability has substantially changed in character or if a student who has been granted academic accommodations requests additional accommodations.

Determination of Eligibility

9.1 The Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee will evaluate eligibility for reduced semester course load/full-time status using the following criteria:

- a. Medical documentation that specifically evidences the need for reduced semester course load.
- b. An academic record that substantiates difficulty in being a full-time college student.
- c. Related factors such as employment activities, co-curricular activities, family/personal obligations, inadequate academic preparation, failure to utilize appropriate academic accommodations, and poor class attendance must not be the primary reason(s) for a record of academic difficulty or the need for reduced semester course load.
- d. The load and rigor of the courses proposed for enrollment during the semester that reduced semester course load/full-time status is sought are of sufficient weight to necessitate accommodation.

9.2 In order to evaluate a student's eligibility for reduced semester course load/full-time status, the Director of Counseling may require a student to submit specific documentation, including additional medical documentation, academic transcripts, and other records as needed.

Request for Review of Curricular Accommodation

10.1 In the event that a student wishes to contest a decision by the Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee, the student may initiate a "Request for Review of Curricular Accommodations" to reach a final

determination. Forms to initiate such further review may be obtained from the Office of Academic Affairs and Outreach or the Office of Counseling, Career Services, and Testing, and must be filed within ten (10) working days of the student's receipt of the preliminary decision that an accommodation will not be granted.

10.2 Curricular accommodations, such as reduced semester course load/full-time student status, will not be implemented during the pendency of the review process.

Reasonable Accommodations Committee

The Reasonable Accommodations Committee will recommend appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. They will review all medical and educational documentation verifying a student's disability and analyze on a case-by-case basis the need for reasonable accommodations. The committee will determine reasonable accommodations, if any, for classroom and access accommodations and complete a Reasonable Accommodations Agreement for each student that it recommends accommodations. The committee will make recommendations on curricular accommodations to the appropriate Dean but will not be the deciding group on these accommodations. During any of the appeals processes for students seeking accommodations, this group will serve as an advisement committee for the Deans, the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach, and the Director of Student Affairs. This committee will meet one week before classes begin and one week after classes begin each semester. The committee will also meet on an as needed basis, to be determined by the Director of Counseling, in order to review new requests for accommodations. Membership consists of: The Director of Counseling (Chair), the Director of the University College, and two faculty members. The committee will report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach or the Director of Student Affairs. The membership will be affirmed each year by the President.

OPSU Disability Services Accommodation Request Form

To: **The OPSU Director of Counseling**

From: (Student's name) _____
 Address _____
 Telephone # _____

Date: _____

I am a student with a disability, who has applied for admission or is enrolled at OPSU. I am providing OPSU with the appropriate documentation to substantiate my request for disability accommodations. I understand that the following are considered appropriate documentation.

In the case of a medical, physical, or psychological disability, students should submit documentation from a qualified professional stating the nature and severity of the disability, the diagnostic procedures used, and recommendations for assistance. Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder must submit documentation of an adult evaluation from one of two sources.

- Students diagnosed prior to graduation from an accredited high school may submit the psychoeducational evaluation on file at the respective high school.
- Students diagnosed after completion of high school must submit a psychoeducational evaluation performed by an appropriate qualified professional.

I would like to request the following academic services or accommodations:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Student's Signature _____

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS AGREEMENT

TO: Mrs. Christi Hale

Director of Counseling

FROM: _____

Name

Street Address/P.O. Box

City/State/Zip

(_____) _____
Phone #

I have provided appropriate documentation (if required) to substantiate my request for disability accommodations. In the case of a learning disability, the appropriate designee on campus has reviewed those documents and recommendations are attached. I request the following accommodations:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

I understand that it will be necessary for me to self-identify to each of my instructors and make appropriate arrangements for these accommodations with them for each of their respective courses. I understand that I must repeat this process every semester by requesting accommodations with the Director of Counseling. I understand that a memo will be sent to each of my instructors regarding approved accommodations.

Student's Signature Date

Director of Counseling Signature Date

MEMO:

TO: _____

FROM: Mrs. Christi Hale
Director of Counseling

RE: Student with Special Needs

DATE: _____

OPSU, at the request of the student, will provide/coordinate a variety of support services to students with special needs and who are presently enrolled in classes. The services are designed to make classes fully accessible to these students while maintaining instructor standards of student performance. Those requesting accommodations for academic accommodations (i.e. learning and/or physical disabilities) are served through the office of Counseling, Career Services and Testing.

_____ is enrolled for the _____ semester and is requesting accommodations.

Course Title	Time	Day(s)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

My office has approved the following accommodations:

7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____

The student's needs are not always determined prior to the time classes begin. If you feel additional services could be of benefit or if you have concerns and/or questions about the student or services being provided, please feel free to contact my office.

Relevant background materials regarding the student are available upon request. Thank you for your concern and anticipated cooperation.

**DISABILITY SERVICES REQUEST FOR FURTHER
REVIEW OF CLASSROOM OR ACCESS
ACCOMMODATIONS.**

TO: The Vice President of Academic Affairs and Outreach or
The Director of Student Affairs

FROM: _____
Name Date

Check the appropriate box

_____ I am an OPSU Student. I feel that I have provided appropriate documentation to substantiate my request for disability accommodations. The Director of Counseling and the Reasonable Accommodations Committee have reviewed my documents and their recommendations are attached. I would like to request that you review further the classroom accommodations I am requesting below.

_____ I am an OPSU Faculty Member. I feel that the student classroom accommodation(s) for (student's name) _____ are unreasonable. I would like to request that you review further the classroom accommodations listed below.

List the accommodations you would like to be reconsidered and any comments you have regarding why they should be reconsidered. You can attach any necessary documentation to this form.

*A copy of this request must also be filed in the office of Counseling, Career Services, and Testing.

