

How to Provide Exam Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Access Matters at UChicago

Students with disabilities are valued members of the University of Chicago. An accessible and inclusive learning environment gives students the opportunity to participate fully in the exceptional course of study offered by UChicago.

Reasonable academic adjustments and accommodations are necessary to ensure an equal educational opportunity for many students with disabilities. UChicago is required by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide educational experiences for students with disabilities that are substantially similar to their peers.

The Role of Instructors

Instructors play a vital role in providing accommodations to students with disabilities. It is a best practice to consider access when planning your course, and it will minimize the need to retrofit your course to be accessible should you become aware that a student with a disability is enrolled. **We encourage you to consult with SDS to discuss any questions regarding testing accommodations.**

Benefits of Administering Testing Accommodations within the Course

Most students with disabilities prefer a testing environment that closely aligns with their peers.

Administering testing accommodations within the course has the following benefits:

- Test administration within the classroom or nearby allows students with disabilities to receive directions from the Instructor or designee in a comparable manner as their peers.
- Information about corrections and clarifications can be communicated directly to the student.
- Students will have equitable access to ask questions during exams.
- The possibility of an exam being lost is significantly decreased.
- Instructors are able to have complete control over test security.

Suggestions for Facilitating Testing Accommodations within your Course

1. Include an accessibility statement in your syllabus so that students are aware of the accommodation procedure in your course and promptly respond to students' requests.

Example: *The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring equitable access to our academic programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, please contact [Student Disability Services](#) (SDS) as soon as possible. To receive reasonable accommodations, you must follow the SDS procedures and follow up with me to discuss your access needs in this course in a timely manner. SDS is located at 5501 S. Ellis. Contact information: phone: 773-702-6000 email: disabilities@uchicago.edu*

2. Arrange an alternative testing space and a proctor(s) to administer the most frequently used accommodations. These include:

- Extended time for test-taking (e.g., 25%, 50%, 100%);
- Reduced-distraction testing environment;
- Stop-the-clock breaks to use the restroom, eat a snack, or administer a medical test; or
- Use of a computer for word processing or the use of assistive technology.

Helpful hints:

- For exams administered during class, keep in mind that students using extended time may have a class immediately before or after the exam. Students are not be required to miss a class to use accommodations.
 - Students taking language exams and quizzes may need to hear oral portions of the assessment more than once. Be prepared to administer individual assessments.
 - Students who have unexpected medical flare-ups and are approved for make-up exams must be offered make-up quizzes/exams of equivalent difficulty. If you are concerned about academic integrity and/or fairness to other students or the prep work required, please consult with SDS about how to best set up this accommodation while addressing these issues.
 - Departmental Administrators/Coordinators or the Registrar's Office may be able to assist with finding appropriate testing space.
 - Quizzes also require accommodations. Plan to give quizzes at a time during the class that will allow for extended time, or alternative quiz administration, such as online quizzes.
3. Respect the student's right to confidentiality about their disability status.
 - When communicating with a group of students by email about the exam arrangements, blind copy the students to avoid sharing their identities with their peers.
 - Discuss accommodations with students in a private setting, such as during office hours or by appointment.

- Students are not required to disclose details about their disability, such as their diagnosis. Instructors should not request or accept a doctor's note from a student with a disability. All documentation should only be shared with SDS, where it can be safeguarded.
- Faculty and University staff should never ask for a diagnosis or the type of disability, but may focus their inquiry around the student's functional limitations. For example, you may ask how the condition will affect the student's attendance, class participation, or ability to meet deadlines or take exams.

4. Provide the accommodations that are listed on the Accommodation Determination Letter from SDS. Refer any student who has not been formally approved for accommodations and does not have a letter to SDS. (Exception: The College's Advising Office may reach out to faculty to offer academic consideration to students with short-term acute medical needs.)

Descriptions of Academic Accommodations

1. Extended Time

Types: Time-and-a-quarter (1.25x), time-and-a-half (1.5x), double time (2x)

Description: Extended time is calculated based on the length of time that the class is being given to complete an assessment. For example, if the class is being given 50 minutes to complete an exam, students with time-and-a-half accommodations would be given 75 minutes, and students with double time accommodations would be given 100 minutes. Please note that in certain circumstances the extended time accommodation may only apply to assessments that require mathematical calculation. If this is the case, it will be specified on the student's accommodation letter.

Common Eligibility (includes but is not limited to): ADHD, anxiety, reduced processing speed, concussion, injury to dominant hand, learning disabilities, physical or sensory impairments, etc.

2. Reduced-Distraction Testing Environment

Types: Individually (alone), small group

Description: A reduced-distraction testing environment is an environment separate from the regular classroom that limits interruptions or other distractions (i.e. paper shuffling, people entering/leaving the room, talking inside/outside the room, typing). In the case of small-group testing, multiple students can test in the same space, so long as there is sufficient space to ensure that the students do not distract one another (i.e. due to bumping elbows) and the number of students in the same space is less than the number of students in the regular classroom. In the case of individual testing, students test in a space separate from their classmates and a proctor (or TA) may be in the same room supervising their exam.

Common Eligibility (includes but is not limited to): Same as the extended-time accommodation. These accommodations usually co-exist, but under some circumstances a student may only require a reduced-distraction environment. Examples include students who

make distracting noises while testing, like reading aloud for comprehension; those who have repetitive behaviors that might be distracting in a small-group setting, like tapping or pacing; or students who require the use of a computer or scribe when testing.

3. Alternative Format

Types: Alternative to scantron, a digital format that is used with a text or screen reader, large print, braille, having the exam read aloud, alternative to computer-based exams

Description: For students with this accommodation, the instructor will need to provide a version of the exam that meets the accommodation. This may include the need to provide the student with a separate space to take the exam.

Common Eligibility (includes but is not limited to): Low-vision, blind, concussion, neurological disorder impacting motor tasks (e.g. dyspraxia), learning disability, language processing disorder

4. Physical Accommodation During Exam

Types: Special furniture request (i.e. desk, table, chair); accessible exam location; special positioning during an exam (i.e. lying, standing, elevating a limb, stretching); wearing an approved item

Description: If the exam is not held in the regular classroom, it will be necessary to assess whether the testing space is accessible and/or can accommodate the necessary furniture. Arrangements may be needed to ensure that the furniture is available to the student during the exam in the alternative space. For students with accommodations for special positioning during an exam or wearing an approved item, the student may need to test in a separate space in order to minimize distractions during the exam to the rest of the class.

Common Eligibility (includes but is not limited to): Mobility or motoric disability, chronic physical health conditions, injuries

5. Testing Supports Required

Types: Computer, calculator, scratch paper, graph paper

Description: Students may require the use of a computer (or laptop) for providing responses to questions on assessments. The use of this accommodation is usually, though not exclusively, reserved for when the assessment requires responses that are more than two sentences in length (for example, essay-style responses). SDS can provide a laptop that is blocked from accessing the internet (i.e. the network adapters have been disabled).

The use of a calculator is restricted to the use of a non-graphing type calculator on assessments requiring mathematical calculation where the ability to perform basic mathematical calculations (i.e. $2+2$, $4*3$) is not being assessed and is not essential to the assessment. SDS can provide scientific calculators without graphing capabilities should the student require one.

Students may also require access to scratch paper and/or graph paper for assessments. The instructor may provide these and request that the student only uses what is provided in order to ensure the integrity of the assessment.

Common Eligibility (includes but is not limited to): ADHD, LD, visual spatial processing disorder, physical or motor disability, and/or injury that prevents a person from writing

6. Breaks

Types: Stop-the-clock breaks, breaks between exams, breaks during the exam, snack break

Description: Breaks during exams should be limited to 5-10 minutes. Typically, students are not allowed to leave the testing location/room during breaks or access their books, notes, or mobile devices. Except in the case of stop-the-clock breaks, students are not given additional time at the end of the exam to account for time spent on breaks during the exam.

Breaks between (two separate) exams only applies to exams that occur on the same day and may require that one of the two exams be taken on an alternative day.

Common Eligibility (includes but is not limited to): Diabetes, PTSD, anxiety and/or panic disorders

7. Flexible Dates/Times

Types: Alternative date, alternative time of day (early or later in the day)

Description: For students with this type of accommodation, it may be necessary to administer an assessment on a day and/or time other than the originally scheduled day/time. In this case, instructors may need to plan an alternative version of the exam to administer to the student and/or make arrangements for a proctor to administer the exam to the student in an appropriate space and in a manner that meets their access needs.

Common Eligibility (includes but is not limited to): Extended time on long exams resulting in scheduling conflicts or unreasonably long examination periods, mobility disability, epilepsy, severe anxiety, major depressive disorder, students on time-released or time-limited medication that may affect their attention and/or performance