

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE 

HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

HANDBOOK FOR FACULTY

DISABILITY RELATED SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

Student Academic Support Services

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Dear Faculty,

Every student at UTHSC brings unique strengths and experiences, and students with disabilities are no exception. While many learn in different ways, their differences do not imply inferior capacities. There is no need to dilute curriculum or to reduce course requirements for students with disabilities. Although, special accommodations may be needed in the way information is presented and in methods of testing and evaluation. Providing accommodations ensures equal opportunities for success in mastery of course material; it does not mean compromising the content, quality or level of instruction. All students are required to meet a standard of competency in course work; students with disabilities are no exception.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide UTHSC faculty with practical information and suggestions in working with students with disabilities. It also offers important guidelines and suggestions for educating and accommodating students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are a rapidly growing minority in American Higher Education. The obligation to accommodate these students extends beyond the moral responsibility and our University's commitment to academic success, there is also a legal imperative to ensuring students have equal access to educational programs and activities. As faculty you also have certain rights, which are delineated in this handbook. Student Academic Support Services (SASS) is available to assist you in finding the balance of providing the accommodation(s) without compromising the learning experience and technical standards of UTHSC programs.

Thank you for taking the time to review the Handbook that has been created for UTHSC faculty and staff. We hope this handbook will become an essential manual that you will refer to often as you seek to accommodate students in the classroom and in educational services at UTHSC. We welcome your ideas and modifications for future additions. Should you have any questions or concerns not addressed within this handbook please contact the SASS office by phone at (901) 448-5056, by email at SASS@uthsc.edu or visit our office in the General Education Building, Room BB9.

SASS Staff

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ABOUT STUDENT ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES (SASS)

Student Academic Support Services (SASS) seeks to facilitate and enhance the learning effectiveness of students. It is essential that both students and faculty understand that difficulty with an academic task may not necessarily be related to cognitive ability, but may be due to differences in learning styles or modalities; previous academic experiences; learning and physical disabilities; life experiences; language skills; or psychological or social demands of this environment.

SASS is committed to ensuring that all students with disabilities are provided access to all facets of UTHSC. We are available to assist and coordinate support services and programs that enable students with disabilities to maximize their educational potential, as well as help increase awareness among all members of UTHSC, so that students with disabilities are able to achieve academic success based on their abilities, not their disabilities. SASS assists students with documented disabilities by determining their eligibility for services and then working with students to determine reasonable accommodations and services which will, in turn, give the student equal access to the University.

LOCATION AND HOURS

SASS STAFF OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday - 8:00am to 5:00pm
SASS is closed from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm daily for lunch

Student Workers help to keep SASS open Monday through Thursday – 5:00pm to 7:00pm
Saturday – 10:00am to 5:00pm, Sunday – 2:00pm – 6:00pm

TESTING HOURS:

Exam administration is available Monday through Friday – 8:00am to 5:00pm
All testing in SASS must be completed by 5:00pm

SASS computer lab is located in Room BB6
SASS Conference Room is located in Room CB15
SASS 24/7 Student Lounge/Study Area is located in Rooms CB3

DISABILITY LAW

Student Academic Support Services (SASS) provides academic services and accommodations for students with diagnosed disabilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. The ADA defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Students disclosing a diagnosed disability with evidence of a functional limitation that impacts the individual in the academic setting will be provided with reasonable accommodations.

Students with disabilities must be able to perform the essential functions (technical standards) of the curriculum, with or without accommodations, and present no threat to the safety and well-being of others. It is the responsibility of the individual student to request accommodations, provide documentation, interact with SASS personnel, and to advocate on their own behalf.

SASS requires a personal interview and comprehensive documentation of the disability to determine appropriate services and accommodations.

SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

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

Academic institutions are required to provide the same opportunity for students with disabilities as those that are available to other students. Students who have self-identified, provided appropriate documentation of their disability, and requested reasonable accommodations are entitled to receive approved modifications of programs, appropriate academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids that enable them to participate in and benefit from all educational programs and activities.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990

The ADA reinforced the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act and was designed to extend civil rights protection to people with disabilities. It requires that all public facilities, services, and communications be accessible to persons with disabilities and that auxiliary aids and services be provided unless an undue hardship would result.

ADA AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2008

“Mitigating measures, including assistive devices, auxiliary aids, accommodations, medical therapist and supplies (other than eyeglasses and contact lenses) have no bearing in determining whether a disability qualifies under the law.” The ADAAA clarifies the coverage of impairments to include those that are “episodic or in remission that substantially limit a major life activity when active, such as epilepsy or post-traumatic stress disorder.”

DISABILITY DEFINED

Under the ADA, an individual with a disability is a person who:

- 1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the person; OR
- 2) has a record of such impairment; OR
- 3) is regarded as having such impairment.

A major life activity under the ADA includes: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working.

The ADA included reading, bending, communicating, thinking and concentrating as major life activities. Additionally, major bodily functions such as “functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions” were also included within the ADA.

A qualified person with a disability is defined as one who “meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the education program or activity.”

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a condition that would otherwise cause a student, because of a disability, to be at a disadvantage relative to non-disabled students in their access to the university’s programs for students.

Reasonable accommodations provide equitable access to programs or facilities and do not fundamentally alter the essential nature of a course or academic program. For an accommodation to be reasonable it also must not cause an undue financial or administrative burden or endanger the safety of patients, self, or others.

***Accommodations are never designed to substantially alter the curriculum or eliminate the student from meeting the academic or technical standards.*

HOW ARE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS DETERMINED?

Documentation of the student's disability and recommendations made by the diagnosing professional are reviewed by the independent disability consultant;

- **Accommodations are determined on an individual, case-by-case basis.** In some rare instances, the academic affairs or course director may be asked if an accommodation is reasonable given the technical standards of the academic program. In addition to the disability consultant, other resources such as the Association on Higher Education and Disabilities, physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, educators and other relevant experts may be consulted.
- **Providing academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, and/or services is not as ominous as it may sound and not all students with disabilities require adaptations or adjustments.** Adaptations may result in only minor revisions or changes, or may require a search for a mutually satisfactory solution for the instructor and the student.
- **Needs vary among individuals with the same disability, therefore, suggestions represent only general guidelines for classroom adaptations.** It is important to remember that a student may have multiple disabilities that have to be taken into consideration. Some students may have disabilities that are not obvious when speaking with the student. Therefore, please do not assume that because you are not able to observe obvious signs of a person having a disability, that the student is not disabled. The fact that the student has been determined eligible to receive accommodations by SASS means that the student has submitted documentation and is officially registered with the University as having a disability.
- **Arranging suitable adjustments involves a shared responsibility between the professor and the student.** Students with disabilities are responsible for bringing their individual needs to the attention of the instructor as early as possible in the school year; however, students may be hesitant to make special requests. It is suggested that early in the semester instructors make a general announcement or place a general statement on the course syllabus.
- **Examples of reasonable accommodations include, but are not limited to:** extended test taking time, use of a tape recorder, or testing in a distraction-free environment.

*****The amount of time needed for a test is carefully determined by examining disability documentation, observations of the student's ability, and historical information. Extra time on clinical performance tests is very rarely granted and only after considerable deliberation by the disability consultant, academic affairs officer, and the course director.***

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION

SASS is committed to ensuring that all information regarding a student's disability is kept in accordance with state and federal laws. The U.S. Department of Justice has indicated that a faculty or staff member generally does not have a need to know what the disability is, only that it has been *appropriately verified by the office assigned this responsibility on behalf of the institution*. Faculty and staff do not have the right to demand access to the actual documentation, including test scores, dates, or names of professionals providing such documentation, unless the student has signed a release form to indicate consent for the faculty or staff member to have this access.

Disability related records are not subject to free access under FERPA. The Act exempts such disability related records that are used for support of the student and that are available only to service providers and other professionals chosen by the student. Faculty and staff should be aware that for many students, disclosing their disability to a faculty member can be threatening and difficult. This is especially true of newly diagnosed students or students with an acquired disability who have not had to explain it to anyone before now.

UNIVERSITY OBLIGATION

The University has an obligation to confirm that students receiving accommodations have verified disabilities according to state and federal law. SASS requests disability documentation on this information. Accommodations and services may not be provided if the student does not provide appropriate documentation of a disability, does not have a diagnosed disability, or does not follow policies and procedures. Disability documentation is housed in a confidential student file and does not become part of the student's academic record.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE

Students have a right to confidentiality. In accordance with state and federal laws, the University recognizes that student records for the purpose of disability documentation, disability determination, and accommodation determination are confidential and are treated as such. However, a student's right to privacy must be balanced against the University's need to know the information in order to provide requested and recommended services and accommodations.

- A student's self-disclosure of a disability is voluntary. Students are never obligated to self-disclose their disability to SASS, faculty, or staff. However, students who wish to obtain accommodations and/or other disability-related services must self-disclose their disability to SASS and officially request accommodations.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE

- Students must disclose their disability by completing the **SASS Self- Disclosure and Accommodation Request Forms**. This acknowledges an understanding that in order for SASS to coordinate, advise, or administer requested accommodations, verification of one's disability is necessary.
- Students must also sign the **Student Agreement**, which is to maintain a record that the student understands SASS procedures and policies on disclosure of disability. The Student Agreement it is not a request for permission. Students requesting that the SASS not disclose a disability must subject the request in writing. Students are not required to sign the Student Agreement form.
- Disability related information is to be treated as medical information. Any information that regards a student's disability is considered confidential and shall be shared with others within the institution on a need-to-know basis and only for the purpose of assuring appropriate accommodations.
- A student's disability-related information remains housed in SASS in a confidential file that is secured and accessible to only SASS Staff. The information does not become a part of the student's academic record.
- A student's disability-related file will not be released except in accordance with federal and state laws or pursuant to a court order or subpoena.
- If a student wishes to have his/her information shared with others, the student must provide a written authorization for SASS to release the information.
- If a student asks that SASS not discuss their situation with faculty or staff, their request will be honored. However, students must understand that if they are requesting SASS to provide accommodations and if they prohibit the individuals responsible for implementing accommodations from discussing critical components of the situation, then it may not be possible to implement an accommodation.
- Under the Privacy Act students may request access to their personal file as long as the confidentiality and privacy of others is respected and neither the student nor anyone else is thereby put at risk.

FACULTY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Faculty and Staff have a Right to:

- Establish essential functions, abilities, skills, knowledge and standards for courses, programs, services, and activities and to evaluate students on this basis;
- Identify and maintain the academic and technical standards that are fundamental to providing a quality academic program, while ensuring the right of individuals with disabilities;
- Refuse an unreasonable accommodation, adjustment, or auxiliary aid or service that imposes an undue hardship or a fundamental alteration of a program or activity at UTHSC;
- Select and recommend accommodations that are equally effective for individuals with disabilities.

Faculty and Staff have the Responsibilities to:

- Include a statement on syllabi to inform students with disabilities how to access accommodations on campus through SASS.
- Maintain the same academic standards for all students, as with appropriate accommodations students with disabilities should be expected to perform at the same academic proficiency levels as their non-disabled peers.
- Work cooperatively with the students and SASS in providing accommodations **only** when an approved accommodations notification from SASS has been received by the college's Academic Dean's office.
- Ensure that students receive the needed accommodations without undue complications.
- Provide, in a timely fashion, test materials SASS may need to ensure appropriate accommodations for students.
- Respect the student's right to privacy; keep disability-related information confidential. Students with disabilities are protected under FERPA and the civil rights law. At no time should faculty and staff make any statements or implications that the student with a disability is any different from the general student population.
- Remember that the student has the right not to discuss the particulars of his/her disability except on a need-to-know basis.
- Contact SASS immediately in the event problems occur.
- Be aware that further accommodations/arrangements may be made at a later time by a member of the SASS staff.

Students are not expected or required to provide faculty with detailed documentation about their disabilities. Therefore, SASS does not give advance notice to faculty regarding students with disabilities who are enrolled in their classes. From a legal standpoint, it is strongly advisable that faculty not expect or request such detailed documentation from the student. It is, however, entirely appropriate for faculty to request that the students provide verification from SASS that they are registered with the Disability Coordinator.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students with Disabilities have a Right to:

- Equal access to programs and services offered through UTHSC;
- Confidentiality of all information pertaining to the individual's disability;
- Information reasonably available in accessible formats;
- An opportunity to receive reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.

Students with Disabilities have the Responsibilities to:

- Meet qualifications and maintain essential institutional technical standards for courses, services, and activities.
- To self-disclose as an individual with a disability and to follow institutional guidelines to request approved accommodations and services.
- Follow published procedures for obtaining information, services, and accommodations.
- Provide appropriate documentation concerning how the disability limits participation in courses, programs, services, or activities.
- Submit a copy of class schedule and testing dates, as well as any other relevant information, such as the clerkship rotation schedule, clerkship sites, etc. each term.
- Discuss the accommodation(s) with the instructor during the first week of class or rotation and/or within one week of being granted the accommodation.
- Inform the course director and SASS if an approved accommodation is not going to be used for an exam. An "Exam Accommodation Waiver" form will need to be completed.
- Contact the SASS office immediately if there are any problems with the manner in which accommodations are being provided.
- Notify the professor at least **3 days prior to each exam** to ensure that the exam will be available in the SASS office at the time of the exam. Also notify the Disability Coordinator **3 days before each exam** to ensure testing time(s) and space in SASS.
- Notify SASS at least **5 days prior to each exam** if there is a conflict in your schedule, such as extended testing time interfering with the beginning of your next class, so that arrangements can be made.
- All exams scheduled in SASS must be completed by 5:00pm.
- Follow the same testing procedures in SASS as if the test were taken in class. For example, tardiness will result in lost time and it is the student's responsibility to start and stop the examination on time.
- Notify the Disability Coordinator if you need to change your requested/reserved time for an exam as soon as possible.
- Remember that accommodations are not a guarantee of a certain grade or of success in a particular class; rather they are for the purpose of providing equal access to education.

FACULTY AND THE ACCOMMODATION PROCESS

- Students may not be aware of disability services available through SASS, or some students may not even realize they have a disability. Faculty and staff can use this as an opportunity to refer and inform the student about SASS and the services available for students with disabilities.
- It is strongly encouraged that a disability statement be included on each course syllabus. This helps to inform students of the process for requesting accommodations and that accommodations are coordinated through SASS. It can also be helpful to read the disability statement aloud or reference the services available through SASS for students with disabilities at the beginning of each semester.

Example syllabus statement:

“Any student who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Student Academic Support Services (SASS) to self-disclose and officially request accommodations. All requests for accommodations must be submitted with supporting documentation. Although students may register for services at any time, please attempt to make arrangements within the first two weeks of the semester as it does take time to process the request and review documentation. For additional information, contact the Disability Coordinator in SASS lbrook15@uthsc.edu or (901) 448-1452.”

- After a student has been approved for a reasonable accommodation(s), SASS communicates the information to the student. SASS also provides the College with the name of the student and the specific testing accommodation(s) only. Information related to a student’s disability, documentation, etc. is confidential.
- Students are responsible for letting their Course Directors/Professors/Clerkship Coordinators know at the beginning of each semester of their testing accommodations in SASS. Students are also asked to remind their professors that they test in SASS no less than 3 days before each exam. This allows the professor time to provide the SASS with the password information and/or a copy of the test so that it is available for the student on the date of the exam.
- It is the responsibility of faculty (or their representative) to ensure that an **Exam Registry Form** is completed for each test taken in SASS. The form can be downloaded from the SASS webpage or a copy can be picked up in the SASS office. This form allows SASS to know specific information related to the proctoring of the test, such as password information, the time the exam is to start, the length of time the class gets for the exam, special instructions, etc.

SASS TESTING GUIDELINES

*Tests are proctored between 8:00am – 1:00pm and 2:00pm – 5:00pm
ALL testing must be completed by 5:00pm*

SCHEDULING

1. Students are responsible for scheduling their exams with the Disability Coordinator in SASS.
*** If a student chooses to take an exam with the class rather than use their testing accommodations in SASS, the student must notify the Disability Coordinator and complete an "Accommodation Waiver Form" for that particular test.*
2. **At the beginning of each semester:** Students must provide the Disability Coordinator with their exam schedule AND inform their professors and/or course directors that they test in the SASS.
3. **5 days before an exam:** Students must contact the Disability Coordinator to confirm they are scheduled for that exam and to confirm the start time for the exam in SASS.
4. **3 days before an exam:** Students must remind their professors/course directors that they test in SASS so that an exam can be provided to SASS to ensure it is available on the scheduled date of administration.

MATERIALS & TOOLS

5. Students must lock up their belongings before beginning an exam in SASS, including ID badges that may contain attached information. Pockets should be emptied of papers, cell phones, pagers or any other electronic devices.
*** Only materials the professor has permitted may be taken into the testing room (i.e. scratch paper, calculator).*

TIME

6. **Exams start at the regular class time.** If a student receives extended time and the amount of testing time for an exam would interfere with another course/lab on the schedule, **students are responsible** for completing an "Alternate Testing Arrangement Form" and making arrangements with professors/ course directors so that another testing time is approved in SASS.
*** Students cannot be tardy or miss a class due to extended testing time in the SASS.*
7. Students are **not** allowed to start an exam if **more than 15 minutes late** without approval from the professor/course director.

RESTRICTIONS

8. Students should make every effort to remain in the testing room throughout the duration of the exam.
9. If snacks and/or drinks are permitted in the testing room, a proctor must check each item prior to the student entering the testing area.
10. Students may **not** use their own computer for computerized tests in the SASS unless approved by the professor/course director.

HONOR CODE

11. The SASS upholds the Honor Code of each College and maintains an environment of academic integrity.

ARRANGING MAKE-UP EXAMS IN SASS (DISABILITY RELATED EXCUSED ABSENCES)

The following guidelines describe the process whereby students currently registered with SASS for a documented disability can arrange to make-up an exam due to an **absence directly related to a previously disclosed and documented disability**.

1. **Students must follow the professor's policy regarding notification of an absence from an exam.** The reason/diagnosis for which the absence is based need only be shared with the SASS staff.
2. Students aware that they will miss an exam prior to its administration must notify SASS by email as soon as possible, prior to the exam.
3. If the student is not able to notify SASS due to an unexpected absence it is expected that they notify the SASS in writing within **12 hours of the original exam administration time**.
4. Within **5 working days** the student must provide SASS with a written explanation/medical excuse from the diagnosing clinician. Once written notification is received, SASS can verify the absence, if needed, for the professor.
 - a. *The notification must include information that directly supports the need for the absence from an exam based on a documented disability on file with SASS. This explanation must be from a professional, on letterhead, and include a projected date for return to campus.*
5. Students must follow the professor's policy regarding make-up exams. If taking a makeup exam in the SASS, follow SASS procedures for regular exam administration.
6. Faculty members should contact SASS if they desire verification of the disability-related absence from an exam. Faculty members must refrain from asking the student for specific and detailed documentation of the excused absence as such explanations/documentation constitute a violation of the student's privacy rights.
7. When providing a make-up exam for a student with a disability-related excused absence, faculty members must administer the same make-up exam given to all other students, provided that the make-up exam is given at the same time for all students.
 - a. *Should it be necessary to prepare a separate make-up exam for any student (disability or not), faculty members must provide an exam that is comparable to the original with respect to the types of questions, length of exam, and complexity of the questions.*

PLEASE NOTE: SASS should not be contacted unless the absence is directly related to a disability that has been documented by SASS. Absences that are not attributable to a documented disability must be handled according to the professor's written policy regarding missed exams.

ARRANGING MAKE-UP EXAMS IN SASS (NON-DISABILITY RELATED)

1. Students must adhere to the professor's policy regarding notification of an absence from an exam.
2. For professors scheduling a make-up exam on behalf of a student, it is asked that the professor email the student and cc: Laurie Brooks (lbrook15@uthsc.edu) regarding testing arrangements. This will ensure that communication has been made with the student and professor/College so that SASS can schedule the exam for the date/time approved by the professor/College.
3. For students scheduling a make-up exam in the SASS, the student must email the professor/College and cc: Laurie Brooks on the email regarding specific testing arrangements. Any emails the student may have received from a professor regarding testing arrangements should be forwarded to Laurie Brooks so that SASS can ensure communication between both the student and professor and that the professor has given the approval to schedule the exam for a particular day/time.
 - ★ *Students cannot schedule a test in the SASS without the approval of the professor.*
4. Due to the amount of testing that takes place in SASS, it is important that we be notified as soon as testing arrangements have been made. **All tests MUST be scheduled in advance in the SASS to ensure a proctor for the exam and to guarantee testing space in the SASS.**
5. Policy states that students may not miss or be tardy for a class due to testing in SASS. If a make-up exam will interfere with anything on the student's schedule, approval of the professor/course director is needed.
6. Make-up exams can be taken in SASS between the hours of 8:00am–1:00pm and 2:00pm–5:00pm. SASS is closed from 1:00pm–2:00pm for lunch. All exams must be completed by 5:00pm, so please keep this in mind when making testing arrangements.
7. An **Exam Registry Form** should be provided for any student taking an exam in SASS. The form can be printed from the SASS webpage, emailed, or picked up in the SASS office. This form allows SASS to know the specific information related to the proctoring of the test, such as password information, the length of time the student has for the test, and/or special instructions regarding the use of a calculator, scratch paper, notes, etc.

If you have questions about a student with a disability, accommodations, or if you would like to discuss a specific situation, please contact the SASS at 448-5056 or sass@uthsc.edu.

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