

## INSTRUCTORS' ROLE IN THE ADA ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION PROCESS

The shift in how education is being delivered due to the Covid-19 pandemic has raised questions about providing academic accommodations for students with a disability. The good news is, whether instruction is being delivered on-line or in-person, an instructor's responsibilities in this area remain largely the same. Below is a brief refresher on this topic.

### General Information Regarding Accommodation Process:

- The Access and Accommodations Center (AACE) is the GSU office responsible for establishing eligibility and determining accommodations for students. Students initiate the request for accommodation process with AACE and submit documentation to substantiate an eligible disability. AACE determines whether a student is entitled to an accommodation and, if so, issues an Accommodation Letter to the student. Students notify AACE of the courses in which they wish to receive approved accommodations and AACE emails the Accommodation Letter to the respective course instructors.
- The role of AACE is to determine whether a student has an eligible disability and what, if any, accommodations are reasonable under the ADA. In addition, AACE provides accommodation-related services and supplies such as distraction-reduced testing sites, interpreters, options for assistive technology, etc. AACE is also available to address questions about implementation of accommodations and/or concerns.
- **The role of faculty members is to provide the accommodations identified in the Accommodation Letter issued by AACE. This may require that the faculty member have discreet conversations with the student to ensure a smooth implementation of the student's accommodations. However, concerns about the accommodations in the Accommodation Letter should be directed by faculty to AACE rather than to the student. Academic accommodations ensure students have an equal opportunity to access the academic environment; therefore, an instructor may not decline to implement an approved accommodation designated in the Letter of Accommodation. Of course, AACE is available to support both the student and the instructor in the successful implementation of accommodations.**
- As specified in the Course Syllabus Policy, remember that course syllabi should include the following statement: "Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the Access and Accommodations Center."
- Instructors should only implement AACE-approved student accommodations except in the case of obvious need when an Accommodation Letter is not required (e.g. a request for an accessible desk by a student who mobilizes on wheels). In all other cases, students who requests an accommodation from an instructor without an Accommodation Letter should be directed to AACE. Similarly, students who request an accommodation that deviates from the Accommodation Letter should be directed to submit their request to AACE.
- **Accessibility has been articulated as a high priority issue for the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG). As web-based instructional materials play an increasing role not only in online and hybrid courses, but also in face-to-face courses, all instructors should make the use and creation of accessible documents and multimedia a priority. Doing so helps ensure that those with disabilities, including but not limited to visual and hearing impairments, can access instructional materials. Faculty members are encouraged to use the range of services provided by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the USG to create and provide accessible course materials which can be found here: <https://cetl.gsu.edu/resources/resources-for-remote-teaching-and-learning/>.**

### Pandemic-Specific Related Information:

- Instructors are not required to accommodate a student who registers for a course with in-person instruction and then requests that the Instructor adjust the in-person attendance expectation because the student is uncomfortable being on campus. Students who are not comfortable attending in-person courses in the fall have the option of registering for course offerings taught entirely online. The exception to this would, of course, be a student with a disability who has received an Accommodation Letter from AACE for modification of attendance requirements, in which case implementation of the AACE-approved accommodation would be required.

- In addition to implementation of student accommodations under the ADA, during this unprecedented time, instructors are also asked to relax their attendance policies for students who indicate they are sick, caring for a sick family member, for a child, or are required to quarantine or isolate. Instructors should not request medical documentation of a student's need to be absent for reasons such as those listed above. Regardless of absences, students must complete all course requirements by the end of the semester and if unable to do so, should be allowed to take an incomplete.