



Counseling Services

Academic Accommodation Information for Students

What are Academic Accommodations at Saint Louis University – Madrid Campus?

Counseling Services on the Saint Louis University – Madrid Campus works to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access, without discrimination, to the academic life of the campus.

What constitutes a disability?

An individual with a disability is defined as anyone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, including learning.

What is the purpose of an academic accommodation?

Academic accommodations are provided in specific academic areas when an individual has a diagnosed disability that causes current and significant functional difficulty in some aspect of the academic experience. A student uses accommodations in order to have the same opportunity for academic success as other students. The goal of the accommodation is to minimize the impact of the disability so that the student can be given the opportunity to demonstrate course knowledge (tests, papers, projects, etc.) and be evaluated (graded) in a non-discriminatory way. Accommodations foster equal access to success, which does not equate to a guarantee of success.

What are examples of academic accommodations?

Examples of potential academic accommodations include:

- extended time testing
- quiet testing in a room outside of the classroom
- student volunteer note-taking services
- special attendance policy arrangements.

What characterizes a reasonable academic accommodation?

As suggested above, a reasonable academic accommodation is one which provides a student with an equal opportunity to succeed in his or her academic life without discrimination.

In determining the ability of the Madrid Campus to offer accommodations to a student, requests for accommodations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Among the factors to be examined are:

- the academic and technical standards required for admission or participation in an education program or service;
- the purpose and nature of the program, course, and/or service;
- the precise education-related abilities and functional limitations of the student and how those limitations could be overcome with reasonable accommodation;
- the nature of the accommodation required in relation to the Campus's resources;
- the consequences of such an accommodation upon the operation and educational mission of the Campus, course, program, service and/or activity;
- regulatory requirements.

A reasonable accommodation does not negate requirements for successful completion of a course, program, service and/or activity, adherence to generally acceptable standards of behavior, rights, and responsibilities, and adherence to administrative and faculty/staff directions and instructions.

What makes an academic accommodations request “unreasonable”?

Saint Louis University – Madrid Campus is not required to offer or provide an accommodation to admit or to continue to admit an individual with a disability to any particular program, course, service and/or activity or to provide educational opportunities and other services if:

- the educational standards or mission of the University would be substantially altered;
- the nature of the program, course, service and/or activity would be fundamentally altered;
- the student is not otherwise qualified (with or without accommodations) to meet the academic and technical standards required for admission or participation in an education program, course, service and/or activity;
- the effects of the disability cannot be overcome even with reasonable accommodations;
- the individual would not be able to complete a program, course, service and/or activity, even with reasonable accommodations;
- an undue financial or administrative hardship (campus-wide) would be caused by the accommodation;
- the individual would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of himself/herself or others, even with reasonable accommodations.

Who decides if I can have an academic accommodation?

The Counseling Center determines if an academic accommodation is reasonable.

What should I do if I have a disability and want to seek academic accommodations?

It is very important to emphasize that as adults, University students who believe they have a disability have the right to choose or not to choose to pursue the possibility of receiving academic accommodations. No student is required to do so, and no one other than the student – including the student’s parents – can do so on his or her behalf. If you do choose to determine what academic accommodations may be available to you, the process begins when you make the decision to communicate with the Counseling Center at Saint Louis University – Madrid Campus. Any student who believes that he or she may be qualified to receive an academic accommodation is encouraged to contact the Counseling Center in person, by phone (91.554.5858 ext.204) or e-mail (counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu).

Your desire for academic accommodations will not be officially recognized or considered without your directly contacting the Counseling Center, even if you have previously disclosed this desire to another Campus official, e.g. admissions counselor or professor. Information shared elsewhere will not be automatically forwarded on your behalf to the Counseling Center.

What will happen after I initiate contact with the Counseling Center?

The Counseling Center will explain in greater detail how the accommodation process works, providing you with information about accommodation options, as well as about the roles of the student, the student’s professors, and the Counseling Center in each one. The Coordinator will also engage you in a conversation and collection of data to determine if you qualify for academic accommodations. This process will include your providing appropriate documentation and completing paperwork. (Cf. Appendix B for a description of documentation typically required for different types of disabilities, and Appendix C for a copy of the form through which a student applies for academic accommodations.)

If, upon completion of the process, the Center determines that a student’s academic challenges are directly linked to a specific diagnosed disability, the student is offered academic accommodations.

What happens if I am granted academic accommodations?

If the Counseling Center determines that you are eligible for academic accommodations, the Coordinator will e-mail your professors, informing them only that you are eligible for an academic accommodation of a specific type. The

Coordinator will not reveal the reason/s for the accommodations.

It will then be your responsibility to initiate contact with professors to make specific arrangements for accommodations. By policy, professors, once informed of your right to accommodations, are also clearly informed that they should not arrange them on your behalf unless you contact them and specifically request accommodations for the course. Professors will not initiate the arrangement. In some cases, students decide that accommodations for a specific course are not needed even though they have been granted by the Counseling Center.

When and how should I contact my professors about my academic accommodations?

Once approval is given by the Counseling Center, it is best if you contact each of your professors at the start of the semester, or as soon as you are granted accommodations, so that you can introduce yourself and discuss in general how to implement the accommodations for each course.

Also, throughout the semester, you should make timely requests to course instructors to ensure that arrangements can be appropriately made. Don't do anything "last minute"! You are responsible for contacting professors at least one week prior to the need for any accommodation so that the professor is given sufficient time to make arrangements. Failure to contact professors within a reasonable time – one week or more – may result in your not receiving the accommodation for a specific test or other academic situation.

You should make a point to meet with professors personally for the first time or two. After that, the professor and you may decide that e-mail communication throughout the rest of the semester will be sufficient. Some professors, however, prefer face-to-face contact. It is your responsibility to learn how each professor wants to be contacted by you, and then to follow it. Do not assume that e-mail is the best or only way to be in contact.

How much information do I need to share with my professors?

The communication which your professors receive from the Counseling Center will indicate that you have a disability and that you have been granted certain academic accommodations; it will not describe the diagnosed disability nor will it comment on it. Your professors are not supposed to ask specifically about your disability, which is information that they do not need to have and which you do not need to share unless you choose to do so.

If you have a medically related disability, such as epilepsy, diabetes, systemic lupus erythematosus, etc. that has resulted in your being approved for accommodations, then you will want to consider disclosing more details of your disability in order to give your professors as much useful information as possible. (Professors can only respond to the information, or lack thereof, that they are given.) Making the decision to share information may increase the chances that you will remain safe and you will receive the support and/or understanding you need in the event of a medical emergency or minor incident that may interfere with course attendance. Discussing this information with your professor may be especially important in a laboratory class where chemicals, medical tools and other equipment are prevalent. In some situations, the Counseling Center may mandate that discussion with the course instructor occur, perhaps with the involvement of the Center, in the best interest of everyone involved. The Coordinator will discuss this possibility with you as appropriate.

You are welcome to speak with the Counseling Center if you would like guidance on how to best speak with your professors about your personal situation. The Coordinator may also assist you in considering the pros and cons of disclosing or not disclosing to professors additional information which may be potentially helpful for them to know.

Can you help if I feel uncomfortable talking to my professors about accommodations?

It is important that you see dialogue with the professor as similar to what you will need to do for the rest of your life as you self-advocate in the work world. The Counseling Center will be happy to talk with you about where the difficulty exists in speaking with your professors, and different options will be presented to you based on your preferences and comfort level. The goal in working with the Coordinator is to support you in learning how to successfully speak independently with your professors and in learning how to be a strong self-advocate.

What if I am not successful in arranging accommodations with professors?

If attempts to contact the professor are not working or if on the rare occasion the professor is not willing to provide the necessary accommodations, you should speak with the Counseling Center as soon as possible to review the situation and develop a course of action.

Different people prefer different modes of communication. If you try to contact your professor by e-mail but without success, consider stopping by his or her office or phoning. It is your responsibility to speak with the professor in a way that matches the professor's preference.

What if I do not like the accommodation options my professor presents to me?

It is the responsibility of the Counseling Center and faculty to provide reasonable accommodations. Sometimes, the reasonable accommodation provided will be in line with your specific preference; at other times, the accommodation will be a secondary preference for you but will still be deemed reasonable overall.

You do not always have to accept the accommodation options presented to you by the course instructor. Professors will often propose ideas that have worked in the past or ideas they think will work with the nature of the class; however, if you are not comfortable with the location of a testing site, how the professor wants to provide you with extra time, etc., you should discuss your concerns with the professor. If these discussions do not lead to satisfactory results, speak with the Counseling Center. The Coordinator will determine if the accommodations presented to you by the professor are reasonable and appropriate. If the Coordinator feels the professor is offering a reasonable option, then you will need to use that accommodation or arrangement. If deemed unreasonable, a plan will be created for how to resolve the issue.

After receiving academic accommodations, how often do I need to contact the Counseling Center?

Once you have received academic accommodations, you are under no obligation to speak further with the Counseling Center. The Coordinator will not assume responsibility to call you or to ensure that you are getting the accommodations you have been granted. Nor can the Coordinator assume responsibility to make sure that you are completing assignments, passing tests, etc. This said, the Coordinator is always willing to work with you provided that you are the one who initiates contact. If you do have a problem, speak with the Counseling Center as soon as the problem emerges, before further complications arise.

If I receive academic accommodations, how often do I need to “renew” them?

Accommodations are valid for the duration of the current academic year. Toward the end of the spring semester you will receive an e-mail from the Counseling Center regarding the updating of your information and the renewal of your accommodations for the next academic year, which can often be handled through e-mail without a personal visit with the Coordinator.

What if I am not granted my requested academic accommodation?

Every effort will be made to provide the student with his or her preferred accommodation provided that the accommodation is deemed to be reasonable. In some instances, however, Saint Louis University – Madrid Campus may offer an accommodation it deems to be reasonable and fair even though it is not the student's first choice. Or, the Madrid Campus may decide that no accommodation is necessary even though the student has requested one.

If a student chooses not to accept the decision of the Counseling Center in regard to a requested accommodation, he or she may review the decision with the Academic Dean.

Are the Academic Accommodation and Counseling Center's processes confidential?

For the most part, the academic accommodation process is confidential, but there are some exceptions.

In order to get the academic accommodation process underway, you only need to share your specific diagnosed disability and related evaluation with the Counseling Center.

If you are granted academic accommodations, the Counseling Center will give your professors your name and a list of your approved accommodations, without further specifics, either when you are granted the accommodations or at the beginning of the semester. Clinical or medical information will not normally be communicated. Professors need to know that you have been approved for academic accommodations, but they do not need to know the disability behind the reason for the accommodation. The Coordinator will not give information to other faculty and staff (including academic advisors and other counsellors). It is your right, of course, to share such information with others as you so choose.

There is, however, one exception to this usual way of proceeding regarding confidentiality. In some situations, it may be necessary for the Counseling Center to disclose some aspect of your diagnosed information to a faculty member, academic advisor, or counselor if the Coordinator feels that disclosure will immediately support Madrid Campus personnel in doing their job in a way that benefits you, the student. Before doing so, the Coordinator will weigh the matter carefully and will share only information necessary to address the circumstance at hand.

Also, your academic accommodation will not be revealed or discussed with your parents, or with any other person outside of the University, unless you sign an authorization allowing the Counseling Center to do so. Even with that authorization, the Coordinator will not initiate contact with your parents or another outside party, but will instead only respond to contacts initiated by them. If the Coordinator has questions about your academic accommodation, the Coordinator will contact you directly, not through someone else.

Your transcript will not give any indication that you have received academic accommodations.

Remember...

The purpose of academic accommodations is to give you an equal opportunity for success by providing support in academic areas of personal need. Your academic performance will be evaluated against the same standards of everyone else whether you use academic accommodations or not.

Appendix A: Description of Typical Academic Accommodations

For further explanation of any one these accommodations, the student should consult with the Counseling Center.

Extended Time Testing Accommodation

A student with an Extended Time Testing accommodation is responsible for initiating contact with his or her professor ahead of time to discuss its application to a particular testing situation.

- Extended time testing can be used for in-class testing.
- Extended time testing does not necessarily cover lab-based exams. A student must consult with the Counseling Center if he or she believes that course lab accommodations should be considered.
- For take home exams, extended time testing often does not apply; however, case-by-case consideration can occur. The student should speak with the Counseling Center if there is concern about the time allotted for a take home test.

Testing options will vary based on the extended amount of time approved for a student, the student's class schedule, the professor's schedule, and the availability of a separate testing room (if the student is given a test location outside of the classroom).

Student Volunteer Note-Taker Accommodation

If granted a Note-Taker Accommodation, the student may either directly ask a classmate to take notes, or may ask the course instructor to identify someone to take notes.

If the accommodated student wants assistance in arranging a note-taker, the student should initiate contact with the instructor. The professor will make an anonymous announcement to the class, requesting a student volunteer to share a copy of his or her own notes. Assuming that a fellow student volunteers to provide this service, the student with accommodations may decide that the notes will be given directly to the professor (and then to the accommodated student), thus preserving the anonymity of the student with accommodations; or, the student with

accommodations may choose to introduce himself or herself to the student volunteer and thus arrange a direct method for the exchange of the notes (e.g. through photocopying). It is highly recommended that the first two or three times a student receives notes from the volunteer he or she shows them to the professor to make sure that they are an accurate depiction of important class material. If the professor does not feel the notes contain enough critical material, the student will need to work with the professor to adjust the arrangement.

Attendance Policy Accommodation

This accommodation must be requested and approved by the Counseling Center and discussed with the course instructor no later than 2 - 3 weeks into the semester in question.

Accommodations for medical purposes are referred to collectively as an "Attendance Policy Accommodation." If granted by the Counseling Center, the student's instructor will be informed only that the student "has been approved for consideration of a modified course attendance policy by virtue of a medical situation." No specifics about the medical situation will be communicated.

What medical conditions can serve as the basis for an Attendance Policy Accommodation?

The medical situation could be something that is consistently present everyday or it could be something that exacerbates at different times. Examples of the latter include sickle cell crisis and fibromyalgia flare-ups.

For purposes of this accommodation, the following do not qualify as a medical situation:

- An occasional headache, the flu, or acute recovery from an operation such as an appendectomy
- doctor's appointments (since normally, with planning, they can be scheduled to avoid conflict with class attendance).

The student's instructor determines how the accommodation will be carried out once the student, having received approval for the accommodation from the Counseling Center, initiates contact with the instructor to discuss the accommodation with him or her.

Students with attendance policy accommodations should keep in mind that they are always responsible for any missed material or work covered in class during absence.

Neither extensions of deadlines for assignments due nor special arrangements for making up quizzes, tests, exams, or work missed during an absence are specifically identified within this accommodation.

Should the student miss a class period for medical reasons on a day when there happens to be a "pop quiz," test or important assignment due, how the instructor chooses to handle any make-up or late work is at his or her discretion. Dealing with the consequences of a missed class (test, missed deadline, missed lab work, etc.) is something that must be negotiated with the professor as the need arises. The student is highly encouraged to attend every class when any assignments or tests are scheduled so as to not leave the outcome of missed work up to discussion with the professor. Also, when first speaking with the professor about the accommodation, the student should speak with the professor about these "what ifs" in the event something happens later.

Documentation for an attendance policy accommodation will be kept on file with the Counseling Center. A student does not have to give medical documentation to an instructor for verification. Should a professor request such documentation, the student may choose to do so, but the student is encouraged to discuss the matter with the Counseling Center before he or she responds to the request.

Appendix B: Documentation Requirements

The purpose of documentation is to verify that a diagnosed disability exists and has been recorded as such. Good documentation also provides enough information to support the Counseling Center in determining fair and

reasonable accommodations. While a doctor or psychologist may recommend accommodations, a recommendation from medical personnel does not of itself guarantee that a student will be granted an academic accommodation. The Counseling Center will make the final determination as to what accommodations are reasonable for your situation only after reviewing all collection information and discussing academic needs with the student, as well as, in some cases, discussing situations with faculty.

For example, a medical professional may recommend that a student receive notes from a professor prior to each class; however, while a SLU-Madrid professor may post through the internet presentations prior to class, it is generally not necessary or appropriate to ask faculty to make regular class notes available because the Counseling Center has alternative note-taking options available to students needing this type of accommodation.

Each student's situation – and the relevant documentation required – is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. For more information about documentation for any of the disabilities indicated below, or any others, the student should consult with the Counseling Center.

Learning Disability

In general, students with learning disabilities should present to the Counseling Center documentation that meets the following standard:

- Evaluation and diagnosis by a qualified professional (completed within the last 3 - 5 years)
- Assessment information, generally including:
 - Diagnostic Interview
 - Intellectual Assessment: Aptitude/Information Processing (preferably using adult norms)
 - Academic Achievement levels, indicating standard scores or percentiles for all normed measures
 - Specific Diagnosis
 - Clinical Summary indicating substantial limitations to learning or other major life activities
 - Records of any prior accommodations
 - Recommendations and rationale for accommodations to be used in the classroom.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

In general, students with ADD should present to the Counseling Center documentation that meets the following standard:

- Diagnosis by a qualified professional
- Date of diagnosis
- Tests and assessments used to make the diagnosis
- Current medication plan, if any.

Other Diagnosed Disability

In general, students with the following diagnosed disabilities should present to the Counseling Center documentation that meets the following standards/criteria, *although it may not necessarily be sufficient to begin services*:

- A **visual disability** requires an ocular report, along with relevant medical history that states functional limitation(s) and the need for accommodations.
- A **hearing disability** requires an audiology report, along with relevant medical history that states functional limitation(s) and the need for accommodations.
- A **health disability** (e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, hypothyroidism) requires doctor's verification and diagnosis, along with relevant medical history that states functional limitation(s) and the need for accommodations.
- An **orthopaedic disability** requires doctor's verification and diagnosis, along with relevant medical history that states functional limitation(s) and the need for accommodations.

- A **psychiatric disability** requires a qualified mental health professional's verification and diagnosis, along with relevant medical history that states functional limitation(s) and need for accommodations.

Undiagnosed Potential Disability

If a student feels that he or she has a disability that affects academic performance but has never been tested for a learning disability, attention deficit disorder, etc., the student will need to consider getting a professional evaluation. The Counseling Center can provide additional information about options, as well as provide referrals to a test provider. Without a professional evaluation and diagnosis, a student is not eligible for academic accommodations. (If a student chooses to pursue a professional evaluation, the student may wish to discuss with the Counseling Center the possibility of interim accommodations.)

