

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Best Practices

The following ‘best practices’ and other information on the reverse side are intended as guidelines for professors and teaching assistants to consider when interacting with students with disabilities. This document was created by the [MSU Council of Students with Disabilities](#) with feedback from students about their experiences in the classroom. You are a vital part of making MSU a great learning environment for all students.

In class

- The disabilities some students experience carry with them periodic unavoidable absences. In support of this reality, refrain from saying, “There is no excuse for missing class.” Instead say, “There are very few circumstances in which it is acceptable to miss class.”
- Microphones are essential for many students to engage fully in the classroom. Their use is advised whenever possible.
- Some students rely on assistive technologies for note taking. Please consider this before restricting technology from the classroom. For more information, visit the RCPD’s “[Assistive Technology](#)” page.
- Use accessible digital materials such as articles and not just scanned picture pages. Review the accessible documents information at webaccess.msu.edu.

In one-on-one meetings

- Be familiar with the Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) forms and process (see opposite side).
- Review and discuss the VISA the student has presented to you and keep the document for future reference.
- Students exhibit varying levels of comfort discussing disability issues. Avoid probing for disability details, as students are not obligated to disclose. The student who is presenting the VISA has documentation and is registered with the RCPD. Need for these accommodations has been verified.
- Student abilities may vary even though they may require similar accommodations. Engage the student and/or the RCPD before making assumptions.

On the syllabus

- Refrain from saying, “There is no excuse for a late assignment.” Instead say, “There are very few circumstances in which I will accept a late assignment.”
- Reference the opportunity to receive accommodations. Download RCPD’s [Model Statements](#).
- Post your book list as early as possible; some students need several weeks to acquire accessible versions of textbooks.
- Include all assignments and due dates on the syllabus. This promotes a sense of responsibility for students and allows them to maximize the value of the course.
- Make the syllabus and digital materials accessible. Information and a checklist are available at webaccess.msu.edu.

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Resources and Information

Language and Interacting:

- Person-first language acknowledges the person first, rather than the disability (for example: “person with a disability” rather than “a disabled person”).
- Other examples:
 - ◊ “person without a disability,” **not**, “a normal person”
 - ◊ “person who has a mobility impairment,” “wheelchair user,” **not**, “wheelchair bound,” or, “confined to a wheelchair”
 - ◊ “person who has ...,” “person who experienced ...,” “person with ...” **not**, “victim of...” or, “suffers from...”
- For a comprehensive list and more information please reference the documents “[What’s in a Name: Person First language](#)”, “[Tips for Interacting](#)”, and “[Courtesy Rules of Blindness](#)”.

Brief overview of the VISA process and purpose:

The purpose of a VISA is to inform faculty members and teaching assistants what accommodations a student is entitled to so that the student and professor can discuss how those accommodations can best be implemented in the particular class. A VISA from the RCPD is generated following a needs assessment and thorough understanding of the medical condition or disability at hand.

A student should schedule a meeting with their professor early in the semester or before classes start. Together they can discuss accommodations and effective implementation.

RCPD specialists are ready to assist in cases where concerns exist or clarification is needed.

For more information, visit RCPD’s [VISA webpage](#).

General resources:

The RCPD website offers guidance. Check out the “[Resources](#)” tab to find documents, videos, and other useful information such as a sample VISA, comprehensive overview of the VISA process, explanatory videos on a range of subjects, and a model statement to include on syllabi regarding disability accommodations.

