

Academic Accommodations Policies & Procedures

Purpose

1.01 It is the policy of Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology (OSUIT) to offer educational opportunities and experiences to all students enrolled at the University on the basis of individual merit without interference from illegal, arbitrary, or capricious acts or omissions. OSUIT will not tolerate discrimination against any student because of gender, race, age, status as a veteran, national origin, religion, or disability. OSUIT embraces and commits itself and its faculty and staff to follow provisions of state and federal law prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities, including, but not limited to, the American with Disabilities Act ("ADA") and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

1.02 To assist applicants to and students of OSUIT regarding needed academic accommodations, OSUIT has created the Office of Academic Accommodations with the specific charge of working with students, staff, and faculty to help ensure that appropriate steps are engaged in by the University in each case. OSUIT has empowered its Director of the Office of Academic Accommodations with the authority to review complaints of potential disability discrimination. The names of the current administrative officials overseeing this office, and their addresses and telephone numbers, are identified in the OSUIT campus directory, which is located on the website osuit.edu.

1.03 This policy statement is intended to formalize procedures already established for the provision of academic accommodations for students with disabilities and to outline mechanisms for resolving complaints concerning the provision of such academic accommodations. This policy statement is intended to supersede any other policy of the University concerning whether the University is appropriately providing classroom or curricular accommodations to a student with a disability.

1.04 OSUIT shall make such modifications to its academic requirements as necessary to ensure that requirements relating to its academic programs do not discriminate or have the effect of discriminating on the basis of disability against an applicant or student. Modifications, in appropriately documented instances, may include changes in the length of time permitted for the completion of degree requirements, substitutions of specific courses required for the completion of degree requirements, and adaptation of the manner in which specific courses are conducted. Determinations regarding the appropriateness of accommodations for students with disabilities inherently must be made on an individualized, case-by-case basis.

1.05 OSUIT will not impose upon students with disabilities other rules, such as the prohibition of tape recorders in classrooms or of service animals in campus buildings, that have the effect of limiting the participation of students with disabilities in an educational program or activity.

1.06 In course examinations or other procedures for evaluating students' academic achievement in its programs, OSUIT will provide such methods for evaluating the achievement of students with those disabilities that impair sensory, manual, or speaking skills as will best ensure that results of evaluations

represent the student's achievement, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (except where such skills are the factors that the test purports to measure).

1.07 OSUIT will take steps as necessary to ensure that no student with a disability is denied the benefits of, excluded from participation in, or otherwise subjected to discrimination regarding the education programs or activities operated by the University because of the absence of educational auxiliary aids for students with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills. Auxiliary aids may include taped texts, interpreters, or other effective methods of making orally delivered materials available to students with hearing impairments, readers for students with visual impairments, classroom equipment adapted for use by students with manual impairments, and other similar services and actions.

1.08 Academic requirements that are essential to the program of instruction being pursued by a student with a disability or to any directly related licensing requirement will not be regarded as discriminatory.

1.09 The term "Academic Vice President" is intended to refer to the chief academic officer of the University or his/her designate within the Office of Academic Affairs.

Definitions

2.01 The phrase "student with a disability" is any student who:

- has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities,
- has a record of such impairment, or
- is regarded by others as having such impairment.

2.02 The phrase "physical or mental impairment" includes, but is not limited to:

- any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genitourinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or
- any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

2.03 The phrase "substantially limits" means the individual is:

- unable to perform a major life activity that the average person in the general population can perform; or
- significantly restricted as to the condition, manner or duration under which he/she can perform a major life activity as compared to the condition, manner, or duration under which the average person in the general population can perform that same major life activity.

2.04 Objective criteria for diagnosis of a "specific learning disability" have yet to be succinctly defined by educational psychologists. OSUIT embraces the general guidelines suggested by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in 1991, which acknowledge that, while multiple approaches are used in this area, specific criteria for diagnosis of a learning disability include, but are not limited to, the following:

severe processing deficits; severe aptitude achievement discrepancies, despite adequate learning opportunities; and a condition of presumed neurological origin.

2.05 A "classroom accommodation" is an alteration in the manner in which a specific class is conducted. Such alterations may include, but are not limited to, alterations in testing time limits, providing special tutoring, providing textual materials in alternative formats (such as on audiotape or in a pdf file), note taking, and the like.

2.06 A "curricular accommodation" is an alteration in degree program requirements. Such alterations may involve, but are not limited to, substitutions or waivers of classes normally required to successfully complete a degree program offered by the University or alterations of time limits required for completion of degree programs.

Determination of Eligibility

3.01 As a mandatory prerequisite to receiving any classroom or curricular accommodations, any student desiring to receive such accommodations, must register with the Office of Academic Accommodations, complete a Request for Academic Accommodations form, provide competent medical documentation evidencing the existence of a specific disability, and cooperate with the Office of Academic Accommodations in determining the type(s) of accommodations that may be warranted in the case. It is the obligation of the student not only to provide competent medical documentation as requested by the Office of Academic Accommodations, but also to renew any additional requests for accommodations each new academic semester.

3.02

- Competent medical documentation is required for two purposes: (1) to document the existence, nature, and extent of the physical or mental disability; and (2) to identify reasonable accommodations. Because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based on assessments of the current impact of the student's disabilities on his/her academic performance in a specific academic program, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation. In most cases, this means that the medical or psychological evaluation and report will have been conducted within the past three years. Learning assessments must be based upon adult-level learning. Assessments made at a pre-college level will qualify as acceptable documentation only if they reflect adult capabilities and the academic demands of higher education. Competent medical documentation, in order to be acceptable, must be rendered by a practitioner with credentials appropriate to the area in question. For example, for diagnosis of specific learning disorders or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders, the documentation must come from a licensed psychologist.
- If a diagnostic report is incomplete or inadequate to determine the present extent of the disability or appropriate accommodations, the University may require supplemental assessment at the student's cost. If the diagnostic report is complete, but the University requires a second opinion (which may include getting a second opinion regarding the diagnostic report or a reevaluation of the disability), the University may select the practitioner and shall bear the cost of the second assessment.
- The Office of Academic Accommodations may require a student to provide additional competent medical documentation evidencing the need for continued academic accommodations at any time that it appears that the student's physical or mental disability has substantially changed in character, or if a student who has been granted academic accommodations requests additional accommodations.

3.03 Verification of the existence of a disability will be retained in the Office of Academic Accommodations and will be shared with other University personnel only as necessary and in conformity with applicable state and federal laws.

3.04 The Office of Academic Accommodations will assist students with disabilities who are seeking classroom or curricular accommodations and will make recommendations to appropriate University personnel regarding accommodations, if any, that are believed to be needed by students. If recommended accommodations are not agreed upon between a student, the Office of Academic Accommodations, faculty, or academic administrators, a request for further review may be filed by the student or the affected faculty member/academic administrator. Classroom accommodations as recommended by the Office of Academic Accommodations will be implemented during such time as the matter is under review. Curricular accommodations will not be implemented during the pendency of the review process.

3.05 A student who believes that appropriate academic accommodations are not being afforded by the University may seek further review through informal or formal means. Such a student may either file for formal review of such determination by following the processes set forth below in this policy statement or, prior to doing so, may seek informal resolution of the dispute by discussing the matter with the Director of the Office of Academic Accommodations. During the time that the dispute is in informal review by the Director of the Office of Academic Accommodations, the time frames for filing a formal appeal as set forth below are tolled.

Request for Review of Classroom Accommodation

4.01

- Special classroom arrangements (accommodations) to assist a student with a disability are initiated by a student filing a Request for Academic Accommodations form with the Office of Academic Accommodations, provide competent medical documentation evidencing the existence of a specific disability, and cooperate with the Director of the Office of Academic Accommodations in determining accommodations that may be warranted. The Director initially reviews the request to assess whether the student has provided competent medical documentation evidencing the need for the accommodations being requested and to make a recommendation regarding classroom accommodation(s) to be provided to the student. As appropriate, the Director will notify the student of his/her determination and, if an accommodation is recommended, will create a Letter of Academic Accommodations that lists the specific accommodation(s) that must be provided to the student. The student may then obtain copies of this letter to hand-deliver at his/her discretion to the appropriate faculty member(s).
- A student or faculty member disagreeing with a recommended classroom accommodation, or a recommendation from the Office of Academic Accommodations that no accommodation is warranted, may request further review by the Academic Vice President (or his/her designee) of the matter. Forms for such requests may be obtained from the Office of Academic Affairs. The completed form and any desired attachments must be filed with the Office of Academic Affairs, and a copy filed with the Office of Academic Accommodations, within five (5) working days of the date that the person requesting has received notice of the classroom accommodations, if any, recommended by the Office of Academic Accommodations. The Office of Academic Affairs will forward copies of the filed documents to the affected student or faculty member(s) and to the appropriate Dean of the school (academic unit) in which the student is enrolled. The faculty member(s) and Dean must maintain confidentiality regarding the request.

4.02 The student or faculty member(s) affected by the request for further review will be given the opportunity to present a written response to the Academic Vice President. Such responses must be received by the Academic Vice President within three (3) business days after receipt of the request documents from the Academic Vice President, unless additional time is granted by the Academic Vice President. If no response is timely filed, the Office of Academic Affairs has the authority to make a determination without further delay.

4.03 The Academic Vice President may seek technical and legal advice from the Office of Academic Accommodations and/or the Office of Legal Counsel to the Board of Regents regarding the matter.

4.04 The Academic Vice President, after consulting with the Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled, will make a final decision regarding the appeal. The Academic Vice President will normally make the final decision within five (5) working days. A copy of this decision will be forwarded to the Office of Academic Accommodations for permanent retention with the student's file. There is no further appeal of such decision.

4.05 The student and faculty member/administrative official may mutually agree to some other form of accommodation at any time in the review process. If such an agreement is reached, that agreement should be memorialized in writing, signed by the student, and the review process automatically will be terminated.

Request for Review of Curricular Accommodation

5.01

- A change in curricular or degree requirements in order to accommodate a student with a disability is initiated by that student filing a Request for Academic Accommodations form with the Office of Academic Accommodations. The Director of the Office of Academic Accommodations initially reviews the request to assess whether the student has provided competent medical documentation evidencing the need for the accommodations being requested and to assess whether the student has the ability to complete curricular or degree requirements as ordinarily required by the Department and College. The Director of the Office of Academic Accommodations will notify the Director of Student Academic Services of the appropriate School of that assessment and of the accommodation(s) requested by the student. Such notification shall be made within ten (10) working days after the requested accommodation is received by the Director for Academic Accommodations.
- The Administrative Assistant is responsible for coordinating with appropriate academic unit faculty and college academic officials for the purpose of making a preliminary decision regarding the appropriateness of the requested accommodation. These officials will consider the recommendation of the Director of Academic Accommodations and the academic requirements of the curricular degree program at issue.
- The preliminary decision of the faculty/college academic officials is required to be in written form, explaining the reasons that such an accommodation should or should not be granted. While each case inherently must be judged on its own merits, consideration should be given to the actions taken in similar cases in the past to ensure fairness and comparable treatment.
- In making the preliminary decision, the academic unit faculty and college academic officials shall thoroughly consider the requested accommodation, its feasibility, cost, and effect on the academic program, and discuss other known alternatives that might be available. If the faculty/College academic officials preliminarily conclude that the requested accommodation should be denied, that recommendation must be supported by a rationally justifiable conclusion that available alternatives

to the usual academic requirements would result either in lowering academic standards or requiring substantial program alteration and must set forth in detail the factors considered by the faculty/academic officials in arriving at that conclusion.

- A copy of the preliminary decision shall be transmitted to the student and to the Academic Unit at the same time. Such recommendation must be transmitted within ten (10) working days following the receipt of the documents from the Director of Academic Accommodations.
- If the student disagrees with the preliminary decision, the student may file a request for review by the Chair of the Academic Unit.

5.02 Forms to initiate such further review may be obtained from the Office of Academic Affairs. The completed form and any attachments must be filed with the Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled within ten (10) working days of the student's receipt of the preliminary decision that an accommodation will not be granted. A copy of this form and any attachments must also be filed with the Office of Academic Accommodations and the Office of Academic Affairs.

5.03 Copies of the request for further review will be forwarded to the appropriate faculty member(s) for the purpose of receiving any additional written response desired to be given by the faculty. Such response must be filed within five (5) working days, with a copy transmitted to the student and to the Office of Academic Accommodations.

5.04 The Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled, or his/her designated representative, should ordinarily render a decision regarding the matter within ten (10) working days after receipt of the response. The Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled may seek academic, legal, or technical advice from College-level faculty committees or from University officials. If more than ten (10) days is required in a particular case, notice should be given to the student of such fact, along with an anticipated date of response. The Dean's decision must include written reasons in support thereof.

5.05 If the student disagrees with the decision of the Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled, the student may request further review by the Academic Vice President by filing a request within five (5) working days after receipt of the decision of the Dean. The Academic Vice President may refer the appeal to the Academic Standards and Policy Committee for input and/or may seek additional input from the Office of Academic Accommodations and/or the Office of Legal Counsel to the Board of Regents. The Academic Vice President normally will make a final decision within fifteen (15) working days and will communicate this decision to the student, the Office of Academic Accommodations, and the Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled. There is no further appeal of such determination.

5.06 The student and faculty member/administrative officials may mutually agree to some other form of accommodation at any time in the review process. If an agreement is reached, such agreement should be memorialized in writing, signed by the student, and the review process will automatically be terminated.

Guidelines for Requesting Reduced Semester Course Load/Full-time Student Status as a Reasonable Accommodation

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandate that institutions of higher education must make "reasonable accommodations" to the usual academic requirements for students with disabilities where such alterations would not affect essential components of

the academic program of the student and where they would not result in undue financial or administrative burdens. The Department of Education states that modifications to academic requirements or curricular accommodations may include “changes in the length of time permitted for completion of degree requirements.” 34 C.F.R.'104.44(a)(1996). Thus, students with qualified disabilities may be entitled to take less than the regularly expected “full-time” academic load and still be entitled to whatever privileges or benefits that are reserved for “full-time” students as determined by the institution of higher education.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 Under current Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology policy, full-time status is defined as follows:

Regular semesters: undergraduate students who are enrolled in 12 or more semester credit hours are classified as “full-time” students. Summer session: undergraduate students who are enrolled in twelve or more semester credit hours are classified as full-time.” Credit hours enrolled in through correspondence study are not counted towards full-time status. (Section 2.2 of the University Academic Regulations)

3.0 Procedure for Initiating Request

3.1 The Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology Office of Academic Accommodations recognizes that students with qualified and documented disabilities may request that specific accommodations be afforded them due to said disability. Under the policy, a request is presented by the student to the Director of the Office of Academic Accommodations and then routed to the appropriate College and Department-level faculty and administrative officers for evaluation and action.

3.2 In order to ensure timely evaluation of a student’s request for reduced semester course load/full-time student status and his/her appropriate enrollment, a request must be made in writing by the student in advance of the start of classes for each semester that the accommodation is sought.

3.3 As a mandatory prerequisite to receiving reduced semester course load/full-time status, any student desiring such accommodations must register with the Office of Academic Accommodations, complete a Request for Academic Accommodations form, provide competent medical documentation evidencing the existence of a specific disability, and cooperate with the Director in determining accommodations that may be warranted. It is the obligation of the student not only to provide competent medical documentation as requested by the Office of Academic Accommodations, but also to renew any additional requests for accommodations each new academic semester. The Office of Academic Accommodations may require a student to provide additional competent medical documentation if it appears that the student’s disability has substantially changed in character or if a student who has been granted academic accommodations requests additional accommodations.

4.0 Determination of Eligibility

4.1 The Director of the Office of Academic Accommodations will evaluate eligibility for reduced semester course load/full-time status using the following criteria:

- Medical documentation that specifically evidences the need for reduced semester course load.
- An academic record that substantiates difficulty in being a full-time college student.
- Related factors such as employment activities, co-curricular activities, family/personal obligations, inadequate academic preparation, failure to utilize appropriate academic accommodations, and

poor class attendance must not be the primary reason(s) for a record of academic difficulty or the need for reduced semester course load.

- The load and rigor of the courses proposed for enrollment during the semester that reduced semester course load/full-time status is sought are of sufficient weight to necessitate accommodation.

4.2 In order to evaluate a student's eligibility for reduced semester course load/full-time status, the Director of the Office of Academic Accommodations may require a student to submit specific documentation, including additional medical documents, academic transcripts, and/or other records as needed.

5.0 Request for Review of Curricular Accommodation

5.1 In the event that a student wishes to contest a decision by the Office of Academic Accommodations, the student may initiate a "Request for Review of Provision of Accommodations" to reach a final determination. Forms to initiate such further review may be obtained from the Office of Academic Affairs and must be filed within ten (10) working days of the student's receipt of the preliminary decision that an accommodation will not be granted.

5.2 Curricular accommodations, such as reduced semester course load/full-time student status, will not be implemented during the pendency of the review process.

Guidelines for Initiating Student Complaints and/or Grievances

The complaints and grievance procedures outlined below are provided to ensure that students' complaints are addressed promptly, that resolutions are achieved in a fair and just manner, and that the concerns can be brought to the attention of the University administration without fear of reprisal.

A "complaint" is a student's written expression of dissatisfaction with the academic accommodations for which they have been approved and/or any possible discriminatory aspects of University-related experiences which are outside the control of the student. Students must submit a written statement of complaint to the OSUIT Office of Academic Accommodations (OAA) via email: chad.spurlock@okstate.edu and should include the following:

- a. Name of the person or department involved
- b. Course name, number, and CRN if it is involving a professor
- c. Date of situation
- d. Location of situation if involving a campus location
- e. A brief synopsis of what occurred
- f. The desired outcome (for example, the chance to retake an exam with the accommodations)

After receiving the student's written complaint, the Director of the OAA will work with the student through the following steps until resolution is achieved.

1. The OAA Director will always direct the student to try to resolve the situation with the staff, faculty, or campus department first.
2. Should the student not be able to resolve the situation or get a response from the staff, faculty, or department, the OAA Director will contact the staff or faculty involved to discuss the student's complaint.

3. If accommodations are not being made and/or a resolution cannot be achieved or if the student is not satisfied with the resolution, the OAA Director will contact the head of the department involved.
4. If resolution is still not achieved or if the student is not satisfied with the resolution, the student's complaint is elevated to "grievance" status. The student will then be directed to contact the OSUIT Office of Academic Affairs to complete a formal Academic Affairs Grievance form and to be advised regarding further steps that will be taken.