

Purpose

Students with disabilities enrolled at Bucks County Community College may be eligible for academic accommodations based on the anti-discrimination protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. At Bucks County Community College, the Accessibility Office (TAO) is responsible for determining eligibility for accommodations and recommending reasonable accommodations based on the legal guidelines and the essential requirements of a course.

Part of Student Affairs, TAO exists to assure that qualified students with diagnosed disabilities have equal access to the programs and studies at Bucks County Community College. Students may be eligible for various academic adjustments, identified by TAO and customized for their specific needs. Faculty consulting and training is one of our primary responsibilities and goals. However, instructors deliver the accommodations in their courses. This form is a quick guide with some basic FAQs for instructor Review.

FAQ 01: What is the Accessibility Office?

The Accessibility Office (TAO) is located in the Student Services Office in the Rollins Building. Below, you will find the contact information for TAO.

The Accessibility Office • Newtown Campus
275 Swamp Road
Rollins Building • Student Services
Newtown, PA 18940

Phone: (215) 968-8182

E-mail: accessibility@bucks.edu

For appointments at the Lower Bucks and Upper Bucks Campuses, a TAO staff member will be more than happy to schedule an appointment to meet with a student or faculty member. Students or faculty members will want to schedule an appointment to have a TAO representative meet them at a preferred time, in advance, by calling (215) 968-8182 or emailing accessibility@bucks.edu.

FAQ 02: Exactly how can the Accessibility Office help faculty?

Some of the ways that TAO can assist faculty include:

- Recommending alternative instructional strategies,
- Advising regarding the appropriateness of requested academic adjustments and how to implement those adjustments
- Offering education about disabilities and accompanying barriers to learning
- Instructing in the use of adaptive information technology aids, such as speech recognition, accessible e-text format or specialized software
- Providing support in how to refer a student to TAO

FAQ 03: How do I respond when an adjustment, such as interpreting is distracting to other students?

Interpreters for deaf students may be a new experience for some hearing students. Faculty who have had interpreters in the classroom report that this distraction wears off very quickly as the students realize the need to pay attention to the

instructor and not to the interpreter. This would be the same as if there was any new person participating in the classroom.

FAQ 04: How do I respond when other students want the same adjustment, such as extended test time as a student in the classroom?

TAO urges all faculty to understand that an academic adjustment or accommodation will not give a student with a disability an advantage, but will level the learning field. If another student makes it known that s/he would like the same adjustment, respond by stating with confidence that "to my knowledge you are not eligible for this adjustment. If that is not accurate please see me after class". If the student indicates a disability exists, refer them to our Office. The policy of the college is that this is not a decision that faculty are expected or should try to make.

Always protect the right of the student with a disability to privacy regarding the disability. This is a confidential issue and many students would not want others in the class to know what their disability is or that it exists.

FAQ 05: How do I handle requests for accommodations when a student does not provide a Faculty Memo from TAO?

All requests for accommodations based on documented disability needs should be made to TAO by the student. Faculty can inform the student that TAO is a free service provided by the college and encourage them to contact TAO to explore all possibilities that may be available to the student. In fact, such a statement is now required on all course formats.

Faculty may provide any accommodation they wish without documentation and there might be situations where this is appropriate. An example could be that the faculty member, as the instructional expert, suspect a student might perform better on an oral test and want to compare the results. The faculty member can do that without the student having been identified by TAO. However, the student needs to know that the next instructor may not handle the request the same way and the only way that accommodations can be ensured is by registering with TAO and having a faculty memo issued with approved accommodations.

FAQ 06: How do I know if a student REALLY needs an academic accommodation?

Faculty members do not have to make the decision for approving academic accommodations. Students who identify themselves through TAO, and are eligible for accommodations, will present you with a faculty memo from TAO stating the approved accommodations for which the student is eligible. Eligibility is based on documentation of the student's disability(s), knowledge of the student's needs, best practices and professional experience.

FAQ 07: What if a student is denied an academic adjustment or does not accept a recommended accommodation?

There is an appeal process that the students can use if their request for an accommodation is denied. The process is outlined in the Student Information Section of the TAO website and physical or digital copies can be provided to students upon request.

If a student chooses not to use accommodations that have been recommended and approved by TAO, that is the student's right. Faculty are responsible for being aware of the need when presented a faculty memo by the student. Many accommodations require very little effort on the instructor's part.

FAQ 08: How should I respond when a student tells me they have a disability?

If the student provides a faculty memo from TAO, verifying this and the need for specific academic accommodations, know that TAO has documented the need of the accommodation on the basis of the existence of specific functional limitations. The accommodations are also based on what would be considered reasonable, according to federal legislation, in "leveling out the playing field" and removing barriers to access in education.

If a student identifies as a student with a disability, but does not provide a faculty memo from TAO, you are under no obligation to provide any accommodations requested by the student. If the student gives you documentation from any source other than TAO, we strongly recommend you instruct the student to provide contact and register with TAO. You are not expected to evaluate psychoeducational evaluations, medical reports or other documentation that related to documented disabilities that qualify under ADA or Section 504.

FAQ 09: How can I encourage students to identify themselves and their needs?

There can be many reasons why a student may not disclose a diagnosis of a qualifying disability. TAO recommends instructors to make an announcement and put the following in their syllabus: "If anyone in this class has a disability and will need certain academic adjustments, I invite you to see me during office hours so we can better discuss your needs." A statement like this lets the student(s) know that you are approachable and interested in their academic needs. Many Bucks County Community College faculty have adopted this practice with positive results. Faculty should avoid giving the impression, "If you have a disability, don't bother me. Go to The Accessibility Office"

FAQ 10: How should I refer a student to The Accessibility Office?

If the student identifies as having a disability and does not know that support services are available, urge them to call (215) 968-8182, email accessibility@bucks.edu, or stop by Student Services for support from TAO. With prior notice, TAO will be glad to arrange to meet with evening students or students at any campus as needed. Remind the student how interested you are in their success and want to support them in receiving whatever services for which the student may be eligible.

If you suspect a student has a disability but has not identified as a student with a disability, we suggest you meet with the student privately, give feedback on what you have observed, and ask if the student thinks they need any assistance. If the answer indicates there is a history of a disability, explain that TAO may be of help the student and how to find TAO. If they say no or that they do not have a disability, please respect their decision or the information they have shared with you. Inform the student of other services available to students, such as Counseling, Career Services and the Tutoring Center. These services may be able to provide the support that the student needs to be successful at Bucks County Community College.

FAQ 11: What disability resources, aids and services are available through TAO?

The spectrum of reasonable adjustments varies greatly depending on the individual student. All accommodations at Bucks County Community College are available on a case by case basis. Accommodations are provided to students based on individual needs, diagnosis, conditions and documentation provided to TAO staff. It is the responsibility of the student to make the request for accommodations.

FAQ 12: What constitutes a disability, anyway?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)

Section 504 states that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under" any program or activity that either receives Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any Executive agency or the United States Postal Service (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009).

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 508)

Section 508 establishes requirements for electronic and information technology developed, maintained, procured, or used by the Federal government. Section 508 requires Federal electronic and information technology to be accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009).

Additional Information

Bucks County Community College recognizes that anyone with a documented physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities qualifies for services as supported by the Accessibility Office. Major life activities include examples as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. Some of the most common areas of documented disabilities are vision impairments, hearing impairments, ADD/ADHD, specific learning disabilities, physical disabilities, psychological disabilities, mobility impairments, and neurological impairments. A person is considered to be a person with a disability if they have a disability, has a record of a disability, or is regarded as having a disability.

Reference:

U.S. Department of Justice. (2009, July). A Guide to Disability Rights Laws. In *Civil Rights Division: Disability Rights Section*. Retrieved September 29, 2016, from <https://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm>

FAQ 13: If a student with a disability is working very hard, using the adjustments and still not succeeding, what should I do?

The very same thing you would do in the case of a student who does not have a disability. If the student cannot satisfy the essential requirements of the course, meet all of the prescribed standards and complete assigned academic products, then the student should be graded accordingly. In the higher education setting, students are expected to meet all of the same standards and expectations if they do or do not have a disability.

FAQ 14: Differences Between High School and College Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Applicable Laws

High School	College
I.D.E.A. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)	A.D.A. (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990)
Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973	Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973
I.D.E.A. is about SUCCESS	A.D.A. is about ACCESS

Required Documentation

High School	College
I.E.P. (Individualized Education Plan and/or 504 Plan	High School I.E.P. and 504 are not sufficient. Documentation guidelines specify information needed for each category of disability.
School provides evaluation at no cost to student	Student must get evaluation at own expense
Documentation focuses on determining whether student is eligible for services based on specific disability categories in I.D.E.A.	Documentation must provide information on specific functional limitations, and demonstrate the need for specific accommodations

Self-Advocacy

High School	College
Student is identified by the school and is supported by parents and teachers	Student must self-identify to the Office of Disability Services
Primary responsibility for arranging accommodations	Primary responsibility for self-advocacy and arranging
Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance	Professors are usually open and helpful, but most expect you to initiate contact if you need assistance

Parental Role

High School	College
Parent has access to student records and can participate in the accommodation process	Parent does not have access to student records without student's written consent
Parent advocates for student	Student advocates for self

Instruction

High School	College
Teachers may modify curriculum and/or alter pace of assignments	Professors are not required to modify curriculum design or alter assignment deadlines
You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class	You are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing which may not be directly addressed in class
You seldom need to read anything more than once, and sometimes listening in class is enough	You need to review class notes and text material regularly

Grades and Tests

High School	College
I.E.P. or 504 plan may include modifications to test format and/or grading	Grading and test format changes (i.e. multiple choice vs. essay) are generally not available. Accommodations to HOW tests are given (extended time, test proctors) are available when supported by disability documentation.
Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material	Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material
Makeup tests are often available	Makeup tests are seldom an option; if they are, you need to request them
Teachers often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates	Professors expect you to read, save, and consult the course syllabus (outline); the syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of you, when it is due, and how you will be graded

Study Responsibilities

High School	College
Tutoring and study support may be a service provided as part of an I.E.P. or 504 plan	Tutoring DOES NOT fall under Disability Services. Students with disabilities must seek out tutoring resources as they are available to all students.
Your time and assignments are structured by others	You manage your own time and complete assignments independently
You may study outside of class as little as 0 to 2 hours a week, and this may be mostly last-minute test preparation	You need to study at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class for each hour in class