# LEARN HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.

As the University of Illinois transitions to online learning for the Fall semester, students with disabilities strive for full participation and engagement with their courses. Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) has created guidelines for students with disabilities and faculty to help navigate learning in traditional, hybrid, and online courses. The sections contained in this guide will highlight different supports instructors should consider when designing courses. These guidelines should be viewed as insight into the experiences students with disabilities encounter with regard to learning. The topics presented should be interpreted as guidelines. Any questions about the implementation of accommodations included in a student's Letter of Accommodations should be done in consultation with the instructor, student, and DRES Access Specialist as soon as questions arise.

**This guide will address the following topics:**

- General Notes
- Instructional Delivery
- Exams
- Assignments

# GENERAL NOTES

- The strategies/tips offered in this guide apply to any learning environment. Written to emphasize the learning needs of students with disabilities, these guidelines are helpful to **all** students, not just students with disabilities.

- It is the student's responsibility to provide instructors with their Letter of Accommodation. Students are not required to present the faculty member with medical documentation verifying their disability. Send a confirmation to student and Access Specialist that you received and viewed the LOA.

- Do not discuss accommodations and changes to accommodations in front of the entire class. These discussions should be done privately with the student.

- Be as explicit as possible with students.  Tell students exactly what the plan is, where they should be checking for updates, what websites you are using, when things are due, and how to turn them in.

- Students might not clearly communicate their needs after presenting you with their LOA. Communication deficits can be attributed to many disabilities. If you have any questions about how to execute an accommodation, you should contact the Access Specialist on the students letter throughout the semester.

- If you have questions about how this accommodation applies or needs to be modified for an online or hybrid environment, please contact the student's access specialist for consultation.

# INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

## Course Pages and Lecture Slides

- Keep instructions clear and concise in online formats. It is helpful to use one platform if possible.

- In synchronous or asynchronous online learning, have lecture videos or slides posted before class. This can help students process information beforehand and can increase engagement.

- If you are posting the lecture video after class, let students know when you will post the video after each class (try to keep this time consistent every week). This allows them to plan their study schedule accordingly.

- When possible, allow for content to be accessed multiple times. This includes lecture videos, homework, and quiz questions.

- Many students access course pages on their mobile device – consider how your learning platform functions on a phone.

- Use simple layouts when presenting information. Cluttered pages with a lot of information are difficult to process.

- Increase size and spacing of text (size 14-16 and double space). Don't underline or use *italics* to emphasize words - it can make words difficult to discern.

- Keep formatting consistent with text alignment - don't try to get creative.

- Use images and diagrams with any text you produce.

- Limit the amount of download options on page. Make all information available on the page as text.

- Any clickable action should have a large area for student to select.

- Design pages so they can be used with only a keyboard, or only through speech. Mouse movement is difficult for some students.

## Classroom Instruction

- If possible, try to use a platform such as Zoom, which is most compatible for video remote interpreting and video remote live captioning services to be embedded within the course platform.

- Students do better when information is presented with visual cues or images that support the text.

- Have both text and audio options available for students.

- For increased engagement in online formats, use breakout rooms during the lecture.

- For longer online classes (longer than 50 minutes), allow for breaks during the lecture.

- All videos/media shown in class should be Closed Captioned. Prepare in advance to get your media closed captioned before classes start.

- Don't talk in front of a window, it casts a shadow on your face and makes it hard to speechread.

- Try to stay in one space when teaching. Pacing makes it harder to speechread. Stay faced forward where students can see your face.

- While teaching, if another student in the class asks a question or makes a comment, it's best practice for the instructor to repeat the

question/comment to make sure everyone in the classroom has access to the question/comment.

- When using an interpreter, speak directly to the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student, not the interpreter. Likewise, do not say, "Can you tell him/her..." Say it to the student directly. Make eye contact with them when speaking. Pretend the interpreter is invisible.

- Do not over-enunciate. It distorts the words and makes it almost impossible to lip-read. Speak normally, at a normal pace - extra slow doesn't help either.

- Some Blind/Low Vision students may require tinted glasses or a hat in class in order to best see the board and cut down on glare.

- Blind/Low Vision students may not be able to see what is happening in a video/movie/media shown in class. In this case, the student may require Audio Description on the videos or an electronic version of the transcript in order to have access to the media.

- For students who still have peer note takers or more commonly, lab assistance, professors can help students by asking for volunteers while not outing students who need assistance.

# EXAMS, QUIZZES, AND FINAL EXAMS

## Before the exam

- Discuss what proctoring software you'll be using before exams. For example if you receive a letter of accommodation with testing accommodations from a student, instructors could say something like, "I use (insert proctoring service) for test proctoring. Have you used this before (and/or) do you have any concerns about this in regards to your disability?"

- If a student has exam accommodations like extended time, make sure their additional time is provided before starting the exam. Students with extended time accommodations need their extended time added from what everyone else is provided. You can't just provide the entire class with extra time.

- If you are using a lockdown browser during exams, you may need to unlock it for students with disabilities who use assistive technology.

- Students who rely on keyboard navigation will not be able to use Proctorio. Some features of Proctorio will not work with some screen readers. The Signature, ID Card, and Room Scan options should not be used if you need to use Proctorio for students with visual impairments.

## During the Exam

- Exam software like Proctorio flag pacing, eye movement, fidgeting and resting. These behaviors are side effects of, or tools used by students to manage their disability. Students with disabilities are more likely to be flagged for these behaviors which creates a stressful environment for the student and instructor. This can delay the options available for the student to complete the exam with their accommodations.

- Allow for printing of online exams as some students with disabilities struggle to process information on a screen.

- Be available during the exam to answer questions students have.

- Be explicit with exam instructions. Let students know what to expect during each step of the exam.

- Let students check answers before submitting the exams.

# ASSIGNMENTS

- Try to keep a consistent schedule for when assignments are due. Make due dates explicit on course page. Consistency adds structure into students' schedules which can help them develop a routine to complete work.

- Be flexible with assignment due dates. Students with ADHD may have problems finding a distraction-reduced space to complete work or take exams. Students with psychiatric disabilities may have increased symptoms making it difficult to focus to complete work. Students with learning disabilities may have trouble with increased online reading or increased auditory information.

- When assigning articles to read for the class, try to provide "clean copies," meaning no writing on the pages, no notes in the columns or highlighting. This makes it difficult to convert the article from paper to electronic format.

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