

# Alternative Assessment for Students with Disabilities

The UW-Madison supports the right of full and equal educational opportunity for all students. Disability should not be the basis for exclusion from educational programs. Instructional accommodations and alternative testing programs may be necessary in order for qualified students with disabilities to participate in instructional programs. Such accommodations, including alternative testing, should allow equivalent opportunity for qualified students to demonstrate their acquired knowledge and competence. They should not create unfair advantage for the student or undue hardship for faculty. The purpose of the following statement of policy is to guide faculty in the provision of alternative testing opportunities for students with disabilities.

Faculty are responsible for the educational activities of the institution, including the assessment of student learning in their courses. Thus, they are expected to work with students to identify and provide reasonable accommodations for assessment (Faculty Document 1071). Students with disabilities are responsible for informing faculty in a timely manner of their need for such accommodations. Students should consult with faculty as early as possible -- preferably before the beginning of a semester, but not later than the first three weeks of classes. Students who incur or recognize a disability and the need for an accommodation during the semester should immediately consult with the instructor. Throughout all of these steps, the student is responsible for self-advocacy.

Testing and assessment in courses may measure knowledge of course materials, proficiency in skills, or both. Students who have acquired such knowledge or skills may not be able to demonstrate their competency under some testing conditions. For example, a student whose disability reduces reading and/or writing speed may not be able to demonstrate proficiency in timed tests. If the skill or knowledge being tested does not directly require timed performance, extended time can accommodate such a student without creating unfair advantage. Similarly, a student with a visual disability may need to use audio tape, large print, or Braille in order to read an examination. Alternative response formats may need to be arranged, including (but not limited to) oral, large-print, or scribe- or computer-generated tests. Consideration should also be provided for those students who, for documented health reasons, need to have the date and time of the test altered.

The determination of appropriate procedures for alternative assessment or testing may depend on the student's disability and history of accommodation; on the nature of the course material; on the design, content, and purpose of the assessment; and on the testing environment. The McBurney Disability Resource Center is available to assist faculty and students by verifying disabilities, recommending accommodations, and providing information and training on disability related issues. Students having previous experience with alternative testing may also provide helpful suggestions to faculty. If a faculty member is not satisfied with a recommendation for alternative testing, he or she may consult with the McBurney Disability Resource Center in order to seek a mutually agreeable modification. If such an agreement cannot be reached, the student has a right to appeal. The faculty member may request that the

departmental Access and Accommodation Resource Coordinator provide information to the student about initiating a formal appeal. Until the appeal is resolved, the faculty member should provide the best possible accommodation without assuming an undue burden or granting a demonstrably unfair advantage to the student.

Most accommodations for alternative testing are relatively simple. For example, students may come earlier to start an extended-time examination, or large-print versions of examinations can be printed at the same time that originals are prepared. Accommodations may be provided directly by faculty, through the McBurney Disability Resource Center, or through other arrangements mutually agreeable to the student and the faculty member (Faculty Document 1071). The ability of faculty to provide accommodation may be compromised by (a) large numbers of students needing accommodation, or (b) limited instructional resources. In such situations, it is recommended that faculty work with the Access and Accommodation Resource Coordinators in their departments and with the McBurney Disability Resource Center to explore potential solutions. In times of high demand, some flexibility may be required.

Faculty, departmental staff, and the McBurney Disability Resource Center are all responsible for maintaining confidentiality. Any disability-related information should be kept in a separate, confidential file and not included with the student's academic record.

Committee on Disability and Access Accommodation

April 7, 1995