

Chapter 14: Accommodations Policy

I. Introduction

- a. Guided by our Catholic, Jesuit tradition of academic excellence, freedom of inquiry and respect for individual differences, our law school is committed to providing an inclusive environment which is responsive to the needs of all students. In doing so we are fully committed to implementing the provisions of the Americans with Disability Act, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and applicable state and local statutes and ordinances in order to provide accommodations to eligible law students to ensure equal access to the study of law.

II. Disability Services Coordinator

- a. The Dean of Student Activities and Leadership is the Disability Services Coordinator (“Coordinator”) for the School of Law. Her responsibilities include implementation of this policy.

III. Confidentiality

- a. The Coordinator is committed to providing students with confidential advice. All documentation submitted to the Coordinator and the records pertaining to the request for accommodations shall be held in confidence in a separate locked file. Information about a student’s disability will not be released to School of Law faculty or staff, unless there is a clear educational, health and/or safety reason.

IV. Process for Requesting Accommodations and Documentation Overview

a. **Background**

- i. The process for determining accommodations is a collaborative one that may or may not require third-party documentation. We encourage students to contact us early in the semester to engage in discussions surrounding their disability as well as their need for accommodation.
- ii. The Americans with Disabilities Act allows postsecondary education institutions to request several forms of documentation prior to support a student’s request for accommodations. This effort is to ensure that administrators reviewing these requests can not only establish the disability, but to ensure that they are informed about its impact and are well suited to provide accommodations that resolve barriers to the student’s performance.

b. **Overview of Process**

- i. The student should set an appointment with the Coordinator.
- ii. There are no deadlines for requesting accommodations; however, the request must be timely. Enough time needs to be given in order to properly review, approve and put the accommodations into place.

- iii. The student should bring any documentation they have available regarding their disability to the appointment. At the appointment, the Coordinator will let the student know if any additional documentation is needed for the request.
- iv. Following the appointment, the Coordinator will send a confirmation letter (“proposed schedule”) to the student. After one week, if there are no appeals, the accommodation is put into place.
- v. Should the student seek an appeal pursuant to section VI of this policy, the proposed schedule will not become final during the appeal process but shall be in effect pending the result of the appeal.

c. Sources and Forms of Documentation

- i. Documentation requests may be made to provide further details regarding the student’s request and can take place in several forms:
 - 1. Primary Documentation: Student’s Self-report
 - a. Each student is best able to identify his or her limitations from a disability. Thus, it is important to have the student provide a narrative of his or her experiences with a disability, associated barriers to performance, and the effectiveness of particular accommodations. This alone may be sufficient to establish the disability and demonstrate the need for accommodation.
 - 2. Secondary Documentation: Observation and Interaction
 - a. While in consultation with the student, ‘coordinator’ and other administrators may form impressions and conclusions regarding the effectiveness of previous or requested accommodations. These observations may serve as valuable forms of documentation when reviewing a student’s narrative of his or her request.
 - 3. Tertiary documentation: Information From External or Third Parties
 - a. When necessary, students requesting accommodations may be asked to provide documentation from qualified professionals licensed in the relevant area.
 - b. This documentation should be recent, typically within three to five years, and should include recommendations for accommodations.
 - c. Educational or medical records and assessments may also be requested such as Individual Education Programs (IEP), Summary of Performance (SOP) evaluations, and teacher observations.

- d. Tertiary documentation should discuss the limitations or the impact of the disability on the student's academic experience.
- e. While any and all documentation may be helpful in providing guidance for administrators, these tertiary forms of documentation may vary in both relevance and value depending on their original context, the credentials of the evaluator, and the level of detail provided in the reports.

d. Documentation Process

i. Individual Review

1. The primary focus of student accommodations is to address barriers that impose limitations on the student's performance. The process of individual review allows the student to articulate and clarify those barriers that result from his or her disability. While there is no 'one-to-one' correspondence of disability to accommodation, there is no prescribed standard for the type of documentation needed to establish and address a particular disability. The documentation process should reflect the uniqueness of the individual student and his or her request.
2. A student who requests accommodations will meet individually with the Coordinator to discuss the student's request. This conversation will help to surface details of the student's history of disability, prior accommodations, and will result in a specific plan for moving forward. This plan may include a request for further documentation should it be helpful.
3. The Coordinator will then review the requested documentation to determine the eligibility for accommodations pursuant to this policy. In so doing, the Coordinator may consult with professionals who have been involved with providing documentation. The Coordinator may also contact former educational institutions or employers to assess previous accommodations, including those received when taking standardized tests.
4. Once the process of review is finalized, the Coordinator will release a proposed schedule of accommodations to the student. The Coordinator may discuss with faculty, University Disabilities Counselors, or other professionals for additional advice. The student's confidentiality will remain in place at all times.
5. This proposed schedule becomes final one week after being proposed to the student, unless the student appeals during that week.

ii. Sensible Standard

1. Every request for accommodation will be addressed utilizing a commonsense standard. Where a disability and its impact are readily apparent, third party documentation may not be necessary to develop a plan for review.

iii. Non-burdensome Process

1. Saint Louis University and the School of Law are committed to a non-burdensome process for students requesting accommodations in their academic experience. The School of Law will not impose a documentation process that is overly burdensome to a student or one that discourages a student from seeking accommodations.

V. Accommodations

- a. **“Reasonable accommodations”** refer to any adaptation in the School of Law environment or in customary practice that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal educational opportunities.

Reasonable academic accommodations may be made in the following areas:

i. Academic Programs

1. These are accommodations necessary to enable a student to enroll in, qualify for, attend, and participate in all programs of the School of Law. In no case shall an Academic Program’s accommodation alter the essential nature of the School of Law program.

ii. Examinations

1. These are accommodations necessary to enable a student to demonstrate competency on the course exam designed by the professor. Examples include, but are not limited to, additional time, use of a computer or scribe. Accommodations that alter the form or essential nature of the exam shall be rarely made and shall be made only in consultation with and the agreement of the professor.

iii. Auxiliary Aids

1. These are materials or assistance necessary to enable a student to participate fully in the School of Law academic program. Examples include, but are not limited to assistive technology, note takers, readers, scribes and library assistance. The School of Law will utilize existing resources such as individual volunteers, state and local agencies and charitable organizations and shall have the cooperation of the student involved.

iv. Physical Accommodations

1. These are accommodations necessary to provide students full physical access to all School of Law programs.

b. Disability Specific Accommodations

i. Learning Disabilities

1. Requests will likely be made for current documentation (within the last three years) of a student's learning disability from qualified professionals in the relevant area and specialty. Individual requests may also be made on a case-by-case basis for specific psychological tests to be performed. These tests should be reliable, valid, and must also be administered by qualified professionals in the relevant area and specialty.
2. For individuals with ADD/ADHD, the student will likely be asked to provide documentation that includes a diagnostician's report of the history of the student's ADD/ADHD, including DSM-IV diagnostic criteria. It is helpful to include a complete history of treatment and the functional impact of treatment on the student's disability and academic involvement.
3. Possible accommodations for learning disabilities may include:
 - a. Note Takers or Recorded Lectures
 - b. Extended Exam Time
 - c. Alternate Exam Location
 - d. Modifications to classroom environment

ii. Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

1. Documentation for hearing loss disabilities may include audiograms performed within the last ten years, or Certificates of Deafness (if applicable), will suffice if performed by a qualified professional in the relevant area.
2. Students who are deaf or who experience severe loss of functional hearing ability will often seek accommodations that may include Sign Language interpreters, real-time captioning, and others. However, students may prefer written transcripts instead of ASL interpreters and note takers. Additional accommodations may include:
 - a. Priority Registration
 - b. Priority or Preferential Seating
 - c. Oral Interpreters
 - d. Close Captioned TV, Video, and Film.
3. Students who experience mild functional hearing loss, or are hard-of-hearing, may benefit from a variety of Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs). Some forms may require

faculty cooperation, such as amplification systems, and should be arranged through the Coordinator.

- a. Accommodations applicable to deaf students may also be available to hard-of-hearing students. However, these students often find assistive listening devices or CART (Computer Assisted Real Time) services to cover their needs.
4. The School of Law is equipped with assistive listening coils in half of the classrooms that seat 80 or more students. With advance notice, the Coordinator will assign the student's class schedule to these rooms.

iii. Visual Disabilities

1. The extent to which a student demonstrates mild to severe visual disabilities, as well as the learning method that works best for that student, will help determine the most appropriate accommodations for both classroom participation and exam taking. Students with visual disabilities face challenges both inside and outside of the classroom such that accommodations are typically requested beyond the classroom and testing environment. Because of the nature of many of these accommodations, it is vital that the student notify Student Services for accommodations well in advance of the semester in an effort to obtain appropriate textbooks, allow for syllabi alterations, and prepare the student for priority enrollment.
2. Depending upon the student's degree of remaining vision, the following in-class accommodations are typically requested:
 - a. Note-taking of lecture materials
 - b. Handouts and PowerPoint presentations in useable formats
 - c. Real-Time Computer Use of in-class board work
 - d. Priority seating
 - e. In-class Movies and Videos in appropriate formats
3. Likewise, the following outside-of-class accommodations are typically requested:
 - a. Readers (access to reader funding, if appropriate)
 - b. Access to modified legal databases
 - c. Feedback on Written Assignments
 - d. Bluebook modifications
4. Exam accommodations will also be made according to the student's need and may include:

- a. Additional Time
 - b. Readers
 - c. Appropriate or modified lighting for students with remaining vision
 - d. Access to inspect testing locations in advance of the exam
 - e. Modified exam submission methods
5. Finally, most students with visual disabilities benefit most from accommodations made to reading materials. SLU Law's curriculum depends heavily on a student's ability to read and navigate large amounts of textual material, and accommodations to these standard materials significantly reduce many of the associated barriers for students with visual disabilities. The School of Law will work with textbook publishers, professors, and other resources to facilitate modifications to reading materials and to provide these accommodations in a timely fashion.

iv. Mobility Related Disabilities

1. Students requesting accommodations may, if necessary to establish or identify a barrier associated with a mobility related disability, be asked to provide documentation from a qualified professional detailing the student's loss of function and associated barriers.
2. In addition to universal modifications provided by the School of Law including elevators, ramps, designated parking, automated door openers, and others, students may benefit from other accommodations to alleviate barriers associated with facility access, classroom learning, and ease of use of School of Law services. These accommodations may include:
 - a. Priority Registration
 - b. Priority Seating
 - c. Priority Assignment of Lockers and Study Carrels
 - d. Modified classroom furniture (chairs, desks, etc.)
 - e. Removal of physical barriers
 - f. Alternative format texts
 - g. Lecture Notes
 - h. Adaptive equipment
3. Exam accommodations for students with mobility related disabilities will vary depending upon the specific barriers associated with the physical/mobility impairment. These may include:

- a. Extended exam time
- b. Modified exam location
- c. Scribes

v. Mental Health Disabilities

1. Not all students who suffer from mental health related issues will consider themselves as having a disability. However, this should not prevent documented individuals from receiving accommodations to remove barriers associated with mental health issues.
2. Documentation would require communication from a qualified medical professional describing the DSM diagnosis. In other instances, some students requesting accommodations may need to provide results from various psychological tests to demonstrate the function impact of the student's treatment, similar to those tests requested of students with learning disabilities.
3. Accommodations will vary widely depending upon the circumstances surrounding each individual's situation, needs, and diagnosis. These may include:
 - a. Note Takers and Lecture Notes
 - b. Extended Exam Time
 - c. Separate Exam Room
 - d. Ability to Leave Class

vi. Living with Chronic Illness

1. Chronic illnesses that affect student performance can exist in myriad forms and will affect individual students in different ways. There is no one accommodation prescribed for an illness that will alleviate that student's barriers to full performance in class and on exams.
2. Requests will likely be made for documentation from relevant medical professionals describing the nature, associated impact, and limitations imposed upon the student's performance.
3. Accommodations may be very specific and may constitute one or more of those listed anywhere in this policy that address mental, physical, mobility, or cognitive learning disabilities.

VI. Appeal

- a. A student who disagrees with the Coordinator's eligibility determination or proposed accommodations shall have an appeal to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The appeal process shall include an

interview with the student, a review of the Accommodation File and consultation with the Coordinator. At the conclusion of the appeal process, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs shall issue a letter of decision. A student who disagrees with the determination of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs shall have an appeal to the Dean.

VII. Collaboration

- a. School of Law faculty and staff shall collaborate with the Coordinator in providing appropriate accommodations to eligible students. Students shall collaborate with the Coordinator and the School of Law faculty and staff to help ensure that the academic programs are provided to all students in an equitable manner.