Office of Accessibility
Student Handbook

Welcome
The Office of Accessibility (OA) would like to welcome you to our office and to The University of Akron! Our goal is to provide students with disabilities equal access opportunities and programs geared for academic success. Please use this handbook as a guide for accessing accommodations and services through the Office of Accessibility. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns regarding accommodations.

Office Hours

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<th>Fall/Spring Semesters</th>
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<td>Monday through Friday</td>
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<td>8:00 AM to 5:00 PM</td>
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Our Staff is Here to Help You

The staff in the Office of Accessibility strives to provide students with full access to, and the opportunity for, full participation in the academic environment at The University of Akron. Your Disability Specialist will be your “go-to” person on campus whether you have questions, need an advocate, or require assistance coordinating accommodations and services. We are here to assist you!

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# Office of Accessibility Student Handbook

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General Office Information

Our Mission
The mission of the Office of Accessibility at The University of Akron is to provide students with full access to and the opportunity for full participation in the academic environment. We are advocates of social justice for students with disabilities and work to end oppression by examining the social, cultural, and institutional barriers to inclusion of all students. We embrace the diversity of our student body and celebrate a culturally sensitive and accessible campus through outreach, partnership, and advocacy with all university departments.

Relevant Federal Laws
In addition to the mission of the Office of Accessibility, the following two directives from federal laws guide the efforts in this office and The University of Akron to provide an accessible experience in higher education. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in federally funded programs and activities. The Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended ADAAA (2008) is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the areas of employment, state and local government, public accommodations and services, transportation, and telecommunications.

College students with disabilities are covered in Title II of the ADAAA. Students often experience a transition from the provisions of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that guided their services in high school and the federal guidelines of the Rehab Act of 1973 and ADAAA that are relevant in higher education.

Statement of Compliance
Pursuant to the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, The University of Akron does not discriminate against any student, because of a disability and does not exclude any qualified student with a disability from participation in or from receiving the benefits of the services, program, or activities of the University.

Maintenance and Disclosure of Records of Disability
Policy for Maintenance and Disclosure of Student Records Related to Disability
The Office of Accessibility maintains records of a student’s disability according to the guidelines of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). These records are maintained in the Office of Accessibility, separately from the student’s academic records, which are maintained elsewhere in the institution (Registrar and/or appropriate academic unit). Records received by the Office of Accessibility that appear to contain information unrelated to the determination and provision of academic accommodations, auxiliary aids and services will be returned to the provider. Information retained by the Office of Accessibility will be only that which is determined to be related to the disability and provision of academic accommodations.

Procedure to Request Release or Review of Student Records Related to Disability
The student should request the release or review of the specific information by filling out The University of Akron’s FERPA Release Form. The student may need to schedule an appointment to meet with the appropriate Disability Specialist to release or review the requested information.
Accessing Accommodations

How to Register with the Office of Accessibility ...

Easy as 1, 2, 3!!

1. Get Started at The University of Akron
   - Applying for admission to The University of Akron and applying for services with the Office of Accessibility are two different processes.
   - Students need to apply, be accepted, and enroll in classes before attending an intake appointment.
   - Students can register with the Office of Accessibility at any point while enrolled at The University of Akron.

2. Submit New Student Application and documentation
   - The Office of Accessibility recommends submitting the New Student Application and documentation 3 months prior to enrollment.
   - Complete the New Student Application to register with the Office of Accessibility. The new student application is a brief online questionnaire designed for students to describe the impacts of a disability. STARS is the online system that allows students to quickly and easily request and notify faculty of approved accommodations.
   - After completing the new student application, students should upload current, disability-related documentation of a disability(ies) completed by a qualified professional. The Office of Accessibility has specific guidelines available or in Simmons Hall 105. The Office of Accessibility will not accept disability-related documentation from treatment professionals who are related, in any way, to the student requesting services.

3. Schedule an intake appointment
   - Once a new student application has been reviewed, including complete documentation, an Office of Accessibility staff member will follow-up to schedule an intake appointment. If any information in the application is incomplete, a staff member will contact the student to address what is needed.
   - During the intake appointment, you will discuss:
     1. Eligible services based upon documentation and disability-related needs.
     2. Training on our online accommodation request system (STARS).
     3. Any other questions/concerns about The University of Akron, our office, and preparation for attending college.
   - You are welcome to bring a support person (parent/guardian, spouse, case manager) to the intake.
   - The appointment will last approximately 1 ½ hours.

What are Accommodations?

An accommodation is a support that is put in place for a course, program, service, job, activity, or facility that is designed to eliminate or minimize disability-related barriers. There are many ways to accommodate a situation or activity. Accommodations vary based on individual circumstances and disability-related documentation.

In order for an accommodation to be considered, it must not:
   - Compromise the essential requirements of a course, program, job, activity, or facility.
   - Cause an undue administrative or financial hardship.
   - Compromise safety to you or others.
   - Fundamentally alter a course or program.
Steps for Requesting Accommodations

Students must follow these steps EACH SEMESTER if they wish to utilize accommodations!

1. **Schedule your classes**
   - It is important to organize your schedule in a way that works best for you! Consider the following before meeting with your advisor:
     - Check MyAkron for your registration dates so that you can schedule your classes as soon as they are open to you.
     - Should you schedule breaks between classes? This is especially helpful if extended time on testing is one of your accommodations or if you have specific transportation needs.
     - When do you function your best? You may want to schedule classes at a certain time of day due to medication or other reasons.
     - Should you limit the number of “heavy” reading, math-related, or writing-intensive courses that you take at the same time? Try to balance your schedule so that it works best for you.

2. **Be Aware of Deadlines for Accommodation Requests**
   - Some accommodations have deadlines in order to have sufficient time to coordinate services. Deadlines are located at [www.uakron.edu/access](http://www.uakron.edu/access).
   - Please request accommodations as soon as possible to avoid missing any deadlines.
   - If a deadline is missed, services will **NOT** be denied. However, they may take significantly longer to implement.

3. **Request Accommodations through STARS**
   - Request accommodations as soon as you have a class schedule prior to each semester.
   - Log in to the Student Testing and Accommodation Request System (STARS) website [https://york.accessiblelearning.com/Akron](https://york.accessiblelearning.com/Akron)
   - Select the courses for which you would like accommodations and click “Step 2- Continue to Customize Your Accommodations.”
   - Mark the specific accommodations that you need for each class.
   - Check the box if you would like your accommodation letters to be emailed to your professors. If you do not check the box, the letters will not be emailed to your professors.
   - **IMPORTANT**- If you change your schedule, it is your responsibility to update your accommodation request in STARS. We are unable to process requests for added classes or schedule changes unless the accommodation request is updated.
   - *Forget how to request your accommodations through STARS? We can help you!*
     - Watch the “How to Request Accommodation Letters” tutorial at [www.uakron.edu/access](http://www.uakron.edu/access).
     - Come to the OA during office hours and a staff member will assist you.
     - Schedule a meeting with your Disability Specialist for assistance.

4. **Accommodation Letters are Emailed to Professors**
   - Accommodation letters are the formal description of the services and accommodations students will receive through the Office of Accessibility.
   - Letters are emailed to instructors one week before the semester starts if requested in advance.
   - Students can choose to hand deliver letters to professors, have them emailed, or both.
   - Letters can be emailed to instructors at any time upon the student’s request.
5. **Communicate with your Professors**
   - Take steps to implement accommodations and maintain good communication with professors.
   - Make sure that they understand your accommodations and do not have any questions.
   - Ask your Disability Specialist if you would like assistance communicating with your professors.

6. **Contact your Disability Specialist if You Have Questions**
   - Call (330) 972-7928.
   - Email directly.
   - Stop in to make an appointment during office hours.

**IMPORTANT:** Accommodations are NOT retroactive. This means that services and accommodations apply only from the point at which the student requests the accommodations and communicates the desire to use each of their approved accommodations.
Roles and Responsibilities in the Accommodation Process

Office of Accessibility Responsibilities
- Review and explain what documentation is needed to determine eligibility for services.
- Determine your eligibility for individualized accommodations based on documentation.
- Maintain student files in a confidential manner.
- Send letters to faculty members that detail your accommodations, per your request in STARS.
- Make a reasonable, good faith effort to provide accommodations, aids, and services for eligible students in a timely manner.

Student Responsibilities
- Register with the Office of Accessibility by providing necessary documentation.
- Meet with your Disability Specialist to discuss your needs.
- Submit accommodation requests through STARS each semester.
- Speak to your professors about your accommodations and maintain necessary communication with instructors and the Office of Accessibility to coordinate services throughout the semester.
- Be aware of out-of-classroom/hands-on learning experiences in your program and communicate with your Disability Specialist and professors to determine appropriate accommodations for those experiences.
- Meet with your Disability Specialist to discuss any evacuation concerns.
- Notify your Disability Specialist if additional accommodations should be considered.
- Contact your Disability Specialist and/or professors if you have any questions/concerns.

Faculty Responsibilities
- Understand accommodations approved by the Office of Accessibility.
- Collaborate with the student and/or the Office of Accessibility to coordinate accommodations.
- Contact the Office of Accessibility if there are questions/concerns regarding accommodations.
- Know the essential elements of a course or program.
Additional Services from the Office of Accessibility

Academic Support Sessions
Our Disability Specialists are available to meet with you for Academic Support Sessions throughout each semester. We are here to help if you would like assistance with time management, organization, connecting to campus resources, accessing your accommodations, and communicating with your professors. Please do not hesitate to contact your Disability Specialist by phone or email at any time.

Campus Walk-Throughs
The Office of Accessibility staff is available, upon request, to walk with you through campus to find your classrooms, determine accessible routes, and assess classroom furniture prior to the beginning of each semester. Campus walk-throughs are intended to help you feel prepared and confident at the onset of each semester.

Equipment
The Office of Accessibility has equipment that can be loaned from our office, including (but not limited to): Tape recorders, Assisted Listening Devices, Digital Recorders, and AlphaSmarts. Students may be asked to complete a Tape Recorder Agreement form when checking out a tape recorder. Your Disability Specialist may make recommendations for you to utilize a specific piece of equipment and will determine your eligibility. Equipment must be returned to the Office of Accessibility upon completion of each semester. Failure to return equipment will result in a hold on your student account.

For Your Success Emails and Office of Accessibility Newsletters
The Office of Accessibility periodically sends emails and newsletters to students registered with our office. These correspondences will be sent to your University of Akron email account, as email is the preferred method of communication at The University of Akron. We will inform you of deadlines, important dates, and helpful tips For Your Success!

Peer Assistance for Support and Success (PASS)
The Peer Assistance for Support and Success (PASS) program is a peer mentorship program designed to help you achieve your academic goals! Please contact your Disability Specialist if you are interested in signing up for PASS.

Quiet Study Areas
The Office of Accessibility has multiple quiet rooms that are available for students registered with our office to utilize during office hours. These rooms provide a quiet, distraction-reduced environment for students to study. Quiet study rooms may not be available during high volume testing times, including the weeks of midterms and finals. Please call (330) 972-7928 to make a reservation or stop in the Office of Accessibility to check the availability of a room.

Reader/Writer Hours
Reader and Writer hours are available by appointment. These hours may be limited based on availability and point in semester. A reader reads the directions, questions, and answer choices to a student, but does not interpret, re-word, or explain the assignment. A writer writes down, or otherwise records, student responses, but does not create answers for the student or help the student identify answers. Contact your Disability Specialist if you are interested in utilizing these services or if additional assistance is needed.
Supports for Temporary Medical Conditions
Temporary medical conditions, including injured limbs, surgeries, pregnancy, and short-term illnesses, may require temporary, short-term accommodations. While the University is not obligated to provide accommodations for students with temporary medical conditions, the Office of Accessibility attempts to accommodate students that may need temporary support accessing the physical campus and the educational curriculum. Please contact us if you have questions about a temporary medical condition.

Additional Services at The University of Akron

Additional Tutoring Supports
Although the Office of Accessibility does not directly provide tutoring for students, we collaborate with the tutoring centers in Bierce Library and the Polsky Building to provide services for our students. The University of Akron also provides year-round E-Tutoring Services for current students through www.etutoring.org. Please contact the Help Desk at (330)972-6888 if you require assistance setting up an e-tutoring account.

Bierce Library, (330) 972-6552
Bierce Writing Commons, ground floor
Bierce Math Lab, ground floor
Bierce Subject Tutoring, ground floor
Learning Assistants Program, ground floor

Polsky Building, (330) 972-7046
Polsky Writing Lab, Polsky 303
Polsky Math Lab, Polsky 332
College Reading and Study Skills, Polsky 342

Students registered with the Office of Accessibility can request additional tutoring time beyond what is offered to other students. To utilize extended tutoring time, students should print an accommodation letter from STARS to provide to Tutoring Services, or ask their Disability Specialist to email an accommodation letter to the Tutoring Services Coordinator.

Counseling & Testing Center
The OA frequently collaborates with the Counseling & Testing Center to provide wrap-around supports for students. The Counseling & Testing Center offers comprehensive psychological services to currently enrolled students. A culturally diverse staff of licensed psychologists and doctoral trainees provide psychological counseling for psychotherapy, career counseling, testing services, outreach and consultation to the university community.

The Counseling & Testing Center provides Learning Disorder/ADHD Assessments for students at a low price. Please speak to your Disability Specialist or call the Counseling Center at (330) 972-7082 to make an appointment if you are interested in services.

Recreation and Wellness Center
The University of Akron’s Recreation and Wellness Center provides equipment that is accessible to students. Please visit the Recreation and Wellness Center or call (330) 972-2348 for more information.

Residence Life and Housing Accommodations
Residence Life and Housing is committed to providing accessible on-campus living arrangements for students with disabilities. Documentation for requests for accommodations related to residence life
should be submitted directly to the Office of Accessibility, preferably at the time the Housing Contract is submitted to University Residence Life and Housing. The Office of Accessibility will determine specific accommodations after consultation with Residence Life and Housing. Please contact the Office of Accessibility for more information about this process.

**Dispute Resolution Procedures**

**Dispute Resolution Procedures for Eligibility for Services**

If a student wants to appeal a decision regarding eligibility for services based on the Disability Specialist’s review of the documentation, the following procedure has been established.

1. Request an appointment to meet with the Disability Specialist who reviewed the documentation and made the original determination. If the concern cannot be resolved during this appointment, initiate Step 2.

2. Request an appointment to meet with the immediate supervisor of the Disability Specialist who reviewed the documentation originally. If after this meeting, the situation is not rectified to the student's satisfaction, initiate Step 3.

3. Request an appointment with the Associate Vice President for Student Success or her/his designee. The Associate Vice President for Student Success (or designee) may consult other relevant professionals as needed to make the decision. After this meeting if the situation is not rectified to the student's satisfaction, initiate Step 4.

4. Request an appointment to meet with the Provost. The decision of the Provost is final.

**Dispute Resolution Procedures for Determination of Reasonable Accommodations**

If a student wants to appeal a decision regarding the determination of reasonable accommodations for his/her documented disability, the following procedure has been established.

1. Request an appointment to meet with the Disability Specialist who reviewed the documentation and made the original determination. If the concern cannot be resolved during this appointment, initiate Step 2.

2. Request an appointment to meet with the immediate supervisor of the Disability Specialist. If, after this meeting, the situation is not rectified to the student’s satisfaction, initiate Step 3.

3. Request a review by the Accommodations Review Committee of the accommodations determined by the Disability Specialist and the accommodations requested by the student. The Committee consists of the following people:
   - Disability Specialist who recommended the original accommodation(s)
   - Director of Office of Accessibility
   - Associate Vice President for Student Success or his/her designee
   - Academic Department/School representative and/or appropriate faculty member(s)
   - Associate Dean of the appropriate academic unit (college) or designee
   If after this meeting, the situation is not rectified to the student’s satisfaction, initiate Step 4.

4. Request an appointment to meet with the Provost. The decision of the Provost is final.