

# 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

Fall/Spring Semesters	Summer Semester
Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM	Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

## 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 to fully participate 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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# 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 to fully participate in the academic environment at The University of Akron. 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 of Akron departments.

Our goal is to provide reasonable accommodations and a supportive, well-resourced environment for students with disabilities to promote student success in the university environment. Our mission goes well beyond the legal requirements, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the ADA as Amended (2008), and supports the University's commitment to create an accessible and welcoming environment for all students.

## Legislation Mandates

In addition to the mission of the Office of Accessibility, the following directives from federal laws guide the efforts of 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 (ADA) of 1990 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. An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one of 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.

## Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

"No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...Shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973)." For the purposes of this section, the term "program or activity" means all the operations of a college, university, or other post-secondary institution, or a public system of higher education.

## Title II of The American with Disabilities Act

"Subject to the provision of this title, no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by such entity (Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act)."

## Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended

The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-325, ADAAA) became effective January 1, 2009. The ADAAA expands interpretation of the ADA's coverage, which has been narrowly construed by case law in a number of decisions by the Supreme Court. Because Congress viewed those decisions as limiting the rights of persons with disabilities, the ADAAA explicitly reversed those decisions. It also rejected portions of the regulations published by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

(EEOC) that interpret Title I (the employment-related title) of the ADA. The ADAAA makes changes to the definition of the term "disability," clarifying and broadening that definition -- and therefore the number and types of persons who are protected under the ADA and other Federal disability nondiscrimination laws.

## **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 appears to contain information unrelated to the determination and provision of academic accommodations, auxiliary aids and services will be returned to the provider. Only information which is determined to be related to the disability and provision of academic accommodations will be retained by the Office of Accessibility.

### *Procedure to Request Release or Review of Student Records Related to Disability*

The student should request the release or review of information by filling out The University of Akron's FERPA Release Form on the University of Akron's My Akron. The student may need to schedule an appointment to meet with their 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: <https://york.accessiblelearning.com/s-Akron/ApplicationStudent.aspx>.
- After completing the new student application, students should upload current, disability-related documentation of their disability(ies) completed by a **qualified professional**. The Office of Accessibility has specific guidelines available 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; 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 you can schedule your classes as soon as they are open.
  - ✓ Should you schedule breaks between classes? Breaks between classes are 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 you take at the same time? Try to balance your schedule so 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>
- Select the courses for which you would like accommodations and click “Step 2- Continue to Customize Your Accommodations.”
- Mark the specific accommodations you need for each class.
- Accommodation letters will 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.

\* Sample Accommodation Letter



Letter of Classroom Accommodation - Spring 2015

Student Name: **Zippy Roo**  
Student ID: 00 - 000 - 01  
Class: 1000 100.001 - OA EXPERIENCE (CRN: 10000)

The above named individual is a student with a disability who has requested accommodations and assistance from the Office of Accessibility. He/She has provided this office with individualized, confidential documentation from a qualified professional that substantiates the disability.

Federal law and University policy require that the University create an environment where students with various disabilities can partake of the programs and services we have to offer in a nondiscriminatory manner. In pursuant to University policy #33-59-20-01 subsection C, The University of Akron recognizes its responsibility for creating an institutional atmosphere in which students with disabilities have the opportunity to be successful. The recommended classroom accommodations for this student are as follows:

**1. Alternative Testing**

- Time extensions for completing tests and in-class work equal to 50% additional time. Students must notify instructor and make arrangements prior to test date. If the instructor is unable to provide the testing accommodations, the student may be required to contact the Office of Accessibility a minimum of four days prior to the test date for scheduling.
- Testing in a distraction reduced space (provided by the instructor whenever possible, or by the Office of Accessibility)

**2. Equipment**

- Use of tape recorder in the classroom. Student may be asked by the professor to sign the tape recorder agreement form. This form can be requested by the student or professor by contacting the Office of Accessibility.

The accommodations based on a disability are intended to remove barriers to learning and demonstration of knowledge between students with disabilities and students without. Students may choose not to use all of these accommodations in your class. Office of Accessibility policy suggests that students speak to you about these accommodations and maintain necessary communication with you and the Office of Accessibility to coordinate services throughout the semester. Each student is ultimately responsible for notifying you of these accommodations in a timely manner. In some courses, students may be required to perform technical standards which may not be reasonable accommodations. Consultation with the Office of Accessibility may be necessary in these situations.

If you have any questions concerning the implementation of these accommodations in your classroom or if you believe that any of these accommodations are incompatible with fundamental course objectives, please call me at 330-972-7928.

Sincerely,

Jessica DeFago

## 5. Communicate with your Professors

- Take steps to implement accommodations and maintain good communication with professors each semester.
- 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/or 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 help 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): Audio recorders, Assistive Listening Devices, Digital Recorders, and SmartPens. Students may be asked to complete an Audio Recorder Agreement form when checking out an audio 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 and a fee if the equipment is lost or broken.

## **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 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. Approval of sessions will depend on availability of OA staff and room availability. Requests

should be made four business days in advance by calling (330) 972-7928. 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](http://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

### **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 cost. Please speak to your Disability Specialist or call the Counseling Center at (330) 972-7082 to make an appointment if interested.

### **Recreation and Wellness Center**

The University of Akron's Recreation and Wellness Center provides accessible equipment 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 accommodation requests 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 of Services**

If a student wants to appeal a decision regarding eligibility of 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 designeeIf 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.