

BSC

Birmingham-Southern College

Accessibility Handbook for Faculty and Staff

Birmingham-Southern College
Office of Accessibility
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Section 1: The Law

Of the relevant federal laws and regulations surrounding accessibility in higher education, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 define the obligation of institutions towards students with disabilities. Section 504 and the ADA provide for accommodations and academic adjustments to ensure there is no discrimination on the basis of disability.

A person with a disability is defined as any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Individuals who have a record of a disability, or who are regarded as having such a disability have certain protections under the law and cannot be discriminated against.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1978 specifically addresses the needs of students with disabilities. It states, “No otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities...shall solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Section 504 requires institutions of higher education provide students with disabilities the same opportunity to engage in educational experiences as non-disabled students. Students who self-identify through voluntary disclosure of their disability, provide documentation of that disability, and meet the eligibility requirements are entitled to receive approved accommodations, such as modification of programs in order to participate in programs and activities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1978 applies to colleges and universities receiving federal financial assistance; failure to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals could result in the loss of federal funds.

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act, the “ADA”, is broad legislation making society more accessible to individuals with disabilities. The ADA protects fundamental rights and extends equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to the areas of public accommodations, employment, transportation, and state and local government services. Under the ADA, a person with a disability is defined as any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such impairments, or; is regarded as having such an impairment.

The ADA does not guarantee equal rights, establish quotas, or require preferential treatment for persons with disabilities over those without disabilities. Reasonable accommodations should be provided to students with disabilities following specific recommendations of strategies, aids, or the use of technology to accommodate a disability without compromising the integrity of the academic program. Accommodations are designed to level the playing field for students with disabilities while being reasonable in relation to the course. Accommodations should not substantially change any essential element of the curriculum or academic program or consume extra personal time from the instructor to re-teach or tutor the student. Accommodations also do not ensure all students with disabilities are successful, but merely provide the opportunity for students to determine their own level of success or failure.

The mandates of the ADA apply to all institutions of higher education, regardless of receipt of federal funding.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Law

What is a disability and who is eligible for services from the Office of Accessibility?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Individuals who have a history of impairment or have been regarded by others as having an impairment are also protected from discrimination under the ADA. The Office of Accessibility serves students who meet the eligibility guidelines outlined by Birmingham-Southern College. These guidelines are defined and influenced by several factors, including the definition of disability as set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1978.

Some common disabilities seen in higher education as defined by the ADA may include:

Asperger's Syndrome	Dyslexia	Specific Learning
Autism	Epilepsy	Disability
ADD/ADHD	Generalized Anxiety	Speech/Language
Cancer	Disorder	Impairment
Cerebral Palsy	Mobility Impairment	Traumatic Brain Injury
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	Psychiatric Disability	Visual Impairment
Diabetes	Sensory Disorders	

Are students with disabilities required to meet the same academic standards as other students?

Absolutely. Students with disabilities must meet the same admission and academic standards required of other students. "Watering down" the curriculum is not considered a reasonable accommodation and is not the objective of academic accommodations.

Am I allowed to know specifics about the student's disability? If I had details, I could provide better assistance in the design of my accommodations.

All disability-related information is strictly confidential. It is up to the student to decide how much information to share about their disability. However, you cannot ask someone if they have a disability or question the student about the accommodations they are receiving. Faculty do not have the right to challenge the legitimacy of a student's disability, demand to review diagnostic information, refuse to provide accommodations, or refuse to work with a student because they have a disability. All concerns regarding accommodations should be directed to the Office of Accessibility.

Section 2: Responsibilities

Birmingham-Southern College is charged with providing a campus where educational, cultural, and extracurricular learning are physically and programmatically accessible to all individuals. Faculty, staff, and students should seek to include all persons, regardless of disability in all programs and activities. Birmingham-Southern has a responsibility to its students to provide a process by which students with disabilities may address their concerns regarding access and provide reasonable accommodations to ensure the ability to participate is available to all who wish to do so.

Student Responsibilities

Students have a responsibility to advocate for their own needs and make the college aware of their need for additional assistance. Birmingham-Southern College is not obligated to provide accommodations and services for students with disabilities who do not self-identify and register with the Office of Accessibility. However, accommodations may be requested at any time and are not limited to the point of matriculation. Accommodations are not retroactive and cannot begin until the registration process is complete.

Students have the following responsibilities related to their disability:

1. Voluntarily identify disability-related needs to the Office of Accessibility;
2. Provide current and complete documentation of the disability to the Office of Accessibility;
3. Formally request needed accommodations and services in a timely manner;
4. Understand limitations and need for accommodations for each course;
5. Communicate with each professor
6. Attend class and maintain the academic standards set by Birmingham-Southern College;
7. Notify the Office of Accessibility of any changes or concerns regarding accommodations.

Faculty/Staff Responsibilities

Faculty and staff at Birmingham-Southern College have a responsibility to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students to access services, instruction, activities, and spaces at BSC.

Faculty and staff have the following responsibilities to students with documented disabilities:

1. Refer students to the Office of Accessibility to have the disability documented and appropriate accommodations determined;
2. Include a statement in each course syllabus informing students that reasonable accommodations are available through the Office of Accessibility;
3. Help provide reasonable accommodations when appropriate;
4. Keep disability related information confidential at all times;
5. Discuss all student-related information directly with the student;
6. Provide instruction to students with disabilities in a fully accessible environment.

Students who choose not to self-identify their disability do not forfeit their right to identify themselves and request accommodations at a later time. However, Birmingham-Southern College is not required to provide accommodations and services for students with disabilities until they appropriately register with the Office of Accessibility and request formal accommodations. Accommodations are not retroactive and only be used once the student has become registered with the Office of Accessibility.

Institutional Responsibilities

Birmingham-Southern College is committed to providing a setting where educational, cultural, and extracurricular activities are physically and programmatically accessible for all students. The Office of Accessibility will provide information and services so students with disabilities may participate in all programs, services, and activities of the institution through clear processes and procedures.

Frequently Asked Questions about Responsibilities

What kind of documentation is required? Is a letter from a physician enough?

Students must provide full medical evaluations prepared by professionals with expertise for the specific disability identified. For example, documentation of a learning disability must include the diagnosis, information related to the history of the problem, specific reports or findings from standardized testing and other instruments used to make the diagnosis, a statement of the limitations presented by the disability in the educational setting, and recommendations for accommodations. The report must be submitted by an appropriately licensed professional.

Who decides if a student meets eligibility requirements for disability related adjustments and services? How is it done?

In order to receive services from the Office of Accessibility, a student must meet the criteria for eligibility as defined by the ADA definition of a disability, and have limitations related to the physical or academic environment. The services provided are determined on a case-by-case basis by the Office of Accessibility after careful review of the medical or psychological documentation provided and individual meetings with the student.

Should I grade students with disabilities differently than other students?

No, students with disabilities should be held to the same academic standards as other students. While unfair to other students, it would also violate the intent of the ADA and institutions could be held liable for “watering down the curriculum” for students with disabilities.

Who pays for accommodations – the student, the department, or the College?

The College is not permitted to charge students for accommodations or services needed due to a disability. The College is not required to provide items of a personal nature such as wheelchairs, personal computers, readers or tutors for personal study, or personal care attendants. BSC is responsible for insuring that all “programs, services, and activities” are accessible and appropriate and disability-related adjustments are available.

Section 3: Registering for Accommodations

The following steps are required for students with documented disabilities to formally register with the Office of Accessibility. Birmingham-Southern College does not actively set out to identify students with disabilities. Students must voluntarily disclose they have a disability, provide appropriate documentation of the disability, and meet the eligibility requirements. Faculty members are not responsible for providing accommodations that are not requested through the proper procedure. Faculty are encouraged to contact the Office of Accessibility should there be a question of whether a student should receive an accommodation.

Step 1: Begin the Process

Students may contact the Office of Accessibility in person during office hours, by phone, or by email to initiate the process of registering their documented disability. The student can also review the process and download appropriate forms and guidelines from the Office of Accessibility's website.

Step 2: Submit the Forms and Documentation

Students should submit their completed forms and supporting documentation to the Office of Accessibility via email, fax, mail, or hand delivered. Documentation does not need to be submitted as a complete package and may be submitted in pieces.

Step 3: Set up an Appointment with the Office of Accessibility

Setting up an appointment with the Coordinator of Accessibility is not mandatory, but is highly encouraged. The Coordinator can assist students by reviewing the documentation to ensure it is appropriate and complete, discussing the accommodations available for the student to utilize, reviewing the processes set in place for the utilization of each accommodation, explaining the process by which faculty are notified, offering support and advocacy for the student, and setting up future appointments with the student if desired.

Step 4: Accommodation Letters are Generated for Pickup

Students will receive hard copies of their accommodations that should be distributed to faculty for that term. Students are responsible for picking up their letters from the Office of Accessibility or their BSC Box. The letter lists all accommodations that are available to the student. The student is strongly encouraged to meet with each faculty member individually to discuss the accommodations and strategies for implementation in that specific course.

Step 5: Meeting with Faculty Members

Students should initiate contact with their faculty members to make them aware of their accommodations. Faculty members should not approach students about their accommodations because of privacy concerns. Students may also not wish to use all of their accommodations (or any of them) in a particular course or courses. It is vital students communicate with faculty which accommodations they wish to use in order to appropriately prepare. For example, if a student wishes to utilize an accommodation of extended time on testing, it is important for the student and professor to agree on when the extended time will take place (before the official start of the test or after the official end of the test).

Step 6: Utilize the Office of Accessibility as a Resource

The Office of Accessibility's role is to support and advocate for all students with accommodations. The Coordinator of Accessibility also serves as a resource for information, guidance, and support for faculty and staff in accommodation matters.

Step 7: Review and Revise Accommodations (as appropriate)

This step is only necessary when, for one reason or another, there is a need to make adjustments or revisions to a student's accommodations. Any time adjustments are made to formal accommodations, updated letters will be provided to the student to provide to the faculty member.

Frequently Asked Questions about Registering for Accommodations

How do I respond to a student who approaches me about accommodations, but hasn't worked with the Office of Accessibility?

Faculty referrals are often the best method for students with disabilities to learn about the Office of Accessibility. Faculty should refer all students indicating they need academic accommodations to the Office of Accessibility to start the formal process. Faculty are strongly discouraged from providing academic accommodations, regardless of how minor or small they may seem to students who are not formally registered.

What are the goals of accommodations?

Accommodations are provided to students to allow equal access to education and to the academic experience of the institution to qualified students with disabilities. In no way should academic standards be altered. However, at times faculty may need to change the way in which they measure a student's competency in a subject. For example, a student with a visual impairment may need to have materials read to them or have examinations made available in large print, Braille, or digital format. A student without the use of his or her hands may need an aide in a laboratory or a scribe for a quiz or a computer with special assistive technology devices. Some students may need note takers or audio recording in the classroom, wheelchair accessible vehicles for field trips, or sign language interpreters.

Other students in the class express resentment that accommodations are being provided to another student who appears "normal" but who claims to have a disability. How should I respond?

This situation can be uncomfortable, but can be handled by simply explaining to them that all students have the right to confidentiality. You are not at liberty to discuss any students' academic situation with others. However, express that you would be happy to meet with them individually to discuss their specific needs.

Are institutions expected to waive courses or write individualized education plans (IEP) for students with disabilities?

Postsecondary institutions are not required to write Individualized Education Plans for students with disabilities as public (K-12) schools do. In postsecondary education, academic programs are required to consider reasonable adjustments or accommodations that do not compromise the integrity of the program. Modifications should not substantially alter the essential skills of a course. It is unusual for courses to be waived for students with disabilities, especially in their chosen field of study.

Section 4: Syllabus Statements

All faculty members should include a statement in their course syllabus to inform students about the process for receiving academic accommodations. The syllabus statement should inform your students that academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities and you are willing to provide these accommodations. You may use one of the sample statements below in your syllabus or help it guide you in writing your own statement.

- If you have a registered academic accommodation with the Office of Accessibility, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations. If you have a disability but have not contacted the Office of Accessibility, please contact them as soon as possible at accessibility@bsc.edu or awsmith@bsc.edu. If you prefer, you may contact the office by phone at (205) 226-7909.
- If you have a documented disability and need academic accommodations in this course, please speak with me privately as soon as possible so I can be prepared to meet your needs. Students with disabilities seeking accommodations must be registered with the Office of Accessibility, which will provide an academic accommodation letter to registered students who are responsible for sharing the letter and discussing accommodation needs with me. If you have not registered with the Office of Accessibility, please contact that office as soon as possible at accessibility@bsc.edu or awsmith@bsc.edu. If you prefer, you may contact the office by phone at (205) 226-7909.
- Students who require academic accommodations due to a disability should make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations. If you have not established your academic accommodations through the Office of Accessibility, but need assistance due to a disability, please contact that office as soon as possible at awsmith@bsc.edu or accessibility@bsc.edu. You may call the office at (205) 226-7909.
- If you are registered for accommodations/academic adjustments, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations/academic adjustments that may be necessary. During this discussion, you are not expected to disclose any details concerning your disability, though you may discuss these details at your discretion. If you have a disability but have not contacted the Office of Accessibility, please call 226-7909 or visit Student Development on the second floor of Norton Center to initiate the process. You may also contact the office accessibility@bsc.edu or awsmith@bsc.edu if you have any questions or need more information. Angie Smith, the Coordinator of Accessibility's office hours are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays 8:30-4:30 or Mondays and Fridays, by appointment.

Section 5: Common Academic Accommodations at BSC

While each student is unique and accommodations are provided on a case-by-case basis, the following accommodations are more common at Birmingham-Southern College.

Extended Time on Exams/Quizzes or In-Class Assignments

The most typical amount of extended time is time and a half, though double time is sometimes recommended. Students are instructed to set up one-on-one meetings with faculty members at the beginning of the semester to discuss their accommodations and at this time should collaborate with their faculty on when extended time should occur (for instance, coming to class before the test or staying for an extended period after the conclusion of the time frame).

For the sake and of time and efficiency, it is recommended by the Office of Accessibility that faculty and students determine an arrangement for extended time that will be consistent throughout the semester. For instance, if a student and member of the faculty decide the student will come early for his/her extended time, this should be the arrangement throughout the semester.

If the standing arrangement needs to be altered for an individual exam or quiz, the party needing the alteration should notify the other party at least 48 hours in advance. This alteration should not be a matter of preference but a substantive conflict in schedule. If the student and faculty member have a dispute on the substance of such an alteration, the Office of Accessibility should be contacted to help resolve the dispute. If the dispute remains unresolved, steps in the Grievance Process, outlined in this handbook, should be followed.

Extension on Out-of-Class Assignments

Students who have difficulty reading, processing, or initiating and/or sustaining attention due to a disability often benefit from a time extension on out-of-class assignments that involve an extensive written and/or reading component. Furthermore, some students may have disabilities that involve random or cyclical acute episodes that cannot be foreseen by the student.

Taking these different situations into consideration, when a student wishes to utilize an accommodation of receiving an extension on out-of-class assignments, such requests should be considered in three different categories:

1) Extension arrangements agreed upon at the beginning of the semester

Students who have a recommended accommodation of “extension on out-of-class assignments” should set up the recommended one-on-one meetings with their professors after receiving the syllabus for a given class. In determining the process of a student receiving an extension from a given professor, the following matters should be considered:

- notice given to the professor of a request for an extension (1-2 weeks is recommended)
- method of communication in requesting an extension
- time of extension (1-3 days is recommended)
- specific assignments a student has marked as assignments where an extension is anticipated

For the last on this list, once students receive all syllabi for a given semester, they should be able to anticipate high-volume times in the semester where an extension may be necessary (for instance, having two papers and an exam due in a two-day span). Students with this accommodation are not required in the first week of the semester to anticipate each assignment that might need an extension, but planning ahead for such dates will benefit the student in time management considerations and encourages communication with the faculty. However, the agreed upon notice of request determines whether the request will be granted.

2) Extensions requested in response to an episode related to documented disability

As stated above, some students may have disabilities that involve random or cyclical acute episodes that cannot be foreseen by the student. The student should notify the professor in the initial one-on-one meeting that such an event is a possibility. The student is **not** required to disclose any details about his/her disability. If the faculty member requests further details, the student may refer the faculty member to the Office of Accessibility for validation of the accommodation request. The Office of Accessibility will confirm the accommodation request but no details of the student’s disability will be revealed.

If an episode is severe enough to constitute an extension request, the student is expected to conduct the required self-care and see a professional with expertise in the area of the diagnosis. Documentation of the appointment with confirmation of circumstances directly interfering with the student’s ability to

finish the assignment in a timely fashion must be submitted to the Office of Accessibility for the extension request to be granted. The standard time of extension will be 1-3 days after the due date of the assignment unless the professional explicitly recommends otherwise in the documentation submitted.

3) Extensions requested for assignments given with less than one week's notice

If a student has the accommodation of extended time on out-of-class assignments and an assignment not on the syllabus is given within one week of the due date or if the information needed to complete the assignment is not given until within one week of the due date, the student may request an extension. This process must be followed for the extension to be given to the student:

- Upon learning of the assignment, the student must notify the faculty member within 24 hours of his/her request. It is recommended that the student talk to the faculty member face-to-face upon hearing of the assignment to make the request.
- The extension will be 1-3 days and agreed upon by the student and faculty member. If there is a dispute that cannot be resolved between the faculty member and student, the matter will be referred to the Office of Accessibility. If still unresolved, steps in the Grievance Process, outlined in this handbook, should be followed.
- The student should set out why the extension is needed (for instance, the student has other responsibilities in other classes due at that time). If the reason for the extension is directly related to the substance of the disability, the student may refer the faculty member to the Office of Accessibility. In such a situation, the student should contact the Office of Accessibility to inform that office of the situation.

Testing in a Reduced Distraction Testing Environment

Much like the arrangement for extended time, for the sake of time and efficiency, the student and faculty member should establish in their initial meeting the standing arrangement for all in-class exams and quizzes, including arrival time of student and location of private room.

If a faculty member is unable to find a location for the student to utilize this accommodation for a given test or exam, the Office of Accessibility can provide a location if a room in the office is available and if given sufficient notice. It is recommended that faculty give the Office of Accessibility at least 72 hours in order to

confirm availability. The process by which the student submits the test when taking it at the Office of Accessibility should be predetermined by the student and faculty member. The Office of Accessibility will send the test to faculty member by confidential hand mail if so requested.

Priority Seating

Students utilizing this accommodation must be given first selection of any seat in the class if requested. This may be at the front of the room or at the back of the room for various reasons. Faculty members should be aware of privacy concerns and discuss with students the best way to reserve seating. Students should be aware of their part in this collaboration. For example, if early arrival on the first day of class is the best way to secure such seating, students should make every effort to arrive early.

Peer Note-Takers

If a student utilizes the accommodation of peer note-taker, the faculty member should make an anonymous announcement during the first week of class that a note-taker is needed. In this announcement, the faculty member can announce that the volunteer should make an appointment with the Office of Accessibility to set up the process.

Students receiving this accommodation can choose whether to be contacted by the peer note-taker and set up an arrangement for the exchange of notes or to pick up the notes from the Office of Accessibility (the Office of Accessibility will arrange to have the volunteer drop off the notes).

Use of Laptop in Class and/or Exams

Certain disabilities require use of a laptop for in-class note-taking and/or exams for purposes such as spell-checking or assistance with processing deficits. If this accommodation is recommended for a student's use, the accommodation must be provided. However, faculty members may include Honor Code considerations in their classroom policy, including unauthorized use of the internet during an exam.

Audio Recording of Lectures

If a student wishes to utilize the accommodation of audio recording lectures, the student must notify the professor of their intentions. If the faculty member wishes, he may enter a Recorded Lecture Agreement that both the student and faculty member will need to sign.

Concerns of infringement upon academic freedom or copyright violation sometimes arise, but Section 504 states that an instructor may not forbid use of a student's aid if that prohibition limits the student's access to an educational program:

A recipient may not impose upon handicapped students other rules, such as the prohibition of tape recorders in classrooms or of service animals in campus buildings that have the effect of limiting the participation of handicapped students in the recipient's education program or activity.

In order to allow a student with a disability the use of an effective aid and, at the same time, protect the instructor, the institution may require the student to sign an agreement so as not to infringe on a potential copyright or to limit freedom of speech.

Flexibility in Absences

Faculty members must make allowances in their attendance policy for students who have an accommodation requiring flexibility in absences. Students are strongly encouraged to contact both the Office of Accessibility and faculty members when absences occur that are a direct result of a documented disability, though privacy considerations do not require the student to reveal details of the needed absence. If faculty believe the flexibility in absences is being used for non-disability related issues, the faculty member should contact the Office of Accessibility for guidance in approaching the student.

Section 6: Tips for Working with Students with Various Disabilities

While each student and their situation is unique, the following tips can provide basic guidance when working with a student with disabilities. The Office of Accessibility will not provide specific disability related information to faculty or staff about a specific student, but these strategies may be useful as you work with the student and observe them in the classroom environment. Remember, some students may disclose their disability to you directly while others may only share their disability in part or not at all. By law, you should not ask the student specifically about their specific diagnosis.

Blind/Visual Impairments

- Read anything written on the board or overhead out loud.
- For longer assignments, establish word limits instead of page numbers in case the student needs to use a larger font.
- Ensure that the aisles of the classroom are kept clear at all times.
- In smaller classes where participation is integral to the course, say the name of the student when responding to a question so the student with a visual impairment knows who is speaking.
- Provide copies of handouts to the Office of Accessibility as early as possible so they may be enlarged if necessary and appropriate.
- If a service animal is present in your class, refrain from focusing on it. Do not pet the dog unless given permission by the handler, and never give the dog treats. See Service Animal Etiquette link on the Office of Accessibility website.

Temporary, Chronic, and Psychiatric Disabilities

- Students with serious medical or psychiatric disabilities may have unpredictable acute phases which require treatment or hospitalization. Although you do not need to compromise essential components of the course, try to be flexible in working with the student to determine how he or she can still get the most out of the class.
- Students who present an Academic Accommodations Letter listing flexibility with attendance and/or assignment deadlines should have a very specific discussion with you at the beginning of the semester regarding reasonable limits to this accommodation.
- The nature of these types of disabilities can change throughout the semester. If a student requests a modification in accommodations, be sure to ask the student to present you with a new Academic Accommodations Letter.

- If you are in a classroom that is physically inaccessible and one of your students becomes physically injured, you will likely receive notification from Academic Affairs or the Office of Accessibility to discuss alternate arrangements or locations for the class to meet.

Deaf/Hearing Impairments

- Look at the class when speaking and avoid pacing. Speak like you normally would, and avoid exaggerations.
- Avoid standing with your back to a window or other light source. The glare can make it difficult to read lips and facial expressions.
- Repeat questions or comments made by others in the classroom before answering.
- Be aware that if the student is using a sign language interpreter, it may take them longer to respond since there is a slight delay between what is said and the student receiving the message.
- Not all students who are deaf or have a hearing impairment use or know American Sign Language (ASL); do not assume they do.
- For students who do use American Sign Language, understand the grammar used in ASL is different from English language grammar. Thus, be aware that such errors on written work do not reflect the intellectual ability of the student.
- When speaking with a student who uses an ASL interpreter, always address comments and questions to the student.
- Avoid oral testing.
- If a service dog is present, refrain from focusing on it. Do not pet the dog unless given permission by the handler, and never give the dog treats. See Service Animal Etiquette link on the Office of Accessibility website.

Physical and Mobility-Related

- When possible, the Office of Accessibility, Academic Affairs, or Health Services will notify you in advance if you are using a physically inaccessible classroom for a course which a student with a physical or mobility-related disability has registered. In this event, these offices will work with the Registrar's Office to facilitate a classroom change and notify you of the change as soon as possible.
- If your office is inaccessible, speak with the student about an alternate private location to meet.
- If you are planning an event or field trip outside of the classroom, be mindful of the accessibility of the space you are visiting and how you plan to get there. Contact the Office of Accessibility for assistance in

securing accessible transportation. Give advance notice of any location changes.

- Students with physical or mobility-related disabilities may be late to class if, for example, during heavy rain or icy pathways. Understanding on your part is useful in these situations. However, if you notice constant tardiness, speak with the student. If his or her explanation is unrelated to the disability, handle the issue as you would with any other student.
- Keep classroom aisles clear.
- If a service dog is present, refrain from focusing on it. Do not pet the dog unless given permission by the student, and never give the dog treats. See Service Animal Etiquette link on the Office of Accessibility website.

Learning and Attention-Related

- Be sensitive to students who, for disability-related reasons, may be unable to read aloud or answer questions when called on.
- Cater to different learning styles by alternating how information is presented. Some students may learn best through listening, while others will be visual or hands-on learners.
- At the beginning of the semester, provide all students with your office hours and information on accessing tutoring services. Please note, tutoring is provided by the Academic Resource Center, not the Office of Accessibility.
- Be prepared to provide a reasonable amount of extra help to students with learning and attention-related disabilities during office hours, as they may need information repeated.
- While rude and disruptive behavior should never be tolerated in the classroom, students with learning and attention-related disabilities may display non-disruptive but inattentive behaviors (such as staring out the window during lecture). Understand that such behaviors are sometimes used as a coping strategy in difficult or tiring learning situations.
- Some students may have the accommodation of allowed breaks, as needed.

Autism Spectrum Disorders

- Be sure to give clear and concrete instructions on assignments and deadlines.
- Try to give structure and organization to lectures by highlighting main points first and summarizing at the end.
- Provide visual representations of class material when possible.
- Encourage the student to participate when doing group work without singling them out.

- Understand that it is often times much easier for students with autism spectrum disorders to communicate via e-mail rather than in person.
- If the student becomes disruptive in class, handle the situation as you would with any other student.
- Allow the student to step out of the classroom for a few minutes if he or she becomes especially anxious or agitated.
- Some students may have the accommodation of allowed breaks, as needed.

Section 7: Myths and Realities about Academic Accommodations

There are many common misconceptions about academic accommodations, learning differences, and disabilities.

Myth: Anyone can get accommodations.

Reality: The Office of Accessibility only provides accommodations to students who present documentation of a diagnosed disability. Documentation must meet the requirements set forth in the Documentation Guidelines for Academic Accommodations provided to each student registering with the Office of Accessibility.

Myth: Extended time for exams is an “academic boost”.

Reality: A student who doesn’t know the material can sit with an exam for as long as he or she wants, and still get a bad grade. If the point is to know and manipulate the material well (which some students with disabilities take longer to do), extended time is not interfering with course requirements. It is merely making the playing field more even.

Myth: Test anxiety is a disability.

Reality: Many students become anxious when taking an exam. However, in order for the student to qualify for testing accommodations from the Office of Accessibility, he or she must have a documented disability where testing accommodations are appropriate.

Myth: The Office of Accessibility provides testing to diagnose students with learning disabilities.

Reality: The Office of Accessibility does not test for or diagnosis students with disabilities. Students who think they may have a learning difference or disability may contact the Office of Accessibility to get a list of local places that provide testing and diagnosis.

Section 8: Additional Disability-Related Terminology

The definitions used in this document are some of the commonly used disability-related terms and may have various definitions depending on their context.

Accessible: Descriptor of a site, facility, service, program, or activity that is easy for a person with a disability to approach, enter, operate, participate in, and/or use safely and with dignity, with or without accommodations or auxiliary aids.

Accommodations: An alteration of environment, curriculum format, or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or complete assigned tasks. Accommodations allow students with disabilities to pursue a regular course of study. They do not alter what is being taught; instructors should be able to implement the same grading scale for students with disabilities as they do for students without disabilities.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act (ADAAA) of 2008: A comprehensive federal law that gives civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities similar to that provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for and prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, state and local government services and activities, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications.

Assessment: A broad term used to describe the tests or other strategies used to measure ability, achievement, or mastery in a particular area against a set of standards or against others' performance. Assessment also refers to the data and information gathered to ascertain a student's disability and to recommend accommodations and services.

Assistive Technology: Technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. Assistive technology can include mobility devices such as walkers and wheelchairs, as well as hardware, software, and peripherals that assist students with disabilities in accessing computers or other information technologies.

Auxiliary Aids and Services: A wide range of services and devices that must be provided to individuals with disabilities so that they can have an equal opportunity to participate in or benefit from an institution's programs and services, unless an undue burden on a program or service would result.

[Central] Auditory Processing Disorder ([C]APD): A neurological syndrome that affects how the brain processes spoken language. There is a breakdown in receiving, remembering, understanding, and using auditory information, making it difficult for the student to process verbal instructions or to filter out background noise in the classroom.

Decoding: The ability to translate a word from print to speech, usually by employing knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences. It is also the act of deciphering a new word by sounding it out.

Disability: A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an individual as compared to most students in the general population, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.

Dyscalculia: Difficulty understanding and using math symbols and concepts.

Dysgraphia: Difficulty with the physical task of forming letters and words using a pen and paper and difficulty producing legible handwriting.

Dyslexia: Difficulty decoding or processing words and/or numbers. It may also be referred to as reading disability, reading difference, or reading disorder.

Dysnomia: A marked difficulty in remembering names or recalling words needed for oral or written language.

Dyspraxia: A developmental impairment of, or difficulties with, the organization, planning, and execution of physical movement.

Expressive Language: The aspect of spoken language that includes speaking and the aspect of written language that includes composing or writing.

Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA): A federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The rights of parents with respect to their children's education records at elementary and secondary school levels are transferred to the student when they reach the age of 18 or attends a postsecondary institution at any age.

Impairment: An injury, illness, or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a loss or difference of physiological or psychological function.

Nonverbal Learning Disability: A neurological disorder that is characterized by below-average motor coordination, visual-spatial organization, and social skills against a background of relatively intact verbal abilities.

Qualified Individual with Disability: At the postsecondary educational level, a qualified student with a disability is an individual who, with or without reasonable accommodation, meets the academic and technical standards required for participation in the class, program, or activity. The standards for a student with a disability are the same as those for all students entering the program or activity.

Reading Disability: Another term for Dyslexia, sometimes referred to as reading disorder or reading difference.

Reasonable vs. Unreasonable Accommodations: Reasonable accommodations are modifications to academic requirements that are necessary to ensure that such requirements do not discriminate, or have the effect of discriminating, on the basis of disability against a qualified applicant or student with a disability. Accommodations are not considered reasonable if making the accommodation or allowing participation poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, requires a substantial change in an essential element of the curriculum, and/or imposes an undue financial or administrative burden.

Self-advocacy: The development of specific skills that enable students to take a proactive role in the management of their college experience. Self-advocacy has been linked to improving student persistence and to retention in postsecondary education.

Temporary Impairment vs. Disability: The ADA states that “impairments that are transitory and minor” are not given protection under the act; a transitory impairment is defined as impairment with an “actual or expected duration of 6 months or less.” Temporary, nonchronic impairments, such as common colds, influenza, and most broken bones and sprains, that are short-lived and that have little or no long term impact on functionality usually are not disabilities. However, a temporary condition that substantially limits a major life activity, such as temporary paralysis, may be considered a temporary disability. The determination as to the status of an impairment is made on a case-by-case basis. Birmingham-Southern College treats pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom as a temporary disability, which is subject to civil rights protection.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL), also known as Universal Design for Instruction (UDI): A set of principles for the design of class curricula that give all students equal opportunities to learn. UDL takes account of the potential broad ranges among students with respect to ability, disability, age, reading level, learning style, native language, race, ethnicity, and other characteristics.

Visible vs. Invisible Disability: A visual disability is a disability that is readily noticeable to others. Visible disabilities include, but are not limited to, amputations, paralysis, lack of physical coordination, or other mobility impairment; speech impediments; vision impairments; and some cognitive impairment. Visible disabilities are what most people think of when they think of disabilities. Invisible or hidden disabilities are not easily noticed and may include such examples as learning disabilities, ADD/ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorders, psychiatric impairments, hearing impairments, low vision, and chronic medical conditions. Individuals with invisible disabilities constantly make decisions about whether to disclose their disability or to “pass” as nondisabled.

Section 7: Grievance Policy

According to the federal law and Birmingham-Southern policy, faculty and staff cannot deny accommodations for students who have documentation and have followed the proper procedures to receive accommodations, without input from the student, the Office of Accessibility, and appropriate BSC administrators. The purpose of the grievance process is to arrive at a final determination of what accommodations are appropriate for a specific situation if accommodations recommended are questioned.

Questions and concerns regarding accommodations for students with disabilities should be directed initially to the Office of Accessibility's Coordinator of Accessibility. If the Coordinator cannot resolve issues involving academic accommodations, a meeting with the faculty or staff member, the Coordinator, the Director of Accessibility, and the student (if appropriate) is the second step in resolving disagreements.

If an agreement concerning an accommodation request is not reached at this point, the final step in the conflict resolution process involves the dissenting party filing formal appeal. During the appeal process, the student is entitled to receive accommodations recommended by the Office of Accessibility.

An appeal of accommodation requests should clearly state the basis and rationale for the objection and should be transmitted as a confidential document to the Provost of the College. The Provost would consider the appeal and render a final decision, which will be communicated to all parties.

Steps in the Grievance Process

1. Faculty member and/or student consult with the Office of Accessibility
2. If resolution cannot be reached, a meeting with the Coordinator of Accessibility, the Director of Accessibility, and student (if appropriate) will be held
3. If resolution cannot be reached, the faculty member and/or student may submit a written appeal to the Provost of the College.

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Additional resources for faculty and staff can be found on the Office of Accessibility's website at www.bsc.edu.