

G-028.1 STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

This procedure sets forth the processes and courses of action the institution will take to adhere to those standards set forth in SMSU Policy G-028, "Student Accommodation (<http://catalog.smsu.edu/policies-procedures/g028/>)," as well as student responsibilities. Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) wants to ensure students know who to talk to and how to work with Accessibility Services. SMSU's goal is to provide the resources and support students need for an equitable learning environment through a participatory process.

Definitions

Access and Accessibility: The quality of being reached, entered, obtained, used, or understood in the same or equivalent degree and timeframe as for others.

Disability: A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Employees: Southwest Minnesota State University personnel including all faculty, staff, administrators, teaching assistants, graduate assistants, and student employees.

Visitors/Alumni/Community Members/Volunteers: Anyone not otherwise affiliated with the institution that requires access to university information, spaces (physical and virtual), and events.

Student: An individual who has applied to the institution or is enrolled in courses.

Prospective Student: An individual who may apply to and, if admitted, attend courses at the institution later.

Self-Identification: The individual recognizes they have a disability/condition and chooses to share additional information related to the disability/condition with staff at the institution to receive accommodations.

Request for Accommodations Information

University Responsibilities: SMSU will provide information and offer students, prospective students, alumni, and visitors the chance to self-identify as having a disability. This will allow the individual to request accommodation and other assistance available to students with disabilities.

Student Responsibilities: Students attending a post-secondary institution who are seeking accommodations are responsible for identifying themselves to Accessibility Services as a person with a disability/condition/impairment. Students may request accommodation at any time before or during a semester. It is recommended that students make their request as soon as possible to avoid delays in implementing certain types of accommodation, such as alternative format materials, captioning, and interpreting services.

Documentation

University Responsibilities: SMSU may ask each student requesting accommodations to provide initial information that includes the student's identity information (such as student name, ID number, email address,

or phone number) and information about their disability/condition or accommodation needs.

The institution may also request documentation to verify eligibility. Individuals with apparent disabilities are not required to provide documentation to verify eligibility. The following are acceptable forms of documentation:

- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Section 504 plan documentation
- Service record from other educational institutions
- Evaluation from qualified health or service professionals
- Disability record from another institution
- Military service-related disability documentation
- Additional information from qualified professionals for new accommodations or when previous documents such as IEPs or 504 plans were not in effect immediately before the individual exited high school.

During the interactive process it may become apparent that additional information is needed to better understand a particular need or request. Accessibility Services may request that a student provide documentation from a qualified professional to help determine accommodations that are reasonable and effective for the student. *Note that Accessibility Services may offer an equally effective alternative accommodation and does not have to approve any or all accommodations recommended by a qualified professional. Accessibility Services may provide temporary or provisional accommodations for a set period (such as one semester) to allow the student enough time to get any necessary documentation.

Student Responsibilities: As a part of the self-identification process, students will need to share information about themselves, including their disability or condition and how they are impacted in an academic environment. Part of this disclosure may include providing documents that confirm eligibility or help staff better understand student needs. Acceptable forms of documentation to confirm eligibility include:

- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Section 504 plan documentation
- Service record from other educational institutions
- Evaluation from qualified health or service professionals
- Disability record from another institution
- Military service-related disability documentation
- Additional information from qualified professionals for new accommodations or when previous documents such as IEPs or 504 plans were not in effect immediately before the individual exited high school.

Interactive Process

University Responsibilities: Staff from Accessibility Services will engage in an interactive process with the student or prospective student. This process allows the staff member and the student to work together to understand the functional limitations the student experiences and determine the most appropriate and reasonable accommodations that ensure equitable access to their learning environment, activities, campus programs, etc.

Staff from Accessibility Services will engage with faculty or the academic dean as needed to better understand essential elements and ensure that accommodations do not fundamentally alter the course or program.

Note: While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, SMSU reserves the right to correct any clerical errors herein. Also, you can submit feedback.

Student Responsibilities: Students are responsible for engaging with staff from Accessibility Services in an interactive process. This is a conversation with the student that allows the staff member and the student to work together to understand the student's needs and determine the most appropriate and reasonable accommodations that ensure equitable access to their learning environment, activities, campus programs, etc.

Students are responsible for sharing their accommodation needs with faculty once accommodations have been established and the accommodation letter sent. Some accommodations will require students to engage in conversations that include faculty and Accessibility Services.

Notice of Denial

University Responsibilities: Students who have been denied accommodations will receive written notification from Accessibility Services with the reason the particular accommodation cannot be provided. Reasons may include:

- Accommodation was requested retroactively
- Accommodation requested was not reasonable
- Accommodation was not related to the student's disability
- Accommodation would create an undue administrative or financial burden
- Accommodation would fundamentally alter essential elements of a course or program

Student Responsibilities: Students have a right to know when and why an accommodation was denied. The institution is responsible for providing this information to the student.

When a student does not agree with the denial of a requested accommodation, they are encouraged to discuss their concern with the Director of Student Success within thirty (30) days from the date of the denial. The complaint can be submitted either in writing (hard copy or electronic) or communicated verbally and should describe the decision they would like to discuss and the rationale behind it. Concerns can often be resolved at this informal level.

Renewal of Accommodations

University Responsibilities: Southwest Minnesota State University does not require students with approved and established accommodations to provide documentation confirming their eligibility. However, the university requires students to inform Accessibility Services of their need for an accommodation letter each semester. At SMSU, this is accomplished through an email or face to face communication.

Student Responsibilities: Students with approved and established accommodations are not required to provide documentation confirming their eligibility at Southwest Minnesota State University. However, students are required to inform Accessibility Services of their need for an accommodation letter each semester. At SMSU, this is accomplished through an email or face to face communication.

Delivery of the Accommodation Letter

University Responsibilities: SMSU is responsible for documenting the approved accommodations for each student. At SMSU, accommodations letters are typically sent directly to students and the respective faculty via email

Student Responsibilities: Students at SMSU will receive an email in their student account prior to the start of each semester that includes a copy of their official accommodation letter. It is then the responsibility of the student to review the letter (either electronically or printed hard copy) with the faculty teaching courses in which they require accommodation.

Faculty Responsibilities: Faculty members should review student accommodation letters upon receipt. They should determine which suggested modifications are appropriate to their course and ensure those modifications are implemented. Faculty members are encouraged to inform the student about the specific accommodations being offered in their course.

If any suggested modifications in the accommodation letter are not appropriate for a particular course, faculty are encouraged to meet with the student and/or the Coordinator of Accessibility Services to make alternate adjustments to meet the student's needs.

Concerns

University Responsibilities: SMSU shall have a process to address student concerns related to student accommodations.

Typically the Coordinator of Accessibility Services will work directly with the student to help find a resolution to the student's concern or help the student to navigate a more formal complaint process.

Student Responsibilities: Students who believe approved accommodations have not been allowed or provided by faculty should first contact the respective faculty member about their concern. Upon receiving that contact, the faculty should respond within two business days with either a solution or a description of their problem-solving process. If it is appropriate, the faculty member should offer an extension or a resubmission of coursework affected by the accommodation.

If the faculty member does not respond within two business days, the student should contact the Coordinator of Accessibility Services for additional assistance. The Coordinator of Accessibility Services should then respond to the student within two business days and work with both the student and the faculty member (if appropriate) to collaboratively find a solution to the concern. If no resolution can be reached, the Dean's Office will be contacted.

Students will meet with the Director of Student Success or other university staff members, should the concern involve Accessibility Services, to discuss the issue and work collaboratively to find any potential solutions.

Complaints

University Responsibilities: The university shall have an internal complaint process to address student complaints related to student accommodations.

The university will confirm receipt of all complaints received within 30 days. The university will work directly with the student to help find a resolution to the matter.

Student Responsibilities: If a student believes they have been or are being subjected to conduct prohibited by Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination in Employment and Education policies, they may file a discrimination/harassment complaint with the Assistant Vice-President for Equity & Inclusion/Campus Diversity Officer.

Students may also file a complaint directly with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (section 504) or the Department of

Justice (ADA) if they feel they have been denied access to, or the benefit of, any university academic program or activity. Students are not required by law to use the institutional grievance/complaint process before filing a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). A complaint must be filed within 180 calendar days of the date of the alleged discrimination.

All Complaints/Grievances that do not involve the mandated rights of students can be resolved by following the SMSU Grievance and Student Complaint Policy and Procedure (https://catalog.smsu.edu/student-handbook/rights-responsibilities/grievance-complaints/?_ga=2.167241469.2108021410.1740945349-1875645830.1729712720).

Types of Accommodations

Testing Accommodation Requests

University Responsibilities: Accessibility Services provides the following to students with testing accommodations specific to their approved accommodations:

- Distraction reduced testing spaces
- Proctors
- ASL interpreters
- Assistive technology (such as screen reader and speech-to-texts software)
- Magnifiers
- Noise-canceling headphones
- White (and other) sound machines
- Ear plugs
- Dimmed Lighting

Student Responsibilities: Each student with approved testing accommodations that necessitate scheduling the exam with Accessibility Services is required to complete a request form that includes the student's name, name of the course, faculty name, date and time the student is requesting to take the exam. At SMSU this is a fillable form but can also be submitted in alternate formats.

American Sign Language Interpreters/CART Service Requests

University Responsibilities: Accessibility Services provides ASL interpreters or CART services for students with these specific accommodations. Accessibility Services staff will confirm with deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing students requested service dates and times. In the event a provider cannot be scheduled, alternative communication methods will be discussed with the student.

Student Responsibilities: The student with accommodations for ASL interpreters and/or CART services is responsible for notifying Accessibility Services staff of their course schedule along with any other appointments, group meeting, or events they would like to participate in. Students are also responsible for notifying Accessibility Services as soon as possible if they will not be able to attend any previously scheduled class, appointment, or event.

Alternative Format Materials Request

University Responsibilities: Accessibility Services provides materials in a variety of formats, such as Braille, audio, large print, digital, etc. to students with approved accommodations for formats that differ from what is typically provided.

Accessibility Services staff will request a copy of the receipt showing the student has purchased or rented the material. For materials provided at no cost to the student, staff will verify course registration.

Accessibility Services staff will notify students when materials are ready for pick up or that they have been placed in an online storage location that the student can access.

Accessibility Services staff will work to get materials as quickly as possible and will make students aware if there are any delays in getting course materials that have been requested.

Student Responsibilities: Students with approved accommodations for alternative format materials, such as textbooks, are required to send a request to Accessibility Services that includes the name and course number, title, edition (if applicable), author, and ISBN for any course materials needed along with the format being requested.

Requests should be made as soon as students know what courses they plan to take or a minimum of 2 weeks before the start of the term for existing students.

Section 4. Authority

This procedure is issued pursuant to the authority granted the Americans with Disability (<https://www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm>) Act of 1990 (ADA); Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act; WCAG 2.0 Level AA (<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>); MN Statutes 16E.03; MN Statutes 363A.42; MN Statutes 363A.43; MN Statutes 135A.163 RISE Act; State of (https://mn.gov/mnit/assets/Stnd_State_Accessibility_tcm38-61585.pdf) Minnesota Accessibility Standard (https://mn.gov/mnit/assets/Stnd_State_Accessibility_tcm38-61585.pdf); Minnesota Human Rights Act MN Statute 363A; the 21st Century Communications and Accessibility Act (CVAA) Pub. L. 111-260; and Minnesota State Policy 1B.4 Access and Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities; The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968. Other authority may also apply.

Section 5. Effective Date

This procedure shall become effective January 1, 2025, upon signature by the President and shall remain in effect until modified or expressly revoked.

Section 6. Responsibility

The Coordinator of Accessibility Services, or designee is responsible for the implementation of this procedure.

Section 7. Review

This procedure shall be reviewed every three years or as needed.

Related Documents

G-028, "Student Accommodation (<http://catalog.smsu.edu/policies-procedures/g028/>)"

Policy History

Date of Adoption: April 21, 2025

Date of Last Review: April 21, 2025

Date and Subject of Amendments

4/21/2025 – Initial creation and adoption