



HANDBOOK FOR STUDENTS

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

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Dr. Lance Alexis; Director
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Dear Fellow Catamount,

Thank you for choosing Western Carolina University. We look forward to being a part of your collegiate experience. This handbook is made available to help explain how enrollment in the Office of Disability Services can assist you in achieving your goals while attending Western Carolina University.

The office is here to assist individuals with documented disabilities and medical conditions in gaining equal access to all aspects of campus life. We are the campus professionals who have specialized knowledge and experience in disability issues. The Office of Disability Services is the central location for reviewing and maintaining documentation, determining reasonable accommodations, implementing accommodations, organizing and arranging awareness activities, advising other departments on accessibility, and researching and purchasing assistive technology.

This handbook contains an outline of services available and strategies for accessing those services. Please feel free to speak to either member of our staff regarding any questions you might have. We can be reached at 828-227-3886.

Sincerely,

Lance Alexis

Early Registration

Students fully enrolled with ODS will be allowed priority registration. By registering for classes as early as possible, you will enable ODS to provide you with the best possible services.

Faculty Accommodation Letter

At your request, ODS will provide a letter for you to take to your instructors explaining the accommodations you will need in class. Take time with each instructor to allow him/her the opportunity to read your accommodation letter and to allow time for you to answer any questions he/she may have. Furthermore, meeting with the instructor may allow you to establish rapport which could prove beneficial as your college career progresses.

Test Proctoring Procedure

If an instructor is unable to provide testing accommodations, ODS is pleased to proctor the tests. In order to provide this service in a responsible fashion, certain procedures must be followed. Students will be informed of the procedures during the meeting where reasonable accommodations are established. For detailed information on ODS Test Proctoring Procedure, please access the following ODS website link:

<http://www.wcu.edu/30447.asp>

Note taker Services

In an effort to increase self-advocacy among Western's students, ODS calls on students who request and qualify for note taking services to be proactive in the pursuit of locating a note taker. In the event that a student does not feel comfortable asking someone in class, please refer to the following procedure:

After giving the instructor an accommodation letter stating that note taking is a necessary accommodation, the student should ask the instructor to announce at the next class meeting that a note taker is needed for a student in the class. It is up to the student to decide whether to permit the instructor to use his/her name.

If the student permits the instructor to use his/her name, the student can meet with the volunteer after class to make necessary arrangements. If the student does not want the instructor to use his/her name, the student may ask the instructor to request contact information from the volunteer and then give that contact information to the

student at a later time. **If no volunteer comes forth, please inform ODS as soon as possible so alternate measures may be taken.**

ODS will provide note taking/carbon paper if requested, which will make the process of transferring notes easier and offers the note taker free paper for his/her notes as well. We will also make photocopies of notes free of charge. **Note takers may also count their service as 3 hours of community service through the Center for Service Learning.**

Interpreter/Transcription Services

During the initial intake interview, the need for interpreting/transcribing services will be discussed. If needed, an interpreter/transcriber will be assigned to each of your classes. On occasion, ODS may be unable to find a qualified interpreter/transcriber for a specific class at a specific time. If this occurs, you will be notified immediately and given the opportunity to change the class to another time or choose a different class when an interpreter/transcriber is available.

Any changes such as a room change, day, or time change either temporarily or permanently must be communicated to ODS immediately to ensure that services are not delayed.

If you know you will miss a class, give ODS and your classroom interpreter(s) and/or transcriber(s) at least 24 hours advance notice. Failure to provide at least 24 hours notice is considered a "No-Show." To give advance notice you may:

- Call the ODS (828-227-3886) and either speak with someone or leave a message by voice or relay,
- Send an e-mail message to the Director (lalexis@wcu.edu) or his assistant (awsong@wcu.edu) as well as to the assigned interpreter/transcriber.

Three “No-Shows” for the same assignment in one semester will result in a required meeting with the Director and implementation of an agreement.

Once a student has missed three classes within one semester, the student must contact ODS staff 30 minutes prior to the start of that class/assignment each day in order to be provided an interpreter/transcriber. Please keep in mind that interpreters/transcribers may be reassigned and services may not be available.

The agreement will be in effect even if notification has not been sent or received. For this reason, students are encouraged to keep track of the number of classes missed per semester.

If a student is late for a class, the interpreter/transcriber will wait 25% of the total scheduled assignment (i.e., 15 minutes for a 50 minute class; 20 minutes for a 75 minute class) up to a maximum of 30 minutes. For late arrivals, observing the wait length begins at the schedule for the class to begin. The interpreter will wait outside of the classroom. If the student has not arrived after the indicated wait time, the interpreter/transcriber will contact ODS, informing the office of the “no show” and then leave. Students are requested to inform the office as soon as possible if they are running late, preferably by calling the scheduler AND the ODS office. This will allow the office to notify the interpreter/transcriber to wait outside the classroom until the student arrives.

If you arrive in class before the interpreter leaves, do not ask the interpreter what you missed. It is your responsibility to ask your instructor, note taker, or other students what you missed, either after class or during break.

If you need to talk to the instructor or other students after class, ask the interpreter if she/he is available. If she/he is not, you will need to set up an appointment and request an interpreter from the Director.

You are responsible for all course content, tests, and other course requirements. The interpreter is not responsible for the grades you receive. Please direct all questions regarding course material and context to the instructor. The interpreter will not be able to provide course information, tutoring, or any form of instruction; the interpreter's/transcriber's role is to facilitate communication.

If communication problems occur or you are having other problems with your interpreter, discuss those issues directly with your interpreter. Do not discuss these problems with your friends or with other interpreters. If the problem cannot be solved, contact the Director. He will be available to discuss options for resolving the issue and to facilitate a meeting between you and the interpreter/transcriber should the need arise. If the problem is related to skill level on the part of the interpreter, all attempts will be made to replace the interpreter. If a qualified interpreter is not available at the time of the class, the student may be asked to change to a different class when a qualified interpreter can be hired to interpret. However, if the problem is related to personality conflicts, all steps will be taken to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of both parties but a replacement interpreter may not be hired. If the problem continues and cannot be resolved, the Director will need sufficient time to find a suitable replacement.

You will be asked to fill out an evaluation providing feedback regarding your interpreter(s) at least two times each semester. Please help us maintain top quality

services by providing your input. However, if you are experiencing problems or have any concerns, please feel free to make an appointment to meet with the Director immediately.

If interpreting services are needed for any college-related events other than the regular class schedule, complete a Request for Interpreter/Transcriber form (available at ODS). Your request will be delivered to both the Director and the coordinator; you will receive confirmation of your request within 24 hours. If you do not receive verification, please contact ODS immediately. Requests should be made at least two weeks before services are needed. Last minute requests will be accepted and all attempts will be made to provide services.

Interpreters will not be placed in assignments that could compromise their commitment to the Code of Professional Conduct. Any questions regarding ethical issues should be directed to the ODS Director.

ODS supports students in Interpreter Education Programs by allowing them to observe classroom interpreters as part of their mentoring, practicum, or intern experience. You have no responsibility to a mentee, practicum student, or intern who may be observing the interpreter in your class. Mentoring, practicum, and intern students are required to follow all aspects of the WCU Interpreter Policy and the RID Code of Professional Conduct.

Alternate Format Textbooks & Equipment

ODS can provide alternate format books if such provisions have been made for you in your letter of accommodation. Our process for transferring textbooks to alternate files is as follows:

Our resource for alternate format files is Access Text Network. If the book is not available through Access Text, we will request the file directly from the publisher. If a pdf file is not available from the publisher, we will proceed to provide alternate format “in-house”. This simply means that we will ask that you leave your book with our office and after the print shop has “cut” your book (removed the binding) we will scan the book and create a pdf file on CD. These files can be accessed easily with any screen reader, most of which are free to download. Books will be returned to you with a spiral binding.

If necessary, a selection of assistive equipment is also available on loan from our office. You will be asked to sign an “Assistive Technology User Contract” for all equipment on loan, as well as an “Electronic Text User Contract” for books.

Student Responsibilities:

- Provide documentation of your disability to ODS.
- Complete the intake process with the Director.
- Discuss services needed with the Director.
- Be on time for all classes, labs, and meetings.
- Take care of and return Assistive Listening Devices, transcribing equipment, or other equipment borrowed from the ODS office in a respectful and timely manner; report all damages or loss of equipment immediately to ODS. Do your best to protect the longevity of all equipment; understanding that you may be held liable for deliberate or reckless damage to equipment.
- Give the faculty accommodation letter to the instructor in a timely manner.
- Discuss any problems with your note taker directly; report any persistent problems to the Director.
- Be responsible and respectful in your actions regarding services.
- Know and abide by all WCU and ODS policies, rules, and regulations.
- Be an active team player in the provision and use of services.
- Ask questions if you be unsure of procedures or policies.

Each student must take the initiative to familiarize him/herself with these policies, rules and regulations (Failure to do so will not exclude you from any consequence of violating any WCU or ODS policy, rule or regulation.)

** If you feel you have been treated in a discriminatory manner, based on your disability, a grievance may be filed with our office. Please call, email, or come by our office to speak with our director. **

ODS Responsibilities

- Maintain confidentiality of all information submitted to the office; release information on a need to know basis with written consent of the individual.
- Assist students in gaining equal access to all WCU services, classes and events.
- Continue to enhance services and access to programs.
- Assist students in completing the ODS intake process and accessing appropriate services.
- Help students determine which support services are appropriate and explain how these services will be provided.
- Maintain documentation of disability and other written records.
- Assist faculty and staff members in working with students.
- Provide advocacy and support to students when working with instructors.

- Provide students with a faculty accommodation letter to give their instructors.
- Refer students to other services on campus when necessary (e.g., Student Support Services, Counseling and Career Planning Services).
- Follow all laws that apply to serving students on a college campus.
- Treat each individual requesting services as an individual with respect and dignity.

Faculty Responsibilities

- Maintain the academic standards of the College.
- Identify and establish the skills and knowledge that are fundamental and essential components to their academic courses/program and to evaluate each student's performance on this basis.
- Maintain the confidentiality of disability-related information and communication unless otherwise given written consent or authorized by the student.
- Acknowledge and provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities in a timely manner. This includes providing accommodations themselves or by making arrangements with the Director.
- Arrange with students the means for providing accommodations in their course.
- Discuss with the Director any concerns related to accommodations, modifications, and/or auxiliary aids requested by students.
- Obtain from the Director any necessary clarifications concerning policies and procedures for requesting and securing accommodations and/or auxiliary aids.
- Provide equal access to classroom resources and exams at a comparable level as provided to any student in his/her class.
- Facilitate exam and quiz logistics in a timely manner to ensure that all tests are administered in a standard and proper fashion. Faculty determines the testing conditions under which the exam or quiz is to be administered (i.e.: closed book, use of a calculator, etc.)
- Treat each individual requesting services with respect and dignity.

Note: Faculty may refuse to provide accommodations for students with disabilities who have not followed Western Carolina University Office of Disabilities Services policies and procedures for participating in the accommodation process.

Many thanks to the University of Tennessee at Knoxville - Office of Disability Services for their contribution to the format of this handbook.