

Policy for the Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Concordia College is committed to providing access to learning opportunities for students with disabilities who meet the standard criteria for admission. Students accepted for admission are considered capable of meeting academic standards if reasonable accommodations can be made for their disability, which do not compromise the academic integrity of the College or the students' educational program. The College's commitment stems from its desire to provide opportunities for an education to all who meet the admissions criteria and to fully serve its constituency.

The College is further committed to complying with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and interpreted, and strengthened by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in meeting the needs of students who have disabilities under the law. It is the policy of the College to make services available for students who, through a recent assessment, can clearly document a disability. Services offered shall include support, counseling, information and academic assistance.

Furthermore, Concordia College policy calls for appropriate accommodations to be made for students with documented disabilities on an individual and flexible basis. It is the responsibility of students, however, to make their needs known and to seek the assistance, which is available at the College.

The following guidelines describe procedures by which reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities enrolled at Concordia College can be accomplished.

General Guidelines

It is the responsibility of each student with a disability to provide written notification to the Director of Counseling & Disability Services immediately upon acceptance for admission to the College. The notification must include the specific nature of the disability and establish the need for accommodation. The Director will respond by providing the student a copy of this policy that explains services available and outlines what is needed from the student. There are specific criteria for documenting a learning disability (LD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), psychiatric disability, or physical disabilities and chronic health conditions. Guidelines will be made available when any of these disabilities are claimed. Guidelines can also be found at the College's website, www.cord.edu. (Click on A-Z index, Counseling Center, Disability Services) The student should then provide official documentation to the Director of Counseling & Disability Services as stated in the guidelines. The College will accept testing and/or evaluations from appropriately licensed personnel in recognized agencies. The College, at its discretion, may require additional testing or evaluation if the documentation is inadequate or in need of updating.

All Concordia students are expected to assume an appropriate level of responsibility for their educational and personal needs during their enrollment at the College. This means that students may initially need more support from the institution but that over a period of time, the goal is to have students doing as much as possible for themselves. At the beginning of each academic year, students are **required** to update their request for accommodation with the Director of Counseling & Disability Services.

The considerations essential for determining the scope of academic adjustments necessary centers on three major points:

1. The essential course content and requirements necessary for academic credit;
2. The course standards for academic performance which must be met to complete the course; and
3. The accommodations necessary for the students to access the course content, thus being provided an opportunity equal to that afforded others in meeting the requirements.

Accommodations will be designed to meet the individual needs of the students. However, they cannot compromise curricular goals, standards, or essential course content, nor interfere with the rights or opportunities afforded others. All acceptable accommodations will recognize the faculty members' right to determine the content and academic performance standards in the classroom. Unless students have gone through the formal process of official documentation with the Director of Counseling & Disability Services, they cannot expect to receive accommodations from faculty.

Specific Procedures

Step 1: Notification

It is the responsibility of each student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, to provide written notification to the Director of Counseling & Disability Services upon acceptance for admission to the College.

Step 2: Referral

Individuals, such as faculty, staff, family member or representative of the Division of Rehabilitation Services who have reason to believe that a student may have a disability that hinders their academic performance, may refer the student to Counseling & Disability Services, but are not required to do so.

Step 3: Certification/Validation

If the disability has been previously identified, either through documentation of a history of having received services in other educational settings and/or through testing/evaluation by appropriately licensed personnel in a recognized agency, documentation must be provided to the Director of Counseling & Disability Services. If the disability has not been formally diagnosed or if a more recent or adequate evaluation is necessary, further assessment may be required by the College, at its discretion, to determine eligibility for services. If further testing or evaluation is necessary, the student will be referred to an appropriate public or private community agency, with the cost to be borne by the student. **Specific criteria must be met in the documentation of all disabilities. The specific guidelines should be requested from the Director or accessed via the College's website at www.cord.edu (see above).**

Step 4: Development of an Accommodation Plan

Once a disability has been established, the Director of Counseling & Disability Services will confer with the student. The Director will work with the student to develop a plan to provide the reasonable accommodations necessary for the student to achieve the course or curriculum requirements and to provide essential support services. Responsibilities of the student, as well as accommodations to be made by the faculty, will be outlined in the plan. Appropriate faculty and staff will be involved in the process as necessary.

Students who qualify for disability services are expected to utilize the necessary accommodations for completion of the College Core Curriculum and major requirements. Requests for a substitution will be considered on the basis of documentation from **within the diagnostic file, and not solely because of the diagnostic label**. Given appropriate accommodation, most students can and do succeed in college-level courses such as math and foreign languages. When there is sufficient evidence within the student's diagnostic file or history that there are no accommodations that can be offered within a specific course to make it possible for the student to successfully complete the

standard requirement, a course substitution or curricular modification may be considered. It is inappropriate to assume that a course substitution is the only accommodation that would be appropriate on the sole basis of the assigned diagnosis. The primary goal is for students with disabilities to fulfill their educational goals through the traditional sequence of courses – appropriately accommodated.

Step 5: Implementation

The College will assist the student in implementing accommodation plans by:

1. Working with the student to plan a course of study early enough so that the students may schedule an appropriate load or courses each semester;
2. Communicating in writing and in some instances through conferences at the beginning of each semester the accommodation plan and the specific responsibilities of the parties involved;
3. Meeting with the student regularly to review personal adjustment and course progress, to engage in any necessary problem-solving with students, and to provide encouragement and support;
4. Making appropriate referrals to campus and community resources.

Step 6: Renewal

Once in the program, it is the responsibility of the student to **renew the request for accommodation with the Director of Counseling & Disability Services at the beginning of each academic year.** The College does not automatically renew the accommodation plan.

Step 7: Petition Process

Whenever there is a petition for change in a curricular requirement, the student is required to inform the Director of Counseling & Disability Services. The student will be directed to write a letter of petition to the appropriate individual or committee according to the specific request, explaining the nature of the disability and stating the rationale for the change(s). The Director will also write a letter to the appointed individual or committee to verify the disability. The Director will then forward the letters to the designated individual or committee (Department Chair or Core Committee, for example) for review and approval or disapproval. Should additional information regarding the disability be needed from whomever, the student will be asked to sign a release authorizing the Director to provide additional information. The College Registrar will be notified of any approved change(s) in graduation requirements. A notation indicating the change(s) will be added to the student's advising folder. If the change(s) are not mutually agreeable, the student, faculty/staff member or Director may use the appeal process as outlined in Step 8 (Appeal Process).

Step 8: Appeal Process

1. In the event that a reasonable accommodation plan cannot be formulated working through the Director of Counseling & Disability Services (and in some instances the Department Chair or Core Committee), either the student or faculty/staff member may file an appeal with the College 504 Officer. His/her decision will be final.
2. If questions or problems arise with regard to implementation of the accommodation plan, the student or faculty/staff member may appeal to the Director. If not resolved, the student or faculty/staff member may file an appeal with the College 504 Officer. His/her decision will be final.