



**Policy Title:** SA8003 - Disability Access for Students

**Subject Area:** Student Affairs

**Responsible Official(s):** Vice President for Student Academic Success

**Responsible Office(s):** Disability Resources for Students

## Policy

The University of Memphis recognizes that students with disabilities are valuable members of the University community and welcomes qualified students with disabilities to campus by creating an environment that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and provides equal opportunity and full access to all the University's programs, services and activities. The University's goal is to extend to qualified students with disabilities the same educational opportunities as those available to other students.

## Definitions

***Person with a Disability*** - One who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities; one who has a record of such an impairment; or one who is regarded as having such an impairment.

***Substantial Limitation*** - Occurs when one's ability to perform a major life function is impacted by a physical, mental, or cognitive condition. An impairment does not need to prevent, or severely or significantly restrict, a major life activity to be considered "substantially limiting."

***Major Life Activities*** - Activities, such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, sitting, reaching, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, interacting with others, working, and major bodily functions such as functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions. The examples provided here are not exhaustive, comprehensive lists.

***Qualified Student with a Disability*** - A student with a disability who, with or without reasonable modifications and accommodations, meets the essential eligibility requirements,

conduct code, and requisite technical standards for a particular program, service or activity offered by the University.

***Reasonable Accommodation*** - A modification or adjustment to a policy, procedure, or practice that enables an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in the class or program; demonstrate one's mastery of the subject matter in a course of study; and/or engage in programs or activities of the University without creating a fundamental alteration of that course of study, program, or service.

***Fundamental Alteration*** - A change to a program or service that significantly alters the essential nature of the course, program, or service. An accommodation may not significantly alter the program, course of study, or service.

## Policy

### **Physical Facilities Access**

Physical Plant and Campus Planning and Design are responsible for making campus buildings, furniture and furnishings, paths of travel, parking and other physical facilities accessible to an extent that no individual with a disability is denied access to programs, services, or activities offered by the University as a result of inaccessible physical facilities. Physical access will be achieved by methods that allow blind/low vision individuals to independently navigate facilities and grounds and allow individuals with mobility impairments to circumvent stairs, curbs, or other such barriers without the physical assistance of others and provision of furniture and furnishings that are designed for accessibility. Modification and retrofit of existing inaccessible facilities will be contingent upon State funding and will be accomplished on a priority basis established by the University Accessibility Committee (UAC) and the Physical Access and Campus Events Subcommittee.

All new structures and major renovations of existing facilities and paths of travel must, at a minimum, meet current accessibility standards and guidelines required by federal and state law upon project completion.

This physical access policy applies to any physical facility that is owned, leased or used by the University.

### **Communications and Information**

It is important that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with non-disabled individuals. Students, employees, and guests with disabilities may obtain information about the existence and location of accessible services, activities and facilities by contacting the following University departments, respectively:

Disability Resources for Students, 901-678-2880, drs@memphis.edu

Human Resources, 901-678-3573, hrservicecenter@memphis.edu

Office for Institutional Equity, 901-678-2713, oie@memphis.edu

Students seeking information on the process for requesting an accommodation may contact Disability Resources for Students or visit the website at <https://www.memphis.edu/drs/>. Finally, information contained in University publications can be made available in alternate format upon request by people with disabilities. Requests for alternate formats for students should be made through Disability Resources for Students. Requests for alternate formats for employees should be made through Human Resources.

### **Digital Informational Materials, Technology, and Media**

All digital informational materials, technology, and media created and used by the University, including websites, online courses, online assignments, or other online educational materials will be created using methodology that will allow full access to individuals with disabilities. This includes platforms, materials, and technologies created by a third-party vendor that is used by the University. Accessible digital technology means that persons with disabilities can independently acquire the same information, engage in the same activities, and enjoy the same services within the same timeframe as persons without disabilities, with substantially equivalent ease of use. All University computer labs, including those used for research or teaching purposes, should be designed for maximum accessibility including the use of furniture and furnishings, peripheral devices, software, and location.

### **Admissions and Recruitment**

The admission standards for applicants with disabilities are the same as for all other students. The University will not make pre-admission inquiries related to disability status.

Qualified applicants with disabilities will not be denied admission to the University or subject to discrimination in admissions or recruitment activities on the basis of disability. Accommodated entrance test scores will be accepted and treated the same as a test given without an accommodation.

### **Student Services and Activities**

All student services, activities, programs, events, and leadership or governance opportunities will be made available to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. Information about how to request accommodations for student services and activities must be made available by the particular student group or organization.

If additional accommodations are necessary to make a University service, program, or activity accessible to a qualified student with a disability, reasonable accommodations will be provided so long as the request is made by the student in sufficient time for the aid to be arranged and so long as the action would not result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the service, program, or activity and would not cause undue financial and administrative burden on the University. Undue administrative or financial burden is determined by the President or their designee and is based on the overall resources of the University rather than the resources of the individual department involved.

### **Responsibilities of Students**

Although the University strives to design the physical environment, programs and services with accessibility in mind, students with disabilities may still experience barriers. Students must take the following actions to obtain disability accommodations and services at the University:

- Register with Disability Resources for Students (DRS);
- Engage in an interactive process with DRS staff to determine need for reasonable accommodations;
- Provide DRS with appropriate qualifying medical or psychoeducational documentation that verifies an existing condition and supports the request for any requested accommodations;
- Make their disability-related needs and specific requests known in a timely manner to their DRS Coordinator; and
- Follow the established procedures of the University and DRS for acquiring needed services, accommodations, and adjustments.

The University is not responsible for providing services or making academic accommodations or adjustments until the above conditions have been met. Disability-related accommodations are not retroactive but begin at the point in which these conditions have been met.

### **Responsibilities of Disability Resources for Students**

DRS staff will engage in an interactive process with the student to determine any reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids, academic adjustments, curriculum modifications or support services which might be necessary for equal access. This determination is based on the student's self-reported barriers and experiences, any history of accommodations, adjustments, etc., third-party medical documentation or psychoeducational testing, and the professional judgment of the DRS professional in relation to the requirements of a particular course or program of study. Having an impairment does not automatically make a student eligible for accommodations or adjustments. All modifications and provision of auxiliary aids will be decided on an individual basis and will be linked to a physical, mental, or cognitive condition and the environmental barriers that exist for the student.

DRS will establish reasonable procedures consistent with University policy, federal and state law, and best practices to provide equal access to the academic challenge and rigor of the University's academic programs and other services.

DRS will also serve as a resource to faculty, staff, and administrators as they work with students with disabilities in their respective areas or manage campus-wide disability issues.

### **Responsibilities of Faculty and Instructional Staff**

The University is responsible for making reasonable academic adjustments and for providing reasonable services and accommodations to qualified students with disabilities to provide an environment free from discrimination. DRS will provide notice of accommodation eligibility to relevant parties based upon review of appropriate documentation and an interactive process with the student. Academic colleges, departments, and faculty will implement reasonable classroom accommodations, course adjustments, and academic program modifications as necessary to provide equal access and opportunity for qualified students with disabilities to participate in the educational process. These types of academic adjustments may include, but are not limited to, adaptation of teaching methods, test accommodations, allowing the use of auxiliary aids in the classroom, substitution of a non-essential course, and changes in the length of time permitted for the completion of course or degree requirements.

The University will not alter academic requirements that can be demonstrated as essential to the program of instruction; that would fundamentally alter the nature of the course or program; that are directly related to a licensing or certification requirement; or that would create undue administrative or financial burden. The question of undue burden will be determined by the President or their designee and will be based on the overall resources of the University rather than resources of the individual department involved. Faculty and academic departments are responsible for establishing and clearly defining the fundamental elements for their respective classes or courses of study.

### **Program and Academic Integrity**

The University has the right to establish criteria for its general education program, academic majors, and requirements for its various degree programs. Academic departments have the responsibility to establish essential requirements and technical standards for their academic programs and must be able to justify those requirements if challenged in the course of determining reasonable adjustments for qualified students with disabilities.

Any academic accommodation, adjustment, modification, substitution or other alternative method employed to provide equal access should be conducted in a manner that will maintain the spirit of academic integrity. Care should be given to provide an equally demanding and academically rigorous program for students with disabilities as provided to other students.

### **Confidentiality of Disability**

Information related to disability is confidential and should not be released without written permission of the student. In certain situations, it may be permissible to share disability information on a need-to-know basis within guidelines established by the University and consistent with regulations under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

### **Grievances**

Any student grievance related to access to facilities, programs, services, or accommodations may be reported to Disability Resources for Students, 901-678-2880, [drs@memphis.edu](mailto:drs@memphis.edu), or can be submitted to [Report a Disability Access Concern](#). If the issue is not resolved to the student’s satisfaction, the student may contact the Office for Institutional Equity to file a complaint.

### **Related Documents, Policies, and Forms**

[Report a Disability Access Concern](#)

#### **Last Revision Update Log:**

SA8003 – revised December 2023

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SA8003 supersedes UM1480

UM1480 supersedes 1:2E:07:01, 2E:07:01A & 2E:07:01B