Disability Services
Faculty Information
Faculty FAQs: Academic Services to Students with Disabilities

Does Wilmington College provide services for students with disabilities?

Yes, Disability Services office provides services to students with disabilities. We guide the College in meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. SRC-Academic Services works with faculty and students in the decision about and facilitation of providing appropriate academic adjustments.

Who is eligible for disability services?

Students who meet the ADA definition of a disabled person are eligible for academic adjustments and other accommodations for disabilities. The ADA defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as walking, hearing, performing manual tasks, or learning. Students requesting academic adjustments are required to register by submitting disability documentation from a qualified practitioner that clearly states a diagnosis and provides supporting information of the need for accommodation. Academic adjustments are determined by the request of the student and the manner in which the disability creates a barrier to equal participation in programs and services.

How do I know if a student is registered with Disability Services as disabled?

Students have the opportunity to have notification letters prepared for each class by Disability Services. Students are responsible for meeting with instructors, giving the instructor the notification letter, and making the arrangements for academic adjustments for the course.

What is an academic adjustment?

An academic adjustment is a modification or elimination of a barrier to a program or service to enable a disabled individual to participate on an equal basis. Examples included extended time for test taking, print material in electronic format, and using FM listening devices.

What should I do if a student brings me a notification letter from Disability Services?

When a student brings you a notification letter and discloses her/his disability to you, you should meet with the student privately and establish a means of providing academic adjustments that is satisfactory to you and the student. Faculty can greatly assist by asking the student what you as their faculty can do to facilitate learning. Students’ needs are often simple to accommodate.

What should I do if the student has requested an academic adjustment but I haven’t been given a letter of notification from Disability Services?

If a student has an obvious disability and the request is reasonable, you should provide an academic adjustment and refer the student to Disability Services. If the disability of the student is not obvious, you have the right to request notification from Disability Services before providing the adjustment.
How do I know if the academic adjustments are reasonable?

Students are expected to fulfill the essential academic functions of a course. Academic adjustments are meant to modify barriers caused by the disability to enable the student to participate and be evaluated on an equal basis as non-disabled peers. Academic adjustments are not intended to alter the requirements of the course. If you have questions about the appropriateness of a request for accommodation, you should contact Disability Services for clarification. You should provide an appropriate academic adjustment until the issue is resolved.

Who is responsible for making academic adjustments?

Faculty who have been notified of the need for academic adjustments by Disability Services via a disability notification letter and have been contacted by the student in a timely fashion are responsible for fulfilling accommodation requests. A faculty member who fails to do so may be personally liable for non-compliance of the ADA and Section 504.

What assistance is available to me when testing accommodations are requested?

The most commonly requested academic adjustment is extended time for test taking. Students can begin the test in the classroom and finish in the instructor's office. If this arrangement is not possible, students may take the test in the Student Resource Center. Students who need tests read aloud are best served when faculty administer the test, but Student Resource Center staff is willing to assist in these cases.

What if a student asks for extended time after a test has begun?

Students are responsible for requesting academic adjustments in a timely manner. You are not responsible for providing academic adjustments without prior notice, but you may want to suggest that the student makes sure that arrangements are in place for future needs. For tests taken at the Student Resource Center, students are required to ask professors at least three days in advance to send the test to the Tutor/SI Coordinator. They are also required to inform the Tutor/SI Coordinator at least three days in advance so that proctoring arrangements can be made.

What academic support services are available for student with disabilities?

The Student Resource Center has several programs to assist students, including individual tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, the Writing Center, the Math Center, and Career Services.

What is the policy on confidentiality?

Information regarding disabilities is confidential. Faculty should guard against acting in such a manner as to disclose the disability status of a student. For example, if a non-disabled student questions why a classmate is given more time to take a test, you should respond that an accommodation is being made for the student. Do not disclose that the student has a disability.

Where can I find more information to assist students with disabilities?

The Disability Services is here to guide and assist you with disability issues. Please call 382-6661x684 for more information.

Adapted from: Office for Institutional Equity, Ohio University, 2008; Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Additional Faculty FAQ’s

Am I obliged to comply with a student’s request for specific learning adjustments?

If a student has a documented disability and requests academic adjustments, you must respond under the ADA legislation of 1990 as well as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you have a question about exactly what constitutes an appropriate adjustment or whether the student has a documented disability, consult the Director of Academic Services.

What are the consequences if I do not provide the requested adjustments?

The student can take legal action against you and the institution. In 1993 the U.S. Department of Education reported that its Office for Civil Rights determined that 86 colleges had violated the rights of students. This was almost twice the number of cases recorded in 1992. In addition, 325 inquiries into possible violations were recorded in 1993.

Is it fair to other students to grant academic adjustments to those students who are disabled?

It is unfair not to grant adjustments. The accommodation “evens the playing field” and ensures that the student’s knowledge is being tested, not her/his disability. A disabled student learns and performs more successfully with certain classroom adjustments which would be unlikely to aid a nondisabled student. For example, one of the most frequently requested academic adjustments is for additional examination time. Studies have shown that giving additional time to nondisabled students will not affect their performance on an exam. However, disabled students receiving additional time perform better.

How can I tell when a student is “faking” a disability?

That students feign disabilities in order to receive special consideration is a common myth. Few if any students who truly understand the nature of a disability would want to “fake” having one. If you have any reason to question whether or not a student has a disability, contact Disability Services.

Must I evaluate the academic work of a student with a disability differently from other students who do not have a disability?

In fact, you should not differently evaluate the academic work of a student with a disability. A good rule of thumb in evaluating a student’s academic performance is to treat all completed work equally. All students must ultimately perform at the same level if they are to receive the same grades.

I want to give students with specific learning needs as much assistance as possible, but where do I draw the line on ensuring that students take advantage of available help and accommodations?

All students are responsible for their own academic achievement. Each student must be personally responsible for class attendance, assignments, and all other course material. It is up to the individual student to seek outside help and to utilize agreed upon academic adjustments.
What are “reasonable accommodations” and who determines the appropriateness of accommodation request?

Since the appearance of Subpart E of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, educators have been urged to avoid using the term “reasonable accommodations” in favor of the more neutral phrase “appropriate academic adjustments.” These adjustments are determined by Disability Services who then communicates them to faculty as requested by the student.

What are some guidelines regarding confidentiality of disability-related information?

Any information from medical records or post-admissions inquiries must be considered confidential and shared with faculty on a need-to-know basis only. Faculty members should not expect to see diagnostic information for a particular student. Of course, faculty members need to know what academic adjustments are necessary and appropriate for meeting an individual student’s needs, but only with permission of the student. The information that you receive about a student’s disability is confidential. It cannot be shared with a third party without the student’s permission.

It is essential to remember that under the FERPA Buckley Amendment, any discussion that you have with a student about her/his disability and/or academic adjustments should not be in a public setting such as a classroom with other students present. In addition, faculty, staff, and administrators cannot draw attention to a student’s disability. For example, if a faculty member wants to check-in with a student to make sure the student’s needs are being met, the faculty member must do so in a private conversation that cannot be overheard by others.

Can a faculty member forbid a student to record class lectures or discussions?

No. Not if it has been recommended as an appropriate academic adjustment. Recording classes are specifically mentioned in Section 504 as a means of assuring full participation in education programs. Faculty members concerned about their right to privacy may work with Disability Services to draw up a contract between the student and the faculty member. Such a contract could detail specific, limited use of the recordings and arrange for their disposal at the end of the term.

When working with an individual student, what is the best way to get additional assistance or advice?

Many times, your best resource is the student who is often able to offer valuable insights about a specific situation or condition. The Academic Services Director can also provide important input.

Adapted from: Disability Services Committee of the GCCCU, 1996

Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Faculty Considerations

1. Encouraging all students to share their unique ways of learning will initiate communication. One instructor always invites students to “educate me” by sharing, in writing or in person, what kinds of personal conditions might impact their learning success.

2. Announce at the beginning of the first class and include in course syllabi this statement: “If you have specific physical, psychological, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester and contact Disability Services so that your learning needs may be appropriately met.”

3. The Disability Services office provides services to students with disabilities. If a student requests accommodations, refer her/him to this office to coordinate all requests.

4. The adult student is always the best source of information about the accommodations needed to assist him/her to succeed in the program or class. When in doubt, ask!

5. When speaking generally about a student with a disability, use language that refers to the person first and the disability second to avoid defining or limiting a person by her/his disability (e.g., “the student with a learning disability” rather than “the learning disabled student”). Avoid referring to the student as the condition itself, such as “an epileptic” or “the paraplegic.”

6. Students whose disabilities impact communication may rely on lip-reading as a supplement to auditory channels. Not all of these students are diagnosed as “deaf” or “hard-of-hearing.” An instructor can help these students by facing them when speaking and being sure that his/her face and mouth are easily visible to the student.

7. Sharing one’s own difficulties in learning can help students believe that instructors understand their difficulties in school and can help students feel more secure in describing their own disability-related problems. Often students provide more detail about their difficulties during these discussions.

8. Students with disabilities most frequently cite “patience” as the quality of professors who have helped them learn the most. Keep in mind that students may need time to consider their words or fully digest what you have said in order to communicate to the best of their ability.

Adapted from: Antioch College, 2000

Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Rights and Responsibilities

Wilmington College is committed to insuring equal opportunity for students with disabilities. This process is a collaborative effort among Disability Services, student, and faculty member. All three participants have a role to play in making education accessible. Understanding your rights as well as your responsibilities is essential to the process of ensuring equal access.

Students with disabilities have the right to:

- Equal access to services, programs, facilities, and employment available at Wilmington College.
- Reasonable and appropriate academic adjustments and other accommodations determined on an individual basis.
- Confidentiality of information relating to disability issues.
- Pursue academic adjustment requests that have not been met through a grievance procedure at the Office of Academic Affairs.

Students with disabilities have the responsibility to:

- Self-identify disability status to Disability Services by providing disability documentation which meets the eligibility guidelines.
- Request necessary academic adjustments and other accommodations in advance of need.
- Meet the College’s academic and institutional standards.
- Follow the specific guidelines established for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations.

Disability Services has the right to:

- Maintain the College’s academic standards.
- Request current documentation that meets eligibility guidelines to verify the need for appropriate academic adjustments and other accommodations.
- Select effective academic adjustments and other accommodations in consultation with the student on an individual basis.
- Deny a request for academic adjustments or other accommodations if the documentation fails to verify the need for the requested service or if the documentation is not provided in advance of need.
- Refuse to provide an academic adjustment or other accommodation that is inappropriate or unreasonable in such a manner as to: pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others, constitute an alteration to an essential element of a course program, or pose an undue financial or administrative burden on the College.

Disability Services has the responsibility to:

- Provide advocacy and consultation services to students with disabilities and their faculty.
- Provide appropriate academic adjustments and other accommodations for a student's known disability so that the student has an equal opportunity to participate in courses, activities and programs.
- Provide information regarding policies and procedures to students with disabilities.
- Provide advice about academic adjustments and other accommodation options.
- Maintain confidentiality of disability issues.
Faculty, administration, and staff have the right to:

- Request in writing from Disability Services notification of a student's need for academic adjustments and other accommodations. (Faculty, administrators, and staff do not have the right to access disability documentation.)
- Decide if an academic adjustment request meets the academic requirements of the course (faculty).
- Contact Disability Services to clarify student requests for academic adjustments and other accommodations.

Faculty, administration, and staff have the responsibility to:

- Provide appropriate academic adjustments and other accommodations in a timely manner.
- Meet with students who have provided a faculty notification letter to discuss requested academic adjustments and establish the procedure for providing academic adjustments in your course (faculty).
- Maintain confidentiality regarding disability issues.
- Alter the form of a testing procedure to measure proficiency in course knowledge based on the ability of the student, not the disability. (There may be an exception when the purpose of the test is to measure a particular skill.)
- Refer students who have requested academic adjustments but have not registered with Disability Services to the Office of Academic Services.

Adapted from: Office for Institutional Equity, Ohio University, 2008
Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Common Disabilities
Working with Students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Definition

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is a neurological condition that affects both learning and behavior. AD/HD is the result of a chronic disturbance in the areas of the brain that regulate attention, impulse control, and the executive functions which control cognitive tasks, motor activity, and social interaction. Hyperactivity may or may not be present. The diagnosis of AD/HD is always a medical one, and the diagnostic procedure must rule out causation from other disabilities.

Characteristics

Primary characteristics include attention deficits (distractibility, inconsistency in focus), impulsivity, and/or over-activity. Secondary characteristics are also common: low frustration tolerance, sleep problems, disorganization in time and place, and poor self-esteem.

AD/HD manifests in a number of ways in academic environments. Students may have difficulty:

- With math problems requiring changes in action, operation, or order
- Organizing written work and essay questions
- With reading comprehension
- Elaborating on their ideas when speaking or writing
- Learning foreign languages
- Being prepared for class, getting to class on time, and keeping appointments

However, students often also show exceptional problem-solving skills in that they have:

- The ability to “hyperfocus” for intense periods of time
- The ability to tolerate chaos and to rapidly rearrange ideas and environments
- Excellent skills for developing multiple approaches to tasks

Considerations

Using a multimodal lecture style and class activities engages all students and helps them better understand course content. Academic adjustments are based on individual needs. Adjustments may include:

**Lecture Classes**
- Gaining access to another student’s notes to verify the accuracy and completeness of their own notes
- Sitting close to the speaker
- Using a laptop for note taking
- Using a voice recorder

**Written Papers**
- Setting up regular meetings with the professor to clarify assignments and evaluate rough drafts
- Working with a tutor when organizing and editing papers

**Examinations**
- Testing in a quiet location
- Extended test time
- Clarifying or rephrasing exam questions to the professor as a comprehension check before answering

Adapted from: Disability Services Committee of the GCCCU, 1996

Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Working with Students with Learning Disabilities

Definition

“Learning disabilities” is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders which are manifested by significant difficulties in language acquisition and use in one or more of the following areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and occur across the lifespan.

Problems with organizational and management skills, social perceptions, and interpersonal interactions may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability.

Characteristics

Individuals with learning disabilities have intelligence ranging from average to superior. Learning disabilities are exhibited in varying degrees of severity across one or more academic areas. They are mainly observed as processing disorders, which means there is a difficulty in receiving or expressing language either orally, in written form, or through body language.

Reading

- Inadequate decoding skills; confusion of similar words; little or no phonic skills
- Slow reading rate and/or difficulty modifying reading rate in accordance with material difficulty
- Problems understanding what is read; difficulty identifying main ideas and details
- Difficulty integrating new vocabulary

Writing

- Poor penmanship
- Slow written production
- Difficulty with sentence structure or poor grammar
- Difficulty copying from blackboard or a book
- Difficulty with learning rules of grammar
- Compositions lacking organization and development of ideas
- Frequent spelling errors
- Poor proof-reading and revising skills

Math

- Incomplete mastery of basic facts
- Difficulty recalling sequence of math operations and processes
- Misunderstanding of math vocabulary
- Confusion or reversal of numbers and operational symbols
- Difficulty reading or understanding word problems
- Inaccurate copying of problems
- Problems with time, money, and measurement
Receptive and Expressive Oral Language
• Difficulty expressing ideas or thoughts aloud
• Problems describing events or stories in proper order
• Mispronunciation of words; difficulty remembering specific words
• Poor ability to remember or understand spoken instructions
• Inability to concentrate or pay attention in class

Organizational and Study Skills
• Poor organization and management of time
• Difficulty beginning and sticking with study tasks
• Poor note taking and outlining skills
• Problems finding and using information from different sources
• Difficulty and anxiety in taking tests
• Poor ability to use dictionaries and other study aides

Attention and Concentration
• Difficulty focusing and sustaining attention on academic tasks
• Fluctuations of attention span
• Distractibility
• Difficulty juggling multiple tasks
• Difficulty following oral and written directions
• Inability to complete assignments in time allowed.

Social Skills
• Difficulty reading other people, understanding body language or facial expressions
• Problems interpreting or understanding subtle messages, such as sarcasm, teasing, banter, or jokes
• Poor judgment leading to behavior problems

Perception and Coordination
• Confusion related to time, directions, or visual motor coordination
• Inability to perform well at sports or games

Considerations

Academic adjustments are based on individual student needs. They may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Lectures and Discussions
• Assist the student in finding a classmate who is a thorough note taker to obtain copies of notes.
• Understand that a student may need to record lectures/discussions.
• Include time for questions, discussions, and requests for further examples before and after class.
• Highlight major concepts and terminology, both orally and visually, remembering to read aloud material on the board or on slides.
• Verbally describe diagrams, charts, and graphs.
• Use color to follow transformations and highlight relationships in complex sequences such as in math or science
• Explain procedures slowly and in step-by-step fashion.
• Remind students often of your availability during office hours for individual clarification of lectures, readings, and assignments.

Written Assignments
• Provide explicit feedback, both oral and written, about strengths and weaknesses of a student’s work so that follow up efforts can be effectively focused.

Examinations
• Encourage formation of study groups and/or individual tutoring.
• Provide additional time to complete examinations.
• Test in an environment with minimal distractions.
• Support the student’s use of a test reader.
• Support the student’s use of a test scribe.
• Provide clarification of test questions.
• Change the test format to meet the student’s needs.
• Provide oral examination for some or all parts of the exam.
• Space math problems on a test to reduce extraneous stimuli.

Adapted from: Disability Services Committee of the GCCCU, 1996

Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Less Common Disabilities
Working with Students with Acquired Brain Injury

Definition

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) is a medically verifiable impairment of brain functioning resulting in a loss or partial loss of one or more of the following: communication, motor, social, cognitive, and sensory/perceptual abilities. ABI can result from two types of trauma:

1) external events, such as closed head trauma or a penetration to the brain
2) internal events, such as strokes, tumors, ingestion of toxic substances, anoxia, or infections of the brain

Evaluation is ongoing since recovery from brain injury usually continues for many months, even years.

Characteristics

There is great variation in the possible effects of a brain injury and most individuals will exhibit some but not all of them. Possible characteristics include:

- Physical and sensory changes
  - Chronic headaches, dizziness, light-headedness, nausea
  - Sleep problems (e.g., insomnia, day/night confusion)
  - Poor body temperature regulation
  - Recurrent seizure activity
  - Reduced speed of motor performance and precision of movement

- Cognitive changes and academic problems
  - Difficulty keeping up with discussions, instructional presentations, note taking
  - Extreme sensitivity to distraction (e.g., unable to take a test in a room with other students)
  - Difficulty making transitions (e.g., home to school, class to class, switching from fractions to decimal problems)
  - Difficulty organizing working and environment (e.g., difficulty keeping track of books, assignments, materials)
  - Problems in planning, organizing, and pacing tasks and activities
  - Tendency to perseverate; inflexible thinking
  - Difficulty with expressive oral or written language and reading comprehension

- Social, emotional, and behavioral problems
  - Chronic agitation, irritability, restlessness, or anxiety
  - Impaired ability to self-manage; lowered impulse control; poor anger control
  - Inability to take cues from the environment (may lead to socially inappropriate behavior)

Considerations

Students with ABI may benefit from teaching strategies and academic adjustments used for students with learning disabilities and for students with chronic health conditions. Students with ABI may also benefit from frequent contact with their advisors and close assistance in planning, setting goals, and evaluating progress toward graduation.

Adapted from: Disability Services Committee of the GCCCU, 1996

Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Working with Students with Asperger Syndrome

Definition

Asperger Syndrome (AS) is a neurobiological disorder which most researchers feel falls at the "high end" of the Autistic Spectrum. Autism and other conditions on the autistic spectrum are developmental disabilities significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction.

Characteristics (from www.autism-society.org and www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/)

Individuals with AS can exhibit a variety of characteristics, and the disorder can range from mild to severe. Characteristics include:

- Marked deficiencies in social skills, have difficulties with transitions or changes, and prefer sameness
- Obsessive routines and may be preoccupied with a particular subject of interest
- A great deal of difficulty reading nonverbal cues (body language), and very often the student with AS has difficulty determining proper body space.
- Often overly sensitive to sounds, tastes, smells, and sights, the person with AS may prefer soft clothing or certain foods, or may be bothered by sounds or lights no one else seems to hear or see.

It is important to remember that the person with AS perceives the world very differently. Therefore, many behaviors that seem odd or unusual are due to those neurological differences and not the result of intentional rudeness or bad behavior, and most certainly not the result of "improper parenting."

By definition, students with AS have an average to superior IQ, and many individuals (although not all) exhibit exceptional skill or talent in a specific area. However,

- Because of their high degree of functionality and their naivete, those with AS are often viewed as eccentric or odd and can easily become victims of teasing and bullying.
- While language development seems, on the surface, normal, individuals with AS often have deficits in pragmatics and prosody.
- Vocabularies may be extraordinarily rich in some students. However, persons with AS can be extremely literal and have difficulty using language in a social context.

Because people with Asperger syndrome are very capable cognitively, they can greatly benefit from college or university education. Unfortunately, many experience difficulties accessing tertiary education for a mixture of reasons. Many students become isolated or lonely and find that their social difficulties increase without necessary support. Students also often struggle because the academic approach demanded by colleges/universities is not differentiated to their learning style. Students with AS can thrive in environments where professors use teaching strategies that are effective for all students and whose professors openly communicate with and are responsive to the student on an individual level.

Considerations

Little research has been done into the needs and problems of college students with AS, and because AS is a very wide category, individuals may have very different needs. Some needs and possible accommodations include:

- Extreme difficulty dealing with roommates in shared accommodation and need for quiet and solitude in order to be able to work; sensitive selection of roommate is important
- Difficulty with proximity to others, leading to a need for an aisle seat in exams or for taking exams in a separate room
• Accommodations similar to those of students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, such as for extra time in exams
• Problems with interacting with others in seminars and discussion groups; effective professors talk with the student with AS privately about the student’s comfort level, the option to pass on responding, and the professor’s expectations for appropriate interactions
• Great difficulty speaking in public, especially without notes; a possible accommodation includes allowing notes
• Difficulty understanding instructions and requirements; a possible accommodation is that the student will check in with the professor each day after class to clarify assignments
• High levels of anxiety and vulnerability to stress; students may benefit from counseling services
• Difficulty coping with the social environment of the college and dealing with other students; residence life staff should connect with students with AS and support their involvement with others

"Able autistic individuals can rise to eminent positions and perform with such outstanding success that one may even conclude that only such people are capable of certain achievements ... Their unswerving determination and penetrating intellectual powers, part of their spontaneous and original mental activity, their narrowness and single-mindedness, as manifested in their special interests, can be immensely valuable and can lead to outstanding achievements in their chosen areas." — Hans Asperger (1944)

"If I could snap my fingers and be nonautistic, I would not - because then I wouldn't be me. Autism is part of who I am." — Temple Grandin, Cattle Expert
Working with Students with Blindness/Visual Impairment

Definition
Visual impairments include disorders in the sense of vision that affect the central vision acuity, the field of vision, color perception, or binocular visual function. The American Medical Association defines legal blindness as visual acuity not exceeding 20/200 in the better eye with correction, or a limit in the field of vision that is less than a 20 degree angle (tunnel vision).

Characteristics
Persons who are blind experience a complete lack of vision, though they may have some perception of light and colors. They often depend on other senses, such as hearing and touch, to gather information. They may use canes and/or guide dogs in order to navigate their environment.

Individuals who are blind do not always have the experience of sight from their past to assist in the recollection of data, so it is not appropriate to assume that someone who is blind is familiar with objects in the classroom or a new environment.

Individuals who are visually impaired are able to use sight to learn to some degree. Private conversations with students will allow them to tell you what they need in order to allow them to use the sight they have most effectively.

Considerations
Since much of the information distributed in a classroom is visual:

- Faculty must assist students in obtaining information in alternative formats, such as written information printed in enlarged fonts for students with visual impairments, or on disc for students who are blind.
- Material presented on overheads may need to be read aloud.
- If movies and other visual aids are used, a summary should be provided.
- Materials must be provided to the Student Resource Center in advance of need be so that they may be modified and made available to students.

Visual impairments present mobility difficulties with which students may need assistance:

- Passages through doors and aisles should be kept clear.
- When furniture is moved, students should be advised of the new arrangement.
- Any changes in class location should be given to the student in advance or a non-disabled student should be assigned to wait at the door and guide the visually-impaired or blind student to the new location. Maintain confidentiality while making arrangements.
- When serving as a sighted guide, let the student take the guide’s arm just above the elbow.
- Students may use a white cane or guide dog for mobility purposes. Guide dogs should not be petted when working.

In addition:
- A lower noise level in the classroom will be important for hearing.
- Students may require a reader for tests as well as a note-taker in class.
- Testing adjustments may include having a reader and a scribe, extended time, and an environment with minimal distractions.
- It is helpful to identify yourself first when speaking with a blind student. Meeting with the student early in the semester to determine necessary academic adjustments will ensure that the student's needs are met.

Adapted from: Disability Services Committee of the GCCCU, 1996
Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Working with Students with Chronic Health Conditions

Definition

A chronic health condition is covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 when it substantially impairs or restricts or impairs one or more of the major life activities, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, working, or learning. Chronic health conditions include multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, AIDS, cancer, diabetes, cardiac diseases, neuromuscular diseases, arthritis, migraines, and Crohn’s disease, to name a few.

Student Characteristics

Some students who are attending Wilmington College have chronic illnesses that are disabling conditions. The degree to which these illnesses affect the student in the academic setting varies greatly. Some conditions may be stable, others may be progressive. Chronic pain may result in limitations to strength, standing, walking, climbing, sitting, kneeling, stooping, and carrying. Cold or sudden changes in temperature may increase the onset of pain. Students with chronic pain may need to stand or change positions intermittently during class. Students may have periods of intense illness, as well as periods of remission. An understanding of the volatile nature of chronic illness will assist the student in discussing the need for academic adjustments.

Some common characteristics include fluctuations in academic performance, variable emotional states, inconsistent energy levels, physical limitations, and sporadic class attendance.

For some students, the effect of medication that is required to control symptoms may compound problems that impact academic performance. Common side effects of medication include fatigue, memory loss, shortened attention span, loss of concentration, and drowsiness. Severe pain may increase the number of absences.

Considerations

Extensions on assignments and additional absences may need to be negotiated in cases of health-related absences, but the student would still be required to complete the course assignments.

Adapted from: Office for Institutional Equity, Ohio University, 2008; Disability Services Committee of the GCCCU, 1996

Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Chronic Health Conditions: Working with Students with Epilepsy

Definition

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder which may result in brief periods of altered consciousness, movements, or actions. Students may have few problems in the classroom and, in most cases, will have learned to manage seizure activity with medication, adequate rest, and proper diet. However, a student may be more likely to experience some of the following characteristics during exam periods when there is increased likelihood of stress and a lack of sleep.

Characteristics

General characteristics that the student may exhibit include fluctuations in behavior and performance, difficulty with concentration, and possible memory inconsistency, especially for names and places.

More intense characteristics are seizure activity, including:
- Petit mal (“blanking out” for a few seconds to a few minutes; it may look like the student is daydreaming)
- Psychomotor (saying or doing something without realizing it; it may be described as “sleepwalking”)
- Grand mal (losing consciousness, shaking, foaming at the mouth)

Considerations

During times of stress the student will benefit from increased quiet time and rest.

Discuss who to contact and what emergency steps to take in the event of a seizure.

If a seizure occurs, clear surrounding area to prevent injury, loosen any clothing around the neck, and turn student gently on side. Do not attempt to hold the person down or put anything in the mouth. Call for emergency assistance.

If further information about epilepsy is desired, or if you need assistance in determining what to do for a specific student in the even to a seizure, please contact Disability Services.
Working with Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Definition

Hearing impairments are the most common type of physical disability. Hearing loss may be sensorineural, involving an impairment of the auditory nerve; conductive, a defect in the auditory system which interferes with sound reaching the cochlea; or a mixed impairment, both sensorineural and conductive. A person with a hearing impairment may have language deficiencies and exhibit poor vocabulary and syntax (grammar).

Characteristics/Responses

Many students with hearing loss use hearing aids and rely on lip reading. Only 30 percent of spoken words in English can be lip read. As an instructor, you should be aware that the student will need to see your lips to know what you are saying:

- Remember to face the class when speaking; your facial expressions also give clues as to the meaning of your words.
- Speaking slowly, using shorter sentences and gestures help facilitate understanding.
- Standing in front of a window or source of glare may limit visibility for the student. It is not helpful to shout or exaggerate lip movements.
- Keep in mind the multiple ways information is flowing in the class that the student with a hearing impairment may be missing. Repeat the questions and comments of other students and class visitors and spend time providing the student with any additional information she/he missed.

Considerations

Offer the student preferential seating. Ask the student where she/he feels most comfortable sitting and allow the student to sit there. Reduce background noise as much as possible, and offer another seat for the student to move to if background noise cannot be stopped.

Use visual aids to the extent possible during lectures. For example, list key words and topics on the board and define them before or during the lecture, and use visual media when possible to augment oral information. When using videos as part of a class presentation, choosing a closed-caption version will allow the hearing-impaired student to participate fully. If the video is not closed-caption, a summary should be provided for the student.

Students with hearing and communication disorders may speak slowly and need more time to communicate. It is important to let the student finish the complete thought. It is helpful to summarize the message to check for accuracy of understanding. If an oral presentation is required, the instructor should discuss the student’s comfort level and possible alternatives (if needed) with the student.

Students using interpreters should discuss with the instructor the best place for the interpreter to be seated to see both the instructor and the student. Be sure that you always speak with the student directly (face the student and make eye contact), not the interpreter. A note taker or copies of the lecture notes may be needed because the student will not be able to see the interpreter and take notes at the same time.

Be sure to check in with the student to find out whether your efforts to enable the student to access course content have been effective. Feel comfortable and relaxed when talking to the student about her/his disability.

Adapted from: Office for Institutional Equity, Ohio University, 2008

Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Working with Students with Orthopedic Disabilities

Definition

A person with an orthopedic disability has a physical condition which limits the individual’s ability to navigate their environment.

Characteristics

The student may use a wheelchair, assistive walking device, or other prosthesis in order to navigate and manage the environment. The student may have limited fine motor skills.

Considerations

Academic adjustments are based on individual need. They may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Make sure the building, classroom, and/or lab are physically accessible with access to elevators and restrooms.
- Arrange the classroom differently, if necessary, to accommodate the student’s wheelchair or other mobility needs.
- Consider emergency evacuation from the classroom and what alternatives would be necessary for the student; acquaint the student with the procedure she/he should follow.
- Do not isolate the student in classroom seating because of mobility needs.
- Be considerate of the time it takes for the student to navigate her/his schedule; be understanding if the student is a few minutes late.
- Arrange for an assistant lab partner for the student if necessary.
- Provide extended time to complete examinations.

Adapted from: Disability Services Committee of the GCCCU, 1996

Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Working with Students with Psychological Disabilities

Definition

Psychological disabilities include, but are not limited to, anxiety, depression, obsessive/compulsive disorder, panic disorder, phobias, and post-traumatic stress disorder. These disabilities are cyclical in nature and symptoms often become more apparent in times of stress.

Student Characteristics

Students with psychological disabilities are often productive and successful students in the academic environment. Some students use medication to control symptoms which may interfere with the learning process. Medications or changes in medication may cause sleep disturbances, interfere with concentration, or diminish ability to attend to lectures or successfully complete assignments. Some students may exhibit some negative behavior, such as indifference or disruption. In the event of disruptive behavior, the student should be informed about the specific limits of acceptable behavior in the classroom and on campus. The Student Code of Conduct must be followed.

Considerations

Accommodations may need to be made for students with psychological disabilities. Flexibility with attendance and assignments may need to be negotiated in cases of health-related absences. Students should present documentation of such a need to Disability Services, not to the professor. Students are required to meet the academic standards of the class. All information that the student discloses to the instructor is confidential.

Adapted from: Office of Institutional Equity, Ohio University, 2008
Working with Students with Speech Impairments

Definition

The category of impaired speech covers several different possibilities, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, or voice impairments.

Characteristics

The student’s speech patterns are different from “normally” accepted speech patterns. Speech impairments are very common among people who are hearing impaired, have cerebral palsy, have sustained severe head injuries, or who have a cleft palate; however, many individuals have a speech impairment but do not have other disabilities.

Considerations

Maintain good eye contact and be patient when the student is trying to communicate. It is not appropriate to fill in a sentence or finish a thought for a student. A speech impairment does not mean the student is not intelligent or cannot hear, so do not exaggerate communications.

Ask the student if she/he would like you so develop lists of technical terms so the student can practice saying and hearing them. Give the student a chance to speak in class, but don’t force it. Encourage working with other students as partners or in small groups. If a stated learning goal for the course is oral communication, work with the student and the Academic Services Director to determine the best way for the student to participate.

Adapted from: Disability Services Committee of the GCCCU, 1996

Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011
Working with Students in Substance Abuse Recovery

Definition

Persons who abuse substances are protected under the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* only if
1) they are currently in recovery, and
2) they are not harmful or disruptive to others

Characteristics

Substance abusers who have been in recovery for some time may not demonstrate any observable characteristics of the disability. Characteristics of abuses just beginning recovery may include:

- Fidgety behavior and/or shakiness
- Inconsistent behavior
- Irritability
- Argumentativeness
- Inattentiveness
- Withdrawal
- Sporadic class attendance

Considerations

Common academic adjustments include recording class lectures/discussions, use of a note taker, and extended time to complete examinations.

Students should also be referred to other college services, such as tutoring or counseling.

Adapted from: Disability Services Committee of the GCCCU, 1996

Wilmington College: 2008, last revision 2011