

Ross Center 101: Information for Faculty

Ross Center for Disability Services
University of Massachusetts Boston

Agenda

1. Function of the Ross Center
2. Legal context
3. Referrals
4. Registration & notification letters
5. Flexible attendance and extensions
6. Questions



What does the Ross Center do?



About 85% of the students we serve have "invisible" disabilities

- ❖ Provide classroom accommodations for all registered students with disabilities
- ❖ Work individually with students to provide access
- ❖ Work with faculty to ensure equity
- ❖ Explore assistive technology with students
- ❖ Coordinate accommodations for quizzes, tests, and exams
- ❖ Provide academic coaching to eligible students

What are accommodations?

- Reasonable academic adjustments, services, equipment, etc. that:
 - remove barriers caused by disabilities
 - provide equal access to enable students to demonstrate mastery
 - enable otherwise qualified students to access curriculum
- Laws: ADA, Section 504
- What does “reasonable” mean according to the ADA?
 - Cannot pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others
 - Cannot place undue financial or administrative burden
 - Cannot make a substantial change in an essential element of the curriculum (e.g., presentations in a public speaking course)
 - Cannot fundamentally alter the manner in which services are provided

Fundamental alteration

- Determining if an approved accommodation fundamentally alters a specific course or program is an interactive process
- Consider:
 - What are the established essential requirements of the course?
 - In what way does the accommodation alter one or more of the essential requirements?
 - Are there alternative ways in which the student can meet the fundamental objectives of the course?
- The US Dept of Education Office of Civil Rights has clarified that decisions about fundamental alteration *must be made by a **group** of knowledgeable and trained individuals at the college within the program and the disability services office*

Source: [OCR No. 01-16-2120](#)

Referring Students

Refer directly to us if...

- ❖ A student discloses a diagnosis or disability
- ❖ A student shares that they had accommodations or special services in high school

(key words: IEP, 504, SPED/special ed, SEN, “separate room”)

Include us in your “menu” of resources if...

- ❖ A student is struggling academically but does not mention a diagnosis or disability

Things to consider...

- ❖ Don't assume a diagnosis
- ❖ Don't make promises of accommodations
- ❖ Keep students' information confidential
- ❖ Appropriate documentation is necessary to receive accommodations

Registration Process

1. Student completes registration request on our website (must have UMB email and ID #)
2. Documentation of disability
 - Functional limitations
 - Removal of barriers
3. Meeting with Ross Center staff
 - Documentation is reviewed
 - Accommodations are determined
4. Student selects accommodations for each course, each semester
 - Can be tailored to the course requirements
5. Faculty receive e-mails outlining accommodations
 - Disability is not shared with faculty
 - Accommodations are not retroactive
6. Faculty and student are encouraged to work with Ross Center with questions

Following Notification Letters

Do not **deny**
approved
accommodations
outright

- Violates federal law
- Violates students' civil rights
- Can lead to OCR complaints, lawsuits, and/or Title IX investigations

*However, **we will work with you** if you believe an accommodation fundamentally alters your course, so reach out to us!*

Do not provide
additional
accommodations

- Creates inconsistency, confusion, and conflict between instructors and students
- Opens the door to legal issues
- Only the Ross Center can determine if an accommodation is legally appropriate

*Any leniency you deem appropriate should be **something you would offer to any student**, not only to students with disabilities*

Flexible Attendance / Extensions

Flexible Attendance

- ❖ Separate from the university's excused absence policy
- ❖ Suggested allowance: 2x the number of times the course meets weekly
 - ❖ If the course meets 3x/week, student would be entitled to 6 absences per term

Extensions

- ❖ Extensions on assignments or test dates, generally 24-48 hours
- ❖ Not a blanket accommodation
- ❖ May not be possible on some collaborative tasks

We welcome conversations about what makes sense for your class!


Procedures and Expectations

- ❖ Student must notify you via email, generally prior to missing a class or assignment deadline
- ❖ Not required to disclose specific circumstances
- ❖ Accommodation is for **episodic symptoms**; should not be used on every assignment

We want to hear from you!

Ross Center for Disability Services

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