



## Foreign Language Module **Working with Disability Resources on Campus**

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**L**earning a foreign language can be difficult for many students. Students with disabilities will have some of the same experiences as students without disabilities but there may be additional barriers for students with disabilities. It is essential that a collaborative approach is taken to address the needs of students with disabilities in foreign language learning. This module will discuss strategies that will promote student engagement and learning environments supportive of individuals with diverse learning needs.

### **College students with disabilities**

Students with disabilities are becoming commonplace on two-year and four-year college campuses. In fact, national data indicate approximately 11% of college students self-disclose as having a disability. A number of trends are leading to the increasing prevalence in college including identification of learning needs at younger ages, individualized education plans throughout K-12 education, enhanced transition planning and services, and a greater awareness of college and university responsibility for nondiscrimination.

Disabilities reflected in the student population consist of a range of visible and non-visible disabilities with the non-visible disabilities such as learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, and psychological disabilities being the most common.

### **So what do you need to know?**

Students with disabilities are admitted through the same admissions process as any other student on your campus. They are qualified to be in your class. As an instructor, you play an important

role in creating a welcoming learning environment for all students and in following institutional procedures for accommodating students with disabilities.

Most campuses have an Office of Disability Resources (ODR, or sometimes called the Office of Disability Services) with one or more professionals on staff to answer your questions about working with students with disabilities.

### **How will you know if a student has a disability and needs accommodations in your class?**

In college, it is the student's responsibility to self-disclose and request any needed accommodation. Most institutions have a formal procedure in place requiring that students register with the ODR before instructors provide accommodations. Students who have completed this process will present you with a *faculty accommodation letter* typically on ODR letterhead specifying the accommodations they may need in your class. If a student requests a disability-based accommodation but does not have a faculty accommodation letter, please refer the student to the ODR. This is essential for helping the institution assure consistency and compliance with federal law.

### **How do students register with the Disability Resources Office?**

Students are required to provide comprehensive documentation of a disability to the institution's Office of Disability Resources. While different types of disabilities call for different elements of documentation (think about, for example, what might be needed to document a visual impairment as opposed to a learning disability), all documentation must substantiate the presence of a diagnosed disability by an appropriate professional and document the current impact of the disability in a learning environment. Using the current documentation, accommodations are identified to address functional limitations that are present in the learning environment. These are the accommodations that are listed on the faculty accommodation letter that you receive from the student.

### **Do students have to register with ODR?**

The Office of Disability Resources encourages students to register with the office early in their educational careers to assess learning barriers. Early contact with students with language-based disabilities facilitates discussions concerning the need for additional accommodations specific to foreign language, course substitutions and/or course waivers when appropriate. Registering with the ODR allows administrators and foreign language instructors to proactively assess and monitor the student's progress in foreign language courses.

However, students may decide that they do not want to disclose their disability or register with the Office of Disability Resources. The student has the right to decline services. These students, however, are not eligible for disability-based accommodations in your class. Students should be aware that accommodations are not retroactive. If a student decides to register at a point when they are failing a course or have already failed a course, there is no obligation for the instructor to change grades, allow resubmission of assignments, or retake tests. Accommodations should be provided for students going forward in the class.

To encourage students to use university procedures for requesting supports, faculty should include a statement in each syllabus, such as this one:

If you have a disability and require accommodations, please meet with me early in the semester to discuss your learning needs. If you wish to request reasonable accommodations (note taking support, extended time for tests, etc.), you will need to register with the Office of Disability Resources. The office will require appropriate documentation of disability. All information will be kept confidential.

This statement informs students that individual instructors are aware of students with diverse learning abilities and the appropriate resources to seek to receive reasonable accommodations.

### **Is there anything beyond providing approved accommodations that you should do in your classroom?**

Providing approved accommodation is an important student support that also assists in keeping your institution in compliance with federal law. However, beyond mandated services, there are a number of considerations you might incorporate in your classroom that will make it more inclusive for many diverse learners. We hope you will explore the other foreign language modules on this web site for ideas.

On our campus, the Office of Disability Resources and the Modern Languages faculty have developed an Early Warning Feedback form to track assessment of the student's progress within the first three weeks of the semester. Together with a list of approved accommodations, the Early Warning Feedback form assists in facilitating a conversation of strategies that will be used by the student and the faculty throughout the course. This form sets a standard that the student will make a good faith effort in the course regardless of the difficulties in this area. The instructor observes the student's efforts and provides feedback concerning his or her assessment of the student's performance in the course, attendance, class participation, use of accommodations, test and quiz grades and the student's preparation for class.

To promote accountability, students are required to meet with their instructor to complete the form. The dialogue between the student and the instructor facilitate feedback for both the student and the faculty member. Once the Early Warning Feedback form is completed the document is forwarded to the Director of Disability Resources. The form is then used to assess whether there is enough information for the Office of Disability Resources and Modern Languages department to support a waiver based on the student's performance, and instructor's observations and feedback. If a waiver is warranted, the information provided is included in a letter of support that is presented to the faculty committee that determines course waivers. The committee will then evaluate information presented by the student and the Office of Disability Resources and Modern Languages and make a decision based on the information provided.

In the event a student does not make a good faith effort in a course, the student will be required to continue the foreign language requirements for their degree. The student at anytime can participate as expected but will not be considered for a waiver if they have not demonstrated standard good-student skills that include regularly attending class, participating frequently, utilizing accommodations, and working with their instructor.



### *Early Warning Feedback Form*

We are requesting your assistance in tracking this student's early progress in your class. Please schedule a brief interview with him/her just after the first regular test or by the second Friday of classes. The point of the interview is to confirm that the student is making a good-faith attempt to learn the target language and to assess whether current accommodations are meeting the student's learning needs. Please send the completed form to the Director of Disability Resources and direct any questions or concerns to that office or to Wade Edwards.

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Language and Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Consultation: \_\_\_\_\_

First Exam Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Student has attended all classes.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student has completed all homework fully and on time.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student is prepared for class and participates in class activities.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student makes an effort to speak the target language.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student is enrolled in the appropriate level.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student understands the requirements of the course as indicated on the syllabus.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student is working with accommodations (please list):

Comments to Disability Resources: