

## TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS BY DISABILITY

Taking a test under standard conditions requires certain skills and abilities that are not a part of what is being measured by the test instrument. For some students with disabilities, the format of the test itself or the physical location in which the test is to be administered will constitute a discriminatory barrier to performance. The suggestions below (listed by disability categories) provide guidelines for adapting examinations to eliminate discrimination against students with disabilities. A discussion of changes appropriate for many students (adaptations in the test environment, extra time, proctors, etc.) is also included.

### HEARING IMPAIRMENT

A hearing impairment may be caused by a physical diminution or loss of hearing ability or by a perceptual problem that causes the brain to process incorrectly what is heard. Such impairment may cause the student not to hear or to comprehend rapidly spoken information such as procedural instructions, descriptive background, or questions posed by other students and answers given before the actual test begins.

#### ADAPTATIONS

- *Student may be given written instructions or information ordinarily read aloud by examiner.*
- *Oral or sign language interpreter may translate oral instruction and information.*

### VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

A visual impairment may represent a physical diminution or complete loss of vision or the inability of a person to perceive what is viewed through the eye. Such impairment may cause a student not to see or comprehend written material that may include announcement of test dates, procedural information, and content of the examination itself. In addition, visual perceptual problems (which may include inability to discriminate figure or ground, sequencing and letter reversals, and similar shaped letters) may preclude comprehension of printed test materials and/or completion of a standard answer sheet or essay exam in the usual manner.

#### ADAPTATIONS

- *Arrange for alternate text formatting of the exam with Virginia Moore, ext. 5863. All tests can be sent as an attachment to [dspstesting@cmccd.edu](mailto:dspstesting@cmccd.edu)*
- *Student may use electronic optical aids, such as a Visual-Tek, which enlarge the print; or non-optical aids, such as Optic, on or a Kurzweil 3000, which change the form of the print to be usable for people with visual impairments.*
- *Student may record answers by typing or dictating.*
- *Student may dictate answers to a scribe who marks the answer sheet or writes the essay.*
- *Where spelling and punctuation are related to course objectives, student and instructor may determine a way for grammar to be evaluated within the parameters of the adaptation.*

## **MOTOR IMPAIRMENT**

Motor impairment consists of the limitation of movement of any limb or fine motor ability. It may involve limitations in performing certain acts such as reaching and entering the exam site or sitting for long time periods of time. Motor impairment broadly describes any disability that limits functional manipulating test materials (i.e. scratch paper, pencils, calculators, etc.), and transcribing responses.

### **ADAPTATIONS**

- *Arrange for exam to be given in accessible building and classroom; arrange for a lab assistant, etc.*
- *Arrange for a scribe to assist manipulation of test materials, marking exams, and writing numbers and/or symbols as directed by student.*
- *Arrange for alternative methods of recording answers such as typing or dictating.*

## **SPEECH IMPAIRMENT**

A speech impairment may cause a student to be unable to speak, to mispronounce certain words, to speak slowly or in a manner hard to understand. Such impairment rarely restricts a student in a written examination; however, depending upon the extent of the impairment, it may have a great influence on oral recitation types of examinations.

### **ADAPTATIONS**

- *Written examinations might be substituted for oral recitation exams.*
- *Student may write his/her response for an oral recitation and have that presentation read by an interpreter.*
- *Student may use an auxiliary aid such as a word board or interpreter for classroom participation.*

## **HIDDEN DISABILITIES**

Among the vast range of disabling conditions which are not usually visible or readily detectable, to the casual onlooker are seizure disorders and other problems related to brain injury or neurological dysfunction; cardiovascular diseases; muscular-skeletal problems (from arthritis to back injury); respiratory disease or dysfunction (such as asthma and chemical or environmental allergies); systemic diseases or dysfunctions (such as lupus, diabetes, cancer, etc.); and learning disabilities. Some students with hidden disabilities must cope daily with constant severe pain, a high level of fatigue, or medications that may affect classroom performance. Because needs will differ widely, adaptations should be made in close consultation with the student. Specific information follows on the most common hidden handicap, a learning disability.

## **LEARNING DISABILITY**

A learning disability is a documented perceptual handicap that affects the ability to process information in people of average to above average intelligence. Different individuals may have difficulties in one or more areas of receiving or sending information. These may include spelling, reading, handwriting, short-term memory, attending, organizing, following directions, spatial relations, math, even translating aural cues.

## **ADAPTATIONS**

- *Arrange for alternate methods of recording answers such as taping, typing, or dictating answers to a scribe who marks the answer sheet or write the essay.*
- *Arrange for special edition of the exam, i.e. text to speech, individually read, in large print, in essay form as opposed to short-answer or in short-answer form as opposed to essay.*
- *Where spelling and punctuation are related to course objectives, student and instructor may determine a way for grammar to be evaluated within the parameters of the adaptation.*
- *Allow student to use a dictionary and provide additional time.*
- *Allow use of a word processor spell-check/grammar-check capability, etc.*
- *Permit test to be given individually in a quiet room without distractions.*

## **ADAPTATIONS THAT AID STUDENTS WITH A VARIETY OF DISABILITIES**

### **TIMING**

Some adaptations to conventional test formats require that the examinee be granted additional time to complete the exam. The act of reading Braille, using a print enlarger, or enlarged print takes longer than reading a standard typed page. Similarly, listening to a tape or dictating answers takes longer than writing answers in longhand. Extended time is frequently necessary, but there are no rigid rules for determining how much additional time should be given; extended time should flexibly permit reasonable progress without dawdling. Many instructors find that allowing the student with a disability twice as long as other students to complete a test will fit most situations. Factors to be considered in determining a reasonable time extension include:

- *type of accommodation (device? personal aide? other?)*
- *exam format (short answer? multiple choice? open book? essay? paper?)*
- *purpose of the course (personal development? career preparation?)*

### **TEST ENVIRONMENT**

Ideally, students should be allowed to take an adapted test in the same classroom at the same time with the other students. However, if adaptation requires the exam to be administered in a place other than the regular exam site, efforts should be made to provide a setting, which is equally conducive to concentration. Considerations include:

- *free from interruption, distractions, and noise*
- *adequate privacy for working with a reader, writer or such devices as a computer, typewriter, talking calculator, or Braille.*
- *sensible and sensitive proctoring*

A student should not be expected to cope with taking the exam in the hallway, library main reading room, or department office if phone, visits, or other distractions will be allowed.

### **EXAM PROCTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS**

Objective test administration may best be assured by arranging for the student to test in the High Tech Center other than the student's instructor, reader, or interpreter. Having one's instructor administer the exam individually can be an intimidating experience for some students and could put the student at a disadvantage as compared to the relative anonymity of group administration of a test in large classes. It may be difficult to ascertain that a reader or interpreter for a student with a visual impairment has maintained objectivity. By using a screen reader for the test, these issues are dealt with in a fair and balanced manner. If you choose to have a proctor to administer exams adapted for various functional limitations, he/she may need the following from DSPS Staff:

- *orientation in ways to read aloud*
- *practice in writing exactly what is dictated*

- *discussion of methods of maintaining integrity and ethics of the test situation.*