Law Student Disability Services Brochure

Oklahoma City University is dedicated to providing for the needs of enrolled students who have disabilities. Reasonable modifications in the classroom and auxiliary aids will be provided for students with appropriately documented disabilities.

Students with disabilities who wish to access services may initiate their request by contacting the Student Services Office. During this intake process, students will have an opportunity to identify specific academic accommodations, and they will be asked to provide a formal request and provide current documentation about their disability. With regard to non-observable disabilities (such as learning disabilities, ADD or ADHD), current means that documentation should be no older than three years.

**Documentation Requirements**

It is the student's responsibility to disclose a disability if the student desires accommodations. The student can self identify at any time during his or her academic career. This disclosure does not have to be during the first semester unless accommodations are being requested for that semester. Disclosure must be done before accommodations can be considered. Accommodations will only be granted if the applicable deadline is met. The institution has no responsibility to make accommodations retroactively.

Information regarding disability is considered highly confidential, is maintained in separate, secure files with limited access, and is shared on a need-to-know basis. Faculty are not prohibited from asking the student for additional information if they believe they could better assist the student and maximize learning.

It is important that students provide documentation not only of a diagnosis of a physical or mental impairment but also of the functional impact of that impairment. This documentation must come from a qualified professional, such as a physician if a medical disability, or a psychometrist or other professional trained in psycho-educational evaluation, if a learning disability.

In the case of **physical disability**, a doctor's statement or a brief note written on a prescription form is not considered sufficient. Documentation of how that impairment or condition substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the student might include but is not
limited to walking, breathing, seeing, hearing, evidence that the requested service or accommodation is appropriate to the needs of the student.

Students who have mental impairments that limits their abilities to function in the classroom may qualify for accommodations. Appropriate documentation of a mental impairment should include a statement of the impairment from a licensed mental health practitioner and, if relevant, a statement of current medication from the prescribing psychiatrist. The report should include summaries of the following: diagnostic interviews, assessment of the student's mental status (including testing summaries) and DSM IV diagnosis. A doctor's statement of the impairment or condition is not sufficient without the documentation of how that impairment or condition substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the student. If the student has received accommodations in the past, a copy of the document(s) outlining the accommodations is also requested.

Students applying for services and accommodations on the basis of a learning disability must submit a current, comprehensive report of a psycho-educational assessment performed by a person who has received formal training in assessment techniques necessary to diagnose learning disabilities and has professional experience in that field. The student's most recent IEP and psycho-education assessment, while helpful, may not fulfill these requirements. The report should include summaries of the following: diagnostic interview, assessment of the student's aptitudes, academic achievement and information processing, and a clear statement of the diagnosis of the specific learning disability. Language indicating a “learning difficulty” or “learning deficit” will not be considered appropriate documentation.

Diagnosis of attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity (ADHD) will be acceptable only when made by an individual who holds a current license in an appropriate field (medicine or psychology) and has formal training and experience in assessment of diagnosis. The report should include a description of supporting past and present symptoms, a summary of the assessment procedures and instruments used, a narrative summary that includes scores and supports diagnosis and a statement of the student's medical needs, including the impact of medication on the student's ability to meet the demands of an academic environment.

**Accommodations For Disabilities**

The use of accommodations in postsecondary institutions is based upon more than just the diagnosis of a disability. It is based upon the severity of impact (Functional Impact) on a major life activity. This is why documentation for a post-secondary institution has to provide more information than just a diagnosis and must address the severity of impact. Another student with the same disability may be impacted differently by his disability; therefore, all accommodations are viewed on a case-by-case basis.
Students at a post-secondary institution are considered adults. The agreement for services needs to be made with the person requesting the services and not with a third party, such as a parent or guardian. The federal laws and FERPA are very clear that institutions are not to communicate to anyone other than the student about that individual's academic progress and/or disability related needs.

A student must meet the requirements of each course they enroll in. It is important to separate personal skills and behaviors from academic requirements. A student with a disability should be graded utilizing the same criteria for all students.

**Accommodations That Are Reasonable**

Some reasonable adjustments in teaching methods are:
- Adapted course materials (large print, books on tape, Braille, etc.)
- Adaptive instructional equipment and/or devices (computers, readers, voice interactive systems, etc.)
- Note takers, readers
- Permission to tape record lectures
- A proctor to read exam questions
- Additional time on exams
- Adaptive equipment such as a print enlarger or augmentative communication devices
- Scheduling classes (appropriate course load)
- Permission for use of service animals

**Accommodations That Are NOT Reasonable**

With regard to disabilities, in the context of higher education, there are three kinds of accommodations that are not considered reasonable:
- It is not a reasonable accommodation if making the accommodation or allowing participation poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
- It is not a reasonable accommodation if making the accommodation means making a substantial change in an essential element of the curriculum (educational viewpoint) or a substantial alteration in the manner in which the university or law school provides its services.
- It is not a reasonable accommodation if it poses an undue financial or administrative burden.

Some myths, assumptions, and requests that are NOT considered reasonable:
- Whatever accommodations I say I need will be provided.
- Any absences will automatically be excused if I am sick or it is disability related.
• If I have a problem then later notify the instructor or Associate Dean for Academic Affairs office that I need accommodations, I can redo and retake assignments and test so the results can be adjusted.
• Colleges will be violating the law if they don't give me one-on-one tutoring.
• As long as I attend class and do the homework, I will pass the class.
• The accommodations I need will be the same in all classes.
• I can take only half of the normal test. The tests will have to be shorter for me and all I need to do is ask the disability office for that modification.
• I can find a tutor and the college will pay for the tutoring.
• If I need more testing to verify my disability, the college will provide the testing.

Attendance

Legal education is participatory education and the American Bar Association accreditation standards mandate that regular and punctual attendance is required for the juris doctorate degree. If you have a chronic condition that may interfere with attendance, you may request waiver of an attendance policy up to the point where absences interfere with the essential nature of the course requirements. Such requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Any request must be accompanied by documentation and the absences can only be excused if they are documented to relate to the chronic condition. However, course requirements can not be fulfilled when absences become too excessive and interfere with the essential nature of the course requirement.

Procedure for Obtaining Accommodation

1. Students may call, e-mail or contact the Office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.
   a. Contact:
      Eric T. Laity, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
      Email: elaity@okcu.edu
      Phone: 405-208-5877
      Fax: 405-208-5802
2. Submit the application form.
3. Students must provide documentation per the guidelines.
4. The application must include a personal statement written by the student outlining the nature of the disability and why the accommodations requested are necessary.
5. Students must submit the application and documentation in compliance with the applicable deadline.
6. The Special Accommodations Committee will review the documentation and approve appropriate accommodations.
7. Oklahoma City University School of Law reserves the right to request independent evaluations before granting or extending a request for a reasonable accommodation. In addition, the Law School reserves the right to deny a request if there is not adequate documentation, the request did not meet the deadline, or the accommodation sought is not supported by the data in the assessment or documentation.

**Deadlines**

Accommodations will not be processed that are not in compliance with the application deadline.

**Classroom Accommodation**

First-year students needing classroom accommodations are urged to submit requests four weeks prior to the beginning of classes. All requests from students who matriculate in the fall must be submitted by the fourth week of classes. All requests from Summer Alternate Admissions students must be submitted by the second week of summer classes. For continuing students, requests and supporting documentation for classroom accommodations must be submitted a month before classes begin for the appropriate semester. This provision does not apply to the Fall 2010 semester. For Fall 2010, continuing students must submit requests by the fourth week of classes.

Classroom accommodations include accommodations granted for graded timed exercises, such as pop quizzes, in-class assignments, and examinations administered during a regular class session. If a student needs a classroom accommodation, all documentation must be submitted sufficiently in advance to allow processing of the request even if the graded timed exercise occurs within the beginning weeks of the semester. If a professor announces that a graded timed exercise will be given, it is the student's responsibility to promptly submit documentation to enable review of the request.

**Examination Accommodations**

Examination accommodations refer to accommodations for examinations administered during the Law School Examination Schedule. Requests and the supporting documentation for exam accommodations must be submitted by the end of the seventh week of the fall or spring semester in which accommodations are sought or by the end of the third week of the summer semester in which accommodations are sought.

**Temporary Impairment**

Students may suffer from acute conditions or injuries that require immediate accommodations. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, upon consultation with a member of the Special Accommodations Committee, may grant reasonable accommodations for such circumstances. If the impairment is known or suspected sufficiently in advance of exams, students must apply by
the established deadline. A request for accommodations due to temporary impairment should be supported by documentation from a physician. If the temporary impairment precludes immediate documentation, medical documentation must be provided within a reasonable time or by the deadline established by the Associate Dean or Committee member. Learning disabilities, ADD, or ADHD are not eligible for the classification of temporary impairment.

**Unusual Circumstances**

Some students may know they have a disability but may not realize the need for an accommodation until they begin a particular law school class. A student who fails to apply for accommodation within the deadlines set forth above, may apply within 10 days of discovering the unusual circumstances that create the need for accommodation. In their personal statement, the student must set forth the unusual circumstances justifying out-of-time relief. All required documentation as outlined above must be submitted.

**Extension of Deadline**

The Special Accommodations Committee may extend the applicable deadline when the Committee finds that the student has in good faith attempted to meet the applicable deadline by filing his/her application and by completing all required testing within sufficient time to comply with the deadline and the delay was caused by the failure of the medical or testing professional to submit the documentation of the disability in a prompt fashion. Under these circumstances, the Committee may, upon request by the student, extend the deadline to allow the health care or testing professional to submit the documentation.

**Effective Date**

The effective date of the new rules promulgated by the Special Accommodations Committee shall be the beginning of the academic year, 2010. The provisions shall apply to all students who matriculate in the fall semester, 2010 or who apply for an accommodation for the first time in the fall semester, 2010.