

## **A Guide for Faculty: Handling Student Inquiries About Accommodations**

Addressing student inquiries about their peers' accommodations requires sensitivity, respect for privacy, and adherence to legal regulations. This guide is intended to help faculty respond appropriately when students ask why a peer may have different rules in the classroom.

In this guide, we offer verbiage recommendations. Part of these recommendations include faculty offering to meet directly with students for modifications and to contact Accessibility Services directly based on the need. For clarification, if a student does not disclose a disability but is hoping for modifications in the classroom, faculty can work directly with them to determine if any modifications are appropriate. When the student discloses needing accommodations in the classroom due to a documented disability, please be sure to direct the student to Accessibility Services.

### **1. Emphasize Privacy and Confidentiality:**

- Faculty should not imply or confirm that a student with different test taking procedures or other class-related modifications is due to disability accommodations. Differences could be due to a number of reasons. None of which may be shared with other students.
- Faculty should not disclose any information about a student's accommodations to other students. Accommodations are protected by privacy laws, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Disclosing that a student has accommodations or any information about a student's accommodations without their consent would violate their privacy rights.
- Stress the importance of privacy and confidentiality when discussing student accommodations. Make it clear that information about an individual's accommodations or modifications cannot be disclosed without their consent. To ensure privacy, use terms like "different test taking procedures and class-related modifications" instead of "accommodations" which inherently confirms the student is registered with Accessibility Services.

*"I appreciate your curiosity/Thanks for the question/Thank you for voicing your concern. It's important to respect the privacy of each student, but what I can share is if you are in need of different test taking procedures or class-related modifications, you can discuss that with me or Accessibility Services depending on the need."*

**2. Refer to University Policies:**

- Explain that test taking procedures and other class-related modifications are provided based on documented needs, following university policies and procedures.

*“The university has established procedures for modifications to support students with diverse needs. If you have questions or concerns about modifications in the classroom, you can discuss that with me or Accessibility Services depending on the need.”*

**3. General Explanation:**

- Provide a general explanation about the concept of accommodations or modifications without divulging specific details about the student in question. Explain that accommodations or modifications are tailored to individual needs to create an inclusive learning environment for everyone.

*“Because each student in this class may have unique needs, the university works to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. Modifications are determined through a confidential process to address these individual needs. If you have questions or concerns about modifications in the classroom, you can discuss that with me or Accessibility Services depending on the need.”*

**4. Encourage Open Communication:**

- Encourage the student to communicate directly with Accessibility Services if they have concerns or questions about the accommodation process. Reinforce the importance of open communication between students and university staff.

*“I appreciate your question. Due to privacy laws, I can’t share information about another student. For any concerns or questions about modifications, I encourage you to communicate with me or Accessibility Services directly. Open dialogue between students and the university ensures effective support for individual needs.”*

**5. Office Hours:**

- Offer to discuss the matter further during office hours, allowing the student to express their concerns in a more private setting. Reiterate your commitment to providing an inclusive and fair learning environment.

*“I understand you may have questions and it’s essential to note that certain classroom policies are in place to enhance the overall learning experience. If you have concerns or questions, feel free to discuss them with me during my office hours.”*

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It's crucial for faculty to be aware of and comply with the university's policies regarding accommodations and privacy. If the professor is uncertain about how to handle the situation, consulting with Accessibility Services is advisable.