



Academic Adjustments Policy Disability Resource Center

What is the Mission of the Disability Resource Center?

The mission of the Disability Resource Center is to unite the Montclair State University community in an effort to provide students with disabilities the excellence and equity in education to which they are legally entitled. We promote the full and active participation of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of post-secondary education while advocating and facilitating equal educational opportunities. This can be accomplished through appropriate support services, curricula, instruction, and policy. The ultimate goal of these services is to enable students to succeed academically, improve retention, and provide students with the opportunity to acquire the tools needed to live successful lives in the future.

What Laws Provide Protection to Students with Disabilities?

Two major pieces of legislation protect the rights of people with disabilities: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Section 504 protects the civil rights of qualified individuals with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is a civil rights guarantee for persons with disabilities in the US. It provides people with disabilities protection from discrimination on the basis of disability.

Who is Protected by Law?

Section 504 states that: “No otherwise qualified person with a disability in the US shall, solely by reason of disability, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participation in, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” Under Section 504, a person with a disability includes any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment. To be a “qualified” person with a disability, a person must meet the academic and technical standards required for admission or participation in a post-secondary institution’s programs and activities.

According to the ADA, a person with a disability is anyone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, including tasks such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, and learning. The ADA mandates that reasonable modifications in policies, practices, and procedures must be made as necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability. The ADA upholds and extends the standards for compliance set forth in Section 504.



What Types of Disabilities Are Covered?

Learning disabilities
Chronic illnesses, such as epilepsy, diabetes, and cancer
Psychological disabilities
Blindness or visual impairments
Deafness or hearing impairments
Mobility impairments
Spinal cord injury
Traumatic brain injury
Other conditions meeting the definition of disability

What is the Impact of these Laws on Post-Secondary Education?

Section 504 and the ADA mean that colleges and universities receiving federal financial assistance must not discriminate in the recruitment, admission, or treatment of students. Students with documented disabilities may request modifications, accommodations, or auxiliary aids that will enable them to participate in and benefit from all post-secondary educational programs and activities. Institutions must make such changes, when appropriate, to ensure the academic program is accessible to the greatest extent possible by all students with disabilities.

What are Modifications and Accommodations?

Requested modifications or accommodations must be considered “reasonable” and “appropriate” for an individual’s disability. An institution must make reasonable accommodations in order to provide a student with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in the institution’s courses, programs, and activities. Appropriate and reasonable accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis, as they are determined specifically on an individual’s functional impairments and provided in order to lessen the discriminatory effects of a disability.

Examples of academic adjustments include:

- Extended test time
- Testing in a distraction-reduced environment
- Use of a reader or scribe
- Use of a calculator, spell checker, computer, or other auxiliary aid
- Use of a tape recorder or note-taker during lectures
- Preferential seating in a classroom
- Sign language interpreters
- Textbooks on tape

Accommodating students with disabilities is not only the legal responsibility of Montclair State University, but also an ethical responsibility. All requested accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate by staff with professional credentials. Such modifications enable qualified students with disabilities to not only have equal access to the full range of programs and activities offered to all MSU students, but also allow the entire campus community to benefit by this added diversity.